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COMMON PROPERTY LAND RESOURCES
Past, Present and Perspectives
(with special reference to Gujarat-India)

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Introduction

India is a populous (844 million) and energy poor (import of energy consumes the highest foreign exchange,) country with a high foreign debt and adverse trade balance, agriculture based economy (GDP from agri. about 50%) and adverse Land/Man ratio. Poverty is therefore, an expected consequence. Under such an environment, Common Property Land Resources (CPLR) are vitally important particularly for the rural poor who have to depend on them for meeting their every day forest based subsistence needs which they can obtain just for the cost of harvesting! Since India is about 80% rural and about 50% of the population is poor, CPLR acquire a special significance from a national perspective. If right priorities for alleviating poverty are to be followed, development of CPLR should come first. Unfortunately, it did not receive any attention until very recently. Perhaps Politicians, Planners, Administrators Sociologists and Economists are not aware of the role and potential of CPLR in social, economic and cultural welfare of the rural communities! This conference is, therefore not a day too soon and I hope, would create the necessary awareness leading to concerted action.

Country Scene

India is situated between 8 degrees 4' and 37 degrees 6' North latitude and 68 degrees 7' and 97 degrees 25' East longitude. It covers an area of 328,7780 Sq. Km.. The highest mountain range the Himalayas forms the northern boundary with the highest peak having an altitude of about 7190 meters. Naturally therefore, the rainfall and temperatures are extremely variable; all the diverse climates of the world are represented.

The population according to the 1991 census is 844 million (m). The increase during the last four decades is as follows:-(1)

Year	Population in m.
1951	360
1981	680
1991	844

From the world perspective, India has 16% of the world population with 5% of its geographic area and 1% of the forest area (1). A more realistic idea emerges from the per capita cultivated land:-

Year	Per capita cultivated land (ha)
1921	0.44
1931	0.42
1971	0.29

1981	0.22
1991	0.17

The per capita forest area is 0.11 ha.(1)

The situation regarding Land Holdings is more distressing and skewed. According to 1971 Agricultural Census, there were 17.5 m. operational Holdings with an average of 2.30 ha. The size wise distribution is as follows: (1)

Size of average Holding	% Holdings	% area
less than 1 ha.	50	9
more than 1 but less than 2 ha	10	12
more than 2 but less than 4 ha	15	19
more than 4 but less than 10 ha	9	
above 10 ha.	16	60

Only a quarter of the landed own two-thirds of the cultivated land.

The area sown has been steadily increasing, as shown below:-(1)

Year	Area sown (m. ha)
1950-51	119
1978-79	143
1988-89	163 (provisional)

The increase has come from CPLR and regularization of encroachments on forests

About 23% of land area is under forests. However, only about half of it is wooded. It is estimated that the forests are being lost at a rate of about 47,000 ha. annually (Forest Survey of India). The density of the wooded areas is much less than the optimum. The average annual production works out to about 0.25 cubic meter per ha. The main reason for the accelerated degradation of forests is the incessant heavy human and livestock pressure. As against the recorded production of 16 m. tonnes of firewood, the consumption is about 200 m. tonnes. The gap is met largely by unauthorized cuttings from forests as well as from CPLR and harvesting of tree growth standing on private farms. Because of the prevailing poverty, it is very unlikely the consumption of fuelwood could be reduced! Statistics show that the consumption has been steadily rising over the years as shown below:-(1)

Year	Consumption (m. tonnes)
1965-66	109
1970-71	117
1975-76	133

India has a livestock population of about 400 m. which is about one seventh of the world's population. The National Commission on Agriculture (1976) has estimated the fodder availability to be about 430 m. tonnes as against the requirement of about 902 m. tonnes. (1). Thus, the fodder and grazing picture is alarming and is largely responsible for the degradation of CPLR.

The economy has grown slowly with highs and lows virtually alternating depending upon the weather God. The average in the last 50 years has been about 2.5%. About 7 m. are added annually to the existing 70m. unemployed. Hardly about 0.5 m are absorbed annually by the industry. With the centrally controlled planning and socialistic approach, the international flow of technology and trade is highly restricted. The manufactured goods cannot stand international competition. There is, thus, an adverse balance of payments and foreign exchange crunch.

History of CPLR

Before the advent of the British Raj, all the resources were owned and managed by the well-knit and cohesive rural communities. The British wanted good quality timber for the Royal Navy as well as constructing a network of railways as also to obtain revenue. They, therefore, reserved the best of forest areas and acquired their complete ownership without paying any compensation to the real owners viz., the village community. In order to ensure the protection of reserved forests, they created Revenue Forests, Minor Forests and Gauchars (grazing areas). These areas were the residual areas and hence of poor quality as compared to reserved forests. Also, their extent bore no relation to the present and prospective needs of the community required to subsist on them. Thus were born CPLR. One important dimension of these common areas is that the management and control by the community which existed before the Reservation got destroyed in the process. This means that in the early British Period, India's non-cultivated lands became open access CPLR. The villagers therefore, no longer felt that the wise and prudent use of CPLR would be in their interest. Since it was free for all and first come first served, everyone vied with everyone else to be the first!! "Future is therefore, totally discounted and everybody is motivated to extract as much as they want for the present without any restraint" (2). This has now come to be known as "Tragedy of the commons"

The extent of CPLR is shown below:-(1)

Category	Area in m.ha.
Barren and unculturable	21.5
Permanent pastures and other grazing land	12.2
Misc. tree groves	3.9
Culturable wasteland	16.9
Fallow other than current	9.5
Total	64.0.

