

Chapter-1

Introductory Remarks

1. Introduction

In this chapter we would provide a general overview of our research problem, theoretical framework and methodology. Our discussion spreads around seven sections, divided into separate subsections and enumerated suitably. In this chapter as well as all the subsequent chapters we have followed an author-date arrangement of citation and detailed references may be looked up in the bibliography. In some cases we have also inserted footnotes where necessary. Section 2 situates the study through a review of the concept and practice of sustainable forest management and zeros in on North Bengal, from where some forest villages have been selected for intensive study. In this section again we have provided a background to the concept of empowerment and provided a brief review of social movement and development theories to which the concept of empowerment is linked. Section 3 presents the research gaps and research questions in the light of the review of the concept of empowerment and related theories stated in the previous section. Section 4 happens to be a dense section on our theoretical framework that has been derived as well as suitably modified for use from the original Marx's theory of Praxis. We could have provided an independent chapter on the subject of this section but we have refrained from this as such an effort could lead us into interesting but somewhat never ending theoretical debate that was considered unnecessary in the context of present study with extensive field research. Section 5 describes reflections on methodology and different dimensions of our field research. Section 6 offers a synoptic outline of the present study and section 7 concludes the chapter.

2.1. Situating the Study

Conservation and management of forest as a growing area of concern has caught attention of the policy makers, social activists, development practitioners, intellectuals and academicians in the recent years. The problem of deforestation and degradation is seen as the major component of global deterioration of environment and world ecological crisis such as pollution, climate change and resource depletion. The Earth Summit held in Stockholm in 1972 and the Brundtland Report published in 1987 together recognized the inexhaustibility of natural resources and insisted on redefining the development process with a focus on intergenerational equity commonly known as sustainable development. In this context the conservation orientation of natural resource governance has become a major thrust in redesigning domestic policies worldwide. International cooperation in terms of financing through bilateral donors, transfer of sustainable technologies as well as management techniques and know-how has been sought to substantiate the very process. In India the programme of forest conservation involves a good deal of experimentation and creation of new institutions and procedures in the governance of natural resources. The 1988 National Forest Policy was adopted to strengthen the conservation regime already introduced earlier with the 1972 Wildlife Act and the 1980 Forest Conservation Act. Following the policy joint forest management (JFM) and eco-development programmes were introduced in 90's with the financial and managerial aids from bilateral donors like World Bank in order to translate the concept sustainable forest management into practice throughout the country. While admitting the Forest Department's inability to protect country's vast forest resources and wildlife alone the programmes for the first time invoked participation of village communities in the management of forests and wildlife with a view of satisfying their needs for development. The purpose was to ensure sustainable use of forest resources along with the rapid ecological recovery through the model of PPP (people public participation) where empowerment of the forest communities was considered

both as the process and the product. Hence, after century old alienation of forest dwellers from controlling their resources those programmes recognized their positive role in restoration, protection and regeneration of forests and made an attempt to integrate their experiences, skills and knowledge with the modern scientific management practices of the Forest Department to evolve strategies for the participatory forest management in the country.

The principal features of this kind of participatory Forest Management Programme which should be implemented under an arrangement between the voluntary agency- NGO, the village community and the state Forest Department are; setting up village Forest Protection Committees (FPC's) establishing and monitoring of management plans by the forest department confining local use to grass and non-timber forest products and potentially a share of the income from the timber sold by the Forest Department. Though the J.F.M was then primarily implemented from the 1990 onwards only in the degraded forest areas across the states but with the 2000 guidelines, Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) extended the programme into the good forest areas also. Now accordingly to the latest information compiled by the JFM cell in the MoEF, as on 10th September, 2003, 17.33 million ha of forests area are being managed through 84,642 JFM committees in 27 states (JFM Cell, MoEF, 2003).

In the District of Jalpaiguri the participatory forest management was initiated with the introduction of the Joint Forest Management Programme following the Forest Protection Committees (FPC's) Resolution in 1991 which covered the plain areas of North Bengal excluding the area under Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC). Other than FPC's, a different Concept of participatory management in the form of Eco-Development Committees (EDC's) has also been introduced with a resolution in 1996 to apply the same principles of sustainable forest management in the Protected Areas of wildlife sanctuaries and National Parks of Jalpaiguri along

with the remaining parts of the state. Hence, it was assumed that the condition of forest as well as the forest dwellers will be changed in the positive direction as the objective of those programme was to stop continual degradation of forest to promote sustainable practices by empowerment of the forest people economically as well as socially through ensuring their participation in the forest management of the District. But after more than a decade of experience the performance of J.F.M and Eco-Development is quite frustrating in the region. While assessing the performance of J.F.M activities and status of conservation and development of the forest resources West Bengal State Forest Report 2002-2003 clearly stated that – “There is no denying that performance of FPCs have tended to vary amongst regions endowed with different bio-physical parameter but there is also appreciable difference in the level of performance of FPCs characterized by similar resource parameters. 50% to 60% of FPCs have been identified as good to very good in South-West Bengal whereas only 30% of FPCs can be attributed to this category in the northern part of the state”. In addition to that a field survey conducted by a Siliguri based independent organization in 2000 showed that after being protecting forest for a continuous period of 5 years in case of FPC’s and 1 year in case of EDC’s (minimum years for being eligible for usufruct sharing / revenue sharing as stipulated by state Forest Department) only 18.75% of the total committees under study were benefited from revenue and usufruct sharing and more than 56% committees had not even bank account. This clearly shows the lack of economic empowerment of the community through JFM. The study further showed that how bureaucratic apathy, absence of marketing mechanism, unplanned support activities and unwillingness to relinquish any power to the community contributed largely to the weaknesses of the J.F.M and Eco-Development Programmes this region.

Apart from J.F.M the Panchayats system was introduced in those forest villages in 1999 (See Appendix-I). But as they are not allowed to take any land-based

activities due to absence of land entitlements of the forest dwellers they failed considerably to uplift livelihood status of the community. Moreover, man-animal conflicts increased highly during this period. Though elephants and other wild animals regularly destroyed crop and killed or injured people, compensation schemes of the Forest Development remained largely irregular and inadequate.

All these factors led to the accumulation of grievances among the forest dwellers. Such grievances were quite varied before J.F.M, so were the practices and aspirations throughout the region. Under JFM regime however, their aspirations and grievances were being institutionalized and consequently it paved the way for regional basis of their demands. But the existing forest workers' union by different political parties was unable to redress their demands at the regional level and to provide leadership and organization, as their activities were concentrated locally. This gap, which is palpable between the growing aspirations and discontents among the forest dwellers on the one hand and the operational areas of the unions on the other, leads to further regional crystallization of the objective conditions of a strong movement.

As a result of this kind of deprivation as well as the emergence of National Forum of Forest people and Forest workers (N.F.F.P.F.W) the process of systematic and organized protest started throughout the region. It was on the 10th Dec 2001, on the occasion of International Human Rights Day the forest dwellers of North Bengal held a mammoth rally at Siliguri to protest against the colonial legacy of exploitation and neglect. The movement took a regional character in the true sense of the term as out 173 recorded forest villages in North Bengal, forest dwellers from 168 villages took active part in that demonstration. Since it's formation in 2001 the NFFPFW organized several major programmes against the injustice under JFM in the region those were attended by a large number of forest villagers from entire North Bengal

including the District of Jalpaiguri. In this phase the movement was not limited in demanding the proper implementation of JFM across divisions rather upheld the larger issue of land and livelihood rights of the forest dwellers and demanded for the abolition of all 'black laws' of the Central and the State Government which tended to view them as burden for forest conservation and hence prescribed for their wholesale eviction from the forests. Since 2008, after the notification of the Forest Right Act, 2006 by the Govt. of West Bengal, the movement has gained a new momentum as it resists the biased implementation of the Act on the ground through the formation of Gram Sansad based Forest Right Committees (FRC's) which has violated the letter and spirit of the Act's instruction to form FRC's at the Gram Sabha level.

However the JFM is not the only manifestation of the cooperative or collaborative management of forest in the region rather the collaborative approach in forest governance was introduced for the first time under the taungya system of artificial regeneration during the colonial regime of forest management. Under the taungya the forest dwelling shifting cultivators of Dooars like Rava, Mech, Garo etc were incorporated under the guise of scientific resource management of the colonial forestry where those forest dwelling people made use of their indigenous technique of slash and burn for preparation of the field for artificial regeneration of Sal (*Shorea robusta*) and later on Teak (*Tectona grandis*) species. In order to perpetuate the system the permanent forest villages were established within the reserved forests in the District and villagers were allowed to raise agricultural crops for two years in clear-felled coups between the lines of forest plantation. In exchange of their labor and indigenous technique for artificial regeneration under taungya the villagers were entitled to certain privileges and facilities followed by an yearly agreement with the forest department like free timber and other implements for building quarters, drinking water, limited medical assistance, free firewood and fodder in addition to

cultivable land not more than 5 acres and nominal cash payment for extra work beyond 90 days. However, under the guise of said benefit of the shifting cultivators the taungya system was reduced into a system of exploitation as the villagers were compelled to provide free and compulsory labor for the Department. The system was continued after independence with some sort of distortion in the original framework and was stopped finally with a historic movement of the forest villagers in Dooars during late 60's when five forest villagers were died before police firing at Gossainhat Forest Village under the Jalpaiguri Forest Division. The movement was initiated under the leadership of the North Bengal Forest Workers and Jaigir Cultivators Union and continued till 1976 to maximize agricultural lands, to introduce Panchayat System in the forest village and to drive out corruption from the forests. It was ended up with a Writ Petition at the Kolkata High Court by the Organization against the illegal and forceful eviction process by the Department in the wake of national emergency in 1975.

Keeping these two kinds of development in the region i.e. collaborative framework for forest governance from the above and the forest dwellers movement from the below in mind the main problem before us is to understand how these two affect the relationship between empowerment and natural resource governance. If we look at the frameworks of JFM in West Bengal we find a connection between degraded forest in South Bengal and greater number of participatory structures in terms of FPCs and the reverse in North Bengal. Does it mean then that empowerment is taken up as a serious agendum only where capacity building of forest dwellers or economic empowerment will not be at the expense of the extractive power of the State? If so, then, is an alternative way of political empowerment through movement that we find in north Bengal is a switchover from cooperation to resistance or both run together in some form or the other? In other

words, do we need an altogether different concept of empowerment in approaching the goal of sustainable forest management?

In the context of the above we would like to investigate that how far this concept of empowerment is adequate to grab the dynamics of shaping, sharing and exercising of power both in forms of cooperation and resistance in the field situation. Is empowerment relative to a framework of cooperation defined by state mediated participatory forest management practices or also to the forms of resistance to those practices? Can analysis of power be carried out in the field situation without theorizing the very process of generation of needs and capacities of people and the relation of the specific forms of empowerment to those needs and capacities? Again, how does one understand the nature and extent of empowerment through both state mediated practices of participatory forest management and episodic resistances to those practices? There is also a problem of understanding success and failure of empowerment in specific ways. Is failure of one particular problem is to be judged in terms of its target or in terms of its broad result? If the result apparently goes against target, does it also lead to empowerment, if the so called failure of the programme be a basis for a movement for sustainable forest management practices and a source of empowerment as well?

2.2. Reviewing the Concept and Practice of SFM

The term Sustainable Development (S.D) was introduced in 'Our Common Future' – a report published by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) also referred to as the Bruntland Report. The very definition set out 'the two fundamental principles of intragenerational and intergenerational equity and contains the two key concepts of needs and limits'. The concept of sustainable development while refuting the current state of technology and discriminatory social organization urged for consequent moderation in our demand from environment. It

'requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to satisfy their aspirations for better life' (WCED, 1987:44) It , therefore, involved a process of transformation in which core components of society- resources use, investments, technologies, institutions and consumption patterns come to operate in greater harmony with eco-systems.

Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio-De-Janeiro in 1992, Sustainable Forest Management (S.F.M) has been a leading concept in the management of forest resources. The term S.F.M can be traced to the so-called 'Forest Principles' and chapter 11 of Agenda 21, which were prominent outputs from UNCED (FAO, 2003 *cited in* Schlaepfer *et al*, 2004)). The term is defined by the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe as 'the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way and at a rate, that maintains their bio-diversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfill, now and in the future relevant ecological, economic and social functions at local, national and global levels and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems'. (MCPFE, 1993)

Whereas Sustainable Development is concerned with the ecosystem as a whole, the Sustainable Forest Management is concerned only with the forest ecosystem. This concept of Sustainable Forest Management may be considered as an offshoot of the concept of natural resource governance, which encompasses all the three components of sustainability, viz. ecological, economic and socio-cultural well-being. It was defined by the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) as 'the process of managing permanent forest land to achieve one or more clearly specified objectives of forest management with regard to the production of a continuous flow of desirable forest products and services without undue reduction of its inherent values and future productivity and without undue undesirable effects on the physical and social environment' (Tajbar *et al*, 1994:996). However, the guiding principles of

Sustainable Forest Management are same as other ecological sustainable resource management which cut across ecological, economic social and cultural dimensions (Text Box 1).

