

CHAPTER – IV

THE PROVISIONS OF LIVELIHOOD OF FOREST VILLAGERS UNDER DIFFERENT FOREST POLICIES AND ACTS

4.1 Introduction

The chapter contains a discussion on the provisions approving or restraining livelihood of forest villagers under different forest policies and Acts. It focuses on the different sections of the Acts that might have a provision of altering the available livelihood options of the forest villages of BTR. The chapter also looks into the thoughts that the policies and Acts furnished towards generating alternative livelihood options for forest villagers in BTR.

Forest dwellers dependence on forest for different kinds of livelihood is amply clear from the discussion in the chapter III. The British's policy viewed the age-old livelihood options based on forest and forest resources as detrimental to forest and hence prescribed to ban such uses or regulate them, in several legislatures. E.P. Stebbing opined that forests in India were free ride for everybody, the British brought significant change by bringing policies and Acts. The author put forward the following arguments in favor of initiating forest policy in his book, 'The Forests of India' (1922), where he articulates, *"No forest policy was initiated when we commenced to govern India, nor was it realized that any such policy was necessary. With the exception of a few royal trees such as teak, sandal-wood, etc., the felling of which was retained, and only nominally retained the forest were free to all to take what they required, to hack and burn down; or to fire annually, in order to obtain a fresh crop of young grass with the arrival of the monsoon for the grazing requirements of their cattle."* It is clear from the above extract that the British viewed the traditional livelihood of shifting cultivators, pastoralist communities and other forest based livelihood of forest communities as detrimental to existence of forest. Perhaps, the perceptions were not built on sound scientific observations. Prejudices of different kinds are believed to be the driving force behind these insights. However, the problem with such prejudices is that they often play a vital role in framing forest policies and Acts. This happened both in colonial era and independent era. The present chapter of the thesis identifies the livelihood practices that were permitted as well as regulated under the provisions of various forest Acts and policies.

4.2 The Livelihood Provisions of Forest People and Indian Forest Act, 1927

Indian forest dwellers or forest dependent people lived and used the forest for their livelihood for generations. This fact has not been adequately documented as the usage was customary in nature. British's concept of property rights did not match with the concept of informal customary rights or the traditional forestry practices. If one goes through the Act, one will find this mismatch in many chapters and sections. In section 3 of the Act it is said "*The State Government may constitute any forest-land or waste-land which is the property of the Government or over which the Government has property rights, or to the whole or any part of the forest-produce of which the Government is entitlement, a reserved forest in the manner hereinafter provided.*" The Government is considering the *forest-land or waste-land* as its property before the declaration of reserved forest. Here, the customary rights of people are overlooked. How the Government has gained the property rights over any forest is not clearly spelt out either. Section 4(1) of the same Act states "*whenever it has been decided to constitute any land a reserved forest, the state government shall issue a notification in the Official Gazette-* (a) *declaring that it has been decided to constitute such land a reserved forest;... (c) appointing an officer (hereinafter called the forest settlement officer) to inquire into and determine the existence, nature and extent of any rights alleged to exist in favour of any person in or over any land comprised within such limits or in or over any forest produce, and to deal with the same as provided in this chapter.*" (Ministry of Law, GOI, 1951) Section 4(1) clearly suggests declaration of reserves were done arbitrarily, forest dwellers or forest dependent people remained at the receiving end. The people got a chance to register their rights on that forest, forest produce etc. but, the end result of that provision of 'registering rights' is evident in the admission ('historical injustice') in 2006's Forest Rights Act.

Under section 6 of the 1927's Act a announcement is published by the Forest Settlement Officer in local language, asking the forest dependent people to produce written proof of rights. The section 6(c) states "*fixing a period of not less than three months from the date of such proclamation, and requiring every person claiming any right mentioned in section 4 or section 5 within such period either to present to the Forest Settlement-officer a written notice specifying or to appear before him and state, the nature of such right and the amount and particulars of the compensation (if any) claimed in respect thereof.*" The forest dwellers might have found this process

cumbersome to register their rights, first they might not have noticed the announcement as almost all of them were illiterate at that time, and second to claim the rights which were customary in nature in written form was quite impossible by the illiterate villagers. Thirdly, to explain their rights in front of an officer who enjoys the powers of a Civil Court under section 8(b)), in their mother tongue, a colloquial language which is not even the dominant local vernacular (here Bengali), narrates the frailness of the process. The process of declaring reserves, recording rights and the arbitrary power in the hand of Forest Settlement Officer under Forest Act 1927 gives an indication on how the forest dependent communities lost their rights over forest and its resources. This is more so, when the section 9 of the Act gradually stops every possible option of reclaiming rights in due course of time. The section 9 states, *“Rights in respect of which no claim has been preferred under section 6, and of the existence of the which no knowledge has been acquired by enquiry under section 7, shall be extinguished.”* (Ibid.)

