

**The Governance of Forests :  
A Study of Terai Belt of Uttar Pradesh**

*Dissertation Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of*

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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### DECLARATION


I declare that the dissertation entitled 'The Governance of Forests : A study of Terai Belt of Uttar Pradesh' submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of either this University or any other University.

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### CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
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## **List of Acronyms**

GC	General Category
JFM	Joint Forest Management
JFMC	Joint Forest Management Committees
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NGOs	Non Governmental Organisations
NTFP	Non Timber Forest Produce
OBCs	Other Backward Classes
SC	Schedule Castes
ST	Schedule Tribes
UP	Uttar Pradesh
UPFD	Uttar Pradesh Forest Department
WB	World Bank

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## Chapter 1

### **Introduction**

... The post colonial society inherits that overdeveloped structure and its institutionalized practices through which the operations of the indigenous social classes are regulated and controlled.<sup>1</sup>

Hamza Alavi in his analysis of post- colonial societies referred to the state apparatus in such countries as overdeveloped in nature. By state apparatus, he basically meant governmental apparatus or machinery used to exercise control over the society. He termed it overdeveloped as it was the machinery which functioned in the developed colonial countries and was subsequently superimposed in colonized countries like India which had altogether different social structure.

In 1865 the first forest act was passed by the Central Legislative Council which marked the beginning of organized forestry managed by the state in India. The forest policy which India had under the British, and which continued even after independence, can be said to be one of the manifestations of such 'overdeveloped' state machinery with its centralizing features.

Such state managed forestry in India, under the British, was based on the principles of scientific forestry. The main motive behind this step was to ensure continuous supply of timber without having to face any kind of threat in terms of possible shortages. Scientific forestry, in practice, paved the way for more centralized management by, in James Scott's words, 'radical simplification of the forest to a single commodity' minus its diversities.<sup>2</sup>It

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<sup>1</sup> Hamza Alavi, "The State in Postcolonial Societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh", *New Left Review*,1(74),1972,p.147

<sup>2</sup> James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven CT, 1998,p.19

facilitated greater commercial exploitation and the element of fluctuations in revenues was curbed to a great extent. It had created 'uniform forests' where 'more complex old- growth forest had been replaced by a forest in which many variables were held constant.'<sup>3</sup>

...attempt to create, through careful seeding, planting and cutting, a forest that was easier for state foresters to count, manipulate, measure and assess. The fact is that forest science and geometry, backed by state power, had the capacity to transform the real, diverse and chaotic old-growth forest into a new, more uniform forest that closely resembled the administrative grid of its techniques.<sup>4</sup>

This mode of forestry more or less continued even after India gained independence.

...the system of forestry introduced by the British- and continued, with little modification, after 1947- emphasized revenue generation and commercial exploitation, while its policing orientation excluded villagers who had the most longstanding claim on forest resources.<sup>5</sup>

The net impact of these set of policies was that it undermined the subsistence and livelihood requirements of the forest dependent communities in a major way. Forest dependent communities included forest dwelling communities like tribals, who were completely dependent on forests for their myriad needs; and also other village communities living in vicinity to the forests for which forests produce was one of the major sources of income, were deprived of their sources of livelihood. Strict rules and regulations in relation to forests had extremely adverse impact on the livelihood and subsistence options of these communities. For instance, many states had introduced nationalization of the minor forest produce,

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.,p.18

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.,p.15

<sup>5</sup> Ramachandra Guha, " An Early Environmental Debate: The Making of the 1878 Forest Act" , *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 27(1),1990,p.65



which required them to purchase the permits for its collection.<sup>6</sup> Many scholars contend that:

...the 'rights and privileges' that colonial officers afforded to the forest people during and after the 1890s, were further eroded during the post colonial period, to the extent that they often became little more than 'rights and concessions' in 1952 and 'concessions' thereafter.<sup>7</sup>

The forest policy which was in existence in India after independence did not depart from the previous forest policy under the British. It was a continuation of the same. Policy formulations and legislations by the government completely ignored the needs of the forest people and did not even attempt to incorporate their concerns. It clearly reflected the monopoly that the state had over the forests by excluding forest communities, which from time immemorial had depended on forests for their subsistence. Needs of timber for construction, fuel wood, seeds, leaves, fruits and other minor forest produce were fulfilled by the forests. Rules and regulations relating to forests severely curtailed customary rights of access, for instance, to graze their animals and collect fuel wood. They did not have any legal rights which recognized their freedom and entitlements over the access and use of forests even when they had been traditionally using forests as common property. This had resulted into the criminalization of access to forests and its use. Regarding what constituted their rights and what was the ambit of these rights it would be apt to say:

...tribal or communal rights which have existed from time immemorial and which are as difficult to define as they are necessary to the rural population...Nor can it be said that these rights are susceptible for compensation for innumerable cases, the right to fuel, manure and pasturage will be as

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<sup>6</sup>Sarah Jewitt, "Europe's 'Others': Forestry Policy and Practices in Colonial and Post-Colonial India" in Stuart Corbridge, Sarah Jewitt and Sanjay Kumar(eds.),*Jharkhand: Environment, Development, Ethnicity*, New Delhi,2004,p.75.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.,p. 74

much a necessity of life to unborn generations as it is to the present...<sup>8</sup>

Forests not only hold subsistence related significance in the lives of the forest dwellers but also cultural. Importance of forests songs and local forest dwelling spirits, for example, in Jharkhand culture bears testimony to it and proves the intricate embeddedness of their lives into forests.<sup>9</sup>

In the absence of any secure rights and freedom to access, use forest produce; a strong sense of alienation had permeated among the forest communities. Commercialization and commodification of forests had disrupted the way of life of these communities. They were not only deprived of their main means of subsistence, 'the social bonds that had traditionally regulated community forest use were frequently broken'.<sup>10</sup>

This alienation and the extreme dissatisfaction these communities had developed got reflected in the form of conflicts between them and the authorities. It led to various struggles and movements. *Chipko* Movement which started in the Uttarakhand region of northern India has been one such prominent movement where people vehemently opposed the centralizing tendencies of the state and the commercial economy and advocated way of life which was in harmony with the nature. '*Chipko* movement as an ecological movement provides a map to a new system of forest management in India that can secure ecological and cultural sustainability'.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ramachandra Guha, Op. Cit., p.70

<sup>9</sup> Stuart Corbridge and Sarah Jewitt, 'From Forest Struggles to Forest Citizens?: Joint Forest Management in the Unquiet Woods of India's Jharkhand' in Stuart Corbridge et al (eds.) *Jharkhand: Environment, Development, Ethnicity*, Oxford, 2004, p.97.

<sup>10</sup> Sarah Jewitt, "Op. Cit., p.62.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 94.

Works of various committed intellectuals in this context also played a very crucial role in forcing the government to rethink and refashion forest policies in India during 1980s. Eminent scholar, Ramachandra Guha, robustly criticized profit oriented scientific forestry and economic modernization that ushered in, in the post independent India:

...India must rethink its development plans if it is not to risk further ecological devastation and a society divided into one-sixth have-all omnivores, one-third ecological refugees and one-half ecosystem people.<sup>12</sup>

*Ecosystem people*, here, refers to the main environmental user groups in India while *omnivores* connote country's urban- industrial people. *Ecosystem people* stand in opposition to the country's urban- industrial *omnivores*.<sup>13</sup> Guha brings in the concept of moral economy or natural economy in contrast to the existing capitalist commodity economy. Moral economy is one where forest resources are exploited in a sustainable manner, on the basis of local knowledge about the ecology; and resources have their use value. However, capitalist commodity economy is market oriented. It promotes commercial, industrial interests. Worth of the forest resources is determined in terms of the monetary returns they give. Principles of the scientific forestry govern the forest resources in such economy.<sup>14</sup>

The hegemony of the scientific forestry and the legislations concerning the forests which were based on this principle were widely contested by the scholars. They strongly expressed their opinions against further reservations of forests, uncontrolled scientific forestry and criminalization of the forest users.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.95

This politics of opposition of the communities depending on the forests, and resentment of the forest intellectuals against the forest policies came against the state monopoly rights thereby having some positive consequences on the policies itself. In fact, Corbridge and Jewitt attribute the democratization of the Indian forest policies to Indians themselves, with the popular actions and activities of the devoted activists and intellectuals. They believe that:

...India's democratic traditions provide spaces for resistance and policy change that activists elsewhere are often denied.<sup>15</sup>

In response to many struggles, conflicts and movements, Indian government attempted to tackle the situation by granting certain legal rights to these forest dependent people. With respect to the governance of forests, it also aimed to introduce a governance mechanism which encouraged participation of these communities in the governance of forests and also in the decision making. The National Forest Policy of 1988 and the policy of Joint Forest Management which came into force in the 1990s were remarkable examples of new systems of forest rule. It was a watershed in the history of forest governance in India.

The national forest policy of 1988 was a significant departure from the earlier policies as it mandated people's active involvement in programs of protection, conservation and management of forests. It also aimed to protect and enhance the yields of non-timber forest produce for the purpose of generating income and employment for the forest communities. This policy was based on the theme that forests should not be viewed just as a source of revenue. They should be looked upon as national asset to be protected and enhanced for the well being of the nation and its people.

The recently passed Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Rights to the Forest) Act 2006 has also been landmark legislation

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.110

in this context. The Act gives the tribal living in the forests for at least three generations, the right to cultivate four hectares of land and access to minor forest produce, traditional seasonal resources and grazing rights.

These forest legislations reflect the shift in government's stance. It has become accommodative and responsive to the demands of forest communities as opposed to its earlier attitude of hostility. It has tried to strike a balance between allowing some access to forest resources to the forest dependent communities, thereby, not harming their subsistence and livelihood needs; and not damaging the resources through its overexploitation. The inevitability of the cooperation of people, who have the stake in the maintenance of forests, has been recognized.

Until recently, it was the state bureaucracy which had all the power for collecting the information about resource management in India. Still, it had been unsuccessful in efficiently and effectively managing it. Various factors can be considered to have contributed to it. The first is that state apparatus cannot have entire information of any ecological system which might be required for making appropriate decisions. Ecological systems are complex systems in terms of their behaviour. It can be predicted only to a limited extent. Historical observations of the system's behaviour can be useful input in predicting outcomes of human interventions and hence, knowledge about the ecological systems available to the local communities might exceed in value when compared with the knowledge of the state apparatus. The second being the question whether this apparatus is sufficiently motivated to maintain the ecological system. Since no member of the state apparatus has a personal stake in the maintenance of resource systems, they might not be adequately motivated to maintain the systems as much as the forest dependent communities with which their lives are deeply

attached.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, it becomes cardinal to actively involve forest communities in governance of forests as they have the requisite information and stake in the maintenance of forests. As a consequence, they will bear responsibility for this.