Text Box 1: Guiding Principles of Ecological Sustainable Resource Management

- Inter-generational equity: providing for today while retaining resources and options for tomorrow
- Conservation of cultural and biological diversity and ecological integrity
- Constant natural capital and 'sustainable income'
- Anticipatory and precautionary policy approach to resource use, erring on the side of caution
- Resource use in a manner that contributes to equity and social justice while avoiding social disruptions
- Limits on natural resource use within the capacity of the environment to supply renewable resources and assimilate wastes
- Qualitative rather than quantitative development of human well-being
- Pricing of environmental values and natural resources to cover full environmental and social costs
- Global rather than regional or national perspective of environmental issues
- Efficiency of resource use by all societies
- Strong community participation in policy and practice during the process of transition to an ecologically sustainable society

Source: Hare, W.L. et al., 1990: Ecologically Sustainable Development, Australian Conservation Foundation, Fitzroy, Victoria (Cited in Ramkrishnan, 2008:20)

This concept of S.F.M can be characterized as an outcome based approach stressing upon the management aspect and deals largely with one kind of ecosystem, incorporates simultaneously the ecological, economic and social consideration with a view to sustain the flows of different sets of forest goods and services. Moreover in order to fulfill a broader range of environmental and social objectives S.F.M ascribed 'global values' to the forest 'that often do not correspond to the values perceived by local people and attempted to decentralize the control of forest from national governments to regional, municipal and local governments and communities though centralized forest agencies still the norm'. However, this decentralization of control in managing forest resources initiated by the centralized forest agencies is an essential criterion for S.F.M, which invoked the idea of empowerment of the forest communities as a principle prerequisite to achieve sustainability, which is in turn related dialectically with the former.

However, a lot of works have already been done on the practice of sustainable forest management in India. A number of literatures have dealt with different aspects of participatory forest management, its problems, prospects and its impact on the empowerment process. From a vast body of literature we have selected the following on the basis of relevance to the present study.

The famous book "Village Voice, Forest Choices: JFM in India (Edited by Mark Poffenberger and Betsy McGean, Oxford University Press, 1996) offers a comprehensive examination of radical changes which have taken place in the management of Indian forest in the last two decades. Divided into three parts, the book examines the resurgence of community forest management in India and its social, political institutional, economic and technical consequences. Part – I reviews the historical background and the current status of grassroots forest management initiatives nationwide, and assesses the policies being enacted to support local environmental protection initiatives. The book advocates that under given a favorable environment, forest communities can quickly re-established their control over the use of forests and grassland resources, thereby reversing a long process of alienation and disempowerment. Part – II of the book explores the role that people and institutions can play in forging new joint management partnership between communities and Forest Departments. It analyses how India's diverse rural communities and their local institutions can work effectively. Madhu Sarin describes the processes and obstacles involves in linking people with forest. Palit examines the challenges facing Indian Forest Departments as they attempt to build new skills and capacities to work closely with rural communities in microplanning and ecosystem management. At last the book examine some of the constraints to promote the JFM programme such as the weak legal and organizational framework for joint management of forest, problem of corruption among the forest dwellers and a large number of new settlers in a forest village who have no traditional rights in forests, as their ancestors did not live in the village at the time of Forest settlement. In brief the book explores the historical roots of deforestation, the alienation of tribal peoples and their re-entry into resource management programme.

Akheleshwar Pathak in his book "Forest: Whose Domain? State's or Forest Dweller's?" (1994) advanced his study by examining the 'crisis' of forest depletion and marginalization of forest dwellers in the backdrop of the 'complex relationship' among the state, forest and forest dwellers, their changing role (forest dwellers and the state) and relationship (contradictory) over the years in accordance with the change in forests. However, regarding JFM he concluded it is nothing but a strategy of reducing the cost of plantation project and it is opposing 'the forest dwellers idea of subsistence agriculture' and would get support only from rural elites and thus it cannot be able to stop the crisis as mentioned above.

Madhu Sarin et al in their famous book "Who is Gaining? Who is losing? Gender and Equality Concerns in J.F.M. (1998) showed "the gap between the promises generated by JFM and actual practice". Sarin explained how women and 'less powerful groups' are being neglected on the one hand and richer and 'higher cast men' appropriated the benefit of J.F.M. and "making all the decisions and controlling the shares". After highlighting those problem the author suggested among other things "holding separate meetings for women....creating all women's organization for JFM" and providing them leadership positions within JFM and also in the forest department.

Dr. N.C. Saxena in his 'thought provoking works 'The Saga of participatory Forest Management in India' (1997) reviewed at first the historical roots behind the adoption of "new forest poling of 1988 and consequent resolution of J.F.M. in India which claimed to be paved the way of peoples participation in the protection, regeneration and development of forests and emphasized the need to adopt proper mechanism for 'procurement, storage and marketing' of N.T.F.P's in order to accelerate the participatory process. The book further argued in favor of proper women representation in the JFM committees. However the book explored certain serious weakness prevailing within the J.F.M. mechanism and their resultant consequences which adversely affects or impedes people participation in the forest management. F.D did not bother about the people's wisdom regarding forest protection, weak mechanism of N.T.F.P. procuring, storage and marketing and under

representation of women in JFM committee. After reviewing these he concluded “the progress made JFM in the country since its inception that the adoption of JFM has not made any major change in the prevailing position of relations between the state and the people nor has it heralded the beginning of a new era of people’s power.” He further adds “state government look upon JFM as cost effective method of forest protection and economically rewarding activity for the people. The aim is neither to empower people nor to make committees autonomous”.

Rabindranath and Sudha in their edited book Joint Forest Management in India, Spread, performance and Impact, 2004 (which is the product of a series of studies conducted by the Ecological and Economics Research Network [EERN] in different states such as A.P., Gujarat, Karnataka, Rajasthan, W.B., Tripura and so on) showed that the J.F.M. programme could be considered as a mixed success. The findings are –

- In terms of vegetation status and the protection of forest from illegal extraction the impact was quite good. Enhancement of leadership qualities in the community to promote the programme was also significant phenomena. In terms of relationship, the JFM fostered a better relationship between the community and the Forest Department compared to pre-JFM period in all the states, with about 95% of the JFMC in the study area reporting an improved relationship.
- In terms of the financial empowerment of the communities through the usufruct sharing and income generation the impact of JFM was moderate. The aspect of women’s empowerment could come under the same category.
- In terms of administrative empowerment through the capacity building, in terms of gender and equity aspects, in terms of community involvement in decision-making process and micro planning, the JFM had been largely failed. The study showed that ‘the decision-making power and final authority lies with the Forest Department.’

Archana Prasad in her book *Environmentalism and the Left* (2005) showed that though in West Bengal the experiment of J.F.M. became quite successful, in terms of showing mechanism between the F.D and the village communities and also in terms of regenerating forest cover as well as benefits received from the NTFP by the villagers, under the influence of progressive social and political movements but in other states where such social engineering had not taken had not taken place before the introduction of J.F.M. programme, the programme was virtually disempowering the community as well as the women by replacing their spontaneous efforts of forest protection and management with superimposing the JFM in the name of participatory forest management. Prasad claimed that several organization like the Ekta Parishad, Kisan Adivasi Sangathan and Adivasi Mukti Morcha in central India raised their voice against this kind of practices. In this way JFM, 'reinforced the department's claim of being the monopoly holder and controller over forests and knowledge about them, thus disempowering the Panchayats.'

Achut Das in his article "Joint Forest Management in Tribal Areas: Conflicts and Resolutions" published in the Mahapatra edited book "Forest Management in Tribal Areas: Forest Policy and Peoples' participating (1997) showed the variability and status of J.F.M. throughout the country and by examining the relationship between tribals and forest officials pointed out different areas of conflict such as conflict 'between State priorities and local needs' 'between management of common property resources and concerns of earning daily bread', 'between supply of firewood and demand,' between 'forest managers and tribals', 'between investment policy and utilization policy for revenue', between price and wage and 'conflict within forest administration' and after that the author proposed solutions in order to resolve such conflicts by building up a mutual trust and confidence among people, forest managers, local users and policy makers and advocated for team work right from planning to harvesting and emphasized need for socio, political economic and environmental awareness and the skills to strength people's management of forest.

K.K. Mishra in his article "Forest Policies and Forest Communities in India: Customary Rights, State Intervention and Participatory Management" published in the book "Peoples and Environment in India" (2001) edited by Misra and Murty viewed the changing nature of forest policies right from Ancient India to the recent adoption of 1988 forest policy on the one hand and also a brief history of the forest movement for preindependence to the post independence period on the other in order to reveal the relationship in between the state and the forest dwellers in the historical context and thereby tried to reveal the rhetoric of peoples participation in participatory forest management under the present JFM regime. After reviewing the real nature of current forest policies and practices by the FD and the State in reality the author argued that neither the present concept of JFM is an exception from the earlier 'top-down' development programme nor it intended to secure peoples participation in the management but it further widened the scope of state intervention in the management of forest resources.

Ellora Puri in her article 'Understanding Participation: Theoretical Foundations and Practical Implications (EPW, June,12-18,2004) conceptualized participation historically and viewed it as 'a tool of empowerment and equity' in the contemporary context. Following this perspective she argued that though from a utility based approach JFM can be considered to be a relatively successful programme but in terms of achieving participation everything have been confined to the formal procedures. The objective of women's empowerment by involving them is yet to be realized. She advanced that assuming community as a homogenous group by the JFM is another drawback of the programme. To conclude the author recognized the need to build up a link in between the programme and the 'statutory village authority of the Panchayat and thereby establishment of proper legal mechanism to rule out the hierarchy within the community. She emphasized the need for an overall 'democratic framework of the state' in order to make success the participatory process in reality.

Sanghamitra Mohanty in her article 'NGO's, Agencies and Donors in Participatory Conservation' (EPW, Sept,7-13,2002) concentrated mainly on the

'internal dynamics of government agencies'. Her study addressed that how the nature and form of relationship among NGOs, agencies and donors affect the participatory conservation programme. She further discussed that how the hierarchical structure of FD, organizational dynamics of the State agencies and NGOs as well as the culture of the tribal community impede the process of participation and empowerment of them. The author highlighted the need to build up a good relationship in between organizations and agencies that she perceived as key ingredients in developing participatory conservation programme.

Manish Tiwary in his article 'NGO's in Joint Forest management and Rural Development: Case study in Jharkhand and West Bengal' (EPW Dec. 27, 2003- Jan 2, 2004) explores the role of NGO's in Joint Forest Management and how performance of N.G.O's affects influence the villages involvement in the participatory management as they expected a lot from NGO's as an agency for rural development.

Sanjay Upadhyay in his 'JFM in India: Some Legal Concerns (EPW Aug 30-Sept.5, 2003) highlighted the 'validity and legality of J.F.M' and argued that the J.F.M circular issued in 1990 has no legal validity and violation of that circular would entail no legal consequences. He pointed out under the weak legal footing of J.F.M people can not be expected to participate fully and the programme thus could not be able to utilize/realize 100 percent of their effort and further state that by weakening the legal footing of J.F.M the present JFM order across the country clearly fail to grant security of rights to the communities and thereby adversely affect participatory process. He also criticized the adhocism in benefit sharing mechanism and advocated to render it a legal basis. He also stated that the inter-institutional conflict between PRIs and JFMC's should be mitigated in order to seen the equal opportunities and rights to the communities participating in J.F.M programme.

Emmanuel D'Silva, B Nagnath in their article 'Beharoonguda', A rare success story in Joint Forest Management" (EPW Feb.9-15, 2002) analyzed the reason for the success of J.F.M from the experience of Behroonguda, a forest village of A.P where the authors pursued their case study. They explore how pro-people attitude of the

forest bureaucrat, using of participatory technique by the local NGO's, local leadership and organizations of the tribal people, providing attractive incentive to the local people appropriate policy framework and above all people's emotional attachment to the forest together formed the basis of successes of participatory mechanism such as J.F.M in the management of natural resources.

R.C.Sharma in his article 'beyond Joint Forest Management (Indian Forester, May 2000) analyzed that how the role and importance of the complex social value of the forest villages and their attitude are the product of history, culture and tradition which apart from policy resolution and their enforcement play an important role in the success of participatory management.

Mohan Jha in his article "Channelizing People's Power towards Protection and Management of protection Areas", (India Forester, Oct 2000) which is based on a case study of 'Gyanganga' sanctuary in Maharastra showed that how local forest communities controlled the illegal sheep grazing by the 'Kathiwardis' the illicit felling and fire and took an effective role in the protection, regeneration and management of local forest resources despite not having any financial support from any corner. They benefited themselves from the sale of Anjan leaves and grass. The author argued that it can be considered as a successful example of participatory management in the protected areas.

Jitendra Sharma in his paper "Joint Forest Management – some Fundamentals Reviewed" (Indian Forester, June 1997) reviewed some of the possible 'counter productive dimension' of JFM programme and advocated for tight monitoring by the department as necessary to minimize the risk factor of peoples involvement in the management of forest resources. It also highlighted the 'changing needs and response of the forest communities in different types of socio-economic set up and pointed out conflicts between local communities under JFM and emphasized the need to address it carefully in a holistic manner by the FD.

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Alined Rastogi in his article "confide Resolution. A challenge for JFM in India" (Indian Forester, June 1999) argued in favor of evolving conflict resolution

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mechanism in order to strengthen J.F.M programme to solve ecological conflicts arising out from socio-economic changes, ‘technological intensification ‘ and changing consumption pattern” which may in long term weak the very basis of J.F.M. therefore there is an urgent need to evolve conflict resolution mechanism to make a balance in between competing goals and contesting interest to strengthen J.F.M programme.

Chetan kumar, TERI, Delhi, India in his paper on “Institution reforms in J.F.M. reflecting on experience of Haryana shivaliks” examined the case of J.F.M programme in Haryana, at first he carefully reviewed the institutional evolution of J.F.M in India from a historical perspective and thereby from the case study in Haryana he concluded that the mere adoption of J.F.M programme did not guarantee the implementation of new participatory form of forest management in the field level. The major bottleneck to participatory management is the departmental rigidity (F.D) to its approach which paved the way for building an apathetic attitude of the people to the J.F.M programme and thereby the author emphasized the need to changes the role of bureaucracy to build up a cordial relation with the people and to make it a genuine participating framework for forest management.