Even if a person manages to register his or her right over any forest land or produce, the Forest Settlement Officer can discard that right with the help of the Land Acquisition Act 1894 as the officer is empowered by this Act also and can act in the capacity of a Collector as provisioned under the Act. According to section 11 of Indian Forest Act 1927, the Forest Settlement Officer also has the power to acquire land over which right is claimed. From the above discussions one may argue that the forest communities got no legal back up under The Indian Forest Act 1927, they were totally left on the mercy of forest department after the finalization of the settlement and on the Forest Settlement Officer during the process of settlement.

4.2.1 Forest dwellers' livelihood and provisions in the Indian Forest Act 1927

Shifting cultivation: The colonial rulers had an understanding that shifting cultivation was harmful for the forest as it is believed to be the main source of forest fire. Though, this understanding is not adequately backed by scientific studies (Kothari, 1996). Nevertheless, the shifting cultivation became one of the main concerns for the forest policy makers. In section 10(1) of Indian Forest Act 1927 it is said, *“In the case of a claim relating to the practice of shifting cultivation, the Forest Settlement Officer shall record a statement setting forth the particulars of the claim and of any local rule or order under which the practice is allowed or regulated, and submit the statement to the State Government, together with his opinion as to whether the practice should be permitted or prohibited wholly or in part.”* (Ministry of Law, GOI, 1951) The section

provides a random power to the Settlement Officer to express his opinion based on personal experience. The British always asked for proof of rights, it might be a tactic as they knew that the Indian society particularly the forest dependent communities followed informal (unwritten) arrangements (customary rights). Property rights in forest in Mughal period were never been a written document, it is the practices of the people, resource extraction pattern of the people which decided the policies barring some Royal interventions (Rangarajan, 2012). Asking for proof or documents of rights automatically makes the person the owner of the property who asks for the 'ownership proof'. It suggests that this ploy was deliberately used by the British.

In North Bengal and the North Eastern States (7states) shifting cultivation was an ancient practice. The Act interfered in this practice and stopped it in many areas as a result; the Jhumias (shifting cultivators) left forest. The than Government was determined to stop shifting cultivation, it may be clear from section 10(5) of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 where it spells out, "*the practice of shifting cultivation shall in all cases be deemed a privilege subject to control, restriction and abolition by the State Government.*" Moreover the section 26(1)(b), (d),(h) of the said Act prohibits use of fire, trespasses or pastures cattle, clears or breaks up any land for cultivation or any other purpose in the reserved forest. As fire was an important component in shifting cultivation; the technique also required clearing and break up from main forest land, it seems the colonial administration keenly observed the processes involved in shifting cultivation and framed laws accordingly to stop it (Ministry of Law, GOI, 1951).

4.2.2. Cattle Rearing & NTFP Collection

Forest dwellers' the most important livelihood after agriculture had been cattle rearing and collection of non timber forest produce (NTFP- mainly food items like wild fruits, tubers and fish). These livelihood options were very important to run their subsistence level agriculture based economy. The Act intervened in these two livelihood options also. Section 12 of the Act states, "*In case of a claim to rights of pasture or to forest produce, the Forest Settlement Officer shall pass an order admitting or rejecting the same in whole or in part.*" In section 14, the above issue is dealt more specifically, it even prescribes to record the details (including numbers) of cattle, quantity of NTFP to be allowed to collect from the reserved forest and in which season the collection will be allowed.