Government has initiated efforts which are geared towards enhancing the involvement of such communities. It has been emphasizing on their participation in the making of decisions which can impact their lives and which can ultimately lead to their empowerment in the true sense of the term. The reality remains that even though efforts have been made towards increasing the participation of the concerned communities, it has not materialized at the grass root level. In theory, participation has been widely appreciated and robust need has been expressed for translating it into practice but without much success. Various factors have been attributed to this dismal situation. In order to fully comprehend the problem of participation, one needs to delve deeper and try to understand the dynamics of power which operate within the communities in consideration.

Several scholars exhibit doubt about effective participation which remains at the heart of development initiatives like Joint Forest Management launched by the state. It aims at protecting the subsistence options of the forest communities by not harming forest resources and consequently leading to comprehensive development of such communities. According to them, the power play within the communities needs to be accounted besides the interaction between the state and its agencies which brings ideas to reality. In the context of development Uma Kothari and Martin Minogue rightly observe:

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<sup>16</sup> Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha, 'What are Forests for' in *Ecology and Equity: the Use and Abuse of Nature in Contemporary India*, Penguin Books: New Delhi, 1995, p. 155.

Its character and results are determined by relations of power, not by the rhetoric of fashionable populist labels such as 'participation', 'civil society' or 'poverty reduction'.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore it can be said that fostering participation of communities in the decentralized governance of forests is not an easy task. It requires an insight into the communities itself. They do not have a cohesive existence even though it appears to be from outside. The powerful sections hinder the process of effective participation of the communities by further marginalizing the already marginalized communities.

## **Methodology**

The research design of the proposed study was exploratory in nature based on prior research reviews, in depth interviews and focus group and also administrative records and documentary evidences. This study is based on primary as well as secondary sources, incorporating field surveys and interviews in the area of the study using tools of qualitative research for data collection.

Balrampur district, which falls in the *terai* region within Uttar Pradesh, has been taken up as field work area. The design of the field work has been based on multi-stratified snowball sampling, stratified proportionally to ensure inclusion of each relevant stratum related to the different levels of forest dependent communities. Besides, important actors such as government officials were interviewed using the purposive method of sampling.

At the level of the district, the study incorporates inputs from forest officials working at the division level. Similarly, at the level of the block and *tehsil* inputs from the range forest officers has been included. Responses of other

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<sup>17</sup> Uma Kothari and Martin Minogue, 'Critical Perspectives on Development: An Introduction' in Uma Kothari and Martin Minogue (eds.) *Development Theory and Practice: Critical Perspectives*, Palgrave,2002,p.13

government persons like foresters and forest guards have also been taken into account. Inputs from about ten forest officials at these levels have been taken on the basis of semi-structured interviews and discussions. Besides these government officials, responses from the forest dwelling and other forest dependent communities, as well as responses of people from the non-governmental organizations active in the area has also been extensively explored. In the case of the forest dependent and forest dwelling communities, head of these communities and other members of the communities were involved. Inputs from these people have been taken with the help of the individual and group interviews and discussions.

Three fringe forest villages under this district have been zeroed in on the basis of their distance from the forest and their accessibility. They have also been selected as they provide the element of diversity to the samples. This element of diversity is rooted in the nature of the communities as well as kind of forests these communities are depended on. These three villages are Gonahwa which comes under Tenduwa Nagar *Gram Sabha*, Girgitahi (*Gugaulikala Gram Sabha*) and Mohakampur (*Mohakampur Gram Sabha*). Being a limited time scale study, it is based on the responses of 45 to 55 people of the field area. From each village around ten households have been targeted. Given the fact that all three villages have only fifty-three households on an average, the sample of around ten households from each village seems to serve the purpose of pertinently representing the intended area.

## **Outline of the Research**

The first chapter traces how participation and decentralized governance became prominent in the discourse of development and subsequently, influenced the erstwhile centralized forest policies. It brought about decentralization of governance of forests which focused on the participation of the communities involved. This chapter further discusses the concept of



participation and its different connotations. It also talks about the processes of participation and its agents. Community participation has been specifically dealt with in the context of the governance of forests.

The second chapter gives a concise overall social, economic and political account of the State of Uttar Pradesh in which the field area is located. It has focused on the performance of Uttar Pradesh on various significant indicators of development. It also throws light on the pervasive socio-economic inequalities in the State which structure and often, hinders community participation.

The third chapter is based on the fieldwork conducted in the forests of Balrampur district of Uttar Pradesh. It extensively explores the working of participatory institutions of forest governance at the grass root level and the way it is perceived by the poor forest dependent communities. It also explores the role of such communities in such governance.

Conclusions have been summarized in the last chapter.

## Chapter 2

### **Participative processes and the communities**

#### **Introduction**

Approach to the governance of forests in India has witnessed radical transformation in recent years, especially over the past two decades. From being centralized during the British period and the early post-independence years, it has developed into a more participatory and accommodative model. This is particularly true, at least in the model, recommended by the national forest policies of the late eighties and the nineties. This paradigm shift in the approach has since been reflected in the government policies related to forests. The focus has now shifted to more decentralized governance of forests, entailing devolution of power from the central government institutions and agencies to the grassroots level institutions and people. It involves participation of communities in the decisions impacting their lives and livelihood; and, consequently, seeks to empower them.

It is therefore imperative to interrogate the larger framework within which the decentralization in the management of the natural resources has been implemented – something that has captured the fancy of intellectuals and policy-makers alike. In fact it can be said that it was the shoot-out of the changes that were discernible in the development discourse post the collapse of the socialist forces in the 1980s. Decentralization had long been a part of the development writings before but it was only in the late 1980s onwards that the scholars showed immense faith in it in the discourse of development.

## **Background**

Agrawal and Ostrom divide the writings on development since the end of Second World War into two phases. The first phase was termed as that of 'international Keynesianism and state-mediated capitalism', in which the state was the major actor and played a significant part in almost all spheres of social and economic development. Attention is drawn to policies of planning and industrialization, especially in the newly independent Third World. All international development aid was also routed through the state. The active role played by the state was very apparent at this time. The second phase began by the end of the 1970s when it was realized by numerous analysts that state was not inevitably best suited to deal with the different problems of inflation, poverty and unemployment. It was after the collapse of the erstwhile Soviet Union that the faith in the state as the most important agent for development declined.

It was following such developments that search began for the alternatives in the development discourse. Many development scholars saw community and markets as replacing the state as development agent. Agarwal and Ostrom stress that the new vision of development that emerged combined the role of the both communities and markets and surfaced as the substitute of the state as the development agent.

It was in this context that participation and decentralization in the decision-making came to occupy centre-stage in the development paradigm and consequently, became the fancy of scholars and policy makers in the arena of development. It was in the 1980s in India that such development got reflected with respect to the governance of forests in the National Forest Policy of 1988 with its emphasis on needs and concerns of the forest dependent communities and their participation in the management of forest resources.

The understanding of the theory and practice of participation and decentralization necessitates an understanding of not just concepts but

also the dynamics of participation and decentralization .The next section therefore offers a brief overview of the main debates in this area.

## **Participation and the Processes**

In the current scenario, be it political, social or economic the word participation has come to occupy a very significant space. It has its bearings on everything from government development programmes to civil society initiatives. It has come to be seen as a cardinal variable for the successful completion of political, economic or social initiatives either started by the state or by other agencies. It is also pivotal for the very acceptance of such initiatives by the people whose lives it would be impacting. Its very usage is seen to be imparting unwavering legitimacy to actions. However, in that sense it also runs the risk of being loosely used or being manipulated by individuals or groups just to serve their immediate interests. History is replete with examples which prove this point.

Participation ...is too serious and ambivalent a matter to be taken lightly, or reduced to an amoeba word lacking in any precise meaning, or a slogan, or fetish or, for that matter, only an instrument or a methodology. Reduced to such trivialities, not only does it cease to be a boon, but it runs the risk of acting as a deceptive myth or a dangerous tool for manipulation.<sup>1</sup>

Given the commanding space that it occupies in myriad political, economic, social and other settings and the legitimacy it bestows, it becomes important to delve deeper and have an insight into the concept of participation which will help understand the nuances of the concept, its various dimensions; and its positive and negative connotations as well.

The Oxford English dictionary defines participation as, 'the action or fact of partaking, having or forming a part of.'<sup>2</sup> Majid Rahnema feels that thus perceived it can either be transitive (having a particular goal or target) or

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<sup>1</sup> Majid Rahnema, ' Participation' in Wolfgang Sachs (ed.) *The Dictionary of Development: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, London.,1992,p.126

<sup>2</sup> Oxford English dictionary,oxford university press

intransitive (subject involved in the partaking process without having any predefined goal or target); either moral, amoral or immoral (depending on nature of the goals it seeks to achieve based on ethical values); either forced or free; manipulative (where subjects actions are controlled without it being realized by them) or spontaneous. Rahnema believes that only the positive connotations are linked to participation and most often it is seen as a free exercise where individuals take part in actions according to their free will and without being influenced or implicitly forced by others. However, according to him, in practice participation can be manipulated and so it does not remain a free exercise.<sup>3</sup>

In order to make it more comprehensible the relationship between governments and its people can be given as an instance. Regimes can claim to have consent of their population. This consent they acquire once they are voted to power by the people. And this can be counted as participation. When the governments take various policy decisions in their tenure they do not do it by consulting its people or people do not actively participate in the decision making process. Major section of the population might disagree with its policy yet the governments often go ahead with its policies as it claims to have the 'legitimacy' of the majority of people. As Scaff also observes about participation that many a times:

participation "functions" to ensure that citizens' interests are not overlooked by elites; it "functions" to provide a cloak of "legitimacy" for elite decisions and hence for the system in which decisions are made.<sup>4</sup>

It was in the 1950s that participation appeared for the first time in the discourse of development and in the 1980s it acquired centre stage. In fact, it had emerged as one of the major dimensions of development. This orientation was triggered by the failure of development framework of the state as agent after the collapse of the socialist forces. There seemed to be

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.116

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence A. Scaff, "Two Concepts of Political Participation", *The Western Political Quarterly*,28(3),1975,p.456

a consensus among the planners, activists, governmental organizations and international aid agencies about involving communities in the process of development. Community was seen as an alternative development agent. Emphasis shifted to involving people in the processes of formulation and implementation of decisions impacting their lives.