2.3. Review of the Participatory Forest Management in North Bengal

However, a few literature is available regarding the participatory forest management in North Bengal which have been reviewed below

In his thought provoking book namely Participatory Forest Management and Democratic Decentralization in India: Focus on the Pioneer State (2004) Prof. De criticized the ‘Statist control regime’ that dominated the participatory forest management practices which undermined its participatory basis. While highlighting the West Bengal as carrying forward this type of participatory forest management programme he pointed out the unutilized stock of social capital due to sidelining of PRI institutions in the participatory development strategies which in turn impede the

process of protecting forest and environment as a whole. The author thereby suggested for revitalizing the Panchayat institutions and thus building a meaningful partnership with the JFMC's in order to achieve a viable basis for sustainability. (De, 2005)

Besides, a field study undertaken by B.G. Karlsson in Buxa Tiger Reserve during 1989-95 showed that the Ravas, indigenous community of the region, were left out completely from the decision making process and the Forest Department forced them to take part in the scheme without which they would have been thrown out from their villages by the Department. He found that both FPC's and EDC's were lacking popular support and community involvement and for villagers the JFM was like any other scheme imposed on them by the Government (Karlsson, 1997:159-164)

In a case study undertaken by Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal on firewood collection and migration in 2000 in North-West Bengal it was found that the JFM efforts in North West Bengal was disappointing in contrast to the excellent quantitative and qualitative performance of JFM in the southern parts of the State. The Forest Protection Committees (FPCs) formed in the area are the result of unilateral efforts of the Forest Department, with the local population or the so-called FPC members, being ignorant of the spirit and purpose of JFM. (FAO, 2001)

In a separate study by an NGO, CREATE on JFM in North Bengal revealed that the success of monitoring activities by communities depends on achieving a balance between sacrificial and rewarding activities (such as the people having some control over harvesting and sale of forest produce) and such a balance was absent in the present condition. The Study therefore concluded: 'sustainability of JFM hinges upon an agreement among the powers that be in acceding to their long standing demand of the forest dependent people to be armed with legal backing to harvest and sell forest products'. (Chakraborty *et al*, 2003)

In addition a comprehensive field study on JFM in North Bengal conducted by a Siliguri based NGO in 2000 showed that after being protection of forests for a continuous period of 5 years in case of FPC and 1 year in case of EDC (minimum years for being eligible for usufruct sharing or revenue sharing as stipulated by the JFM resolution, 1999 and EDC Resolution, 1996) only 18.75% of the committees under study were benefited from revenue and usufruct sharing and more than 56% committees had not even bank account. Moreover more than 50 and 60 percent of total forest and forest fringe mouzas in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling district remained outside of JFM and among approximately 300,000+ households in those mouzas only 50,000+ households (a meagre 19%) joined the Committees. The Study observed the extent of participation of the members of FPCs and EDCs were not wide, a general lack of awareness about JFM concept and registration process prevailed among the members. Further, the irregular election of JFM committees, involvement of the Committee members in illegal extraction of timber and commercial operation, absence of control of the member over NTFP trading and little interest of Panchayat members to involve in the process undermined the very essence of the Joint Forest Management in the region. This clearly showed the extent of economic empowerment of the communities through JFM. The study showed that how bureaucratic apathy, absence of marketing mechanism, unplanned support activities and unwillingness to relinquish any power to the communities contributed largely to the failure of JFM and Eco-Development Programmes in the region. (Ghosh, 2000)

2.4. Review of Concepts of Power and Empowerment

In a nutshell the very concept of empowerment has been conceived in the dominant paradigm of development as a multi-dimensional social process that helps people to gain control over their own lives. (Page and Czuba, 1999) However, there are contending perspectives on empowerment which differs considerably to each other regarding the way peoples can exercise their control over the process of development. One of the leading perspectives as represented by the World Bank

viewed empowerment as 'the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process are actions which both build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets.⁴ Accordingly, the four key elements of empowerment are 1) access to information 2) inclusion and participation, 3) Accountability and 4) local organization capacity. The other perspective defined empowerment as the 'opportunity and means to effectively participate and share authority' (Bastian, Fruchter, Gittel, Grear and Haskins, cited in Simon, 1987:382) This process is characterized by delegating legal power or official authority which is seldom linked up with the ownership question. In the context of Joint Forest Management (JFM), the policy and practice of SFM inclined largely towards the World Bank model of empowerment following capacity building initiatives through participation the communities in the forest management. However in praxis a little attention was paid to delegate the legal or official authority to the forest communities while ignoring the ownership question of them over forest resources. In spite of that the JFM programme provides impetus to community participation in forest management through a decentralized approach aiming at financial and administrative empowerment of local communities for managing the forest resources where empowerment has been considered at three levels of active participation or patrolling to protect forests, participation in decision making for micro-planning at the village level and usufruct sharing from net sale proceeds of the forest departments to improve financial capacities of the communities. The key to this process of empowerment is participation at the micro-level under institutional arrangements of VFCs/FPCs or EDCs as specified by the concerned state forest departments to ensure sustainable use of the nation's forests to meet local needs together with the achievement of broader environmental goals. (Poffenberger & McGean, 1996). This particular notion of empowerment as practised and followed by the F.D in the programme of JFM contains the following assumptions:

- Firstly, this concept of empowerment views power as ability to access and control over the resources. Thus it conceptualizes power from the 'ability' perspective.
- Secondly, it considers a particular form of power i.e. co-operative power which assumes that power flow occurs only in the same direction, which results in co-operation among the actors.
- Thirdly, it relies on de-concentration or diffusion of power without which the process of empowerment can not be possible.
- Fourthly, According to this paradigm empowerment occurs only through a hierarchical relationship whereas the authority delegates its power to the lower level.
- Finally this concept of empowerment assumes that the people are virtually powerless to carryout a project successfully.

In short, this particular idea of empowerment advocates for granting power to the communities in order to abolish social economic, cultural and psychological barriers of the communities and converts them from being "passive recipients of government programmes to "active participants and managers of their own affairs". It requires the full participation of people in the formulation and implementation of decisions determining the function and well being of the communities. In the forest sector, participatory management calls for a re-orientation of the hierarchical control and regulation oriented structure of state forest management where Forest Departments would play a supportive role, encourage community initiatives and share management responsibility with those very people. But this overall perspective of empowerment employed by the GoI in JFM in particular and in the process of development in general received harsh criticism from different quarters as it derecognizes the process of empowerment through an appropriate dialogical form of education to bring about 'concretization' and through this the transformation of the self to make peoples free from all forms of oppression. (Harriss, 2007:2717) It

has been criticized for putting excessive emphasis on formal institutional arrangements involving 'an external upper level agency to grant power rather than people below seizing it in the course of struggle'. (Mohanty, 1995:1436) The limitation of this process has been exposed further as it undermines the radical and perceptible redistribution of power, especially in the context of Indian society divided into classes, communities and gender, through the expansion of the civil, political and social rights of citizenship. (Beteille, 1999) Finally, this process of empowerment through the institutionalization of participation in the state initiated process also diverts attention from the people's movement challenging the dominant paradigm of development and instead of providing a challenge to the existing power structure; the restricted participation actually paves the way for a legal and suitable medium for enhanced domination of the existing elites. (Narayanan: 2003:2486)

Thus empowerment paradigm as practiced under the participatory forest management used to promote a partisan view of power where empowerment was seen as an intended consequence of two faced intervention of decentralizing control and capacity building within the development process. The one sidedness of the concept proves the inability to grab the whole gamut of shaping, sharing, distribution and exercising of it in the field situation. Therefore to judge empowerment process the study concerning implication of power in its wider dimension is imperative. There exists a vast body of literature showing different dimension of power from different perspectives. Some of them are reviewed below

The contemporary well known debate on power regarding its conceptualization started with the publication of the famous articles "Two Faces of Power" by P. Bacharach and M. Baratz (1962) in the American political Science review and the "Decisions and Non Decision: An Analytical Framework in the same journal in 1963, where they severely criticized the pluralist's 'one dimensional view' of power as given by Robert Dahl, who in his "The concept of Power' (1957)

(Behavioural Science, 2:201-215, later on published in his 'Modern Political Analysis') visualized power by the most often cited definition as '(individual) A has power over (individual) B to the extent that A can get B to do something which B would not otherwise do'. Barry Barnes in his article 'Power' published in Richard Bellamy edited "Theories and concepts of politics, An Introduction (1993) argued that Dahl's definition represented a specific view of power which is conceived as an attribute of individuals" securing compliance and can be understood in terms of its effects. In response to this view Bachrach and Baratz argued that Dahl's conception of power was promoting merely an 'one dimensional' view of power as it confined the scope of exercising it (power) only in case of decision making and observable behavior of individual actor. Against this they assumed that power could be exercised in case of preventing one self by the other from doing something. They claimed that power has two faces. The first face has already been considered by pluralists, according to which 'power is totally embodied and manifested in "concrete decisions" or in activity learning directly upon their making'. The other face of power could be understood by considering decisions that were not made as it could be inferred indirectly or covertly. Therefore to understand the exercise of power in a given political relationship more fully one should examine both decision-making and non-decision making. This non-decision making aspect is important because prevailing political values and procedures limit decision-making and mobilize bias in favor of some groups as opposed to others. However these two faces of power advanced specific notion of power whereas self defined interests and conflict of individual agents is necessary for a power relationship.

Steven Lukes in his Power: A Radical view (1974) criticized this two dimensional liberal view of power as inadequate for its methodological individualist position as well as its failure to recognize the potential issues and latent conflicts of interests within the political process. Contrary to the first two faces of power Lukes argued that power might be exercised under a situation where one individual is

willingly doing something according to the desire of the other. Apparently it seems that there is no conflict of interests but Lukes argued that there may be a latent conflict of interests if the willingness of the individual led oneself against his objective real interests which can not be self defined but determined by the 'socially structured and 'culturally patterned' behavior of groups and practices of institutions. Therefore according to Lukes power may be a means of shaping perceptions and preferences of others as against their objective real interest.

Lukes' three-dimensional view of power has come under sharp attack from several dimensions. As Terence Bell in his *Transforming Political Discourse* (1988) pointed out that some critics argued that Lukes understood power in negative terms where he equated 'exercising power' with 'causing harm' and thereby discarded the possibility of exercising power through "rational persuasion and even in beneficial or benevolent ways". Other critics argued in favor of Lukes by admitting the 'concept of objective interests' and its importance in the discourse of power. The another group of critics as mentioned by Terence Ball, viewed power as an 'essentially contested' concept and therefore argued that this 'three dimensional-view' can not be claimed itself as superior to other 'alternative conceptualizations'.

However Peter Digeser in his article *The Fourth Face of Power* (1992) argued that these three faces of power could not exhaust the extent of the debate in conceptualizing power. Hence he described Foucault's unique idea of power as 'the fourth face of power' because in the radical view given by Lukes power is understood not only to explain action but beliefs also. Foucauldian concept of power carries forwarded this movement by identifying the relationship between subjects and power. Contrary to other three faces in this fourth face, according to Digeser, subjects are understood as social constructions and not presupposed or biologically given, "In Foucault's conception, power has not been defined in opposition to freedom as happened in the liberal and radical explanation. Here 'power is coextensive with the social body'. (Foucault, 1980, quoted in Digeser). Power is

everywhere and provides the context of all kind of social practices. Therefore to Foucault each and every kind of relationship can be termed as power relationship. More interestingly to him (Foucault) power is not only everywhere but it is never “anybody’s hands”, individuals are merely the vehicles of power because it is conveyed through their practices and interactions. It is put into operation when we participate in discourse and norms (which governed the social context) and does not exist independently of those practices. Moreover power is not only the part of each and every interaction among individuals but by nature it is an productive element which “produces things, induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse” (Foucault, 1980 quoted by Digeser). In this production power is conveyed by acting upon specific intentions and goals and thereby it is both “intentional and non-subjective as claimed by Foucault. For its peculiar character there can not be any kind of “comprehensive or all encompassing” theory of power rather the form of power can be understood through specific practices and that’s why Foucault argued that it “comes from below” (quoted by Digeser from Foucault, 1980). Moreover, according to this conceptualization power is always accompanied by ‘resistance’. In forging a particular kind of subject, in imposing a particular form upon a human being, the exercise of power creates its own resistance. Resistance implies that individuals are not predestined to be rational, responsible and self disciplined as assumed under the three faces of power. Foucault wrote about histories of most visible form of resistance such as the mad, the sick, the criminal, and the abnormal. These histories’ revealed the disciplinary character of power that implies power in society can be creative as well as oppressive, disciplines can enable as well as oppress. Due to this character of power individuals are shaped, manipulated, restricted and oppressed by webs of power relations of which they understood little.

Thus the contemporary mainstream debate on power focuses on the changing faces of power starting from liberal pluralist position to post modernist viewpoint via radical perspective. This phenomenon of changing faces pointed out to

the legacy of changing perceptions on power. If we start with the beginning of the modernist paradigm we would find the same legacy. To start with Hobbes should be logical as he defined power systematically for the first time in history from a general outlook and then applied it to the specific context of his study in the realm of politics.