However, agreements were also done with the forest villagers regarding amount of land to be allowed to plough, number of livestock to be allowed to rear and days of free labor to be rendered in forestry works of FD etc. The colonial forest policy brought the concept of forest village (ref. chapter I) in Indian forest during the early 20th century. Most of the Jhumia communities (shifting cultivators) came back in such villages. Initially, there were no rules and regulations to regulate their livelihood. In 1912 rules were made and the then forest department started to write an agreement with these forest villagers. Apart from mandatory free of cost labor (*beggary*) the terms and conditions also spells out the following i. each family will get cultivable and homestead land of 2.5 acres in plains and 1.5 acres in hills ii. Each household will be allowed to keep 2 plough cattle, 2 milch cow and 4 calves; 2 goats or sheep etc. (www.buxatigerreserve.com & Choudhury, 2015)

4.3 The National Forest Policy 1952 and Forest Dwellers' Livelihood

The national Forest Policy of 1952 recommends the States and the Union Territories which have no forest Act, to bring legislation in tune of the Forest Act of 1927. It prescribes to stop shifting cultivation and suggested to use this skill of forest dwellers in forest plantation. The policy suggested Taungya system of plantation in forest, exactly in the line of Dietrich Brandis. The policy viewed the system as a 'win win' situation for the forest dwellers as well as forest department or government. Technically, country's first forest policy after independence recommended a system of plantation based on exploitative and undemocratic system of production. Since the shifting cultivators in many cases were not ousted from the forest instead they were employed in forest department to follow their technical expertise (shifting cultivation) of slash and burn agriculture in a different format suitable for forest plantation, it is thought to be a 'win win' situation (APFD website)

The policy also states that '*all grazing in forests, particularly unlimited or uncontrolled grazing, is incompatible with scientific forestry.*' It also strongly opined that efficient forest management needs regulated grazing and control over number of cattle. It mentions that cheap forest grazing '*leads to reckless increase in the numbers of cattle which decreases their quality*'. As a result of free and indiscriminate forest grazing, the forest dwellers never bothered about number and quality of the cattle.

However, the policy also thought of the welfare of the forest dwellers it recommended for establishing forest workers cooperatives to mitigate the exploitation of the timber merchants. It seemed that the policy believed that the denudation of forest is being done by the forest dependent people. The policy hoped that one day the local forest dependent people would learn the importance of forest and look upon the forest as a means of their livelihood. It suggested that a great step forward will be achieved if that awareness comes to them. The policy seems to suggest that the forest dwellers are not aware of the value of forest in their life even though the forest dwellers' livelihood traditionally depended on forest and forest produce (Ibid.).

4.4 Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature or IUCN held its tenth General Assembly in Delhi in 1969. In this historic event experts from all over the World elected to put Indian tiger in the endangered list against much protest from the safari tour operators and the old-time hunters. However, the inaugural address delivered by the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi cleared the Government's intention. She said, *“When forests are cut down, wildlife is naturally threatened. Some beautiful and interesting species have become extinct. The rate at which secret poaching and shooting are taking place, the rhinoceros, the famous Bengal tiger, and even the elephant, might disappear unless we take vigilant and drastic steps to preserve them. We have a Wildlife Board, which has put a ban on the export of tiger and leopard skins. We do need foreign exchange but not at the cost of the life and liberty of some of the most beautiful inhabitants of this continent.”* (Rangarajan, 2012) This event of 1969 set a new tune in the forest bureaucracy and among political leaders. It becomes amply clear if one follows the steps taken by the Central Government following the General assembly of 1969. The steps are listed below chronologically:

- I. Nationwide tiger census - in the summer of 1972
- II. Enactment of Wildlife Protection Act 1972 – September 1972
- III. Declaration of Project Tiger – April 1973.

The backdrop in which the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 (WPA 1972) was enacted is easily understandable from the above discussion. The Act wholly concentrated on wildlife and radically changed hitherto approaches practiced in forests. The Act was

passed in the Parliament in 9th September, 1972 and was made applicable in West Bengal from 1st May 1973; vide G.S.R. 224(E).

The Act is heavily indebted to the Indian Forest Act, 1927 for several provisions. It provides scope for declaring any forest as Sanctuary and National Park. It also provides provision for settlement of rights of local people much in the line of Indian Forest Act 1927. This chapter will be focusing on the provisions related to settlement of rights and on provisions of the Act which might have adverse affect on the livelihood of forest villagers.

