

**AGA KHAN RURAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME  
(INDIA)**

**A Paper to be presented in the International Conference  
On the Theme : The Commons in An Age of Globalization**

***Title of the Paper***  
***Conasumerism Versus Conservationism And its Reflection on***  
***Human -Wildlife Relations: A Case of Gir Protected Area***

***April, 2002***

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**Consumerism Versus Conservationism And its Reflection on  
HUMAN ~WILDLIFE Relations: A case of Gir Protected Area.**

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**SUMMARY**

Most forest land in India is under government ownership and the Forest Department is mandated to manage it in the "National Interest". The forest policy, 1988 and Govt. of India's circular enabling Joint Forest Management, 1990 forged a new path as it assured benefits to community and their involvement in management of the forests. So far 0.116 million area is covered in JFM out of 3.2 million total forest area of India. The management of protected area is governed by the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 which provides exclusive rights of management and protection to the FD. The 546 protected areas covers around 0.65 million hectare in India. The Act categorised protected areas into National Parks, Sanctuaries, and reserve forests. According to the law communities living inside the national parks have to be evicted and utilisation of forest resource is prohibited. In case of sanctuaries some customary rights were recognised by the government. However, people residing in and around PAs were using forest traditionally. Now by declaring forests as PAs the human needs and desires often compete with the conservation objective.

The Gir Protected Area of Gujarat state is last remaining habitat of Asiatic Lion. The lion population (177 in 1968 to 305 in 2001) and its prey population (5600 in 1968 to 52800 in 2001) increased substantially. There is significant achievement in terms of Gir ecosystem conservation but the way it was achieved is debatable. From early seventies to till now 592 Maldhari families (Pastoralists residing inside Gir) out of 845 families were resettled. The exercise of resettlement has not resulted in desired success. Around 45% of the resettled families have left the sites where they were resettled. Each of the family were provided 3.2 ha. of land for agriculture but now it is proven that it was not easy for the community which was practicing animal husbandry for generations. (Chaudhry, K. 2000)

The rural economy around Gir area is pre dominantly based on commercial agriculture. The groundnut and mango are major cash crops of the area. The commercial agriculture is paying them Rs.17000/- per ha. Of 1 crop of groundnut to Rs.0.1 million per hectare from mango orchards (1 ha = 2.74 acres). This resulted in high private land values and exploitation of natural common pool resources. The common lands (grazing lands) were encroached and privatized by the political leaders while excessive use of ground water depleted the water table to dark zone. This situation subsequently put more pressure on Gir forest for supply of fuelwood, fodder, and NTFP collections to 0.13 million people, 0.10 million livestock, from 97 villages around Gir.

In the above difficult and conflicting scenario, AKRSP(I) is suggesting future strategy. There is a need for striking balance between the development needs and conservation priorities in Gir PA by involving local community. AKRSP(I) has evolved this strategy by series of discussions with most of the primary stakeholders namely poorest, Maldharis, women, and farmers.

- Involvement of Maldharis in co-management of the Gir PA (major policy decision to be taken).
- Development of alternative income generation opportunities to the poorest namely Siddhis (an African origin tribe engaged in fuelwood trade)
- Networkings with the primary stakeholder for inter institutional relationships.
- Developed capacity of people who have resettled.
- Effective community mobilization over conservation of Gir PA.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 A brief profile of India and its forests:**

India is a big country having 1 billion population in its fold. India has 2% of the world's land, 1% of its forests and 0.5% of its range lands but supports 16% of its human population and 15% of its cattle. India would have the population of China by year 2010 and by 2020, it may be most populous country in the world. A large section of the rural population in India depends directly for their livelihood and welfare on natural resources like forest, land, water and wildlife. This is important for forestry as it directly affects the forests.

India has only about 23% of forest land, of which only part (17-19%) is actually forested. The greatest threat to forests is from expansion of farming, as land is required to meet subsistence requirements of the growing rural population. Agriculture and forestry have historically been considered as antagonistic disciplines, competing with each other for land. The other peasant activities such as grazing, collection of fuelwood, shifting cultivation and encroachment result in permanent change in land use on forest degradation. Thus, forest - poverty relationship usually remained negative, which means if people continue to be poor they will destroy the forests. Farmers' compulsion to satisfy their daily needs forces them to put their entire land for short term crops, this results in less tree raising in private land.