Hobbes defined power in its broadest and generalized sense as “the present means” of a man “to obtain some future apparent good”. He thought it as a natural attribute of a human agent such as extraordinary strength, good looks etc and then reduced to it as an instrumental asset acquired through those natural qualities like richness, reputation etc which makes a man ‘loved or feared’ by many people or even privileged himself against the other. In short he treated it as a means to reach a definite goal of obtaining some of the ‘apparent good in the future and thus made the concept as essentially teleological and temporal. While mentioning its nature he described it (power) as an ever-increasing phenomenon like fame, which ‘increases as it is produced’. Through this definition Hobbes made the exercising of power as a conscious activity of a human agent because without any idea of ‘goods’ power exertion is simply impossible by an agent. Moreover the concept became a relative and dependent one as the idea of ‘goods’ used to vary from man to man. (Hobbes: 1962)

Unlike Hobbes, Locke provided a ‘two fold’ concept of power from his general understanding of human nature. He perceived it as “the ability to make a change and the ability to be changed”. One he called active power derived from active form of action and the other, passive power denoting the passive form of action. From this dualist viewpoint he, for the first time, described the power as a relational concept. This new conceptualization significantly added a new dimension in understanding the power flow. Whereas in Hobbes power flows are unidirectional in case of Locke the flow must be reciprocal in nature i.e. it used to flow from both the ends, one who is exercising the power and over whom it is being exercised. Thus for Locke both forms of power co-exist in actual happenings i.e. one is the condition of existence of

the other. He identified power with certain actions that brought about changes in the present state of the phenomena and unlike Hobbesian means he conceived power as a functional attributive. Thus he provided a wider conceptualization of power. (Locke: 2004)

Like Hobbes and Locke, Rousseau did not make any systematic expositions of the concept of power rather his usage of the notion can be characterized full with ambiguity. From his apparently inconsistent putting of the word as well as diversified application of it in the different contexts and above all the idealistic logic in his arguments made it extremely difficult for oneself to formulate any general understanding of the very concept. From his texts namely “Emile” and “The Social Contract” where he dealt majorly with the concept, one can get impression that there are many concepts of power in Rousseau where exists a constant dilemma of dilution of the one version by the other. Amidst this confusing and controversial footing it is quite impossible to form any general argument on power by means of simple deduction. Nevertheless from his different usage we can extract at best the essence of the concept to search out the common thread in order to reach the explicable singularity of power as maintained by Rousseau.

Like Hobbes and Locke Rousseau did not conceptualize power as qualitative attribute but he conceived it as a relative disposition that can be ascribed to those primordial qualities essentially possessed by the divine entity, animate being as well as the body politic. This disposition unfolds itself as casual phenomena constituting the sufficient condition behind any specific operation. For example while talking about the relationship between man and nature he asserted that nature “gives him (man) only such desires as are necessary for self preservation and such power as are sufficient for their satisfaction” (Rousseau,1961:44). To him every free action of an individual is produced by the concurrence of the two causes, one is will ‘which determines the act’ and the other is the power ‘which executes it’ (Rousseau, 1938:49). Though he excluded the will as form of power but in another context

regarding the description of 'the human quality of free agency' in order to obey or resist the command of the nature in opposition to the brute he considered human will as power which is 'purely spiritual and wholly inexplicable by the laws of mechanism'(Rousseau, 1938:184). The reason behind that is the will here is not only determinants of the action but constitute the sufficient condition behind the operation of obeying or resisting the command of nature. Again when he was talking about body politic he divided sovereignty into two components one is sovereign power the other is General will. Here he treated General will as moral phenomena which used to direct the sovereign power to promote the common good (Rousseau, 1938:253). Regarding Sovereign power he argued that it is 'nothing less than the exercise of the General Will' and a 'compelling force, in order to move and dispose each part as may be most advantageous to the whole' (Rousseau, 1938:22 & 26). In case of identifying motive power behind the guidance of one's behavior or action he advanced that for God it is will or animal it is instinct for human being it is conscience and for the body politic it is the General Will. It should be worthy to mention here that despite the presence of instinct and will he put the conscience for human being as motive power because only it constitutes the sufficient condition as a guide to action of the human behavior whereas the other two qualities i.e. instinct and will merely provide the necessary condition behind this particular action. Not only human being in other cases (God, animal and body) also the principle behind the identification of power remained the same.

From these above examples it can be assumed that the power, according to Rousseau is a dispositional property which refers to the sufficient condition for occurrence of any action. In other words any quality may take the form of power only when it fulfills the criteria of being casual phenomena by denoting the sufficient condition for any specific operation. Naturally any quality, which is devoid of that particular dispositional property, may be treated merely as an attribute. Now ontologically this kind of disposition is purely relative in its orientation at least in the

two senses. For the first it is due to its conceptuality which we found in the above example and secondly for its transmissibility. For Rousseau power can be transmitted from one entity to the other as he mentioned in the social Contract while talking about the inalienability of the Sovereign Power that the power of the body politic can be transmitted but the will can not. Therefore it can be said that Rousseau conceived power as a relative disposition.

Hence, this legacy of changing dimensions of power within the Contractualist tradition was further carried forward by the utilitarian, Marxists, critical theorists and the feminists. In each and every bit of unfolding history of political literature one may discover new faces of power, which unequivocally made it (power) a multifaceted phenomena. Without apprehending this multi-dimensionality inheres in the concept it would be quite difficult to trace out the historical root of the empowerment concept as well as understanding its (empowerment) procedural and substantive aspects in a concrete field situation.

2.5. Review of the Developmental and Social Movement Theories

Situating empowerment and sustainable development theoretically requires us first to look at development theories generally. The post-war great triad of development theories, namely, modernization theory, dependency theory and world system theories, consists today of several low and middle range theories like Global Commodity Chains theory, post-structural/postmodern turn in development theory, new comparative international political economy, institutional theories of development, feminism and gender studies and the like. These suffer from a dilemma of linking up the fact of historically evolved global capitalist economy and struggles among social forces with pronounced political contents (Robinson, 2000). The dilemma may stem from their lack of engagement with the questions concerning historical processes of change. These seem to be concerned only with developmental problems and issues as things and preoccupied with technical and managerial

aspects of development. These are over conscious of intentional and negligent of *immanent* development (Hickey and Mohan, 2005). Sustainable management as part of this type of development discourse thus suffers from *ahistorical* and *apolitical* orientation. These are influenced in a significant manner by the neo-liberal perspective on development that initially tried to replace both market and entrepreneur by State and Experts respectively and tried subsequently again to provide correctives, qua Post-Washington consensus, by emphasis on human development and so on. Situating empowerment and sustainable development therefore requires one to relate it to history and politics, intentions and structures, subjectivity and objectivity. The existing development scenario offers a domain that is overtly political. The entrenched powers seek to condition the nature and extent of empowerment and sustainable development from the above and there is a continuous attempt from below to enhance empowerment and sustainability. If we imagine people to have needs and capacities with which they face the constraints of life they must be seen as continuously deciding strategically where to change and how and with what instruments as they have also to live their lives. We must situate empowerment and sustainability in that very process.

A look from *ahistorical* and *apolitical theories* of development to theories of social movement shows remarkable consistency. Initially theories of social movement were strongly influenced by crowd psychology and were generally seen as irrational outcomes conditioned by subjectivity and at a later date, as outcome of reaction to social marginality. Later, thanks to Rational Choice Theory these were started to be seen as rational actions and popularly conceived within Resource Mobilization Theory (Crossly, 2002). A further development in this regard was represented by the Political Process Approach that focused on the interaction between the political processes within the political system and the social movements (Jaspers, 1997). In recent times the discourse on social movements is animated by New Social Movement formulations that try to focus on the nature of political

conflict somewhat differently. Habermas (1987) for instance sees NSMs as a response to the colonization of life world and tries to create a space for conventional social movements within the discourse of NSMs. In a different vein NSMs have been shown to be one of the manifestations of a tendency toward global civil society in which cooperation around common concerns seems to be the driving force amidst conflicts spawned by forces of globalization. Nevertheless the debates around NSMs have not produced commensurate theoretical insights (Calhoun, 1993) for a theoretical effort that seeks to be concerned with political and historical processes of empowerment and sustainable development. Such an orientation must see social movements as continuous and developing as both from the top and from the below, struggling to establish and contest respectively hegemony and as related in a fundamental way to the processes of sustainable management and empowerment. Social movements seen in this way can be consistent with concern for a political and historical approach to social development in general and sustainable management in particular. Development when seen as inherently conflicting and political implies that developmental problems like sustainability and empowerment are not to be seen as 'things' the distribution of which can be managed by experts or scientists but aspects of developments of needs and capacities of human being, aspects of interaction of active subjects with changing objective reality in which both cooperation and resistance around particular context are connected by the dynamics of praxis.

3. Research gap and Research Questions

From the above it is quite clear that Joint Forest Management has been attracting lot of attention from scholars and both descriptive and analytical works are present in abundance. Several works have been produced in the area of sustainable development and only a few on natural resource governance but they do not link up with studies on social movements. Moreover social movements as an area has been attracting lot of attention but systematic works on the narrow specialized area of

forest based movement is very rare in general and particularly in India. It is necessary to understand the linkage between forests based social movement and participatory forest management practices. Moreover, there has not been any research linking both cooperation around forest management practices and resistances to them from the perspective of power. This is quite strange in the sense that empowerment is said to be the purpose of both cooperative framework and of resistance. We need to focus more on power before we debate on the nature, extent and means of empowerment as the core concept of power is contestable, a fact shown by our merely illustrative list of literature on the concept of power. Our literature review also shows absolute lack of any field based study of forest based social movement and its relationship with practices of participatory forest management in North Bengal region where all the elements of cooperation and resistance around natural resource governance can be found. Keeping the gap in mind the following research questions have been selected to undertake the present study.

- Q.1 How does one conceptualize power to understand and measure empowerment in relation to participatory forest management?**
- Q.2 How do empowerment and sustainable forest management in particular and natural resource governance in general relate to each other in field situation?**
- Q.3 How to understand popular cooperation and resistance within the terms of empowerment as objectives of participatory forest management in India?**

4.1. Theory of Praxis

Admittedly, an approach like this can derive resources from the Marxist theory of Praxis. The present crisis of development and environment has increasingly been regarded as the problem of praxis. The policy delinked from praxis proves to be absurd in providing any material solution. It has been realized that praxis has its own

logic as well as consequences, which should not be underestimated in structural planning laid down in advance. In this context, conceptualization of praxis seems inevitable. Modern discourses assume its transitive character by narrowing down its significance. Marx's concept of praxis reveals newer scope to be engaged with it. One is aware that the notion of praxis was developed by Marx as an ontological category to overcome the dualism of subject and object. What is often overlooked is that praxis also is the substance as history of development. As Marx observed, some basic needs must be fulfilled in order to live and the capacities are needed to fulfill those needs. However, needs and capacities are not opposed as such but are mediated through human praxis. Through labor, capacities for need fulfillments are developed and thus capacities become needs themselves. As he observed:

...the first premise of all human existence and therefore, of all history, the premise, namely, that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to make history.....the satisfaction of the first need (the action of satisfying, and the instrument of satisfaction which has been acquired) leads to new needs; and this production of new needs is the first historical act.

(Marx, 1964:39)

Needs and capacities are thus dialectically related. Needs are dynamic so are capacities. Empowerment seen in this way is both objective and subjective, a relationship of both needs and capacities and like the process of immanent social development a product of struggle. While the immanent and intentional developments are all inseparable parts of praxis and human way of making history, the immanent development arrays the specifics of social movements into movement from the top and movement from the below , into powerful and powerless and struggle for empowerment through cooperation and resistance as capital gets more and more organized . The new found attraction for people's participatory structures and common property resources within capitalist mode of production is relevant to

social movement from the above and connected with immanent nature of development. As Marx observed:

...as soon as the capitalist mode of production stands on its own feet , then further socialization of labour and further transformation of land and other means of into socially exploited and therefore, common means of production ,as well as the further expropriation of private proprietors , takes a new form....This expropriation is accompanied by the action of immanent laws of capitalist production itself , by the centralization of capital ...the transformation of the instruments of labour into instruments of labour only usable in commonthe entanglement of all peoples into the net of world market....

(Marx, 1936)

In the light of the above empowerment flows out of praxis which engenders new needs and new capacities for satisfying those needs which in turn generate further needs. Such praxis is of course not an outcome of rational calculation by individuals but a product of social being experiencing through mediation of subjective awareness and objective conditions of life. Evidently the experience contains many semiotic and cultural aspects. The specific forms of social organization are both constituted by and constitutive of such cultural and semiotic mediation (through tools and signs for example). These have to be learned for deployment of needs and capacities under the conditions of social nature of production. Within those condition empowerment is expressed through cooperation and resistance, through learning and changing, through conscious reflection and social actions for deployment of needs and capacities. There is of course a conflict between entrenched dominant structure of needs and capacities that is reflected in the movement from the above and 'empowerment from without' and that strives to counteract those through social movement from below or 'empowerment within'

through complex interplay of cooperation and resistance. Sustainability is conditioned by the nature of interaction between these two kinds of needs and capacities and in the long run its positive realization is coextensive with people's empowerment.

The connection between development as understood above and sustainability has been the central stuff of Marxist ecology. Contemporary Green Theory asserts the ontological and material priority of the natural world and a part of it is critical of Marxist view of history as essentially anthropocentric. Nevertheless the dialectical ecological element in Marx is more often missed than not. Marx's denial of any universal purpose before history and his notions of man's 'natural metabolism' and the concept of 'metabolic rift' under capitalist production shows time and again the weakness of contemporary Green theory. (Foster, 2000), its absence of dialectical understanding. Sustainability is not a goal but a condition of mediation of nature and history, as Marx tried to point out while raising objections to Feuerbach and Bruno Bauer.