Participation gradually became a very popular slogan. However its drawback lied in the fact that many a times it was used only at the rhetorical level without having any concrete content. It was easy for the governments to get aid from the external agencies if their development projects were based on the participation of the communities under target even if in reality these projects proved unable to foster effective participation. As Scaff also recognizes quite often participation is used to provide 'cloak of legitimacy' to actions. Participation is about the promise of including the voiceless and underprivileged marginalized sections of society in making their preferences known in development programmes and developing mechanisms to meet these preferences and fulfill their needs.<sup>5</sup> Actions where participation is just glued to provide legitimacy defy the very purpose of participation.

Participation by communities unwinds in the context of social, economic, political and cultural institutions and arrangements. In such settings power plays an important role. It gets manifested along the lines of gender, race, ethnicity, caste and class.<sup>6</sup> For instance those who are powerful exercise control over the resources. As a result the marginalized communities remain unable in participating effectively in a democratized set up. Bina Agarwal opines that the idea of inclusiveness is indispensable to the discourse of participation no matter how different and contested its meanings and definitions can be. She stresses on the inclusion of

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<sup>5</sup> Agarwal, Yadama, Andrade and Bhattacharya, "Decentralization And Environmental Conservation: Gender Effects From Participation In Joint Forest Management", *CAPRI Working Paper No. 53*, July 2006, p.3

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

especially those who would be most affected by any proposed intervention related to development.<sup>7</sup> However the dynamics of power manifested through caste or gender prevent the inclusion of the poor marginalized communities. Even the best intentioned participatory development institutions can fall prey to socio economic inequalities created by powerful hegemonic classes in society who establish control over these institutions .consequently these institutions begin to 'exacerbate existing forms of exclusion, silencing dissidence and making dissent.'<sup>8</sup>

There are many significant agents which play pivotal role in the participatory processes. These can be the state, the communities or other Non Governmental Organizations. It's the community which participates in the participatory developmental institutions set up by the state. The Non Governmental Organizations have also come to play a very significant role in these participatory institutions especially since the paradigm shift occurred in the discourse of development where the role of the state as the most important actor got subdued. These Non Governmental Organizations have donned the cardinal role of the facilitator in the participation based development institutions. They function as the intermediary between the state and the communities.

As a result, whenever the discourse of participation is invoked it becomes inevitable to elucidate the role of Non Governmental Organizations in participation based development of people. In the recent past they have been encouraged by the activists as well as planners because of their participation based non bureaucratized style of functioning. They act as facilitators when it comes to providing training to the poor people in participation which activists and planners believe lead to the accomplishment of the development tasks with greater efficiency and at

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<sup>7</sup> Bina Agarwal, "Participatory Exclusions, Community Forestry And Gender: An Analysis For South Asia And A Conceptual Framework", *World Development*, 29 (10), 2001,p.1623

<sup>8</sup>, Agarwal, et. al., Op. Cit. , p.7

lesser costs. Of late even state governments have realized this and have encouraged their involvement in initiatives like joint forest management in particular and governance of forests in general and many other development initiatives. They have emphasized on the role of Non Governmental Organizations as raising awareness among the communities and mobilizing them and as promoter of participation. However it would be in appropriate to keep this rosy picture in mind while analyzing the participation oriented capacity building initiatives of the NGOs. Need arises to throw some light on the nature of the participation it brings with it. Rahnema reckons that in the process of imparting values of participation and training communities, people in participation; NGOs as change agents often tend to transcend their role as catalyst beyond recognition.

Acting, in most cases, as a promoter or professional of participation, rather than a sensitive party to a process of mutual learning, he became sometimes a militant ideologue, sometimes a self- appointed authority on people's needs and strategies to meet them...the change, of which they considered themselves the agents, was only the projection of a predefined ideal of change, often highly affected by their own perception of the world and their own ideological inclinations.<sup>9</sup>

This kind of induced participation clearly undermines the unfeigned regeneration of the people's space. It also undervalues the meaning of participation i.e. ' to live and to relate differently...the recovery of one's inner freedom, that is, to learn, to listen and to share, free from any fear or predefined conclusion, belief or judgment.'<sup>10</sup>

Governments and other development institutions frequently took resort to participation to gain legitimacy for their actions and eventually serving their own ends and purposes rather than being concerned about people's empowerment through the means of participation. To prevent such manipulative and hegemonic tendencies activists further refined participation and came up with 'popular participation' as an alternative which promoted human centered development.

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<sup>9</sup> Majid Rahnema, Op. Cit., p.124

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 127



Popular participation was intended to perform at least four functions i.e. cognitive, political, instrumental and social. The cognitive aspect of participation basically stressed on forms of interactions which were representative of people's own culture rather than reflecting the ethnocentric realities specific to the western countries and their knowledge system. It basically showed great faith in indigenous forms of knowledge based on socio-cultural realities specific to it. The political function was to empower the marginalized people by involving them in the process of decision making and thus giving voice to them and also of providing legitimacy to various development related projects. The instrumental function was basically to come up with new alternatives wherein people played significant active role in decisions impacting their lives. Finally the social dimension of participation aimed at development which could cater to the basic needs of the people and thus eradicate poverty.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 121

## Conceptions of Participation

In the context of the local resource management consensus emerged among the academics as well as policy makers and planners regarding the need to involve people and adopt participatory methods. For instance governments across the globe turned towards participatory forest protection programmes. Such consensus was followed by the failure of many earlier top down state development programmes.

According to Ellora Puri there are two sets of group of people advocating participatory model. One views participation as a means to achieve efficiency while the other believes that it would lead to the goals of empowerment and equity.

The social capability approach exponents distinguish between efficiency based participation and agency based participation. Participation for efficiency approach forms the basis of Robert Putnam's book 'Making Democracy Work'. In it he has discussed about the two prerequisites for effective 'good government'. " One, active participation of the civic community in public affairs, and two, a civic culture in which the participants are 'bound together by horizontal relations of reciprocity and co- operation, not vertical relations of authority and dependency'."<sup>12</sup>The latter one is referred as social capital constituted of the elements of trust, reciprocity and coordinated actions of the communities which is essential, as Putnam acknowledges it, to improve the efficiency of society. Agency based participation on the other hand focuses on the role of human agency. It emphasizes on the involvement of people who would be affected by the policies and equal distribution of costs and benefits. It's a people centered approach and it stresses on contribution of human agency to change in policy decisions, social commitment and norms. Participation in this case

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<sup>12</sup> Ellora Puri, " Understanding Participation: Theoretical Foundations and Practical Implications", *Economic and Political Weekly*,39(24), 2004, p.2512

becomes a goal in itself and eventually it leads to empowerment of the people and towards the goal of equity.<sup>13</sup>

Lawrence A. Scaff feels that participation is a process in which one engages rather than a thing which one possesses. He makes distinction between participation on the basis of its instrumental function and interactional function. Interactional participation according to him gets reflected most appropriately in the instance of public communication where groups of people organize around issues and interests common to them and the communication proceeds horizontally where all voices are heard and opinions are respected.<sup>14</sup> It has its own positive consequences. It performs set of 'educative functions' as Patement calls it. It increases knowledge and self awareness, boosts confidence to express one's opinion freely and without any kind of hesitation in public forums and thus enhances leadership skills and aspirations.

Instrumental participation becomes more of a technique to gain influence and serve one's own interests. In Scaff's words:

... reciprocity is replaced by competition, private interests are seen as the sole determinant of public commitments, and on the whole participation's functions are connected with the dictates of self-interest and the need for "legitimacy."<sup>15</sup>

In the writings of many scholars instrumental aspect of participation has been revealed where participation has been conceptually linked to power and influence in decision making. Lasswell and Parsons for example define power as 'participation in the making of decisions,' and authority as 'the institutionalized code defining rights of participation in the power system.'<sup>16</sup> Instrumental participation gets also manifested in situations of competition over scarce goods and resources where those who have more influence

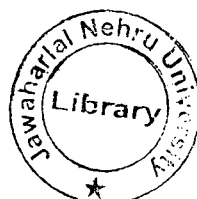
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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p 2512

<sup>14</sup> Lawrence A. Scaff, "Two Concepts of Political Participation", *The Western Political Quarterly*, 28(3), 1975, p.456

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p.459

<sup>16</sup> Ibid



get away with major share while the marginalized communities do not get access to such resources.

Scaff does not intend to place one notion of participation over the other. He recognizes that both instrumental participation and interactional participation is representative of two contrasting forms of rationality which are valid in their own place. However he does not hesitate in saying that the concept of participation as interaction has been ignored and needs to be given equal attention. In his words it-

...offers an opportunity for reappraising what it means to be a citizen, and underlines the need for institutional reforms that promote political communication. Recent proposals for urban decentralization are an excellent example of its practical applicability to the problems of modern representative democracy.

<sup>17</sup>

## **Community and Participation**

Theorizing about a peculiar concept becomes possible only after observation of its operationalisation at the ground level. One tryst with reality and it invariably throws new aspects of the concept to the forefront to be captured again in the theory. The concept of participation is no exception to this.

Against the background of the deforestation crisis of late 20<sup>th</sup> century and failure of the forest protection and development programmes Ramachandra Guha vehemently criticizes the forest policies of the post colonial state which was continuation of the policies of the colonial British Raj. The traditional bonds which village and tribal communities had with the forests were frequently broken by these policies. He gives the instance of how peasantry at that time was excluded from using forest as the resource base

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.p.462

which was seen as one of the major reasons for the deforestation crisis in India.<sup>18</sup>

Such failures led to the revival of the discourse of participation at the policy and academic level. Community participation was seen as answer to many development problems and serious efforts were made towards its realization at the grass root level and not just in rhetoric. In the realm of the governance of forests Joint Forest Management was a watershed development. It came in existence in the June 1990 as part of the National Forest Policy in the form of guidelines which put stress on the involvement of Non Governmental Organizations and state governments in the governance, protection and regeneration of forests. It also aimed at meeting the basic requirements of the rural and tribal communities from the forest like taking care of the need for fuel wood, small timber, minor forest products and fodder for their animals.<sup>19</sup> Joint Forest Management based on the participatory model fulfilled both the functions of participation that is serving as a means to increase efficiency and also furthering the goals of equity and empowerment.