4.4.1 Sections of WPA 1972 which dealt with settlement of rights

The section 18 of WPA 1972 spells, *“The State Government may, by notification declare its intention to constitute any area other than any area comprised with any reserve forest or the territorial waters as a sanctuary if it considers that such area is of adequate ecological, faunal, floral, geomorphological, natural or zoological significance, for the purpose of protecting, propagating or developing wildlife or its environment.”* However, the State Government, may also declare any area comprised within any reserve forest as a sanctuary under section 26A(1)(b) of WPA 1972. In this connection it must be mentioned that the definition of ‘wildlife’ under the WPA 1972, is not only wild-animals but every single thing of the forest. The section 2(37) defines wildlife as, *“‘wildlife’ includes any animal, bees, butterflies, crustacean, fish and moths; and aquatic or land vegetation which form part of any habitat.”* According to this definition grass, NTFPs, fuel-woods all fall under the category of ‘wildlife’ since they ‘form a part of any habitat’. So, to extract all these from the Sanctuary is a punishable offence under WPA 1972. Forest villagers are traditionally dependent on different types of minor forest produces for nutrient supplement and selling fuel wood to nearby rural markets. This definition of ‘wildlife’ might have created impediments in their livelihood.

Like the Indian Forest Act 1927, this Act has provided some procedures to follow to settle the rights of local people on land and forest products. For example, under section 19 *“The collector shall inquire into, and determine the existence, nature and extent of the rights of any person in or over the land comprised within the limits of the sanctuary.”*(WPSI & Justice Singh, 1998) The WPA 1972 also publishes a proclamation for the local forest dependent community of the locality where the forest is situated. Within two months of the publication of the proclamation any claimant of rights under

section 19 has to produce documents. According to section 22, the collector will inquire into the rights, though it is also mentioned that the records may be ascertainable from the records of the state government. During the period of survey of forest land and other forest rights the Collector enjoys the power of a civil court. Section 23(b) of the Act says, “*the same powers as are vested in a civil court for the trial of suits*”. Moreover, it is important to notice that under section 24, the collector has the absolute power to either admit or reject the rights of the claimant in whole or in part. Here it is also crucial to mention that the collector may proceed to acquire such land and extinguish rights in exchange of compensation as is provided in Land Acquisition Act 1894. However, in the section 24(2)(c) of the same Act it is mentioned, “*Collector may allow, in Consultation with the chief Wildlife Warden, the continuance of any right of any person in, or over any land within the limits of the sanctuary.*” This provision is not allowed while determining the limits of a National Park. The process of declaring a national park is more or less common with the processes involved in declaring a sanctuary. All the sections between 19 to 26-A except the section 24(2)(c), are also applied for various purposes like investigation and determination of claims and extinguishment of rights, in relation to declaring a National Park. (Ibid)

The above mention mechanisms are a complex process of determination of rights, proclamation by collector, and enquiry by Collector etc. This complex process might have restricted thousands of illiterate forest villagers in registering their rights what so ever they had.

4.4.2 Provisions of the WLA 1972 and the livelihood of forest villagers

The section 17A of the Act states “*..no person shall willfully pick, uproot, damage, destroy, acquire or collect any specified plant from any forest land and area specified,.. no person shall possess, sell,.. or transfer by way of gift or otherwise, or transport any specified plant, whether alive or dead, or part of derivative thereof: from any forest managed under W.L.P.A.72*” (Ibid. 1998). A Tiger Reserve is governed by the WPA 1972 as National Park as well as Sanctuary is created within the territory of the reserve. Forestry activities like felling and plantation that went on up to late 1980s in BTR got halted after the declaration of Tiger Reserve in 1983. The forest villagers who were the labor under forest department and contractors became idle. They are forced to look for alternative sources of livelihood. Government also took several steps to generate alternate livelihood for the forest villagers.

Section 27(2) of the Act makes the forest villagers duty bound – (a) to prevent the commission, in the sanctuary, or an offence against this Act; (b) to help in discovering and arresting the offenders; (c) to report death of any wild animal; (d) to extinguish fire in the sanctuary; (e) to assist any forest officer in the investigation.

Section 33(d) of the Act gives power to the forest officials to regulate or prohibit grazing in sanctuary. Under section 35(7) no grazing of livestock is allowed in National Parks (WPSI & Justice Singh, 1998).

Several provisions of the said Act also imposed restriction on collection of non-timber forest products as well. Entering or residing within the area of sanctuary or carrying a weapon is subject to the permission of Chief Wild Life Worden (CWLW). Where definition of ‘weapon’ also includes bows and arrows, hooks, knives, nets. Forest villagers are mostly tribal (Rava, Metch, Ducpa, Jharkhandi e.t.c.) and Nepali. All these communities are culturally and occupationally dependent on the above mentioned weapons for various livelihoods. The above discussions make it interesting to look into the livelihood of the forest villagers of the BTR to assess the consequences of the policy interventions.