Now a days 'praxis' has been regarded as a '*transitive* concept' both in the developmental and the environmental discourses while criticizing overestimation of structural arrangements to get rid out of the problems. The concept of *transitivity* attempts to incorporate the logic of praxis in the planning process by opposing the Enlightenment philosophy as well as social evolutionism where "history unfolds its potentialities in an immanent and natural process of *intransitive* character'. (Linkenbach, 2007, 104) As a perspective, it stresses upon the activeness of human agency in shaping up the course of history. However, this activeness cannot be exhausted in mere *transitivity* but on the contrary; it affirms the *transcending* character of the concept of praxis as propounded by Karl Marx. As a concept, the limitations of *transitiveness* have manifested in its idealistic expression of intentionality where primacy has been assigned to subjectivity over and above the objective mode of being of subjects. It cannot make difference between activity

under hegemonic compulsion and free conscious activity born out of historical necessity. It cannot explain the transgressing nature of human being against constraints within and without. Now, to uncover the 'veil of ignorance' embedded in *transitiveness* understanding of praxis as *transcendence* is crucial to comprehend as well as to guide human action in its right course for shaping the future.

4.2. Praxis in Marx

The discourse on Marx's concept of praxis used to be revolving around mostly within two popular versions. One of the version imbued with Petrovic's proclamation of Marx's specific usage of 'praxis' as practice equates praxis with practice (Petrovic, 2000, 437-438) where both the terms 'praxis' and 'practice' have often been used interchangeably. Another version is inspired by Labriola's understanding of praxis as the unity of theory and practice where a cyclical movement of theory and practice will go on in a continuous pace (Nemeth, 1980, 24). The inherent problem that lies within those interpretations is that the former confines human activity to mere expression of specific form and the latter fails to draw a distinction between the product and the process. To Marx, the division of labor, indeed, results into differentiation between the theoretical and the practical forms of human activity. The theoretical form is associated with the production of consciousness and the practical form refers to the applied part of human activity. Nevertheless, the significance of human activity cannot be exhausted only by understanding its formal expression. Realization of essence and its dialectical relationship with forms is inevitable to grasp the meaning of praxis in its comprehensive realization of human activity as laid down by him.

It is true that Marx does not provide any systematic exposition of the notion of praxis like the theory of surplus value or the theory of capital etc. However, careful reading of Marx would reveal two complementary usages of the term, which leaves opportunity behind the construction of a perspective on praxis while keeping

the spirit intact with his dialectical penetration to human activity. It is seen from the review of his works that he often uses the term praxis as generic category of human activity or action in opposition to non-praxis or passive mode of being. It is generic in the sense that he uses it to denote any kind of activity of significance irrespective of its forms and manifestations spanning across his early to later phase of writings. As for example, in his note to doctoral dissertation when he advances that 'The practice (praxis) of philosophy ...is itself theoretical.' (Bender ed. 1972, 15) Here he perceives praxis as man's theoretical activity but on the contrary, in *Capital*, he put forward that 'One of their first consequences was that in practice (praxis) the working day of the adult males in factories became subject to the same limitations,'. (Marx, 1936, 310) he understands praxis as man's practical activity. Again, in his different works he uses the term to refer a concrete sphere of activity, such as in 'The German ideology', he mentions about 'bourgeois praxis' and in the Communist Manifesto about 'political praxis' etc. Thus, the word praxis cannot be limited to any specific form or manifestation of human activity in Marx though some authors tried to render a specific meaning to the word by equating with the term 'practice'. But, Marx uses a German word *praktisch* corresponding to the English word 'practice' and interestingly from *EPM* via *German Ideology* to *Capital* one can find the co-existence of both the words 'praxis' and 'praktisch' even in the same paragraph in which 'praktisch' denotes always the practical or applied part of human activity in juxtaposition to theory. One of the examples of his distinctive usages of the terms praxis and *praktisch* can be drawn from the *EPM* where he argues that 'The extent to which the solution of theoretical riddles is the task of practice (praxis) and effected through practice (*praktisch*), the extent to which true practice (praxis) is the condition of a real and positive theory,...'. (Marx, 1993, 116) However, as generic category the term praxis in Marx acquires its specific meaning in specific context by fulfilling certain general criteria of being active as against of being passive. In its active mode of being, human activity is quite different from passive mode of being. Active mode assumes the role of human agency where it is acting upon the structure

or conditions of life. On the other, in case of passive mode of being, agency is being usurped due to illusion or compulsion by the structure, which results in loss of transitiveness of human activity. Though Marx is not explicit about that passive mode of human activity or non-praxis in opposition to praxis but undoubtedly he is aware about the fact, as it has implicitly been expressed in his dealing with 'religious estrangement in "Contribution to Hegel's Philosophy of Right'. He maintains religion as 'inverted consciousnesses and continues to say that 'The criticism of religion disillusion man so that he will think, act and fashion his reality as a man who has lost his illusions and regained his reason; so that he will revolve about himself as his own true sun. Religion is only the illusory sun about which man resolves so long as he does not revolve about himself.' (Bender, 1972, 46) Thus religious activity can't be treated as praxis as the human agency has lost its activeness due to illusory consciousness and hence, instead of 'doer' man becomes passive receiver of the blessings from God and realizing himself in the 'other world'. Therefore, the correct understanding of praxis as generic connotation in Marx, as pointed out by Adolfo Sanchez Vazquez is that 'All praxis is activity, but all activity is not praxis' (Cited in Jun. 2006, 135).

In this context of transitiveness of human activity, Marx seems to be inspired by Aristotelian legacy of viewing praxis as 'action' oriented human activity leading to the distinction between praxis and non-praxis though unlike Aristotle he includes theoretical activity within the radius of praxis. However, despite the continuity, Marx registers a fundamental break with that legacy by investigating the generic essence of human activity and its relation to specific forms. The break is inevitable because of the limitations contained in the transitive character of praxis. If praxis can be conceived of merely as transitive, the problem of opposing rationality in action embedded in contradictory praxis between bourgeoisie, prolétariat will remain unsolved, and the revolutionary praxis will be devoid of any significance. Therefore, Marx is convinced that despite having transitiveness human praxis may not

represent always the true reality of things due to alienated positing of it under conditions of fetishtic forms of objectivity. Marx therefore makes another distinction, which he mentions in the *EPM*. The phrase 'true praxis' therein implies the existence of false praxis. The understanding of true praxis leads Marx to conceptualize praxis as transcendence by conceiving of the generic essence of human activity and its dialectical conformity with the specific forms such as theory and practice where absence of that conformity results the false notion of praxis. The following section deals with that perspective on 'true praxis'.

Marx, in the First Thesis on Feuerbach, conceptualizes praxis as 'sensuous human activity' representing the generic essence of human action. It is generic because that essence of human activity as characterized by 'human' and 'sensuous' mode of being can be comprehended only in relation to genus. In his understanding of humanness, he holds that despite his individuality, man enjoys his real existence as social being and 'as a totality of human manifestation of life.' (Marx, 1993, 100) He further argues while criticizing Feuerbach that human essence is nothing else but 'the ensemble of the social relations' (Marx, 1964, 646) Thus, to him the manifestation of humanness has been affirmed only in both the awareness and actualization of species character which presupposes the identity between the 'thinking' and 'being' despite their distinctive existence. In Marx's word, 'In his consciousness of species man confirms his real social life and simply repeats his real existence in thought, just as conversely the being of the species confirms itself in species consciousness and exists for itself in its generality as a thinking being.' (Marx, 1993, 99-100) Regarding 'sensuousness' Marx observes two kinds of sensuousness while dealing with natural science as 'science of man in the *EPM* i.e. 'sensuous consciousness' and 'sensuous need' where senses affirm themselves 'as essential powers of man' by relating themselves to the thing or object of senses. Through these human senses, the process of objectification of human essence takes place in general. Nevertheless, under private property regime, the senses, in their

estrangement condition, have been reduced to the 'crude practical need' and become 'restricted senses' by losing the quality of humanness. Therefore, 'sensuous human activity' refers to that essential property of activity, which affirms human senses of species consciousness in order to recognize the human needs of species being. However, this essence of human activity cannot be actualized in reality until and unless it has been conformed by the specific forms of activity as the manifestation of essence always takes place through specific forms and on the other, specific forms can realize its fullest expression or development only by conforming to the generic essence. Thus, the dialectic of essence and form shows that the unity between the two where each conforms the other and constitutes the whole gamut of human activity. Here, theoretical form affirms the 'sensuous consciousness' of species character as in Marx's realization, 'The activity of my general consciousness, as an activity, is therefore also my theoretical existence as a social being' (Ibid, 99); and practical form recognizes 'sensuous needs' of *species being*. Therefore, praxis in Marx refers to that kind of activity where the contradiction between forms and essence disappear along with the contradiction within forms and consequently human activity acquires the transcending character by going beyond the bondage of 'alien powers' which governs their life process in general. The transformation of subject and object coincides leading to the 'conscious mastery' over those powers and human activity becomes 'free, conscious and life activity' aiming at humanization of the world where human being will no longer lose themselves in their objects as it happens under alienation. In this context, Marx conceives of revolutionary praxis as transcendence manifests in the form of 'practical-critical' activity, which goes beyond the mere unity between the two but understands that unity as by product of praxis representing dialectical conformity between essence and form. In this way, the perspective of praxis, which traditionally refers to the transitivity of human activity, acquires higher status in the hands of Marx by indicating transcending capacity of human activity in their specific forms of manifestations. The praxis becomes an objective and historical category. It is

objective because it produces and transforms material life in order to realize the 'objective essence' of human being. It is historical because through that production and transformation of material life men make their own history.

With this special understanding of praxis as transcendence, from the standpoint of dialectic between the generic essence and the specific forms, Marx overcomes the duality of specific forms, theory and practice, which prevail in the Aristotelian legacy of differentiation between theory and praxis. He, on the contrary, conceives of the unity between specific forms or between theory and practice not as mere spatial co-existence of the two but as the consequence of the conformity between essence and forms. In this conformity, both practical and theoretical forms of activity can be considered as praxis depending upon their capacity to affirm the generic essence. Moreover, if one of the forms translates itself into praxis then it becomes the basis for developing the other form. This is obvious in his argument when he says in the *Thesis on Feuerbach* that 'All social life is essentially practical (praktisch). All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in practice (praxis) and comprehension of this practice (praxis). (Marx, 1964, 647) Here, praktisch or practical form of activity becomes praxis as it conforms to the generic essence and thereby forms the basis of 'a real theory' by affirming it at par with that essence. In this regard one should look into Marx's differentiation between the two kinds of practical activity i.e. alienated labor and self activity where the later only conforms to the generic essence of 'human' and 'sensuousness' and therefore can be treated as praxis. Marx views labor as the negative form of 'self activity'. It is 'negative' or 'subordinate' because under the condition of 'estrangement' labor 'makes man's species life' merely 'a means to his physical existence.' (Ibid, 74) and thus individuals fail to realize their development through the confirmation of their real self. In opposition to that, he conceives of 'self-activity' (positive) as the confirmation of human essence through the comprehensive appropriation of the productive forces. This life activity constitutes the realm of development and

enjoyment of life and thus negates the antagonism between activity and enjoyment. However, in communism with the abolition of private property and consequent 'fixation of social activity' as is determined by division of labor the antithetical character between production of material life and 'self-confirmation' will disappear along with the antagonism between activity and enjoyment. It will happen due to the process of 'objectification of human essence' through the appropriation of human's 'comprehensive essence in a comprehensive manner'. In this stage, the 'self-activity' will lose its two hierarchical forms of manifestation i.e. negative as well as positive and will reach to a new higher stage. From this viewpoint Marx asserted that "Only at this stage does self-activity coincide with material life, which corresponds to the development of individuals into complete individuals and the casting-off all natural limitations. The transformation of labor into self-activity corresponds to the transformation of the earlier limited intercourse into the intercourse of individuals as such." (Marx and Engels, 1964, 84) Hence, it is 'self activity', which in its practical form manifests the generic essence of human activity and thereby producing corresponding forms of consciousness in which enjoyment as an mental attribute will no longer conflict with practice. On the other hand, despite its practical form of existence (practice) labor cannot be treated as praxis as it is devoid of the human essence. There is another side of the same coin also where theory exhibits its conformity with the generic essence and becomes praxis. Marx has expressed it in that classic statement, - "It is clear that the arm of criticism cannot replace the criticism of arms. Material force can only be overthrown by material force; but theory itself becomes a material force when it has seized the masses." Moreover, the theory will seize the masses only when "it fulfills the needs of the people." (Marx, 1975, 182)- It is evident in the argument that theory, while recognizing the human sensuous needs of the people by inculcating the essence, it has been transformed itself into material force by producing corresponding practical form of human activity. Therefore, each specific form of human activity may be of theory or practice can build the unity with the other form only by translating itself

into praxis and any kind of aberration in that process the unity becomes mere mechanical or abstract unity as the human activity loses its transcending character. In short, the duality of forms i.e. theory and practice can only be overcome by a dialectical process. The very process is marked by the transformation of specific forms into praxis by conforming themselves to the generic essence resulting actualization of transcending character of human activity. In this process, the leading form will invoke the supplementary form of activity in accordance with that essence in order to establish a promotional unity between them where human activity restores its holistic expression by making itself free from structural differentiation.

4.3. Dialectics of Praxis

Understanding the dialectics of praxis following Marx is to understand contradiction inherent in praxis. This contradiction refers to the contradiction between the forms of praxis i.e. theory and practice marked by both the dialectics of antagonism and unity between the two. For Marx, both the theoretical activity (theory) and the practical activity (practice) are derived from and determined by the material condition of life that includes already existing conditions as the product of history and conditions produced by the activities of human being referring to ongoing practices (Marx and Engels, 1964, 31). These material conditions of life are governed by the contradiction embedded in the objective structure of the society namely the contradiction between the productive forces and the production relation. This contradiction in the objective structure, however, results the contradiction within the material conditions of life leading to contradictory material existence of human being. Now as far as the material conditions of life is itself contradictory, the theory and the practice derived from that condition will no doubt be contradictory. Moreover, this contradiction between the theory and the practice generates further contradictions within theories and practices.