Myriad arguments have been given in favor of community participation in forest management. Local communities through the means of such kind of involvement and inclusion will be able to acquire skills and confidence which will enable them to voice their concerns and to act in their own interest. Some utility based arguments have also been given related to it like 'sharing of responsibilities of management with the primary user group would ensure sustainability of the resource by encouraging "prudent practices". It was felt that in a context where the government owned the resources but did not have the managerial capacity nor the commitment to

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<sup>18</sup> Ellora Puri, " Understanding Participation: Theoretical Foundations and Practical Implications", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 39(24), 2004, p.2513

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

manage these resources, community involvement would result in regulated use and conservation of resource.<sup>20</sup>

Many of the aspects of the reality of the community participation have been overlooked by planners and scholars who argue in favor of community participation. These are the inherent hierarchies, differences in power and socio-economic inequalities prevalent in the local communities which lead to the exclusion and ultimately alienation of the marginalized sections of these communities like women, lower castes and classes. Communities are often perceived in an idealized manner where its constituents i.e. people are ignored and the fact that they are not on the equal footing on the social and economic ladder of the society in which they live and which also determines their role in such society. Dynamics of power which operate within the communities in consideration need to be taken into account in order to fully comprehend the scenario and the practice of participation.

Philip Woodhouse has questioned the cohesion of the local communities. He believes that populist or communitarian approaches often portray the local communities in an ideal manner which leads to distorted understanding of the reality. As a result, answer to the question as to why effective participation does not materialize keeps on eluding the common understanding.

...the populist heritage of many people-centered alternatives inhibits a rigorous examination of power relations. As a consequence, power relations between local communities and 'external' agencies of the state or market tend to be highlighted, while those within communities may be neglected, leading to idealized and conservative images of 'community' that preclude an understanding of the dynamics of social change and their environmental implications.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Philip Woodhouse, 'Development Policies and Environmental Agendas' in Uma Kothari and Martin Minogue (eds.) *Development Theory and Practice: Critical Perspectives*, Palgrave, 2002, p.146

Corbridge and Jewitt share the same views about the cohesion of the communities. When the question of cohesion is evoked, they feel that it is not something which exists naturally in the case of communities. They put stress on the need to foster active citizenship, a sense of belonging and empowerment in the communities.

Many proponents of JFM assume...that trust and mutuality are primordial features of tribal communities, and that vocabularies of collective action and deferred gratification are somehow already in place in communities such as the Oraons and Mundas, and need only to be ignited by new institutional arrangements. We doubt this so.<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, it can be said that participation cannot be perceived as the panacea for all kinds of development problems. Its realization through the institutions might entail number of difficulties if broader aspects related to it are not taken into account. 'Enabling participation is a complex undertaking. It is complex because participation by citizens in a community unfolds in a dense context of social, economic, political and cultural settings and arrangements.'<sup>23</sup> It becomes imperative to understand the power play in communities if one seeks to find answers to the problems of community participation and the failure of the participatory development institutions.

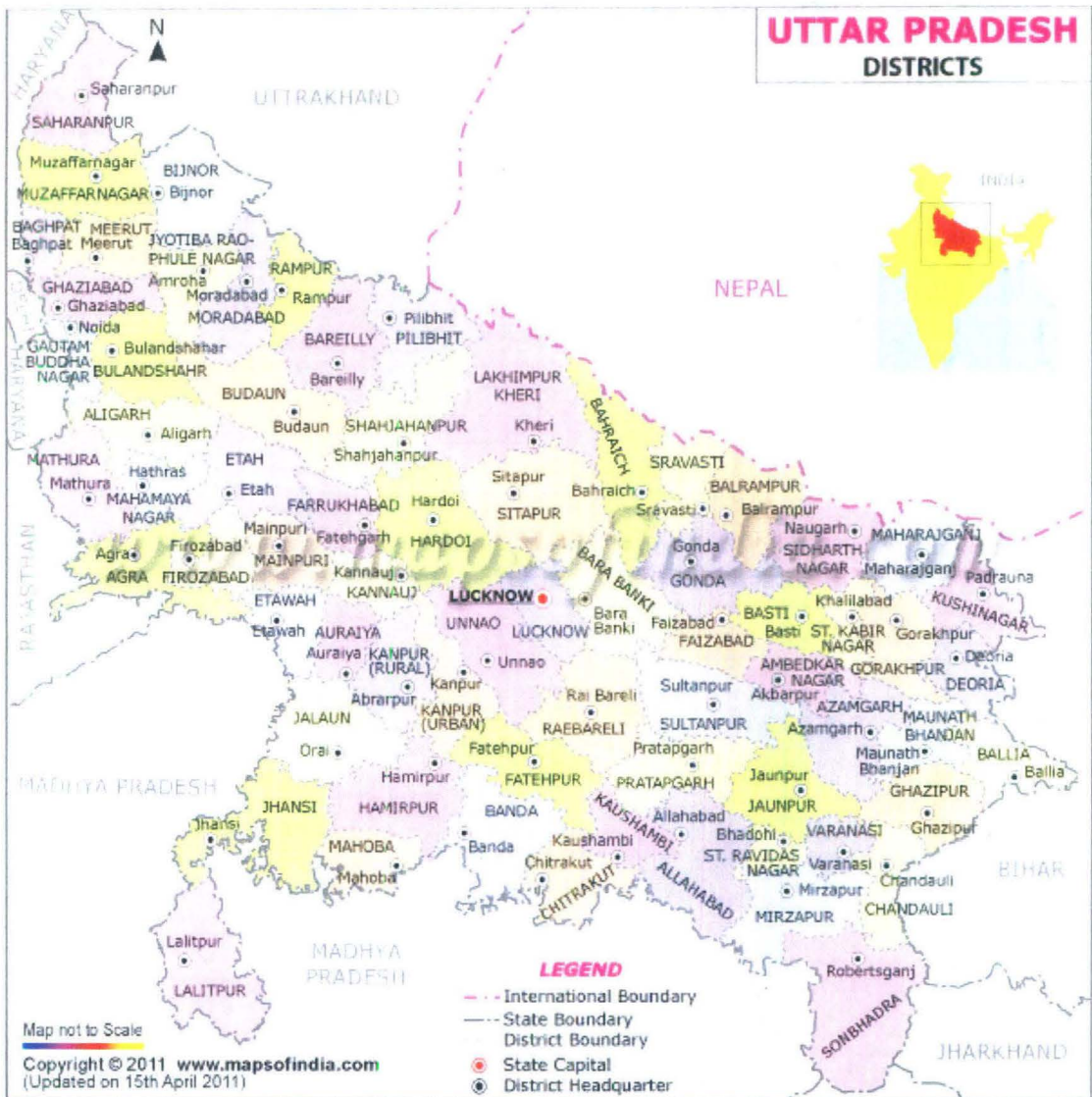
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<sup>22</sup> Stuart Corbridge and Sarah Jewitt, 'From Forest Struggles to Forest Citizens?: Joint Forest Management in the Unquiet Woods of India's Jharkhand' in Stuart Corbridge et al (eds.) *Jharkhand: Environment, Development, Ethnicity*, Oxford, 2004, p.107

<sup>23</sup> Agarwal, et. al. Op. Cit., p.3

## Chapter 3

# A Brief Socio- Economic and Political profile of Uttar Pradesh



Source: [www.mapsofindia.com](http://www.mapsofindia.com)



Uttar Pradesh, also often referred to as 'Hindi heartland'<sup>1</sup> of India, is the most populous state of the country. Though it is home to such large proportion, it ranks very low in terms of human development index. It lags behind most of the states on various socio-economic indicators of development and is counted as one of the most backward states in India today. The period from the time of independence till the 21<sup>st</sup> century unleashes a pace of development in terms of economic growth which was decent till the 1970s when compared with the other states of India. Only few states were ahead of it. However after the 1970s pace of development showed decline and Uttar Pradesh came to be counted as one of the last on the ladder of economic growth and other socio economic indicators of development. 'UP has been slow to seize on the opportunities created by the liberalization of the Indian economy that began in 1991'.<sup>2</sup> A decade past the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the picture seems very grim and one wonders what has contributed to such steep decline. This chapter aims to highlight how Uttar Pradesh has fared on different development indicators and analyze factors which have led to such dismal performance.

## **Historical background**

The provinces of Agra and Oudh were merged by the British to be called as the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. Later, in the year 1935 its name was shortened to the United Provinces. United Provinces was renamed as Uttar Pradesh in January 1950.<sup>3</sup> 'UP, with its existing boundaries and structure, owes its existence to the British. They amalgamated various

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<sup>1</sup> Gyanesh Kudaisya, " Constructing the 'Heartland': Uttar Pradesh in India's Body-Politic", *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*,25(2),2007, p. 153

<sup>2</sup> Valerie Kozel and Barbara Parker, " A Profile and Diagnostic of Poverty in Uttar Pradesh", *Economic and Political Weekly*,38(4),2003,p.385

<sup>3</sup> India Year Book, New Delhi, 2011,p.1146

districts, areas and territories to carve out a single administrative entity.<sup>4</sup>It did not have a single unified structure until the arrival of the British.

Politically Uttar Pradesh has always been an important state for the Indian union. Its political significance can be traced to various reasons including its size and population. This state has also been important breeding ground for the politics of *hindutva*, as well as marginalised and backward castes which ultimately acquired significance at the national scene.<sup>5</sup> In the recent past, there has been growing political mobilization of the lower castes in the state. This political assertiveness manifests itself in the coming into power of Bahujan Samaj Party under the leadership of dalit leader Mayawati. However, Haris Gazdar and Jean Dreze feel that the low caste movement in the state has rather occupied itself with the narrow objectives like achieving caste based reservation in the public sector.<sup>6</sup> Broader and more meaningful goals which meet the needs of the marginalized and underprivileged masses and ultimately bring in their socio economic and political development are yet to be realized.

## Land Distribution

Uttar Pradesh economy can be said to be primarily agriculture based. About eighty percent of its population still resides in rural areas. Currently, the total population of the state is 199,581,477.<sup>7</sup> In the year 2001 it was 166,197,921, where the rural population constituted a huge number of

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<sup>4</sup> Kudaisya, Op. Cit., p.155

<sup>5</sup> Sudha Pai, Pradeep Sharma, Pralay Kanungo And Rahul Mukherji, " Uttar Pradesh in the 1990s :Critical Perspectives on Society, Polity and Economy", *Economic and Political Weekly* ,40(21),2005,p.2144

<sup>6</sup> Haris Gazdar and Jean Dreze, 'Uttar Pradesh: The Burden of Inertia' in Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen (eds.) *Indian Development: Selected Regional Perspectives*, New Delhi, 1996, p.104

<sup>7</sup> Official website of census of India available at [www.census.gov.in](http://www.census.gov.in) accessed on 15 July.