(19.6 % of the total land area)

Causes for the decrease of CPLR

A large number of factors has contributed to the decrease in the extent of CPLR in the country though they vary from one area to another. By and large, diversion to other land uses chiefly, agriculture and encroachments have

been dominant. The Government followed a policy of distribution of wastelands to the landless and leasing such lands for cultivation in an effort to achieve self-sufficiency in food. The famous Grow More Campaign launched immediately after independence brought under plough substantial areas from CPLR which could hardly sustain agriculture. The physical increase in the area sown which was about 119 m.ha. in 1950 to the present about 163 m.ha. was registered by a corresponding decrease in CPLR. (1)

Encroachment needs a special mention and a few words of explanation. There was complete stagnation in the rural economy during the British Regime. The average growth rate of agriculture was about 0.3% while the population was expanding at the rate of about 2%. (Swaminathan 1982). The traditional rural industries had been destroyed during this period. This situation led to unemployment and under-employment which continues even more aggressively till to-day leading to encroachment in a big way. The absence of any management facilitated and hastened the process.

CPLR offered the least resistance to their being diverted for uses such as roads, housing, mining, private and public industries etc.

CPLR gradually got reduced, their productivity got depleted and the population depending on them went on increasing. The pressure on accessible forest areas therefore, mounted to the point of their destruction. This is the general situation in the entire country. This condition is aggravated, as shown in the paragraphs that follow in the section below.

Reasons for the deterioration and destruction of CPLR

(1) Increase in human and livestock population over the period. This resulted in overuse leading to further lowering of production leading to destructive use.

(2) Poverty ; urban biased development created unemployment and underemployment. This resulted in increasing dependence on decreasing CPLR.

(3) Inappropriate Forest Management Systems (commercial) leading to reduction in production of the commodities needed by the rural people. Even though 90% of wood produced is used as fuelwood, Forest Management Systems are designed to produce revenue earning commercial wood: firewood happens to a bye-product.

(4) Changes in cropping pattern in favour of commercial crops leading to decreasing production of fuelwood and fodder. Modern technology despised trees on farms. Concomitantly, the prices of fuelwood became sky high resulting in large scale harvesting of trees from farmlands. Aggravating the situation was the unfavourable Govt. Policies for tree raising on farms.

(5) Breaking down of traditional relationship between land owners and agri. labour regarding supply of agricultural residues as a result of Land Reforms and Minimum Wages Act.

(6) Nationalization of Private Forests led to their destruction, on which the villagers in the vicinity depended.

- (7) Absence of Management and Regulation of CPLR.
- (8) Absence of investment in CPLR.

The present situation is that the CPLR are in different stages of degradation and destruction. Their productivity is greatly impaired at a time when the needs have increased!! The solution seems intractable! Does it? Not really so as is explained below.

The degradation is progressive and perceptible. It takes varying periods of time depending upon the degree of overuse, the kind of overuse and the time of the year when it takes place. Generally speaking, the following stages are discernible:-

Stage I : The most fertile patches of land are encroached upon for cultivation

Stage II: Important fuelwood trees followed by less suitable ones are the first to disappear. This is followed by the destruction of the most valuable timber trees closest to the habitations. After they are exhausted, the next best come to be selected. The destruction spreads in concentric circles to a distance of about 15Km.

Stage III : Fruit trees which are normally protected by the community become unavoidable victims.

Stage IV : The bushes which are normally not used as fuelwood, find a market.

Stage V : The stools of trees are removed

Stage VI: The area becomes barren and erosion takes place. In moist areas, unpalatable herbs and shrubs such as Lantana, Cassia tora, Zanthium etc proliferate. In very dry areas, Prosopis takes charge.

Regarding grasses, the most palatable are the first to disappear. The ultimate result is accelerated erosion in dry areas and colonization by hardy unpalatable herbs and shrubs in the moist areas.

Gujarat Scene

General:

It was about 1973 that CPLR attracted attention following the National Commission's Report on Social Forestry. It represented Government's response to the fuelwood and fodder crisis impacting on the welfare and stability of the rural poor. Initially therefore, it was not connected with environment or market.