However, the material condition, which gives birth of the contradiction between the forms of praxis, is nothing but the division of labor, before that, as Marx put it, "the production of ideas, of conception, of consciousness is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life." (Marx and Engels, 1964, 37) The identity between the theory and the practice which has been broken down due to the primary development of the productive forces along with the consequent division of labor which creates the scope of antagonism between the two. Marx views it as "Division of labor becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labor appears. From this moment onwards consciousness can really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice...from now on consciousness in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of "pure theory", theology, philosophy, ethics, etc." (Marx and Engels, 1964, 43) The antagonism, as a byproduct of the division of labor, makes theory and practice mutually exclusive to each other. The very process of this exclusion used to be culminated in complete separation of the two and resulting alienation in both kind of practices. On the contrary, alienated activity also leads to the separation between them. Two fold alienation in human activity have been taken place where the theoretical activity (theory) becomes "illusory" or merely speculative while lost its relation to the material life and the practical activity (practice) becomes "abstract" while being divorced from 'true consciousness' or 'positive theory'. Marx views speculative philosophy as an example of theoretical alienation and shows labor as a form of alienated practice. The alienated activity becomes the fundamental characteristics of the ruling class as Marx perceives that "The division of labor...manifests itself also in the ruling class as the division of mental and material labor, so that inside this class one part appears as the thinkers of the class, ...while the others' attitude to these ideas and illusions is more passive and receptive, because they are in reality the active members of this class and have less time to make up illusions and ideas about themselves." (Marx and Engels, 1963, 61) These

alienated activities subvert all the possibility of 'true praxis' as they engage in conflict with each other due to not conformation to the 'human essence' and simultaneously derecognize the unity between the consciousness and action. This subversion of true praxis leads to the negation of the "species character" of the human being in their specific forms where human activity loses its transcending character and becomes mere reflection of "estranged life" which is governed by the 'things' and is being manifested in the private property and all forms of its expression. Thus human activity in its alienated form fails to realize the true essence of life while reproducing the existing structure of the society or 'inverted' material conditions of life and finally becomes regressive in character.

Besides this antagonism, there is another side of the same contradiction that represents the reciprocity between the theory and practice marked by a dialectical unity between them as Marx observes, "Thinking and being are thus certainly distinct, but at the same time they are in unity with each other." (Marx, 1993, 100) The material condition responsible behind this dialectical unity is nothing but the ontological status of human being as 'sensuous' and 'active' being which manifests itself in its species character informed by 'the actual physical nature' which make them distinct from the animals. Hence as an 'actual' and 'living species' "he treats himself as a universal and therefore a free being." (Marx, 1993,72) In addition, as far as the "development of human energy...is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis." (Marx, Capital Vol. III, Part VII) According to Marx this 'realm of necessity' at the societal level appears truly when in a historical epoch the productive forces in a given society become destructive forces under the existing relation of production and as member of the non-ruling class individuals have "to bear all the burdens of the society" resulting from that 'mischief' and as a consequence "from which emanates the consciousness of the necessity of a fundamental revolution". (Marx and Engels, 1964, 85) Hence, the unity of theoretical (consciousness) and practical

activity (means producing activity) becomes evident in the realm of necessity where forms of activity conform to the generic essence and individuals as species being find themselves in the class struggle as a member of the revolutionary class in order to overthrow the existing structure of the society which acts merely as 'fetters' in realizing the true essence of their life. This unity, however, produces the mutually promotional relationship between the two forms of praxis. There are two dimensions of this kind of promotion where theory is derived from the apprehension of reality and turns itself into practice and on the contrary, the practice, which is shaped up by the material reality or circumstances, produces theory and in turn is guided by that theory. Due to the very process it is not only practice which always promotes theory but simultaneously it is theory that promotes the practice also. The nature and the agent of promotion used to be depending upon the context where the unity is taking place between the two. It is due to this mutually promotional relationship between theory and practice "circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances" (Marx and Engels, 1964, 50). Because it is through practical activity or practice men make their circumstances and that circumstances in turn make men by affecting or changing his consciousness or theoretical bent of mind. This unity of theoretical and practical activity assumes the conformity between forms and essence and creates the possibility of true praxis where human activity acquires the transcending character and therefore starts transforming man and the material conditions of life aiming at 'conscious mastery' of 'alien powers'. In this context, Marx talks about revolutionary praxis, which he advances in the in the Third Thesis on Feuerbach. "The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself....The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice." (Marx, 1964, 646) To Marx, this revolutionary praxis symbolizes the unity of "practical-critical activity" for

changing, men and their circumstances aiming at total transformation in human life and its material conditions.

4.4. Praxis in History

Marxism has often been understood as “philosophy of praxis” which is nothing but the reduction of historical materialism merely into the affairs of human agency while underemphasizing the importance of structural contradictions in which human activity is being generated. This approach seems to ignore the dialectics between praxis and material conditions of life shaped up largely by the mode of production, which in turn is conditioned by the past. The dialectics is reflected in Marx when he expresses that, “Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.” (Marx, 1975, 96) The dialectics depicts that no form of praxis can be judged independently of the mode of material production of life in general in which each specific form of praxis has its origin and development and to which that praxis intends to transform. Marx uncovers the dialectical relationship between the two while he deals with capitalist mode of production.

Marx finds mode of production as the basis of history. He states that “This conception of history depends on our ability to expound the real process of production, starting out from the material production of life itself, and to comprehend the form of intercourse connected with this and created by this mode of production (i.e., civil society in its various stages), as the basis of all history;” (Marx and Engels, 1964, 49). This mode of production determines the material conditions of life as it “conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general”. (Marx, 1976, 3) However, to Marx, the ‘production of material life’ is conditioned by the dialectic of productive forces and production relation in a given society, which in turn results contradictory mode of transformation simultaneously. Therefore, the process of transformation cannot be disassociated

from the production process of material life and praxis cannot be isolated from its material conditions of life. Under capitalism, this contradictory mode of transformation through praxis refers to the fundamental distinction between capitalistic way of transformation and revolutionary way of transformation of the life and society. Capitalistic way of transformation through praxis is limited in mere modification of things, which implies the manipulation of life process both in its relation to society and nature in accordance with 'blind desire for profit'. The transformation process becomes 'subservient to capital'; human objects becomes alien power and ruling over man, man is being alienated from his product, from other man, from nature and from his 'species being'. The process leading to 'dehumanization of man' and tears down man's relationship with rest of the society by reducing him into isolated individual. Further, capitalism distorts the metabolic relationship between man and nature causes 'metabolic rift'. (Foster, 2000, 155)

Thus capitalist praxis transforms the material conditions of life by ignoring the 'essence' of man and their essential relationship with society and nature and hence becomes counterproductive as it is digging its own grave. However, to Marx, there is other simultaneous effect of capitalist transformation, which produces congenial material conditions leading to emergence of 'revolutionary praxis'. As Marx observes, 'As soon as this process of transformation has sufficiently decomposed the old society from top to bottom, as soon as the laborers are turned into proletarians, their means of labor into capital, as soon as the capitalist mode of production stands on its own feet, but with this too grows the revolt of the working-class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself.' (Marx, 1936, 836-37) Nevertheless, the formation of the proletariat as the revolutionary class under capitalism does not satisfy the sufficient condition for introducing revolutionary praxis because without a 'revolutionary ideology' the class becomes merely the 'class in itself'. On the contrary, with the emergence of "revolutionary ideology" the class put itself into the revolutionary praxis as

'practical-critical' activity and "becomes united, and constitutes itself as a class for itself." (Marx, 1976, 211) The revolutionary praxis is marked by its transformative capacity of the material conditions of life in its totality. However, the nature of revolutionary praxis cannot be grasped by understanding this transformation as mere manipulation or modification of things rather it can be comprehended only as transcendence. It is transcendence because the revolutionary transformation is characterized by the process of negation of negation where the proletariat as the agent of this transformation attempts to negate the capitalism in order to negate themselves along with all other classes to bring about a classless society i.e. communism. Historically the proletariat becomes the agent of transcendence under capitalism as its particular class interest coincides with the general interest of humanity. Marx views communism as 'positive transcendence' as 'it is the genuine resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species.' (Marx, 1993, 97) The process of transcendence through revolutionary transformation of the self and the circumstances can realize only by actualizing the role of the revolutionary class 'which revolts not only against separate conditions of society up till then, but against the very "production of life" till then,'. (Marx and Engels, 1964, 51) Therefore, the basic difference between praxis of bourgeoisie as false praxis and of proletariat as true praxis in shaping up the life process lies in the very fact that whereas every bit of capitalist transformation as modification is ended with the consequent triumph of 'alien powers' over man, the revolutionary transformation as transcendence on the other in its every bit of progress makes man free from the servitude of that powers and thus prepares history.

To conclude, it is to be argued that the concept of transitiveness brings forth illusion about true essence of human activity, which forgets that human civilization cannot glorify itself by reducing man into a doer but by asserting man as an active transformer of the self and society while going beyond the limit and gravitation of

material conditions. Essence of life cannot be exhausted in mere activeness but lies in creation of that life against the forces of death. Human agency cannot actualize itself only by expressing preferences or intentions but can do it by playing its historical role, which coincides with structural needs of transcendence. Therefore, adjustment with structural limitation as an activity often used to be projected as empowerment signifies in reality the incapacity of human agency; it is only through revolutionary struggle man casts that limitation aside leading to conscious mastery over those circumstances. Thus, the notion of transitivity never understands the subtle distinction between impotent activeness and awakened activeness and fails to capture the significance of praxis as an activity of transcendence. In opposition to transitivity, the transcending character of praxis overcomes the dualism between the logic of immanence and the intentionality as transcending activity cannot be separated from the material conditions of transcendence and its inevitability. It is to be remembered that Marx's specific configuration of the proletariat as the universal agent of transcendence may or may not be effective to catch all rhythmic expressions of life under constant flux but praxis as transcendence is still operative as potential force of change (Jha, 2010). It has been exhibited contextually in the localized forms of movement across nations, which finds its micro-agents as the bearer of the spirit of transcendence with the episodic coincidence of their particular interest with general interest. The formation of universal agency is yet to be undergone but humanity keeps its journey on to shape up its promising future on the shoulder of human activity, which is nothing but praxis.

In the field situation we therefore expect to have both cooperation among stakeholders and resistance to 'empowerment from without' as a part of wider social movement. The main research problem can be explained as a conflict between two kinds of movements or two kinds of empowerment. The relative success of empowerment from within may be related to positive realization of sustainability. Further, the cooperation between stakeholders would be of tactical nature, a way of

living with what is bare necessity, but also a way of developing new needs and capacities that is likely to be expressed in a overtly political manifestation. Participatory structures for natural resource governance thus are capable of both integration of needs and capacities of opposed kinds, for preservation of entrenched dominant structures of needs and capacities as well as for outgrowing that integration by a process of empowerment through social learning and experience , cooperation and resistance , a process of movement away from particular social organization to general social organization , from metabolic 'rift' to natural metabolism around cooperative production.

5.1. Reflections on Methodology

While the purpose of a research project often decides the methods and techniques of research and the so called research design, the terms like methods and research design are often confused with methodology which has a broader connotation and is connected with epistemological considerations. The purpose of the present research project can be understood from the questions stated above but some clarifying remarks are necessary here on methodology. Standard reference works on research methodology generally referred to three epistemological positions – objectivism, subjectivism and constructivism (Crotty, 1998). The first looks at objects, as real and the cognate methodology may be positivism. The second disregards objective reality and subjectivity of the researcher is considered as real. Its popular methodological examples include structuralism and hermeneutics. The above positions emanate from and reinforce dualist kinds of understanding. Traditionally historical materialism tried to break with this kind of dualism through its notion of praxis. In recent times constructivism has been trying to bridge objectivism and subjectivism through symbolic interactionism, discourse analysis and the like. However constructivism may or may not make use of dialectical logic, which we proposed to use in our methodology.

There is a possible source of confusion if we lean towards constructivist's methodological consideration. Commonly the methodological textbooks set an artificial opposition between quantitative and qualitative research and constructivist methodology is shown to be leading to qualitative research methods while survey research is connected easily with quantitative research and that in turn with positivist methodology. Qualitative research can always make use of quantitative categories in the use of qualitative techniques like participant observation, interview and PRA techniques. In the present project stress will be on qualitative research methods with an effort to quantify our observations in the light of theoretical framework. The later of course would be influenced by the epistemological as well as methodological considerations stated above.

However, the present study is heavily relied on the qualitative tools and techniques though to substantiate the understanding of the field it also makes use of quantitative method and categories as well. The study undertakes key informant interviews, focus groups and sample surveys on the basis of a triad i.e. the method of random, purposive and snowball sampling. For household survey the present work draws sample size from the universe of 5890 household in six forest divisions in the District. While assuming the normal response distribution as 50%, margin of error as 10% the sample size became 67. Therefore the study decided to undertake seventy household surveys in the selected seven forest villages from the four largest forest divisions in terms of number of villages and household. Out of seventy six forest villages in six forest divisions in the District of Jalpaiguri, the study has chosen seven forest villages for both 70 household surveys and seven focus group interviews along with some key informant interviews by taking two from each three largest forest divisions namely Jalpaiguri, B TR (West) and BTR (East) while taking one forest village from the fourth largest forest division of Coochbehar (Wildlife-III). The seven villages are chosen purposively keeping the progress of two aspects of participatory forest management and forest dwellers movement. Besides in order to get a clear picture

of an earlier movement what is found relevant for the research we conducted almost 100 key informant interviews across 15 forest villages including the selected seven on the basis of snowball sampling.