131,658,339.<sup>8</sup>Development processes therefore need to focus on the myriad basic needs of the people living in villages and it should ensure their well-being and social progress and not just material prosperity. Agriculture is the main occupation of about sixty -six per cent of the population.<sup>9</sup> However when focus shifts to the pattern of distribution of land one comes across highly unequal distribution of land. Land ownership still largely remains in the hands of the rural elites.

Dreze and Gazdar note two cardinal developments in the agrarian history of Uttar Pradesh. First one was the abolition of *zamindari* system which introduced land reforms at the national level after independence as part of the socio economic goals where the role of private intermediaries in the land revenue system was done away with. The second development happened in the nineteen sixties and seventies under which modern agricultural practices and technologies were introduced in the agricultural sector. The land reforms restricted the power of the landlords and gave land rights to bulk of landless farmers. Still, immense inequalities in the pattern of ownership of land prevailed. Landlessness too could not be eradicated. Dreze and Gazdar observe that little change occurred in the land ownership in Uttar Pradesh even after the abolition of *zamindari* in the four decades after independence.<sup>10</sup>

While noting the changes in the agrarian structure of UP since independence... there has been an increase in the proportion of agricultural labourers and marginal farmers, indicating an increasing proletarianisation of the peasantry. "The sum total of economic forces in the countryside, despite the land distribution programme, has implied a high level of concentration of land and assets among a small percentage of big landowners and rich peasants."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>ibid.

<sup>9</sup> India Year Book, Op. Cit. ,p.1146

<sup>10</sup> Gazdar and Dreze,Op.Cit,p.37

<sup>11</sup> Jayati Srivastava. " Unequal Partners", *Social Scientist*,30(3/4),2002,p.88

Advances in the agricultural practices and technologies brought economic prosperity to the western part of Uttar Pradesh. However, this green revolution only led to economic growth in western area. This growth failed to bring any kind of improvement in other indicators of development. In fact, the western part, the material gains notwithstanding, fared badly on some indicators when compared with the eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Thus, it has been demonstrated that gain in private incomes has not lead to improvement in other indicators of development like basic education, healthcare, gender equality and caste equality. It is in this context that the role of the public action acquires significance. Public action according to Dreze and Gazdar would incorporate both the interference by the state as well as the role of the general public and civil society.

## **Gender Equality**

Gender equality is a central indicator reflecting the status of the half of the society. Uttar Pradesh is one of the most unequal states of India in terms of gender equality with only Haryana being ranked lower. In fact, in the case of Uttar Pradesh, the condition of women is so deplorable that it would be a misnomer to term the females as the equal half. The female-male ratio in the population seems to clearly elucidate this point. In 2001, the number of females per thousand males was 898, which is much below the national sex ratio of 933.<sup>12</sup> In the year 1991, the sex ratio in the State was even lower at 879.<sup>13</sup> By the year 2011 the sex ratio has increased to 908.<sup>14</sup> It is a marginal increase that too amidst various awareness programmes launched by the government and is still among the worst in India. Hence, this increment cannot be considered as anywhere near impressive. This skewed sex ratio can be attributed to the parental preference for a male child and neglect of the health of female children and it clearly reflects the

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<sup>12</sup> Official website of census of India available at [www.census.gov.in](http://www.census.gov.in) accessed on 15 July 2011

<sup>13</sup> Gazdar and Dreze, Op. Cit., p.44.

<sup>14</sup> Official website of census of India available at [www.census.gov.in](http://www.census.gov.in) accessed on 15 July.

strong discrimination against females in the state. However, in the age group of 0 to 6 years, the sex ratio in 2001 was 916.<sup>15</sup> It has further decreased 899 by 2011.<sup>16</sup>

<b>Demography</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Sex Ratio (Females per 1000 males)</b>
Total	1,66,052,859	898
Schedule Caste	35,148,377	900
Schedule Tribe	1,07,963	934

*Source: Census of India, 2001*

This discrimination against females does not remain limited to only health care and sex preference at birth time, it extends to other spheres like education and labour force participation as well. Their work is relegated to the domestic domain and is considered valueless compared to that of men's outside work. In Uttar Pradesh women have little agency. They are marginalized and underprivileged.

<b>Literacy rate</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Gender Gap</b>
Total	56.6%	68.8%	42.2%	26.6%
Rural	52.5%	66.6%	36.9%	29.7%
Urban	69.8%	76.8%	61.7%	15.0%

*Source: Census of India, 2001*

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Uttar Pradesh had a poor literacy rate of 56.3 per cent in the year 2001 . The gap between males and females in literacy was further depressing. The literacy rate among males stood at 68.8 per cent whereas for females it was 42.2 per cent, which clearly shows a huge gender gap of 26.6per cent. This gap was more among the rural population compared to the urban population of the state. For the rural population the gender gap was 29.7 per cent and for the urban it was 15.0per cent<sup>17</sup>. This also goes on to underline the need to revamp the structure of basic education system in the rural areas and address the factors leading to low female literacy. Dreze and Gazdar believe that limited access to education for women will mar their ability to play an informed role in the family and society. Education has liberating potential. It can enhance the capabilities of the human beings and give them the confidence to participate freely on various political as well as economic platforms.<sup>18</sup> The low level of participation of females in education shows their very limited role in the public sphere and hence negligible participation in the democratic politics at the grass root level.

Yet another indicator which shows restricted agency roles of women is low female labour –force participation. Dreze and Gazdar consider it as crucial indicator of gender relations primarily in two respects:

‘First, there is much evidence that gender inequality within the family (e.g. the survival disadvantage of girls vis-à-vis boys) tends to be lower when adult women have wider opportunities for gainful employment. Second, participation in gainful employment is one indication of the general participation of women in society, outside the narrow confines of domestic work.’<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Lori McDougall, “ Gender Gap in Literacy in Uttar Pradesh: Questions for Decentralized Educational Planning”, *Economic and Political Weekly* ,35(19),2000,p.1649

<sup>19</sup> Gazdar and Dreze, Op. Cit.,p.57

The work participation rate of Uttar Pradesh for both main and marginal workers in the year 2001 was 32.5. Males accounted for 46.8 rates while for females it was far less at 16.5. This figure undoubtedly shows the gender gap in the labour force participation for both main as well as marginal workers.

## **Social Equality**

Uttar Pradesh has a highly fragmented rural society. It is riddled with caste, class and other social inequalities. It is the higher castes people who wield power in almost all dimensions of village life. Although Uttar Pradesh remains one cardinal state where movement of the lower castes and other backward classes took flight yet it was unable to usher in any meaningful radical change in the structural social inequality faced by majority of lower castes people.

For nearly two decades, Uttar Pradesh has had a movement to mobilize the *dalits* and the other backward castes of the state. However, UP's lower castes had, before the mobilization began, and still have, the worst social indicators in the state and in the country.<sup>20</sup>

Despite such movements and rise of political parties which give the hope of social, political and economic empowerment and development of the marginalized sections of the population, their condition continues to be deplorable in the state. Access to basic education and amenities still remains a dream for them in this caste and class ridden society. Even in the case of employment schedule castes occupy least desirable of the jobs which are often menial in nature. The place in the *varna* system i.e. the social status remains closely intertwined with the occupation.

Regular wage, salaried and professional employment and large business is more pronounced amongst the higher castes. While OBCs occupy an intermediate position in the salaried and professional jobs, very few

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<sup>20</sup> Santosh Mehrotra, "Well-being and Caste in Uttar Pradesh :Why UP Is Not Like Tamil Nadu", *Economic and Political Weekly* ,41(40),2006,p.4261

Muslims are involved in such jobs. SCs however continue to remain at the bottom of the occupational structure.<sup>21</sup>

Santosh Mehrotra seems to believe that such lower castes movements have only focused on the narrow goals and hence have achieved only superficially. 'UP's mobilizes of the *dalits* have focused exclusively on capturing power, the gains to the lowest castes have been entirely of a symbolic nature.<sup>22</sup>

Dreze and Gazdar opine that rural elite- the high caste landlords exercise great control over the local government institutions and appropriate the resources for their own vested interests and thus have prevented the benefits from reaching the poor people. These local government institutions have been completely captured by the mighty and powerful rural elites belonging to the higher castes which in turn have jeopardized decentralized Panchayati Raj institutions and thus efforts to provide effective basis of local democracy and accountability.<sup>23</sup>

In the context of Uttar Pradesh 'decentralization was perceived as a problematic issue from the very start. Those familiar with the rural inequalities warned that devolution of political power might well result in the enhanced tyranny of dominant elite groups.'<sup>24</sup>This hegemony of the rural elites has been the major factor which has subverted the proper functioning of village institutions and various development programmes.

The sorry status quo of Uttar Pradesh calls for the need for a social change which alone can give hope for the possible future achievements. Dreze and Gazdar feel that social inequality should get proper attention and should not be relegated to the sphere of secondary issues. They opine that:

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<sup>21</sup> Jayati Srivastava, " Unequal Partners", *Social Scientist*,30(3/4),2002,p.90

<sup>22</sup> Santosh Mehrotra, "Well-being and Caste in Uttar Pradesh :Why UP Is Not Like Tamil Nadu", *Economic and Political Weekly* ,41(40),2006,p.4261

<sup>23</sup>Gazdar and Dreze, Op. Cit.,p.97

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.



... social inequality is not just a matter of income distribution...social change, including the elimination of oppressive inequalities, is an integral part of development...social inequality can be a major obstacle to the successful pursuit of a wide range of other development objectives.<sup>25</sup>

Factionalism in Uttar Pradesh can be seen as major hurdle in achieving social inequality and social change. Since rural elites greatly control the local institutions of governance the scope of the practice of democratic politics through these institutions have been lost and with it the hope of genuine development too.