The power of managing forests has been vested in the Forest Department. Established in 1864, the colonial objective of forestry was to earn revenue which was more or less continue after India independent. The first policy of independent India in 1952 consolidated enforcement, and especially stressed that the interest of the larger economy should prevail over local interests.

Since the early 1960s, the forest department of India has been heavily criticised by tribal commissioners, anthropologists, other government, bureaucrats and NGOs for -

- its anti poor and anti tribal policies;
- for being corrupt exploiting the forests as well as the people living in or on the fringe of the forests;
- for its top down approach;
- for its anti environment stand and;
- for not being capable of preventing the continuing degradation of forests despite the immense power at its disposal;

With the remote sensing data in the early 1980s, showing that forests disappeared rapidly, the pressure on the department mounted. Despite the laws and the manpower at its disposal, the afforestation and protection work seemed to be an uphill task. Afforestation and protection efforts undertaken were often very costly and futile due to among other things, the non cooperation of local communities, which had divergent interests from the forest department. The forest department found it unfair to be blamed for the deforestation. According to them human interference and biotic pressure outside its control were the main reasons for the deforestation.

However, this situation made many foresters realize that afforestation under the present circumstances cannot take place without taking the assistance and interest of local

people into account. This led to the new National Forest Policy in 1988 and the government Regulation on Joint Forest Management in 1990. Furthermore, this paved the way for involving the local communities in forest management besides putting the local interests into the picture again by adopting JFM policies.

The wildlife Protected Areas (PAs) comprising National Parks and Sanctuaries in India have increased in number and their extent in last three decades. Considerable inputs for improved PA management and development of desired infrastructure support and capacity building have been provided by the state and central government. Currently there are 546 Protected Areas in India, covering approximately 4.5 percent of the country's geographic area or some 20 percent of the forest land. Most PAs in India were carved in 1970s. The national park prohibits all consumptive use of resources within its boundaries and by legal implications excludes human habitation. The sanctuaries till late 1991 allowed forestry operations and traditional use of resources by people. After amendments to the legal provisions, all consumptive uses within sanctuaries have also been curtailed except livestock grazing which if the competent authority deems, can be allowed under a set of regulation. The law also requires that human residing within are located beyond the notified boundaries of a National Park or a Sanctuary.

## **1.2 A brief profile of Gujarat and its forests:**

Gujarat State encompasses an area of 1.96 lakh square kilometers, which forms nearly 6.4% of the total area of the country. Gujarat is a major industrial state, also has a good potential to develop a vibrant agrarian economy by deriving competitive advantages from Gujarat's unique position in many commodities. Among the principal crops, Gujarat has a major share in India in crops in area and production of Pearl millet (12.89% in area, 24.99% in production). However the percentage of Gross irrigated area to gross cropped area in Gujarat is 36.25% which is lower than the all India average of 38.33%. Agriculture is commercialized a bit in Gujarat as only 41% of the total cropped area is under food grain as compared to 65% of the cropped area at national level.

A salient feature of irrigation regimes in Gujarat is that the full irrigation requirement of the crop is generally not met. The over exploitation of ground water has caused seawater ingress in the part of 1600 km. coastline of Gujarat. The quality of water is suffered drastically due to overdrawl and less rains, which keep ground water, unfit for domestic consumption.

Gujarat has a 9.6 percent of total geographical area (18815 sq.km) as a notified forest area. However, only 6.4% of the total geographical area have actual forest cover. The actual forest cover is divided into the following categories -

<b>Category of Forest</b>	<b>%age of total forest area</b>
Open forest	28%
Degraded forest	27%
Grasslands	06%
Dense forest	34%
Mangrove forest	05%

The extent of degraded forest area is indicated by the difference between the notified forest area and the actual forest cover, which amount to 3.2% of the total geographical area and about one third of the notified forest area. (Saxena 2000).

Eighty per cent of the total Gujarat forest is covered under Sanctuaries and National Parks. In terms of absolute figures 16900 sq.km area is under 25 PA. The Joint Forest Management programme is restricted to 1214 sq.km covering 1020 villages.