5.2. Gathering and Analyzing Data

Gathering data from the forest villages has been quite a learning experience for me. There have so many surprises and obstacles that I have had to face during the field works in those villages. The foremost problem has been the lack of communication facilities by both roadways and railways. All the forest villages except one where we went for field studies were situated at a considerable distance from highways or some kind of metalled roads. Except for the Panijhora Forest Village under the Buxa Tiger Reserve (BTR) West Forest Division the lowest and the highest distances of the forest villages from roadways were 1.5 kms and 6 kms respectively and the mean distance of the six villages from the nearest roadway is approximately 3.5 kms. Similarly the lowest and the highest distances of forest villages from nearby railway stations are 1.5 kms and 21 kms and the mean distance of the seven forest villages from the nearby railway station is approximately 13 kms. Naturally in the first phase I had covered the distance from the bus stop or railway station to a village on foot as there was no other mode of communication except the bicycle which only a few villagers could afford. Although in the later phase I had been privileged to hire a motor bike from an NGO worker to cover the BTR (West) and East Division the motorbike remained useless all along the field visits to cover two of the forest villages in the BTR (East) namely Lepchakha and Chunabhati both of which are situated in the Buxa hills. The average distance of the two hill forest villages from the foothills is 6 kilometers and there is still no mode communication from the foothills other than trekking. During my four visits in Lepchakha and two visits in Chunavati I faced extreme difficulty in trekking of more than 12 kms twice and more than 6 kms four times in those villages. However, in case of villages under Jalpaiguri Forest Division I took my own motorbike in the later phase which was approximately 100

kms away from my residence at Siliguri. But in case of Coochbehar Forest Division I had finished my field work on foot all along my field visits. The second problem what I had to encounter was to find out key informants in each of the villages. This proved to be very crucial for my field study as during my first visits in all those forest villages I had found that the villagers were looking at me suspiciously and would not answer my question properly and would rather talk in terms of “yes” or “no”. When I enquired later on about the matter I came to know that the villagers had looked at me as stranger and had thought that I was the representative of the Forest Department with harmful intention as I was asking questions about forest related matters. Despite the assistance from a Siliguri based NGO (NESPON) in introducing local villagers to me and the active cooperation of a local organization of movement (NFFPFW) I often found that my first set of key informants could not work properly and so I had to interact alone with my interviewees. Hence to solve the problem I had to make several field visits before my final focus group interview and household survey for choosing my final set of key informants and building rapport with them. The third difficulty I had to go through was the problem of language. I interviewed villagers belonging to different linguistic communities like Nepali, Jharkhandi Advasi, Rava, Mech and Bhutia. Though most of the Nepalees and Adivasis are more or less fluent in speaking and expressing their views in Bengali I faced problem in interviewing from the Ravas, Meches and Bhutias. It is true that Rava and Meches can speak Bengali but they can do it to some extent and in case of long answers or story telling they often use the proverb, terms, words of their own which I could not understand without the help of my key informants. The situation became extremely difficult in case of Bhutia community who could not speak and did not understand the Bengali and even most of the Bhutias I interviewed did not know even Hindi. In two Bhutia villages of Lepchakha and Chunabhati I had to hire local interpreters who knew both the languages of Bhutia and Bengali. The fourth hurdle what I had to overcome was the problems of staying for a couple of days on the spot. Except my targeted field visits in Jalpaiguri and BTR (West), I spent nights during most of the

field trips in those villages ranging from 2 days to 7 days at a stretch in each village. With my middle class background and habits I had to face difficulties particularly in terms of food, bath and toilet habits. Besides, during winter I had to carry extra blanket to the spot for night staying as the villagers are habituated with little warm clothes. Last but not the least was the set of difficulties arising out of natural reasons. During the entire rainy seasons the villages were virtually inaccessible and the visit of the outsiders into the forests was totally prohibited by the Forest Department. The only seasons to undertake fieldworks were summer and winter. Moreover, in winter there was a considerable threat from the wild elephants which used to roam around the forest villages except the villages in the Buxa hill in order to eat paddy from the cultivated land of the forest villagers. During the period there were high chances of falling before a herd of elephants and so to avoid the problem we had to change the shortest route frequently while going from one village to another. Despite our cautious approach and repeated telling of the villagers about the criteria to combat the situation I met the tuskers thrice in my approaching road to another village. Though at those moments I forgot all the tactics told by the forest dwellers I had the good fortune of seeing those elephants moving away on their own. As a whole conducting the field study in forest villages was not a matter purely academic in nature!

5.3. Early field Trips

My early field trips, which started before preparing my synopsis, were both remarkable and resource full which contributed to reorient my approach towards the field and helped me to gain new insights about the practice of participatory forest management and the movement of the forest dwellers. I went to the field with a lot of preconceptions about those people and their day to day practice of living. Before visiting to the field I met several forest officials at the Divisions and the State levels. Most of them strongly believed that the forest dwellers were largely

associated with the forest thefts and the upliftment of their livelihood conditions alone would keep them out of these kinds of practices. My next preconception was formed by surveying the vast body of literature on participatory forest management in India and from a few field based studies earlier conducted in North Bengal. Both the sources were largely relied upon the binary that if empowerment of the forest dwellers was not taking place through the participatory forest management then there was a problem of disempowerment of the forest communities. In a word most of the reviewed studies on participatory forest management at the national, regional or local level either engaged in proving that either the communities were being empowered through the success of JFM like the case of south West Bengal or being disempowered with the failure of participatory forest management such as the cases of central India or Uttar Pradesh. In my earlier field trips I got the evidences to interrogate both the perceptions. Firstly, I found that only a section of forest dwellers (not most of them) were involved in illicit felling of timber and there was no difference between relatively poor and wealthy forest dwellers in that practice. The main driving force behind those illicit logging cannot be ascribed to the level of poverty rather it was obviously the market forces and the communication with the market which made them involved with illicit felling. The basis of this understanding was my experience which I gained during my earlier stays in the forest villages which revealed the fact that the incidence of relatively high involvement of the villagers in illicit felling occurred in the road side villages in comparison to villages in the remote place. The Second thing that I found during my earlier trips was that despite the relative failure of the participatory forest management the villagers were in a good position in terms of bargaining capacities with the Forest Department, and were able to take independent decisions in respect to their day to day interaction with the forests and to protest against local injustices by the Department in an effective manner. I found the empowering role of the ongoing movement behind this kind of situation of the forest dwellers on which none of the studies so far had concentrated. Further in my earlier trips I came to realize the impact of a historic

movement by the forest villagers of Dooars during 1967. Though I came to know for the first time about the movement from the Karlsson's Book (1997) but from the sketchy picture of an about two and half pages of his report totally based upon his single interview with an activist of the movement I failed to realize the significance of it. In my earlier interaction with the forest dwellers I got glimpses of its horizon, extent and ramifications. It was then I had decided to reorient my focus on the matter to get a complete picture of the movement which now forms the subject of Chapter-4 of the present thesis. My earlier field trips undertaken several times eventually enabled me to finally select the villages under different divisions for my final fieldwork and issues for investigations to understand the problems of natural resource governance in North Bengal in the context of participatory forest management in India.

5.4 Targeted Field Trips

My targeted field trips can be divided into three phases. In the first phase I made several visits to the field to collect data about the movements and resistance of the forest dwellers since independence. I met with Mr. Ramesh Roy, the undisputed leader of the historic movement against *taungya* system along with other leaders and volunteers of the movement like Kalicharan Pandey, Prem Sharma, Tanka Bahadur Chhetri, Ganat Rava, Jogen Rava and Temba Munda etc. In order to get a clear picture of the movement in this phase I travelled almost 15 villages and some of which I visited more than three times. In this phase I first went to the virtually inaccessible hills in the upper Buxa region adjacent to the Bhutan Border. I met people even older than the 100 years of age and interacted with the villagers from different tribal communities. I became astonished during my field visits by the fact that while of some villages were not acquainted with the ongoing forest dwellers movement almost all the villages and each and everyone knew about the past movement against *taungya* and about the well known leader Ramesh Roy. Besides

the historic movement I came to know about many local resistances that took place in between the past and the present movement. The most notable among those were Orange Orchard Resistance in Buxa Hill under the BTR (east) Division and resistance to acquire loading/unloading rights of the forest dwellers in forest Depots in Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar Division. In this period I came to know that the Panchayat system was introduced too late in the forest villages i.e. in 1998/99 and the villagers in BTR (West) and Jalpaiguri Divisions organized resistances to bring about the system. After gathering of data about the movement and local resistance I turned to the next phase of data collection. In the second phase I conducted seven focus group interviews in the seven forest villages in the four forest divisions while taking two focus group of each division at a stretch. I stayed for two to three days in each village to conduct the focus group interview. From those interviews I understood several issues relating to forest management and the eco-system and certain facts about how people remained unrepresented so far, like the issues of contract system in forest plantation under National afforestation Programme (NAP), matter related to spacing between the seedlings and the problem of forest maintenance etc. In the third phase I conducted household survey of 70 households in those seven forest villages taking ten household on the basis of random sampling from each village under study. For household survey I had to spend more times than the focus group interviews and I rented room for 15 days in nearby urban centres of each forest division like Alipurduar, Rajabhatkhawa, Gairkata etc. Only in the Buxa hill I stayed in the village like Santra bari and Lepchakha as there were no nearby urban centres. For BTR (West) I hired a motorbike and for Jalpaiguri Forest Division I took my own motor bike and in Coochbehar and BTR (East) Divisions I conducted the surveys on foot. With these household surveys the picture of participatory forest management in the District became quite clear before me. Though I prepared the final schedule after conducting five pilot surveys in three divisions during the final survey I realized the inadequacy of my final schedule to grab all the dynamics around participatory forest management. To overcome the problem I took several notes in

my field note book of the additional points. However, everything was more or less OK until an unfortunate incident took place in this last phase of targeted field work. When in the month of October, 2009 after conducting twenty household surveys I was returning back from the Jalpaiguri Forest Division with my motorbike to my place of residence which was hundred kms away I lost my field bag containing those schedules, field note book, rechargeable batteries for camera and so on. Actually I kept the bag in the side hook of the motor bike and on rough road I could not recognize when the bag fell down on the busy highway. Later I went back almost half of the way asking roadside shops and people about the bag but no one could tell anything. Lastly I lodged FIR in two police stations namely Bhaktinagar and Rajganj Police Station----- but even after months they were not able to trace it.

5.4. Most Recent Field Trips

I was completely upset for a month after that unfortunate incident. But eventually boosted up myself and again randomly selected 10 people from the voter list of each village following the earlier sampling method and took departure for those two villages for survey. Except one respondent at khuklung Basti Forest Village the entire set of respondent was new. I spent another 5 days to finish my survey. This time the survey took place quickly as in case of many questions in my schedule I got familiar about their pattern of answers from the experience of the earlier survey. Even I became familiar from the earlier survey with certain specific Rava words and expression while answering the same questions. Moreover a few respondents of the new sets were present in my interaction with the respondent's of the earlier survey. Besides, when I told the unfortunate incident the villagers became more cooperative and extended their cordial help to finish my last part of the survey.

5.5. Interviews

For conducting interviews I constructed semi-structured questionnaire for key informant's interview, structured schedule for household survey and questionnaire for focus group interviews. Besides, I made use of separate field note book for each forest division to note down points in interviews. In addition to the 70 households' survey and 7 focus group interviews I have taken more than 60 unstructured or semi structured in-depth interviews including the key informant's interviews. However, while undertaking interviews I have gathered so many unique experiences. I can remember that during my earlier field trips when I met Ramesh Roy for interview I found that he was speaking so fast that I could not note down all the points. I felt the necessity to keep a sound-recorder to avoid the loss of data. Soon after the trip I went again to Ramesh Roy with an old model big size tape recorder and recorded his speech but it was too uncomfortable to carry and inadequate (cassette system) to record a long interview. Hence, I bought the Sony IC Recorder to keep records of all important key informants' interview and the focus group interviews. The Recorder proved to be worthy particularly when I took interview of Abhilac Thakur, who was one of the activists of the 1967 movement from the Student Block (The Student wing of the Forward Block Party) and now is serving as a priest in the Church of North India (CNI). When I went through the approximately two pages incomplete description of the movement in Karlsson Book's 'Contested Belonging' based on his interview with Abhilac Thakur I found something wrong in that interpretation by Thakur what I could not match with several interviews with other leaders and activists of the movement. Therefore I asked Thakur that whether he told Karlsson that the June, 1971 incident of killing five forest villagers at Gossainhat by the Police was an accident as written by Karlsson (See Karlsson, 1997:125) or it was the natural revenge by the Department against the villagers participating in a movement against the taungya system. Mr. Thakur answered me that he never used the term 'accident' to describe the event rather he termed the June,1971 event as a 'co-incident' of the

villagers movement against the Department and the involvement of the police into that which resulted in the death of five villagers. Thakur further continued that due to language problem perhaps the 'Shaheb'(Karlsson) misunderstood his expression. The Recorder became useful again in taking interviews of the then District leadership of Forward Block and the activists, organizers and leaders of the 1967 movement. Against the scarcity of the documents the recorded interviews helped me a lot to get a picture of the entire happenings. However, I gathered also some of the unique experiences while conducting interviews of households in Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar Forest Division where forest villagers either are engaged in forest operation and forest related activities or engaged in cultivation of their land almost all along the year due to having some sort of irrigation facilities or natural reservoirs of water, the villagers used to away from home within 7 O clock in the morning and returned back during 3 O clock in the after noon. In these cases I got very short time for interviews as a part of my household survey as I merely got the period between 3.30 to 6 pm. After that villagers used to engage in dinner and sometimes some of them also became intoxicated in the evening. As a result I had to spend a long time to finish my targeted interviews in those divisions. The time was so scarce that even I had to conduct a focus group interview by breaking it into two days. The other memorable experience during key informant's interview was my journey from Garo Basti to Godamdabri Forest Village in BTR (West). In the shortest route there was a river on the way which we had to cross otherwise we (me and one of the forest villagers) would have to move additional 22 kms to reach our destination. Therefore we decided to cross the river Dima through the hired motor bike but unfortunately in the middle of the river the motorbike got stuck and both of us fell down into the river. Thereafter with the help of local villagers we were rescued finally along with our bike and cancelled our programme on the day. The most exciting experience during interviews took place at Lepchakha in the upper hill region of Buxa. The village was closely adjacent with the Bhutan Border and few years back in the joint venture of Indian Army and Bhutan Army against KLO the village was considered as

one of the war spots. There was a SSB outpost in the entrance of the village from which each outsider had to get permission to enter into the village. During my first visit to the spot I was sternly refused by the SSB officer to undertake any interview of the villagers despite showing my Identity Card. But I had nothing to do as the village was selected as a sample of my study while taking account the participatory forest management and resistance together as a criteria of selection. Therefore in my next two subsequent visits in the village I kept my purpose of visit confidential and registered myself as tourist and travel as my purpose of visit in the SSB Check Post. However they were suspicious about my intention and followed us (me and interpreter from Rajabhatkhawa) insistently during my final survey. We stayed there for three days during the final survey and conducted interviews in a hide and seek manner. In spite of our cautious attempt to conduct interviews in the earliest in the morning i.e. in between 5 am to 6am in the morning and 7pm to 8 pm in the evening we were caught red handed by the SSB personnel though nearly at the end of our survey. The personnel snatched our all filled-up schedules and camera but as the villagers were impressed they protested against that and strongly demanded before the personnel to get back all the things to me. Finally due to their stiff resistance the men came down and returned the schedules and camera back to us. However we did not face any difficulty to get interviews in the next two villages after that very incident.