...development work at the village level is a prisoner to factionalism where, in order to maintain their superiority, the dominant class deliberately subverts developmental work or harnesses it for their own personal/caste gains.<sup>26</sup>

Sincere intervention by the state and through the support of the general public only one can think of achieving the goal of social equality in the state. The government needs to get its priorities right and should have the political will to implement policies related to basic education and basic health facilities. Government requires intervening for reducing the social inequalities which make the devolution of power to the local level institutions difficult.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.111

<sup>26</sup> Jayati Srivastava, Gazdar and Dreze, Op. Cit.,p.93

## Chapter 4

### **Governance of forests and community participation: Insights from the field**

The success of numerous development projects and initiatives has come to depend heavily on the effective participation of those whose lives it would be impacting. State action needs to incorporate the needs and concerns of these people and it cannot be in a vacuum. Ensuring success in these development efforts necessitates meaningful collaboration of state initiatives and concerned communities efforts. Peter Evans has also emphasized on the significance of this state society-synergy and expresses immense hope in the potential of this synergy. He states that 'active government and mobilized communities can enhance each other's development efforts'.<sup>1</sup> He further postulates that

Citizens contribute local knowledge and experience that would be prohibitively costly for outsiders to acquire. As the beneficiaries of the final product community members can also contribute their time at implicit wages that public employees should not be forced to match. These obvious complementarities provide a potential basis for synergy.<sup>2</sup>

The need to reinforce this synergy through meaningful participation of the forest dwelling and forest dependent communities seems to underline the goals of the forest governance in the country. Joint Forest Management which came into existence as part of the guidelines issued by governments circular in the 1990s and which was later revised in the year 2000 echoed the same approach towards the management of the forest resources. It hoped to facilitate the implementation of the National Forest Policy of 1988, which was a watershed development in the history of governance of forests in the country.

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Evans, 'Government Action, Social Capital and Development: Reviewing the Evidence on Synergy', *World Development*, 24 (6), June, 1996, p.1119.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 1130

The policies related to forests which were pursued during the colonial times focusing more on commercial benefits at the cost of community's livelihood continued even in the post independence years. In the colonial times forests had been categorized as reserved forests, protected forests and village forests under the forest act of 1878. According to its provisions village forests had to be taken care of by the local government or *panchayat* while the reserved and protected forests came under the complete management of the forest department. These colonial forest policies continued after independence. National Forest Policy Resolution of 1952 which recognised that 'the claims of communities living in and around forests could not override national interests'<sup>3</sup> elucidates the continuity of forest policy which did not take care of the requirements of the communities.

The 1988 National Forest Policy was a remarkable development which for the first time introduced radical change in the approach. It paved the way for transition from a regulatory framework to participatory one. It placed greater emphasis on meeting the subsistence related requirements of the forest dependent communities and environmental stability. Exploitation of forests for the industrial use and generating state revenue came to be only secondary to it. The livelihood concerns of the tribals and other poor living in and around forests were specifically dealt with.<sup>4</sup>

## **Joint Forest Management In India**

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<sup>3</sup> Paul P.Appasamy, " Role of Non-Timber Forest Products in a Subsistence Economy: The Case of a Joint Forestry Project in India", *Economic Botany* ,47(3), July-September,1993,p.258

<sup>4</sup> J. E. M. Arnold, "Joint Forest Planning and Management (JFPM) and Sustainable Rural livelihoods in India", paper prepared for the DFID Rural Development Office, Delhi, p.8

The Joint Forest Management geared towards fostering meaningful partnership between forest communities and state agency has been adopted by twenty seven states in the country with 62,000 Joint Forest Management groups managing around 14.2 million hectares of forest area<sup>5</sup>. By January 2000, 1,02,48,586.41 hectares of forest land had come under JFM with 36,130 JFMCs protecting and managing the forests. There was a rapid growth in the forest area falling under the JFM. Between the years 2001 to 2003 only, 21,711 new JFMCs came into existence with the forest land increasing up to more than three million hectares.<sup>6</sup> The forest areas allocated to JFM do not involve transfer of ownership of the forest land to the dependent community. Legally, it continues to be under state control. Under JFM this forest land is required to be jointly managed by the community and the forest department.<sup>7</sup>

In the words of Hill and Shields JFM can be understood as:

Sharing of products, responsibilities control and decision making authority over forest lands between forest departments and local user groups, based on a formal agreement. The primary purpose of JFM is to give users a stake in the forest benefits and a role in planning and management for sustainable improvement of the forest condition and productivity. A second goal is to support an equitable distribution of forest product<sup>8</sup>

## Legal Status

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<sup>5</sup> Daman Singh, "Policies Affecting Private Sector Participation in Sustainable Forest Management", *India Country Sub-Study*, 2002, p.8

<sup>6</sup> Chakrabarti and Datta, "Evolving an Effective Management Information System to Monitor Co- Management of Forests", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44 ( 18), May 2, 2009, p.54

<sup>7</sup> J.E.M. Arnold, Op. Cit., p.9

<sup>8</sup> Girija Godbole, " Joint Forest Management and Gender", Working Paper No 4 for the Engendering Eden Project, September, 2002, p.3

<sup>9</sup> Daman Singh, Op. Cit., p.11

<sup>10</sup> Sanjay Upadhyay, "JFM in India: Some Legal Concerns", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 38 (35), August – September, 2003, p.3629

In most of the states JFM resolution did not enjoy legal sanction. There were only a handful of states where JFM programme had legal backing. These states were Jammu and Kashmir, Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. In the rest of the states it had been launched through administrative orders at the state level and did not have any legal basis. As a result, it could be challenged if it did not comply with the national level guidelines.<sup>9</sup> Also, since it is not legally binding its violation would not entail it being challenged in the court of law. In fact the forest policy, which delivered this resolution, merely amounts to opinion of the legislative house in legal terms. Hence, it does not necessitate mandatory adoption of the JFM resolution word by word, by all governments.<sup>10</sup> The resolution based on the circular provides ample scope for flexibility. This flexibility imparts space to the State governments to modify, update or even repeal it at executive will.<sup>11</sup> This in turn can have both favorable as well as adverse implications. On the positive side it leaves room for the states to mould the programme to suit the new circumstances and hence evolve accordingly; on the negative side it runs the risk of losing the very essence of the programme which could result from the lack of political will of the state agents.

In the absence of such legal support co-management of forest resources becomes prone to vulnerabilities. It has been argued that the legal standing of the JFM has its bearing on the nature and sustainability of community participation.<sup>12</sup> Therefore in order to ensure effective participation by the communities, community participation should be institutionalized under JFM and JFMCs should be given formal status.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.3630

<sup>12</sup> Daman Singh, Op. Cit.,p.11

A weak legal footing can hardly be a firm basis where people who are expected to participate in such a joint programme would give 100 per cent of their effort.<sup>13</sup>

Central government order which came in the year 2000 demanding the state governments to register the JFMCs under Societies Registration Act, 1860 was rooted in the same concern.<sup>14</sup> It was followed by objections by many states. Sanjay Upadhyay seems to identify reasons behind such protests. He feels:

... this could create a legal impasse, as the whole programme of JFM, which is an incentive-based management option and the spirit and objective of the Societies Act which is to promote charitable activities and such are at variation with each other. The problem with such short-sighted and reactive methods of issuing guidelines for achieving limited purposes and short-term objectives clearly creates more confusion than any clarity in implementing a programme which has such high stakes.<sup>15</sup>

There is another group of JFM advocates who argue that JFM should be left to naturally evolve on its own in myriad circumstances. They warn that it would be too early to suggest legal solutions to it.<sup>16</sup> In the light of differences of viewpoints over the legal status of the JFM it seems plausible to quote here what Daman Singh says:

...it would be wise to explore alternative forms of organisations at the state level rather than adopt a single option across all states.<sup>17</sup>

## Area of Study

This study, drawing on the broad fieldwork conducted in the *terai* region forests of Uttar Pradesh, examines the role of the communities, which are dependent on forests for their livelihood, in the governance of the forests. It primarily focuses on the institutions of forest governance and analyses how effectively these institutions have been able to foster participation of

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<sup>13</sup> Sanjay Upadhyay ,Op. Cit.,p.3630

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Sanjay Upadhyay ,Op. Cit.,p.3631

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Daman Singh, Op. Cit.,p.13

communities in the protection and management of the forests. The study also demonstrates that the radical change in forest policy facilitated by the National Forest Policy of 1988 and subsequently by the guidelines issued by it in the 1990 and 2000, has not resulted into incorporation of the needs and concerns of the dependent communities. The study shows how participation of forest communities which was the essence of Joint Forest Management programmes has yet to be realized substantially. It also tries to reflect on the factors which have prevented effective participation of the people in the decision making process such as educational backwardness and gender inequality.

The rationale behind taking up Uttar Pradesh as my area of study has been that the State has considerably less forest cover than the national average. Uttar Pradesh recorded forest area constitutes a miserable 9.1% of the total geographic area of the state which is much below the national average of 23.6%. The forest areas in Uttar Pradesh are mostly located in southern part of the state and the *terai* region in the North. The forests are poor in quality and therefore, forest-based livelihood options are limited.

The Himalayan (Kumaon and Garhwal) region of the undivided Uttar Pradesh<sup>18</sup> has been frequent foci of research. The movement for the protection of the forests started in the hilly regions of Uttarakhand, colloquially referred to as the *chipko movement* where people fervently resisted the centralized policies of the state anchored in commercial benefits. It entailed increased awareness among the people about the protection and efficient management of the forest resources. It also attracted the attention of authorities as well as researchers. Efforts were made at the policy level for promoting efficient governance of the forests. Intellectuals wrote on the inadequacy of the policies and apathy of the state towards the concerns and requirements of the dependent communities. It seems to me the forest areas of Uttar Pradesh have been much neglected

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<sup>18</sup> The state of Uttar Pradesh got bifurcated in the year 2001 and consequently, a separate state of Uttarakhand came into existence.

in the area of research despite the fact that they are degraded and fast depleting because of immense biotic pressure. Added to this is the fact that the lives of the bulk of poor people solely depend on these forests for their subsistence which in turn necessitates meaningful intervention by state as well as the civil society in terms of promoting awareness among the communities and ensuring their participation in the significant decisions impacting their lives. There is urgent need to bring to light the working of institutions of forest management and their role in ensuring participation of concerned communities in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

### **Legal Status of JFM in UP**

Uttar Pradesh is one of the few states where JFM is backed by the force of law. The JFM programme has been given under sections 28 and 76 of the Indian Forest Act 1927. The Joint Forest Management Committees have been constituted under sub-section 6 of section 29 of the Uttar Pradesh *Panchayat Raj Act 1947*.<sup>19</sup>

In 1997 the Uttar Pradesh Village Forest Joint Management Rules (UP-VFJM Rules) were enacted as a precursor to the World Bank (WB) funded Forestry Project (1998- 2002). Later in 2002, following the separation of Uttarakhand and guidelines by Ministry of External Affairs for strengthening of JFMs, UP Forest Department amended the UP-VFJM Rules. After the completion of the WB-funded UP Forestry Project, JFM activities were continued with support from National Afforestation Programme, which issued guidelines for the formation and functioning of JFMCs.