Gujarat is located on the west coast of the Indian Sub-continent. Excepting the eastern part which is hilly, the rest is flat. It enjoys tropical climate with temperatures ranging from 46 degrees in summer to about 6 degrees (C) in winter. The rainy season extends from June to September. The rainfall decreases as one moves from south to north. The highest is about 2500 mm and the lowest is about 200mm. Twelve out of nineteen Districts are drought prone. Almost every year, some part of the State or the other is affected either by drought or floods.

The population (1980) was 32.6m (density 166/Sq.Km).The livestock population is 14.7m.Between 3.6m and 4.3 m graze freely in the forests.The population of sheep and goats is 4.7m.The power generation is largely through imported coal and is normally in short supply and expensive.The dependence on fuelwood is therefore very high as shown below:-(3)

Domestic consumption of fuelwood (1972-74)

Source	Amount in million tonnes	%
Recorded removal from forests	0.16	2.64
Unrecorded removal by privilege holders	1.03	16.97
Saw-mill residues	0.20	3.30
Imported from other States	0.05	0.82
Agriculture crop waste	2.49	41.02
Removal from waste and other lands	2.14	32.35

Source:NSS,1972 and NCA 1974-Reproduced from "Evaluation of Gujarat Social Forestry Programme"1986.

The above Statement reflects the degree of dependence on CPLR.With the progressive trend towards commercial crops as also gradual depletion of forest resources,the pressure on CPLR is terribly on the increase.The position regarding grazing and fodder is no better.It is relevant to point out that the land holdings are so small that farmers cannot set apart a portion of their small holding for fuelwood and fodder production.The size of holdings and their distribution is shown below:-(3)

Land size class(ha)	% of area	% of farmers
Upto 1.00	2.88	23.52
1.01 to 2.00	6.90	18.87
2.01 to 5.00	24.19	30.37
5.01 and above	66.03	27.24

Source:Calculated from Agricultural Census 1976-77(unpublished)Gandhinagar,Revenue Department,Government of Gujarat-Reproduced from"Evaluation of Gujarat Social Forestry Programme,1986.

Gujarat has hardly 10% of its land area under forests half of which has become degraded under pressure from the rural people.(per capita forest area is 0.035ha.)The annual production of fuelwood is in the neighbourhood of 0.44 m.t as against the consumption of 7.32 m.t.

The distribution of forests is irregular.The drier areas are virtually devoid of forests.

Extent and distribution of CPLR:

The extent of CPLR during 1961-62 and 1981-82 is shown below:-(4)

Category	1961-62	1981-82
Percentage of the total area		
Forest,barren,unculturable and culturable waste	14.9	13.2
Gaucher	6.7	5.2

The area under CPLR is progressively decreasing.

The distribution and the use pattern of CPLR is found to be sensitive to the agro-ecological conditions.It

is therefore,desirable to treat the status of CPLR in Gujarat according to the agro-ecological zones.For our purpose,five zones can be recognized :(4)

S.NO.	Zone/Region	Names of Districts(Counties)
1	Kachchh	Kachchh
2	Saurashtra	Amreli,Bhavnagar,Jamnagar, Junagadh,Rajkot & Surendranagar
3	North Gujarat	Banaskantha,Mehsana,Sabarkantha
4	Central Gujarat	Ahmedabad,Gandhinagar,Kheda Panchamahals and Vadodara
5	South Gujarat	Bharuch,Dangs,Surat & Valsad

A critical study of the distribution of CPLR shows that :-

(1) Their extent over a period has decreased.The reasons for this phenomenon have already been explained under the Country Scene.

(2) The percentage of CPLR is less in agriculturally prosperous Districts.(South and Central Gujarat)

(3) The higher the population density,the lower is the percapita CPLR

(4) The higher the livestock population, the higher is the per capita livestock CPLR.This is understandable because higher livestock population is normally associated with dry areas where climate is not favourable for profitable agriculture.

Iyenger (4) has differentiated three types of villages.The first type-I is that in which agriculture is intensive and progressive because the climate and soils are good.The availability of CPLR is very small.Because of the relative prosperity of the local population,the dependence on CPLR for fuelwood,fodder and other commodities is relatively low and declining.The second type-II of villages are those where the prospects of agriculture are apparently good but the irrigation facilities are limited.The area of CPLR is reasonably high and the dependence on them is generally more.Because the land is culturable and is available,the encroachment is generally the highest.The third type-III villages are located in the arid and semiarid zones where the prospects of agriculture are highly limited and the rainfall undependable;the population density is low and the availability of CPLR is the highest.The land based activities center round livestock raising and occupations related to it.

In tribal areas,the situation is very different.The commercialization of forests has eroded the tribal economy and driven them to large scale encroachments of forest areas.The Government Policy of periodical regularization,particularly on the eve of every election,of such encroachments has encouraged them.Because forest areas are normally poor and not suitable for sustained cultivation,the tribal encroachers cultivate fresh areas after abandoning the old ones(shifting cultivation) .This is one of the main causes of forest destruction in the country.