### **1.3 A brief note on Gir Protected Area :**

Gir protected area is the single largest tract of forests in Saurashtra region of Gujarat state in India, which covers total area of 1450 sq.km. (Gir National Park 258.7 sq.km) and 1153.4 sq.km. as Sanctuary and 40 sq.km. Pania wildlife Sanctuary). Besides this 470.5 sq.km. forest area constitutes buffer zone, as reserve protected and unclassed forest. Thus a total of 1882.6 sq.km. forms Gir forest. Out of total area 1502.7 sq.km. falls in Junagadh district and 379.9 sq.km. in Amreli district. Gir has tropical monsoon climate, which is hot during the summer. The Gir forms the catchment of seven perennial rivers viz. Hiran, Saraswati, Datardi, Shingoda, Machundri, Chodavadi and Raval. According to Champion and Seth's classification of Forest types, 1964, these areas fall under the type 5A/C, i.e. very dry teak deciduous forest. The degradation stages of this sub type also met within this tract as under:

- Sub type 5/DS1 - Dry deciduous scrub forest
- Sub type 5/DS2 - Dry Savannah forests (locally called vidis)

The Gir harbour about 32 mammal species, around 300 bird species, 26 reptiles and around 2000 insect species. The main carnivores found in Gir are Asiatic lion, leopard, jungle cat, hyena, jackal, mongoose, civet cat and ratel. The Gir forest is the last remaining home of the Asiatic lion. Once lion was widely distributed in Asia, from Asia minor and Arabia through Persia to India. The last animal surviving in the wild outside Saurashtra was reported in 1884. The live population recorded, as per 2001 census is 305. Historical records show that lions in the Gir preyed mainly on the domestic live stock of Maldharis (PAstoralists residing inside Gir) (Joslin 1973, Berwisk 1974) which forms nearly 75% of its diet. However the latest studies conducted by Dr. Naik, Chellam and Johnsingh (1993) have shown that 36% of the kills were from domestic livestock.

The protection of Gir Lion was initiated in 1965 after declaration of the Sanctuary. The Gir Lion Sanctuary Project (1972-78) laid foundation for restoration of the forests from degradation. No one can argue against the need to preserve the Gir ecosystem, though the ways to do this can be debated. In early seventies and later till now 592 families of 845 families of Maldharis were resettled. Presently, there are 54 maldhari nesses in the sanctuary having about 361 families. The fringes of sanctuary are inhabited by 14 forest settlement village with the human population of 4500 and 4250 livestock. In addition to this, there are 97 villages located around 6 km. of the sanctuary having 1,36,000 human population and around 1,00,000 livestock.

The dependence of all stake holders in and around Gir PA lies for grass, fuelwood, small timber, and fruits. Since these are prime necessities of people and livestock and in the absence of viable alternatives people especially the poorest are compelled to adopt illegal ways for obtaining them.

## **2 Consumerism : The Gir that is !**

### **2.1 Divergent and competing interest for the Gir PA:**

Human needs and desires grow with technological innovations and purchasing power. The 82 villages in and around Gir PA have a definite and rational but divergent interest in the use of the forest. The resources in Gir and environmental issues are governed by a web of interest, conflicts and trade off between different sets of local people and Forest Department.

An exercise was conducted by AKRSP (I) to assess the dependence of people on Gir PA. The villagers of 29 villages of Talala and Mendarda taluka were gathered and concluded the results dealt below in the table:

**Table : Dependence of people of Periphery villages on Gir forest.**

S.No	Particulars	No.of villages	No.of H.Hold dependent
1	People dependence for fuelwood collection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For selling purpose</li> <li>• For own consumption</li> </ul>	9 24	106-111 947
2	Peoples dependence for grass collection from the forest	20	414
3	Free grazing of cattle inside the forest: No. of cattle	23	11,781
4	People depending on forest for NTFP collection	18	115
5	People getting employment as a daily wage earner from the forest	18	218

**Note:**

1. **Total no.of villages 29 from where information is gathered (Mendarda and Talala Taluka)**
2. **As per villagers the total number of households in these village may be approximately 6040 nos.**

### 2.1.1 Interest of farming Community:

The rural economies in Junagadh and Amreli districts are predominantly based on agriculture and land is one of the important resources for the rural people. Usually the economic status of any rural household is assessed by land ownership. Farmers choose crops according to availability of land. If irrigation is assured they go for high value crops like groundnut, sugarcane, castor, red gram and fruit crops like Mango, Sapota and coconut. The table below shows that per acre income from rainfed farms is about one seventh of the farm with three season irrigation, about one fourth with two season irrigation and half of a farm with support irrigation. Horticultural fruit crops of Mango and Sapota provides 9 to 10 times more income than rainfed farming. The Gir periphery area is the richest, where per acre land productivity is the highest in the district. In the Gir periphery area on irrigated land farmers, are growing mango and banana. This area is famous for Kesar variety of mangoes. In a good year farmers earn upto Rs.1,00,000/- per acre from the mango orchard.