4.5 Conservation Act, 1980 and forest people’s livelihood

The commercial use of forest resources took a heavy toll on the Indian forest. Heavily subsidized forest product for industry and conversion of forest land for big development projects made the half of country’s recorded forest either denuded or degraded. Conversion of forest for various developmental projects became a routine affair. Policy makers were clueless, how to mitigate the impact of this development model on forest and became seriously concerned about the conversion of forest without alternative plantation or regeneration. Conservation consciousness in India was creeping in after the tiger census of 1972; the policy makers felt the urgency of a rigid law against conversion of forest land. And thus the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 was enacted. The Act paid emphasis mainly on three issues viz. controlling of logging operations, restricting conversion of forestland, and providing livelihood options to the local community. It is opined by many scholars that the Act performed considerably well so far as first two issues are concerned but failed badly in generating alternative livelihood options for forest communities (Poffenberger, 1996). And often, the provisions that were

supposed to stop conversion of forest land ended up being a hindrance on the forest villagers' livelihood.

Section 2(ii) and 2(iv) of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 (as amended in 1988) states, "*No State Government or other authority shall make, except with the prior approval of the Central Government, any order directing – (i) that any forest land or any portion thereof may be used for any non-forestry purpose; (ii) that any forest land or any portion thereof may be cleared of trees which have grown naturally in that land or portion, for the purpose of using it for reafforestation.*" In the Application of Forest (Conservation) Act 1980 it is said in point no. 1.4(i) & (ii) that cultivation of tea, coffee, spices, rubber and palm is a non-forestry activity. Cultivation of fruit bearing trees or medicinal plants would also require prior approval of Central Govt. except when such plants are indigenous in nature. These clauses of the Act, (mainly the explanation of 1.4(ii)) have potentiality to influence on the livelihood of forest villagers. The above clause restricts the state government from clearing any forest even for the purpose of reforestation.

Explanation on point no 4.6(i) states "*Extraction of minor minerals like boulders, bajri, stone, shell etc. from the riverbeds shall not be permitted if river bed is in a national park or a wildlife sanctuary unless such extraction is for the benefit of the forest or wildlife.*" It is evident a sizeable population of forest villages of BTR was engaged in boulder, bajri and sand lifting from various streams (riverbed) flowing through BTR. The provision of the Act allegedly created complexities.

While giving an explanation to section 2(iv) of the Act in point no. 1.8(i) it is said, "*Sub-clause 2(iv) of the Act prohibits clearing of naturally grown trees in the forest land for the purpose of using it for reforestation..... irrespective of their size, for harvesting existing crop and/or raising plantation through artificial regeneration techniques, which may include coppicing, pollarding or any other mode of vegetative propagation.*" The clarification of the clause also states in point no. 1.8(iii) that, "*..Also prior clearance would be required when the proposal is for clear felling of an area of size more than 20 ha. in the plains and 10 ha. in the hilly region, irrespective of density.*" (WPSI & Justice Singh, 1998). The one of the main occupations of the forest villagers of BTR had been to engage in forestry works under the forest department. The above explanations suggest the difficulties in carrying on with the productive forestry activities which provide livelihoods to forest villagers. The commercial forestry of clear felling

coupe (CFC) got replaced with a halt on conversion of forest for non-forestry purposes. The ban on CFC means ban on soil preparation, cleaning, thinning, fire fighting, fires line making, final harvesting, nursery work etc. (Gupta, 2005).

4.6 National Forest Policy, 1988 and forest people's livelihood

The National Forest Policy, 1988 acknowledged that the forest has suffered serious depletion since the last National Forest policy of 1952. It enlisted the reasons of this depletion to (a) ever increasing demand for fodder, fuel-wood and timber, (b) inadequacy of protection measures, (c) diversion of forest lands to non forest uses without ensuring compensatory afforestation, (d) and the tendency to look upon forests as revenue earning resources.