Uses of CPLR:

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Grazing and firewood gathering are the two major uses of CPLR. It is only in the type I villages that the local people grow their own fodder and stallfeed their livestock. In the II and III type villages about 65% to 70% of livestock depends on CPLR(4). Sometimes conflicts develop between adjoining villages regarding the use of a particular CPLR. Grazing has another dimension which assumes grave proportions during failures of rains which happen to be quite frequent. Migratory herds of livestock spell disaster wherever they go!!

Iyenger(4) collected figures of firewood dependency in the three types of villages. This information is shown below:

Distribution of Households according to the firewood dependency

Cooking medium	Village Type		
	I	II	III
	(Percentage)		
1. Fuelwood	49.4	58.8	28.6
2. Fuelwood & dung-cake	46.0	30.7	69.6
3. Dung-cake	1.3	3.9	1.6
4. Kerosene	0.8	1.1	0.2
5. Biogas	1.5	0.7	0.0
6. Coal	1.0	4.7	0.0
ALL	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Households	2472	1285	486

About 60% of Households in Type III villages depend on CPLR for fuelwood needs as against 62% and 33% in Type II and I respectively. About 58% in Type I villages collect fuelwood from their own farms as against 31% and 36% in Type II and III villages(4)

CPLR-based activities are undertaken largely by the poor sections of the rural community i.e. landless and marginal farmers who constitute the majority. They not only obtain from CPLR the biomass to meet their personal needs but also sell headloads in the neighbouring rural and semi-urban areas. These activities add to the income of the Households.

The economic dependence (excluding grazing) of the rural poor in the 25 villages surveyed by Iyenger(4) is shown below:

Activity	No. of villages in type		
	I	II	III
1. Fuelwood collection for sale	4(36%)	6(66%)	3(60%)
2. Collection of M.F.P.	1(9%)	7(78%)	2(40%)
3. Collection of raw materials	2(18%)	7(78%)	1(20%)
4. Use of Tank/River bed	3(27%)	2(22%)	2(40%)
5. Collection of medicinal herbs	-	2(22%)	-
6. Others	1(9%)	1(11%)	-
TOTAL number surveyed	25	11	9
			5

Collection of fuelwood and M.F.P is an income generating activity in Type II and III villages.

Other uses of CPLR are:-

- (1) Fruit gathering
- (2) Minor Forest Produce gathering
- (3) Quarrying
- (4) Collecting soil
- (5) Brushwood collecting for fencing
- (6) Fishing
- (7) Cremation and burial
- (8) Housing
- (9) Industries
- (10) Roads and Paths

The dependence of rural communities varies not only according to the agro-ecological conditions but even within a given area, it varies with the section of the community. As for example, large land owners would either produce their own fodder and firewood on their farms or purchase the same. At the other extreme, for the landless poor, the dependence is total. In between the two, there are several degrees of dependencies. Broad classification would be like this:

- (1) exclusively dependent
- (2) Partially dependent for sustenance
- (3) Marginally dependent but can do without CPLR
- (4) Dependent for one or two commodities required once in a while
- (5) Dependent for eking out a living
- (6) Dependent for supplementary income
- (7) Not dependent at all

It is as expected that the rich and the poor have different demands on CPLR. Even within the poor, the demands vary with the degree of poverty. However, one phenomenon that is common is that they are heavy.

Management of CPLR:

- There are four Government Agencies. These are
- a. Village Pachayats for Pachayat Lands
 - b. Revenue Department for Revenue Wastelands
 - c. Roads & Irrigation Depts. for Strips
 - d. Forest Department for Degraded Forest Lands

The Panchayats and the Revenue Department have no Management and Regulatory organization. It is thus 'free for all' and 'first come first served' environment. It is only Forest Department which has an organization and Laws for regulating the uses.

Iyenger(4), during the course of his study talked to the older generation who expressed the feeling that regulation and control on the use of CPLR was quite strict before independence (1947)

Status of CPLR

Irrespective of the type of villages, the CPLR are under heavy pressure leading to gradual and progressively accelerated degradation ultimately creating

barrenness. Between these two extreme conditions, there is a large number of stages as detailed earlier. The prevailing situation is one of decreasing CPLR and increasing population and poverty.

The size and the uses modify the structure and composition of the vegetation of CPLR. The changes in vegetation in turn force the users to modify their use. Thus, the cycle of changes in vegetation and uses modified as a result goes on till there is complete destruction.

The CPLR related problems are governed by the location and the degree and diversity of their misuse
Past efforts at development: Lessons Learnt

Except for stray and adhoc attempts, systematic development measures were initiated in 1950 with the inauguration of the annual festival of trees, Vanmahotsava. The efforts since then spanning about four decades can be divided into three distinct periods: (5)

I 1950-75

II 1976-85

III 1986 to date

Each period is credited with new knowledge and new insights. Each period has taught a few lessons. Each period is characterized by a modified approach and strategy.