5.7 Observation

During the field survey I came to fully appreciate the meaning of the term 'Observation'. Some struck me very much and some such I captured in my Canon Digital Camera. In persuasion of the research I went for the first time to forest villages and got acquainted with the day to day living of the forest villagers amidst tremendous hardship. Moreover one cannot ignore the scenic beauty of the forest villages surrounded by lush green forest cover, sparkling hilly streams and narrow

rivers. Staying in those remote forest villages was indeed a rare opportunity to feel at home with nature and its people and to see things from an insider's perspective which was quite impossible from a day's visit for tour purpose. I visited so many forest villages and their surrounding places which were still virgin and remained untouched by the crowd of urban visitors and though they had lot of potential to become ideal tourist spots. I saw how the beautiful forests were being robbed daily to meet the demands of the urban market. Many things I have seen on the spot which have not been inserted into the thesis proper given the scope of the themes and objectives of the chapters. I found that women are more involved than their male counterparts in the collection of firewood that may be or may not be for their own household purposes. Several stacks of firewood sold out daily to the shops, hotel, small industries and brick factories in the nearby urban centres. Male are mainly involved in large scale felling of the timber used to be sponsored by timber mafias of the town. I became surprised to see how the illicit logs were sold and auctioned openly before the eyes of the Forest Department. I came to know from a Beat Officer that how fake forest raids were conducted by the Department on spots where some of the logs were piled up plan fully and in the very next day the news paper reported that some cubic meters of illicit timbers were recovered but no persons could be arrested. I came to know how corrupt forest guards whistled at night during petrol in a prearranged manner not to warn but to intimate the dishonest forest villagers that they were leaving that place and it was time to cut down the trees from that compartment. But this was not all and there of course was the other side of the coin. In one interview of a key informant an age old Rava forest villager under Jalpaiguri Division who had served the Forest Department as a village Mandal since 1965 I faced an embarrassing situation when he broke into tears while telling about the forest theft saying that "how can I bear theses things as I have been planting those trees since 1967 and nurturing those like my child and I

recommend that the current provisions in the Law should be changed immediately because if a person can be imprisoned for 14 years for killing a life then why it is for only two years in case of cutting and killing a tree". I have seen also other remarkable things in a forest village under BTR (West). In the context of scarcity of firewood a villager innovated a special kind of "Chullaha" which could hold its steam only with the one piece of firewood whereas it takes three to four pieces in case normal Chullaha. The special kind of Chullaha became popular in the place though could not cross the boundary of that village. I also found another innovation in the cultivation of 'Saji/Mukhi Kanchu (*Colocasia esculenta*) as a successful species of intercropping in the very context of climate change, elephant attack and increasing price of chemical fertilizer which I have discussed in detail in the Chapter-3. On the contrary I found the failed experiment of the Department in introducing citronella as a species of intercropping. It failed because earlier Elephant did not even touch the species but now days they have changed their food habits and uprooted the citronella grass regularly. Despite the fact when I asked the officer of MFP Division at Khuntimari that why not you are replacing the citronella with the saji/mukhi kanchu, he remained unanswered. In so far as the elephant attacks are concerned the villagers told that the Department often suggested for cultivating alternatives like Oal, lemon etc but if we left paddy cultivation then how could we gather our food for living. I found how in the entire forest villages the experiments of the Department with electric fencing or cutting trench to stop the elephant to enter into villages have failed miserably and how presently the Department has agreed to accept the indigenous method of driving away the elephants by watch towers locally known as 'taung' and prescribed in some villages to construct 'pakka' taung from the FDA fund as the wooden 'taung' constructed by the villagers were often destroyed by the elephant. In one of the forest villages namely Khuklung I got interesting information about how the elephants used to destroy the barrage in the nearby river every year.

During one of my trips I saw that the entire cultivable land in a side of the village got flooded by the water. When I enquired about the fact the villagers told me that it is a regular event of the year and it took place because after the rainy season the elephants used to play on the barrage of the river and due to their playing it got damaged and the water of the river came out and caused flood. In the next morning I visited the spot and saw the terrific sign of the elephant playing on the barrage from a comfortable distance. Further I found that how the Ravas are leaving their traditional instrument of fishing like 'Jhakai', 'Burung' etc and adopted the 'Fasi Jal' (an unique kind of net for fishing which can be extended according to one's wish' and more importantly no one would have to play any role to catch fish through the net instead one can lay the net at night into the river and the next morning a number of fish would be found stuck in that net) from the Muslim communities. When I asked them that why they have changed their habit they replied that presently as a result of the shortfall of rain together with the other factors the biomass of fish has been declining in the river and in this situation they can merely catch one or two fish with their traditional instruments at a stretch which could not assure sufficient income against their labor-time. One interesting thing I found as a problem was that in all most all the forest villages the grazing became counter productive to the agricultural practices of the villager. The most memorable and historical things what I saw in my field trips were related to the movement against taungya which took place during 1967 to 1976. Since there was nothing like systematic documentation of the historic movement except the proceeding of the High Court Case in 1976 I had to depend entirely on the accounts of key informant's or on oral history to construct the phases of the movement. In this context two things that I observed at Gossainhat forest villages helped me a lot. The first thing was the monument of martyrs who died on 10th June, 1971 before the police firing in that village during the movement. In the first phase of oral interviews there were so many confusions

regarding the date and year of police firing and the name of the martyrs but all the problems became solved after viewing the monument where names of the five martyrs were inscribed along with the date and year of the incident. The next thing was a 'Putul Nanch'(Doll's Drama) which was devised by a local villager after the brutal murder of those five villagers in the movement. The show contained the story of slavery of the forest villagers during taungya and their torture under that system by the Forest Department and also a brief story of the movement that occurred in that part of Dooars. When I heard from the older villagers that several shows of that 'Putul Nanch' were organized during 70's and early eighties I made a contact with the person and requested him to conduct the show again and offered him that all expenses that would be required. The villager agreed on one condition that he would play the show again only on the 25th December night when they would celebrate the occasion of X Mass day. By religion the whole Rava community of the village belongs to Christianity and he was one of them. Finally I agreed and went to the village amidst the severe chill of the wintery night of December. I recorded the whole show and later I got several clues from it while preparing the political history of the movement. Besides, my observation shares both the painful experience of jeopardizing the essence of participatory forest management by the Forest Department as well as the heartening experience of few SHGs with the initiatives of the forest villagers which I have registered in Chapter Three.

5.6. Documentary Research

Besides the field work I have collected a lot of primary documents from different places. Most notable among them are the Report on Agro-forestry in India and Sri Lanka from FAO library in Rome, an older article on Taungya Based Intercropping in North Bengal from the archive of the most reputed journal Indian Forester from Dheradun, a study on Taungya in relation to Soil Properties, Soil Erosion and Soil

Management from the library of Kerala Forest Research Institute at Thrissur, the Calcutta Gazette from West Bengal State Secretariat library at Writers Building, Kolkata, West Bengal State Forest Reports from 2000 to 2008 from the library and archive of the West Bengal State Forest Department at Aranya Bhavan, Salt lake in Kolkata, Writ Petition of a case in 1976 from the High Court of Kolkata, Documents on current movements from the regional headquarter of NFFPFW at Siliguri, Annual Reports and Working Plans from the Divisional Headquarter of different forest Divisions, Annual organ of the North Bengal Timber Merchant Association published in vernacular in between 1971 and 1983 from the former President of the Association at Alipurduar and older news clippings of different news papers from the Centre for Himalayan Studies at North Bengal University, Darjeeling etc.

5.7. Data Analysis

In so far the data analysis is concerned while analyzing the quantitative data I at first classified data on the basis of relative priority in respect to my research questions which I have collected from primary sources and field surveys. After that I made use of basic tables and frequency tables to explore causal propositions between variables in tables. Further to understand the association among variables and elaborating their relationship in few cases certain figures and diagrams has been made. In this analysis of quantitative data I had recourse to statistical software like SPSS. For qualitative data analysis I have prepared transcripts from the individual and group interviews. From those transcripts I have done theme based classification of data and interpreted them to understand the relationship between concepts and categories under study. It is required to be mentioned here that in analysis of qualitative data obtained from group interviews I have only relied upon the point of consensus over issues among the members of a group and never made use of mere

opinion of a single individual which has been contested by the other members of the group.

6. Synoptic review of the Study

As some sociologists have pointed out we are all inhabitants of a risk society. The natural scientists have supplied innumerable evidence of the fact that most of the risks are man-made such as green house effect, global warming and mutant bacteria. There have been prophesies of doom, of nuclear holocaust, of ice age, floods and earth quakes. Panicked as we are, we have been told to live lightly on nature, reduce emission, limit energy use, regenerate forests and preserve biodiversity.

Political theory has not fallen much behind in adopting the theme of risk society and the possible correctives. Announcing that environment is political the green political theory arrived in the academia in 80's of the last century. Undoubtedly political power as codified in rules and laws and as embedded in institutional practices, both prescribes and proscribes certain practices, that preserve or destroy eco-system which can not be ignored in any effort at environmental management. Hence environment and forestry of late have attracted the political scientists as matters of academic interest. The present work is a product of such an interest.

In the West the conservationist lobby had often created a demand for removing human habitation from forest ecosystems in the name of preservation of wilderness. Not that such demands went unopposed but in a country like India where for centuries people have been inhabiting forest areas and where much of the forest resources belonged to the category of tropical forest, the idea of wilderness as a tool of conservation cannot find and has not found many supporter among those who are influenced by the idea that forest ecosystem could be better preserved by increasing the livelihood prospect of the forest dwellers in a manner where they are

not compelled to destroy forest resources out of poverty. As a result new forest policies since the 90's introduced Joint Forest Management practices where forest dwellers as member's of Forest Protection Committees (FPC's) and Eco Development Committees (EDC's) etc. get more monetary incentives or community assets through forest protection activities. Subsequently Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) and Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) came out with Forest Right Act (FRA), 06 which was partially implemented across states since 2008 that promised land ownership rights and community rights to forest villagers under certain conditions. One might say that over the years the importance of participatory forest management strategies for protecting the environment in general and the forest ecosystem in particular has become firmly established.

The present thesis interrogates the practices of participatory forest management strategies with reference to the nature and extent of empowerment of the forest villagers who are both targets of strategies of forest management developed by the global and state agencies as well as the participants who both cooperate with the imposed framework and resist it by either modifying it or by attempting to transgress it. We have undertaken extensive field studies in the Dooars region of West Bengal covering many forest villages across Jalpaiguri District that contains four territorial forest divisions viz. Jalpaiguri Forest Division, Coochbehar Forest Division (Wildlife III), Buxa Tiger Reserve (West) and Buxa Tiger Reserve (East) Division. Apart from examining in detail the implications of Joint Forest Management strategies for sustainability of forest ecosystem and empowerment of forest villagers we also covered the ongoing movement of the forest villagers developing in intensity since 90's in the Dooars region which with their demands for community forest governance had a resonance in the FRA, 06. However, in our thesis we had to go a little deep into the history of the present movement which had an origin in an old movement against taungya system in the

region that began in 1967. Since that part of the movement was never researched historically with the seriousness that it deserved we would have like to study it more intensively but for the fact that our interest is less historical in the present work. Nevertheless we have found evidence of continuity between the two movements and their relevance in designing any viable and sustainable forest management strategy.

7. Conclusion

The present chapter has attempted to connect certain subjects like sustainable development and forest management to the core concept of power with which political scientists are more familiar. The chapter has established a link between the concept of empowerment and participatory development in the context of forest management in the forest rich area of West Bengal especially the Dooars region of North Bengal famous for its wildlife and ecology. We have further learnt in this chapter that this region is both a laboratory of forest management practices like Forest Protection Committees and Eco Development Committees and also an action-centre of social movement of forest dwellers in North Bengal. Finally we were introduced to two different dimensions of empowerment, the empowerment from above and the empowerment from below which have been taken up for further analysis in the subsequent chapter.