The policy adequately tried to address all the above mentioned reasons for depletion of forest and gave a guideline that may be adopted to undo the mistakes of the past. The chapter will be focusing on the guidelines which might have long term ramifications on the livelihood of forest villagers as well as condition of forest. In the 'Basic Objectives' of the policy, emphasis is given to the following matters:

- (i) restoration of the ecological balance that has been adversely disturbed,
- (ii) preservation of the remaining natural forest,
- (iii) increasing forest/tree cover through massive afforestation and social forestry programmes,
- (iv) meeting the requirements of fuel wood, fodder, minor forest produce and small timber of the rural and tribal population,
- (v) increasing the productivity of forests to meet essential national needs,
- (vi) maximizing substitution of wood,
- (vii) creating massive people's movement for achieving these objectives.

In the preamble of the policy, rural needs, diversion of forest land and the mindset to view forest as revenue earning sector were held responsible for depletion of the forest. However, it is observed that in the stated objectives, the concern of diversion of forest land and the mindset has not been taken into consideration. Need of the industries which primarily see the forest as a revenue generating sector had been included in the objective, where it proposed to increase the productivity of the forests to

meet essential national needs. It is clear from the stated objectives, the policy wholly depended on the rural population for fulfilling its aims, it prescribed for a people's movement (emphasizes on women participation) much in the line of the Joint Forest Management.

In the sub-head "Essential of Forest Management" the policy emphasized on afforestation of such species which produces fuel wood and fodder, protection and improvement of minor forest produce as it gives sustenance to tribal and to other communities living in and around the forest. However, the policy also emphasized biosphere reserve, national parks etc.) throughout the country.

The policy set a target of 1/3rd of the plain land under forest cover and for the hills the target raised to 2/3rd of the land. In its 'Strategy', emphasis was given on a massive 'need-based and time bound programme of afforestation' on all degraded lands 'whether forest or non forest land'. The policy encouraged all forms of plantations, be it on alongside of roads or on village and community lands. It is clear that the policy highly valued the success of social forestry program of 1970s. The same types of programs are envisaged that is why the call for a people's movement is given. It is also witnessed that just after the adaptation of the policy of 1988, massive programs on different type of plantation works like social forestry, JFM etc are undertaken or spread across the country. Surprisingly, all these programs promoted species like eucalyptus, pulp producing trees which provide very little fuel wood or fodder. This is excellent raw materials for pulp industry and mine-pit props. However the policy unequivocally states that "*The practice of supply of forest produce to industry at concessional prices should cease.*"

The National Forest Policy 1988 reversed the narrative drawn in 1952's policy regarding the rights of the forest dependent community and went on to state – "*The life of tribals and other poor living within and near forests revolves around forests. The rights and concessions enjoyed by them should be fully protected. Their domestic requirements of fuel wood, fodder, minor forest produce and construction timber should be the first charge on forest produce.*" (WPSI & Justice Singh, 1998). The policy also reminded the forest department about the symbiotic relationship of tribals with forest and advised it to engage with them to make them partners of conservation. It recommended 'development of forest villages at par with revenue villages'.

The policy picked the concept of Joint Forest Management (JFM) which was showing miracles in the south western part of west Bengal. An informal system among forest dependent communities and forest department was successfully regenerating the heavily degraded *sal* forests of the district of Medinipur. The concept spread like wild-fire, soon it took a shape of a people's movement, the National Forest Policy adopted this concept of JFM during implementation of the policy and spread it in whole of the country without taking into consideration the variances in socio-economic condition of communities and the ecologies.

However, it failed to generate livelihood for forest dependent communities as the share of 25 percent from final harvest (after deducting costs) could not motivate the communities. Moreover, the communities had to wait at least 5 years before they can enjoy the returns. In some geographical locations 5 years is not enough for getting intermediate yield from regenerated forests. In North Bengal the most of the forest villagers did not take it seriously because of this reason. Nearly 48 percent of North Bengal's forested tracts (here two Districts of Darjeeling and undivided Jalpaiguri) is home to 5 National Parks and 5 Wildlife Sanctuaries which comprises exactly 47.64% of the total forest area of the districts (Directorate of Forest, GoWB, 2012). In these protected areas harvesting as well as plantation (except for wild lives) is prohibited under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, this cause made JFM irrelevant in protected areas as it predominantly depended on intermediate harvesting and final harvesting of trees. However, protected areas came under another concept of JFM called Eco-Development Committee or EDC. EDC had the opportunity of getting revenue from tourist entry in forest; this provision could not encourage the forest villagers (Sarker, 2009 and Nandi, 2002). The forest villagers in North Bengal also perhaps could not believe the forest department as their partner in conservation crusade as the memory of *beggary* days was still alive in their minds.

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