Analysis of the developments during these three periods has led to a better understanding of WHYS and HOWS considered imperative for refining and articulating different aspects of Planning and development of CPLR

I 1950-75

The Van Mahotsava was made an instrument of a radical change from a long period of indifference to trees to the one of caring and loving trees and Nature—a revival of traditional culture, behaviour and way of thinking and living! The objectives as spelt out in Government documents were:—(1)

"(i) To provide fuel and thus to release cow-dung for use as manure.

(ii) To increase production of fruits, and thus add to the potential food resources of the country.

(iii) To help conservation of soil and stop further deterioration of soil fertility.

(iv) To help create shelterbelts around agricultural fields to increase their productivity.

(v) To provide leaf fodder for cattle and thus to relieve intensity of grazing over reserved forests.

(vi) To provide shade and ornamental trees for the landscape.

(vii) To provide small poles and timber for agricultural implements, house construction and fencing.

(viii) To inculcate tree consciousness and love of trees amongst the people.

(ix) To popularize the planting and tending of trees in farms, villages, municipal and public lands for their aesthetic, economic and protective value."

Another landmark event during the period was the revision of the old 1894 Forest Policy in 1952. The salient features of the revised Policy insofar as they relate to CPLR (village forests) are: (1)

"(a) They(village forests) should serve the needs of the surrounding villages,

(b) supply of villagers' requirements should be at non-competitive rates provided they are utilized by the villagers themselves and not traded,

(c) the management of such villages should aim at meeting the present as well as the future needs of the people,

(d) removal of produce in excess of its annual growth should not be permitted,

(e) the management of such forests should not be entrusted to Panchyats without above considerations and appropriate safeguards,

(f) the co-operation of the Panchayats should be enlisted in the protection and creation of village forests and in the distribution of forest produce to the local people but not at the cost of economy and efficiency, and

(g) while profit motive should be relegated to the background, the expenses of development and maintenance of such forests must come from their own income."

In regard to the responsibility of the Forest Department to achieve the above objectives, the revised Policy stated:-(1)

"(a) To awaken the interest of the authorities within their region in the development, extension and establishment of tree lands,

(b) to draw plans for such purposes bearing in mind the need for species of commercial importance,

(c) to establish nurseries and seed stores in each area for the supply of saplings, plants and seeds,

(d) to supervise the planting of trees and render such technical assistance as may be necessary for the development of tree lands and

(e) to arouse tree consciousness among the people through publicity by celebrating 'Van Mahotsavas' and by encouraging the 'Van Premi Sangh' (Tree Lovers' Associations)

It may be appreciated that all the essential ingredients that make for success of CPLR development were in place about four decades ago but the achievements were insignificant.

In order to promote tree planting, liberal subsidies and incentives were also provided by the Government. In spite of all this, people did not take to tree planting in CPLR.

Lessons Learnt:

(1) Policy decisions are not adequate all by themselves.

(2) Money does not grow trees: it is the PEOPLE who grow them.

(3) Government cannot develop CPLR: it is the PEOPLE who can with Government support. It has to be a PEOPLE's activity supported by Government and not vice versa. TAKE CARE OF THE PEOPLE AND THE CPLR WOULD TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES.

(4) Growing any tree anywhere has little meaning and appeal to the rural folks. PEOPLE's choice of species and convenience are of paramount importance.

(5) Education, Extension and Training are central to success.

(6) Early flow of benefits is a great motivating force.

(7) Local level institutions can make all the difference between success and failure. There should be a clear cut policy regarding access to the resources created on CPLR and profit sharing

II 1976-85

This period represents a watershed. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank revised their approach to Forestry. The National Commission on Agriculture came out with its Interim Report on "Social Forestry". The World Conservation Strategy was announced. There was a great awareness about the role of trees and forests in Nature Conservation. The Central Government created a separate Department of Environment as well as a National Wastelands Development Board. The International Donor Agencies became eager to assist Social Forestry Projects.

Based on the last twenty years experience, the focus was changed from TREES to PEOPLE. Extension Organizations were created almost overnight. Many Agencies—both Governmental and Non-Governmental—got involved in CPLR development. There was little coordination, much less integration. The bureaucratic attitude saw little change. The centralized Planning and Decision Taking continued. There was no clear cut Policy regarding allotment on land, disbursement of subsidies, sharing of benefits etc. The control over access to trees and the rules governing felling and transport which were unfavourable, continued.

CPLR Development Activities:

During the period, the Government intervened and undertook the development of CPLR—mainly the Panchayat controlled—with the objective of demonstrating to the rural community that it is feasible to raise trees on such lands without irrigation (the rural people believed that no trees can be grown without irrigation) and that it is they who would ultimately benefit. The Forest Department presumed, nay hoped, that ultimately the village community will take over the activity. In about 1980, a comprehensive Project aided by the World Bank came to be implemented. Main components impacting on CPLR were:-

- (1) Managed Village Woodlots
- (2) Self-Help Village Woodlots
- (3) Strip Plantations along Road, Canal and Railway sides

The profit sharing was 50% in Managed Village Woodlots.