Currently, Uttar Pradesh Participatory Forest Management and Poverty Alleviation Project are under implementation in the 20 forest divisions spread over 14 districts of the state of Uttar Pradesh. The project is being funded through a soft loan provided by the Japan International Cooperation Agency, JICA (formerly Japan bank for International Cooperation). It aims at restoring degraded forests, augmenting forest resources and improving

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<sup>19</sup> Daman Singh, Op. Cit.,p.13



livelihood of local forest dependent communities and as well as empowering them. The empowerment is sought to be achieved by promoting sustainable forest management including JFM plantation and community development, thereby improving environment and alleviating poverty.

## **Profile of the Area**

Situated in the eastern region of the *terai* belt of Uttar Pradesh Balrampur is home to 1,682,350 people. Balrampur has predominantly rural population which constitutes approximately 92 per cent of the total population. The total rural population is 1,546,770 while urban population comprises of only 135,580 people.<sup>20</sup>

The gender inequality here seems acute as the sex ratio is even lower than the miserable sex ratio of Uttar Pradesh also. Balrampur has a low sex ratio of 895 which is less than sex ratio of 898 females per thousand males of Uttar Pradesh and much below the national sex ratio of 933. This figure clearly shows intense discrimination against women in this region. This biasness further gets reinforced in other spheres like education as well. The literacy rate of this place stands at a dismal 34.6 per cent with 21.8 for females and 45.8 for males which is a massive gender gap of 24 per cent. Again, the literacy rate is much lower than the poor literacy rate of Uttar Pradesh with 56.3 per cent.<sup>21</sup>

As regards the Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes population in the region, it comprises of 13.5 per cent and 1.1 per cent of the total population respectively. The sex ratio among Schedule Castes is even lower than that of the Balrampur region as a whole. There are only 864 females per thousand males among the Schedule Caste community which is far less when compared with the sex ratio of 895 of the entire region. It evidently

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<sup>20</sup> Official website of census of India available at [www.census.gov.in](http://www.census.gov.in) accessed on 15 July

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

portrays extremely unequal gender relations in the community. The other marginalized community i.e. Schedule Tribe has relatively better sex ratio of 910 females per thousand males. However, it is still much lower than the national sex ratio of 933.<sup>22</sup>

Demography	Population	Sex Ratio (Females per 1000 males)
Total	16,82,350	895
Schedule Caste	13.5%	864
Schedule Tribe	1.1%	910

*Source: Census of India, 2001*

The grim picture which these indicators paint echoes the urgent need for the development initiatives to be more inclusive in this region. These figures portray immense disparity between men and women. It also shows how marginalized castes have been almost left out of the purview of the development programmes and it seems they are unable to reap benefits from the opportunities provided by these programmes. The main reason for this has been rigid social inequality prevalent in the region as has been already discussed in the previous chapter.

## **Field Study**

### **Sample villages**

The three sample villages chosen under the Balrampur district for the field work are about four hours drive away from the Balrampur city. These are all fringe forest villages. They all come under the Sohelwa Wildlife Division of the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department (UPFD) and are under the purview of the Uttar Pradesh Participatory Forest Management and Poverty Alleviation Project under implementation from the year 2007-2008. This initiative is projected to be the amalgamation of the twin goals of augmenting the forest

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

resources and thereby ensuring their sustainability along with enhancing the livelihood options of the forest dependent people. It aims at lessening the poverty of the poor forest communities by creating income opportunities for them for instance through JFM plantation or income earned through the sale of the Non Timber Forest Produce. On the lines of the previous initiatives this too is based on the co-management of forests by the forest department and the concerned communities. Joint Forest Management continues to be its essence which again brings to the forefront the need to examine the nature of the practice of participation by the involved communities and subsequently compels to answer the question whether such initiative has been able to account for the needs of the forest dependent communities.

### ***Girgitahi***

The sample village Girgitahi is approximately 750 miles away from the forest perimeter with a population of about 400. 98 households constitute the village. The population comprises of predominantly underprivileged castes along with very few upper castes people. There are 31 Schedule Castes households and 59 Other Backward Castes households in the village while the upper castes household number stands at 8.

As one enters the village one comes across scores of huts with thatched roofs. There are only a few *pacca* houses in the village, most of them are *kaccha*. There is one *pacca* road running through the centre of the village. As it was known from the villagers later, this road had been made under the MNREGA. Another noticeable feature about the village is the absence of electricity. Villagers told how some nearby villages had been connected to the electricity and that their village had been left out. The village also has a primary school nearby. When queried whether children went to the school the answers were in affirmative. However it came to be known from the forest officials in the region that during the harvest season the attendance in the school drastically falls to almost zero as even children get engaged in the agricultural field at that time.



**Girgitahi village which comes under Gugaulikala Gramsabha**

<b>TABLE: 4.2</b>				
<b><u>Gugaulikala Gram Sabha</u><sup>23</sup></b>				
<b>Number of Households according to the social category</b>				
VILLAGE	SCs	STs	OBCs	GC
Gugaulikala	6	-	60	14
Shankarpur	3	-	16	-
Pachpedwa	5	-	49	6
Girgitahi	31	-	59	8
Dubeypurva	10	-	15	10

<sup>23</sup> On the basis of information collected from forest officials of Barahwa range on 20 may 2011

## **Gohanwa**

Another field site chosen was the village of Gohanwa which is about 800 meters away from the forest boundary with a population of approximately 250 people. It is a relatively small village with only 27 households. Out of the total households 26 belong to the Other Backward Castes while only one household belongs to the Schedule Castes. It is also an Ambedkar *Gaon*. The *pacca* road which connects the village and the electricity poles which run parallel to it have been made under the schemes for the Ambedkar villages. Again there are only couples of *pacca* houses in the village rest of them are *kaccha*. This village comes under the Tenduwanagar gram *panchayat*. Hardly any children here go to school as the school is quite far off and hence many inconveniences are faced by them.

## **Gohanwa village of Tenduwanagar Gram Sabha**



## ***Mohakampur***

The last site selected for the field study is the village of Mohakampur which has a predominantly tribal population. Even Mohakampur is a small village with 35 households. 34 households belong to the Schedule Tribes with only one household belonging to the Other Backward Castes. All the STs in the village belong to the *Tharu* tribe. It is a close knit community compared to communities in other sample villages.

Villagers are mostly dependent on the forests for their subsistence. Requirements of fuel wood for cooking food, leaves and timber for the construction of their huts, cattle food and other minor forest produce gets fulfilled from the forests itself. When some villagers were inquired if they had seen any kind of change in the forest cover in the last ten years in terms of increase or decrease in the forest cover they seemed little apprehensive while answering this. Almost all of them said that they had seen an increase and appreciated the forest department for its efforts. However a handful of them were unapologetic when they said that the forest was quite dense before and was fast turning into a degraded forest and efforts should be made to protect it. Inquired as to how it could be

VILLAGE	SCs	STs	OBCs	GC
Tenduwanagar	13	-	44	-
Gohanwa	1	-	26	-
Bhadwar	12	-	28	-

<sup>24</sup> \* On the basis of visit to Gohanwa village on 20 may 2011 and information collected from forest officials of Barahwa range

protected, they were unclear about the protection measures except by planting more and more trees. Most of them were unaware of the terms related to the co-management of forests like JFM. However they agreed that village communities were encouraged and were involved by the forest officials in the plantations undertaken by the forest department.

<b>TABLE - 4.4</b>				
<b><u>Mohakampur Gram Sabha</u><sup>25</sup></b>				
<b>Number of households as per social category</b>				
VILLAGE	SCs	STs	OBCs	GC
Jarwa	10	-	66	-
Kanahideeh	7	42	20	-
Saifdeeh	-	-	20	-
Kusahawa	1	16	31	-
Mohakampur	-	34	1	-
Baitahaniya	-	45	-	-
Sagarapur	-	22	-	-
Majagawa	-	-	4	19
Naseemdeeh	8	7	14	7
Tarwa	-	-	52	4

<sup>25</sup> Based on interaction with forest officials from Rampur range of Sohelwa Wildlife Division

Girgitahi and Gohanwa come under Barahwa range of the Sohelwa WD. Barahwa range in turn comes under a sanctuary implying that it is a prohibited area and therefore collection of fuel wood, cattle grazing; fishing, plucking fruits are all banned in the region by the government. When villagers were asked as to how they sustain their family in the face of such bans they expressed their gratefulness to the forest officials active in the region who allowed them access to the forests to collect non timber forest produce required for their daily needs. Indeed it seems impractical to declare collection of the NTFP as completely illegal without incorporating the requirements of the poor forest communities. A woman of about 40 years of age from the village Gohanwa says:

“We are grateful to the forest officials who allow us to collect fuel wood for cooking food and other important forests produce. Otherwise it is difficult to sustain the family. They are being very considerate that despite the ban they allow access to forest for fulfilling basic needs.”<sup>26</sup>

It seems very plausible on behalf of the forest officials to allow such access as these communities have always been dependent on the forests. Else it might also lead to conflict between villagers and the forest department as villagers would perceive it as an encroachment on their rights by denying access to their basic requirements.

Many projects initiated by the government which target such poor forest communities include guidelines about generating more sources of income for the community which does not impact the forest resources adversely so that the degree of dependence of the communities on the forests can be reduced. These programmes also emphasize on participation of the communities in the management of forests which could help in creating awareness among them about the importance of the protection of the forests.

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<sup>26</sup> Based on interaction with a woman of about 40 years from Gonahwa village on 18 may 2011



This State government Programme based on these lines and funded by an external agency by Japan ,the Uttar Pradesh Participatory Forest Management and Poverty Alleviation Programme which is under implementation from 2007-2008 seems to have been unable to deliver substantially at least in these sample villages. The forest department is still the senior partner in managing everything related to the forest.