Results of plantations were good but there was little participation by the rural community which unfortunately perceived it as a Government activity. Also, the benefits accruing to the rural poor were insignificant.

Lessons Learnt:

(1) The Forest Department Functionaries have the training, tradition and class related incapacities to deal with PEOPLE. They tried to implement Social Forestry with traditional tools and technologies. They have kept PEOPLE away from forests far too long. Their regulatory functions have alienated PEOPLE FROM THEM. As such, they need an intermediary—a bridge—between them and the PEOPLE. NGOs/VOs thus came to acquire a strategic importance in the development of CPLR.

(2) PEOPLE need to be involved in Planning and Implementation of the development so that they feel that it is THEIR Programme that the Government is operating.

(3) Fodder and uncultivated fruits should receive a higher priority because they appeal to the PEOPLE the most.

(4) Education and Training should receive greater attention.

(5) Multiplicity of Agencies concerned with CPLR development should coordinate and integrate. They should adopt a simple procedure with only a single window for the delivery of inputs i.e. subsidies, technology, seeds and seedlings etc

(7) Foresters should acquire more knowledge about indigenous trees.

(8) Top-Down Planning and flow of information should be replaced by a Two Way flow. A Forum should be established at different Levels to ensure continuing interaction among all the parties concerned. This is the only way to establish TRUST and CONFIDENCE between the PEOPLE and the Government functionaries. Talk to the people, talk to the people and talk to the people; this is the only way to understand one another!!

III 1986 to-date:

Because of the increased interest in trees and International awareness regarding the role of trees and forests in Rural Development, Agricultural Development and Environmental Preservation, the objectives of CPLR came to be expanded, extended and diversified. The current period therefore, represents a historical watershed in the recognition and realization of the value of trees and forests in the health, happiness and of the nation. The Central Government came out with a New Forest Policy (1988) and also announced Participatory Management in the development of Degraded Forest Lands which are de-facto CPLR, as a Government Policy (June 1990) CPLR under the control of the Revenue Department also received attention. Government formulated a Policy regarding the lease of such lands fixing the priorities for allotment and the quantum to be leased.

During the period, the focus shifted from monoculture to multi-purpose environment-friendly trees. Another landmark development was the involvement of Wood-based industry in raising the raw material needed by them. There was a great spurt in the growth of NGOs/VOs, Tree Growers' Societies and Associations, Local Environmental Groups, Women's Organizations, Tribal Groups etc

Panchayat Lands:-

Some of the developed CPLR controlled by the Panchayats came to be harvested. In order to motivate the Panchayats to participate more actively and effectively, the Government has started awarding 75% of the net income to the Panchayats and the balance is reserved for replanting of the harvested area. This has made some difference and a few of them with a strong leadership have made full use of the liberal facility. However, by and large, this measure has failed to make an impact. Most of the Panchayats are politicized and are dominated by rural elites who have little stake in the development of CPLR. Besides, a rural community is rarely a homogenous society with common interests and dependency.

A large number of Management Model options are available and quite a few of them have been experimented tried with mixed A long way is to be covered to hit an appropriate Model under a given set of social, economic, and environmental conditions. The following is the catalogue of important Models:

- (1) A co-operative effort of Panchayats, Government, Local and Regional NGO/VO, University and Industry.
- (2) Panchayats all by themselves
- (3) Panchayats with Government
- (4) Government with Panchayats-this is the most widely used Model
- (5) Government with Panchyats and NGO/VO
- (6) Panchayats with NGO/VO supported by Government
- (7) Panchayat, Government and Industry
- (8) Panchayat, Government and University

Revenue Department Controlled CPLR:

The Government has issued orders for the lease of such lands. However, little progress has been registered largely because the decision making power is centralised at the highest level. The rural poor and even the NGOs/VOs find it difficult to cope with the paper work, running about and the delays. Even if the land lease is granted, the requisite support in the form of credits, loans, technology, seeds and seedlings etc is still not in position. Even after raising trees successfully, they are not sure of getting the permission to fell, transport and process the material. The ageold restrictions still operate.

Various alternatives have been tried with mixed successes. Important among these are:

- (1) Individuals largely landless and Marginal Farmers. Trees are permitted to be raised with a guarantee to the usufructs (Patta Scheme)
- (2) Land given on a long lease to Tree Growers' Co-operative Societies under specific conditions. The rental is nominal. However, the support measures are inadequate.
- (3) Tree Growers' Societies and NGO/VO

(4) Tree Growers' Societies, NGO/VO and Government

(5) Government alone

Degraded Forest Lands:

These lands are under the control of the Forest Department. They have been under scientific management. However, being located close to habitations, are under increasing pressure largely because of the degradation of the CPLR on which they have been depending all these years. Thus, these areas are de-facto CPLR. It is only during the last five years or so that they have received attention.

A brief history of these areas would help the proper understanding of the efforts currently under way. As I mentioned earlier, the pressure on forests has been progressively increasing. The Government responses have been:

- (1) Strengthening staff
- (2) Establishment of Mobile Squads with armed police
- (3) Establishments of Checking Posts on important and notorious routes
- (4) Legislation for deterrent punishment
- (5) Arming the Forest Field Staff

All these measures failed to contain the menace of illicit felling of trees from Government forests.

History has it that the primary reason for the destruction of forests is the alienation of forest dwellers during the Foreign Rule for generating revenue. The Management of Forests was commercialized to the utter disregard of the needs and welfare of the forest dwellers. Is it ever possible to protect the forests so long as this environment continues to operate?

In mid 1987, Mr. R.S. Pathan—a dynamic, down-to-earth Forester with a vision took over the charge of Surat Circle—the best forests of Gujarat State. After analyzing the situation, he came to the conclusion that conventional measures have completely failed. He therefore, decided to experiment with a people oriented and reformist approach—an approach normally inconceivable for a conventional Forester! He started meeting the villagers and his staff which had become demoralized and helpless by then. In the process, he felt the need for institutional involvement which could be the forum for reacting with and reaching out to a large body of villagers. He soon thought of the Federation of Forest Labour Co-Operative Societies having 34 Primary Societies with a Membership of 23,000. The Forest Societies are the oldest in the country—over four decades—have a three tier structure and the office-bearers are democratically elected

Pathan realized that it would be hard to sell the idea of PROTECTION per se'. Instead, he highlighted the social, cultural, economic and emotional aspects of forests and their impact on their life and livelihood. After having decided on the strategy, he (Pathan) organized broad based

meetings in which all NGOs/VOs, Panchayats, Associations, Religious Leaders, School Teachers and others were invited. The Forest Department remained in the background and conscious efforts were made to create a feeling among the forest dwellers that they were the organizers and that all decisions were taken by them. This feeling proved a great stimulant and morale booster for the tribals who started taking increasing interest in such meetings. It took about five months (a short period indeed considering decades of confrontation with the Forest Department) of discussions, education and extension to establish a rapport and persuade the tribals to listen to the Forest Department. Pathan took full advantage of the favourable environment and organized a large number of Village Level Meetings. One important issue discussed in all such meetings was: What are the needs of the local people, who these beneficiaries are and how can such needs be met without destroying the forests?

I attended one of these meetings and was very impressed by the awakening and the enthusiasm of the people. The presence of women was very encouraging. The local leaders addressed the gathering and explained in details how the protection of forests was ensured through patrolling of forests by groups of 5-6 by turns and imposing social sanctions on those who cut trees and grazed their animals in the closed areas. What surprised me the most was that what the Forest Department could not accomplish within four decades even with authority of law, the villagers achieved within a few months without any legal backing!!

By the end of December 1987, Pathan felt that time was ripe for involving the politicians to secure their patronage and support. One of the most effective political tools to garner large scale support of the public, politicians and bureaucrats is to organize a Padayatra (Rally on foot). The Chief Minister of the State, other Government Agencies, Panchayats, Social Service Organizations, School Teachers, Religious Leaders, elected representatives and a large number of the public who matter participated. The Rally was attended by about 10,000 people. It passed through 20 villages, covered 50 Km. and took three days. At every village, a meeting was held and the forest related problems were discussed very frankly and freely. The Department took prompt action in resolving them. Sometime, complaints against a few members of the Field Staff were received. Even these were resolved which action created a lot of trust and confidence. In order to reinforce the relationship and to demonstrate that the Forest Department sincerely and genuinely cares for them, the Department organized a Medical Camp with the help of the Medical College in which 1600 tribal patients were treated. This event had a great emotional impact!

Staff development was addressed almost simultaneously. It had to be reformed and educated as to how to deal with forest dwellers who have a distinct culture and

different sensitivities. Another aspect which was urgently required to be addressed was regarding the morale of the field functionaries. A couple of murders of the members of forest staff had demoralised them and correspondingly encouraged the smugglers. Pathan therefore, organized staff development programmes such :

- Tribal Culture and Traditions
- Use of Fire Arms
- Training in self defense-martial arts
- Forest Law and Legal Procedures
- Operation of wireless

An integrated and holistic approach included the Traders and Saw Mill Owners who abetted the crimes by purchasing and quickly converting the stolen timber. Pathan visualized this vital link and addressed this problem. Fortunately, he succeeded in breaking the nexus between them.