## **Factors Preventing Effective Participation by the Communities**

The factors which seem to have hampered the process of participation by the communities in managing the forests are numerous. These range from inadequacies of the state intervention in implementation of the development programmes to problems related to communities themselves. 'Inadequate commitment, ineffective implementation and insignificant results' have been the pattern in the state of Uttar Pradesh.<sup>27</sup>

### **Educational Backwardness**

'Literacy is a crucial tool of effective participation in a democratic politics'.<sup>28</sup> The educational backwardness among the communities also affects their capability to participate in an effective manner. It paralyses them in various ways. The uneducated marginalized sections find it hard to voice their needs and concerns in public arena. Also, being illiterate they cannot play an informed role in the society. It undermines their confidence to participate freely in the democratic processes. As is the case with Uttar Pradesh, a huge proportion of its rural population is illiterate clearly reflected by a low rural literacy rate of 52.5 per cent as against the urban one of 69.8 per cent.<sup>29</sup> The case of Balrampur rural region is even worse as depicted by the even lower literacy rate of 32 per cent.<sup>30</sup> Then if education is about

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<sup>27</sup> Dreze and Gajdar, Op. Cit. p.91

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.89

<sup>29</sup> Official website of census of India available at [www.census.gov.in](http://www.census.gov.in) accessed on 15 July

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

enhancing the capabilities of people so that they can play active role in the participatory development programmes the rural region of Balrampur district does not portray a promising picture. Such educational backwardness can distort the very essence of participation. It applies to the governance of forests in UP also where co management is being promoted by the Uttar Pradesh Participatory Forest Management and Poverty Alleviation Programme. In the sample villages there is endemic educational backwardness. While Girgitahi and Mohakampur had primary level schools near the village, Gohanwa had no such primary school located nearby. Consequently hardly any child was going for the elementary education. The group discussion with around twenty people including men, women and children in the Gohanwa village revealed that none of the elders were literate and even children were not going to the school because of the distance. However most of the elders agreed that it was crucial. One of the parents when asked why not he could drop his child to the school says: "It is not possible for me to drop him at school every day and again go to the school to pick him up. It is very far off and I have my own work to do."<sup>31</sup>

In the *Tharu* tribe dominated village of Mohakampur almost all the children including girls, present in the group interview with around twenty five people were going to the school. The *Tharu* tribe community seemed to be more sincere towards educating their children .however in the Girgitahi village even though the school was nearby only a handful of children were going to the school from around five households which were visited.

### **Caste Inequality**

Caste inequality is pervasive in the state of UP. In fact the objective of devolution of power to the communities in the decision making through the local level institutions has not materialized. These local level institutions have been almost captured by the powerful upper class rural elites. As a

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<sup>31</sup> A man of about thirty years from Gohanwa village says in the course of the group discussion on 18 May 2011

result there is no participation by the marginalized communities in various development programmes initiated by the government. In the sample villages, however, the upper castes are very small in number. In Mohakampur and Gohanwa there are no upper castes households and in Girgitahi there are only 8 out of the total households of 98. Nevertheless one shocking revelation about the capture of local level institution by rural elites came to light through the interview of a forest official at the range level. It was a village gram sabha near the sample villages. He says:

“It has recently been declared as a reserved seat. The Gram Pradhan elected belongs to the OBC category. However it has been the stronghold of the upper castes. Before it was recognized as a reserved seat gram Pradhan was always an upper caste from a household of the village. Now the new OBC Gram Pradhan has been hired by the earlier one on a monthly salary of three thousand rupees. He is a puppet in his hand. His work is only to sign wherever he is asked to. All the affairs are managed by the earlier pradhan and he has control over the resources as well as funds which come for the village panchayat.”<sup>32</sup>

### **Gender Inequality**

Widespread gender inequality is another hurdle in achieving the goal of participation by all. The discrimination against women is extensive in the Balrampur region as the figures given in the above section about the profile of the area depicts. The social norms and conventions prevalent in the region restrict the role of the women in public sphere. As a result there are no women in the *panchayat* meetings. The sample villages *Gram Sabhas* do not function in an appropriate manner. A woman of about forty five years when was asked during the interview if she goes to the *panchayat* meetings answers in negative and says:

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<sup>32</sup> Based on interaction with a range level forest official of Sohelwa WD on 21st May, 2011.

"I do not go to these meetings. What is the use? I attended the meeting way back, only once .But, nothing happens there. It is just a formality. Even when the meetings don't happen it gets registered that it happened signed by only a couple of members from the panchayat. Even the men in my village are not informed about these meetings in advance or the issue that these meetings would take up".<sup>33</sup>

## **Functioning of the Institutions of Forest Management**

The Uttar Pradesh Participatory forest management and poverty alleviation project is under execution in this area since 2007-2008. However everything seems to be on paper as not much could be found at the ground level. Officials at the range level had only some vague idea about it.<sup>34</sup> Villagers did not know about the JFMCs. There was one villager of about fifty years of age encountered during the course of the fieldwork. He was from the village Girgitahi and had been a member of the JFM committee when the project had started. It was known from him that he was called for the meeting only a couple of times in the beginning. It had a forest staff also as its member. Since then he was never called. JFMC did not work there.

We see that the purpose of the Uttar Pradesh Participatory forest management and poverty alleviation project has been defeated in the sample villages. There is no participation by the forest dependent communities in the management. Even now it's the forest department which single handedly manages the forests. Many forest schemes based on co management by the communities and forest department have come and gone but there is no trace of meaningful participation by the communities. State government seems to be more contended with getting aids from the foreign agencies in the name of participation and less with the dealing with the root causes which creates the environment in which

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<sup>33</sup> Based on interaction with a woman of about 45 years from Gohanwa village on 18 may 2011

<sup>34</sup> Divisional forest officer was unavailable during the course of the field work.

effective participation is not possible. Again the causes are related to not just the lack of commitment on behalf of the state but also to the social inequalities and backwardness. This necessitates efforts to be undertaken not just by the state but also by the civil society and people.

## Chapter 5

### **Conclusion**

Synergy between governments and its citizens has been emphasized by the scholars like Peter Evans for the efficient working of the developmental programmes. However, fostering this kind of synergy can be ridden with a number of unseen problems. The major factors leading to such problems can range from the lack of political will on behalf of the state agents to carry out these programmes to communities themselves which are the target of such developmental initiatives. To say that communities always have good social capital which is rooted in the 'horizontal relations of reciprocity and cooperation, not vertical relations of authority and dependency'<sup>1</sup> would be misleading. The insight into the communities reveals a different picture. Communities are not homogeneous. Even they are divided on the lines of caste, gender, class, race and ethnicity and the power among them is not distributed equitably. This power asymmetry gives rise to 'resource asymmetries'.<sup>2</sup> The powerful lot exercise greater control over the resources at the cost of the marginalized sections of the communities. Therefore the dynamics of power at the local grass root level leads to pervasive social, economic and political inequalities within communities which hamper the proper functioning of even the well intentioned development institutions and failure of several development programmes.

The paradigm shift in the development writings in the late 1980s impacted the governance of the natural resources too. State was no more seen as the important actor for performing the developmental functions. The focus shifted to the alternatives and decentralization of institutions was

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<sup>1</sup> Ellora Puri, " Understanding Participation: Theoretical Foundations and Practical Implications", *Economic and Political Weekly*,39(24), 2004,p.2512

<sup>2</sup> Agarwal, Yadama, Andrade and Bhattacharya, "Decentralization And Environmental Conservation: Gender Effects From Participation In Joint Forest Management",*CAPRI Working Paper No. 53*,July 2006,p.3

emphasized upon. Community and market were seen as potential alternatives in the developmental processes. They were expected to play an active role in development functions. In the case of the management of natural resources too, decentralized governance was highlighted.

The field of forest governance in India too did not remain untouched by these changes. A far reaching change occurred in the forest policy in India. Centralized forest governance gave way to decentralized governance. It was reflected in the forest policies from the late 1980s and onwards. The fundamental change began with the National Forest Policy of 1988 and the circular issued by it on the Joint Forest Management which emphasized on participation of the poor forest communities in governance of the forest resources. Later Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Rights to the Forest) Act 2006 also showed that the needs and concerns of the communities had been accounted for in such governance. These forest legislations tried to balance access to forest resources by the forest dependent communities, thereby, not harming their subsistence and livelihood needs; and preventing the resources from its overexploitation. The immense significance of the cooperation of people having the stake in the maintenance of forests has been recognized.

Meaningful participation involves active role by the communities in the process of decision making. A decentralized system of forest management can augment the forest resources by benefitting from the inputs of the community's traditional knowledge about the local resources they have been depended upon. It's the forest communities which are the main stakeholders in the forests and therefore they have the incentives too to manage them efficiently. Therefore the co- management of forests by the forest department and the communities has been emphasized upon in managing the forests.

This study has focused on certain aspects of the governance of forests in India. The working of the institutions of forest governance in India has been highlighted along with the processes of participation which these

institutions lay stress on. These institutions aim to involve dependent communities in the governance.

The Joint Forest Management, which came in the 1990s, based on the equal partnership between forest authorities and forest dependent communities has been implemented in most of the states in India. In some of the states like Uttar Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, it has the legal backing too which is essential for ensuring that its guidelines are not flouted by the governments. In the absence of such legal support co-management of forest resources becomes susceptible to different vulnerabilities. It has been argued that the legal standing of the JFM also affects the nature and sustainability of community participation.<sup>3</sup>Therefore, analysts opine that in order to ensure effective participation by the communities, community participation should be institutionalized under JFM.

Some of the scholars, however, feel that JFM should be left to evolve on its own according to the different situations. Therefore it should be allowed flexibility. If it's too rigid it will face immense difficulties when enforced in different regions and might ultimately fail owing to unfavorable environment.

Though it has been implemented in most of the states in India yet it has not brought about desirable results everywhere alike. Reason behind such variations could be differences in the socio- political situations. Since JFM requires participation of people at the local level. As a result, socio- political and economic realities come to play a very significant role. The variation in these realities in different regions of the country affects the functioning of JFM. Therefore, it is felt that it should be flexible in its functioning which in turn can help it adapting to different ambiances and in functioning effectively.

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<sup>3</sup> Daman Singh, Daman Singh, "Policies Affecting Private Sector Participation in Sustainable Forest Management", *India Country Sub-Study*,2002,p.11



The study has highlighted the status of JFM in the state of Uttar Pradesh. It has thrown light on the forest governance institutions. Participation by the communities which is the essence of the JFM programme has not been realized substantially. The forest villages of Girgitahi, Gohanwa, Mohakampur within the Balrampur region taken up as field area illustrate this reality.

The study underlines that the pattern of governance is still not participative. In the state of Uttar Pradesh caste and gender inequalities are quite pervasive. These inequalities lead to suppression of the under - privileged marginalized sections and thereby prevents meaningful participation by all. These inequalities weaken the proper functioning of the local level institutions.

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