Protection is only one part of the whole issue. The forest dwellers have to be involved in restoring and enriching the degraded forests. Pathan therefore, coined a catchy slogan "RESTORE THE FOREST THAT WAS FIFTY YEARS AGO". This appealed to the people who volunteered to carry out cutback operations and enrichment planting. These operations not only improved the forests but also in the process generated much needed firewood and grass for local consumption. Gamtalao is the village which spearheaded the movement. This village invited neighbouring villages and talked to them and showed to them the otherwise unbelievable improvement. I visited this village in February last and was impressed by the results and the interest and enthusiasm of the local people. The Chief Minister visited this village recently and announced that the Government would share 25% of the revenue with the village. The District Panchayat also announced a prize of Rs.100,000 (U.S. Dollars 5000) to the village achieving the best results. The encouragement and incentive provided by these measures was just superb-beyond every body's imagination!! So far, about one hundred villages have constituted Forest Committees and have undertaken the task of forest improvement. A silent revolution is under way, as it were!! I would like to crystalize the unique, unconventional and innovative features (6) of this Governmental initiative for the benefit of the Delegates from other Developing countries faced with similar problems:

- (1) Establishment of credibility and creation of trust and confidence
- (2) Close co-operation and collaboration with all concerned
- (3) A holistic and integrated approach
- (4) Appropriate Educational and Extension methods
- (5) One Agenda-Welfare of Forest Dwellers
- (6) Creating and supporting Local Committees and enabling them to conduct business and take decisions
- (7) Removal of irritants such as undesirable staff
- (8) Addressing and resolving the problems regarding the basic needs of the villagers

(9) Staff Development

(10) Equitable distribution of benefits

Social Security through Afforestation is another innovative concept of associating destroyer of forests with their Protection and Development. Salient features of this initiative-again by a Government Agency, Forest Department-are:

(1) Degraded forest land is allotted (not leased) to a tribal landless family which was involved in stealing timber and firewood from forests. An area of about 2.5 ha. is allotted to each carefully selected family annually for a period of 15 years. Each plot is contiguous to the previous year's plot. The 15 year period is considered adequate for harvesting. The 2.5ha. limit per family is fixed on the basis of the capacity of an average family to carry out all the operations and earn adequate income to sustain the family. Every month, specific operations are required to be carried out as per the schedule provided by the Forest Department. As an incentive, the family is assured of sharing the profit in the proportion 80:20. The Scheme is in operation for about 12 years. The results to-date are that it has succeeded in a few places and failed in others. No evaluation has so far been done.

Lessons Learnt

(1) The highest priority should be accorded to the establishment of TRUST and CONFIDENCE between Government Functionaries and the PEOPLE. It should be the starting point in CPLR development process.

Meeting the basic needs of the people and addressing their most pressing problem should be the only agenda in the initial stages followed by employment generation and other economic activities.

(2) Development of People is as important as difficult. Investment in People invariably stimulates local economy. Education, Extension, Training and Demonstration are central to success.

(3) LOCAL, LOCAL AND LOCAL. Local Organizations, Local Resources, Local Leadership and Local People in charge of Planning and Implementation should be the foundation on which the development of CPLR should rest. The Government role should complement and supplement the local efforts and fill in the vacuum wherever it exists. The objective should be to inculcate and sustain self-reliance. One of the measures I envision in this direction is to develop the institution of Village Level Barefoot Foresters backed up by District level Forest Science Centers (Van Vignan Kendras).

(4) CPLR development has to become a co-operative and collaborative programme of all concerned. To make it so, all the participants should meet periodically at different levels and try understand and help one another. Such a Forum should be institutionalized.

(5) Piecemeal planning according to the control or legal status of CPLR crates problems besides being wasteful and ineffective. Participatory Integrated Planning and Implementation along impart legitimacy to the Programme and the People offer spontaneous co-operation and assistance.

(6) CPLR Development per se' makes little meaning to the rural people unless it is integrated with their overall economic development and welfare. This imperative need necessitates the long overdue restructuring of the Government Institutions, mainly the Forest Department. Social Forestry Wing should be made a part of the Rural Development Department.

Village Identity should be re-established and sustained.

(7) Multipurpose Trees found locally should replace single use local species or exotics. They have become a part of the local People's life, livelihood and culture. Their neglect have undermined rural economy and stability leading breaking down of the Man-Nature relationship. Many cottage industries have died in the process.

(8) Decision making in regard to allotment of land and funds should be decentralized atleast upto District Level if not further. Decentralization encourages grass-roots initiatives and participation.

(9) The rural people should have access to the village resources. All legal and administrative impediments to the freedom of the people in this regard should be removed.

CONCLUSION

CPLR development benefits the poorest the most. It is a low investment high yield programme which is within the resource-capabilities of the rural people. This activity has the potential of bringing about a socio-economic revolution in the rural areas.

Helping the poor help themselves and ultimately become self-reliant in meeting their tree-based basic needs holds the key to the sustained success of the programme. In most of the situations, Government initiatives and interventions are inescapable. A co-ordinated and integrated approach to Planning and Implementation in collaboration with the local people would be most cost effective and optimally productive.

There are indications that CPLR development is possible and feasible. All the required resources of Land, Labour, Technology and Money (in any case the investment is very low) are available. What is in short supply is a band of dedicated workers and local Leaders of credibility!

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