**TABLE : JUNAGADH LAND USE PATTERN**

	(in ha)	%age
Total geographical area	10,60,000	
Rural population	16,15,000	
Net cultivable area	6,00,700	56
Culturable wasteland	17,000	
Fallow land	1,24,000	
Gaucher land	1,20,000	
Forest land	1,00,000	
Area under fruit tree orchards :	21479	
Area under mango orchards	12939	
Area under Coconut orchards	4327	
Area under Sapota orchards	2491	
Others	1722	
<b>Total</b>	<b>42958</b>	<b>7</b>
Area under irrigation	126147	21
Area under groundnut cultivation	3,76,000	63

**Source : District Panchayat, 2000**

The data above reveals the commercial mode of agriculture. The ground area is 63% of total cultivable area is the district. Gujarat is a major groundnut producing state in India. Out of this Junagadh have 50% of its total cultivable land under groundnut production. It is the major edible oil source for the state as well as India. The average return from groundnut crop is tabulated below as compared to orchards.

**TABLE : MICRO AGRICULTURE REGIONWISE NET INCOME PER ACRE : JUNAGADH (FROM DIFFERENT QUALITY OF LAND)**

Agricultural Regions	Link with different intensities of irrigation (In Rs)				
	Rainfed	Kharif irrigation	Kharif & Rabi Irrig	Kharif, rabi & summer Irrigation	Commercial Fruit crops
Gir periphery	10624	16980	33940	59000	97800
Coastal saline	7654	15450	30945	56529	79900
Rocky region	6085	13470	29894	53965	60299

**Source : AKRSP(I) field work (1999)**

The above table indicates that there is an enormous difference in productivity and therefore income corresponding to different intensities of irrigation. A farmer owning land with higher intensity of irrigation is certainly economically better off. In addition to this, good returns in terms of land value are also higher. The study done in the year 2000 reveals difference in the land values in 3 districts tabulated below:

**TABLE: APPROXIMATE LAND VALUES IN THE THREE DISTRICTS OF GUJARAT.**

District	Irrigated (Rs./acre)	Unirrigated (Rs./acre)	Pvt. W.land (Rs./acre)
Bharuch	63160	28000	16200
Surendranagar	66800	35600	15500
Junagadh	166800	87000	55500

**Source : AKRSP(I) field work (1999) (1 ha = 2.47 acre) (US \$ 1= Rs.48)**

The above data highlights land values are highest in Junagadh districts hence people having more land will be socially well established. The commercial agriculture with higher land values indicates that people are very much inclined to commercial agriculture and therefore try to bring more land under agriculture. Since land is a limited resource, encroachment over village common land has increased. This has resulted in more dependence on Gir for fodder and fuelwood for most of the farmers while the poorest rely on Gir for fruits and other NTFP collections.

Talala is one of the taluka of Junagadh district sharing Gir National Park area. The fertile black soil and better irrigation availability makes farming productive to the farmers of the area. The short duration seasonal crops like groundnut and pulses are replaced by long duration cash crops viz. Sugarcane and mango. The last 10 years data reveals area reduction of groundnut crop pearl millet and significant area increase in sugarcane and mango orchard (refer table)

**Table : Change in cropping pattern in 8 years span in Talala taluka of Junagadh district.**

Crops	Area under cultivation (in hectare)		
	1992	1999	%age increase/decrease
Groundnut	17733	15000	(-16)
Pearl millet	964	600	(-37)
Sugar cane	2141	4000	86
Mango	4568	9300	104

**Source: Vijayan, S & Pati, B.P. 2001m : Impact of changing cropping pattern on Man - Animal conflicts around Gir PA. The Indian Forester 127 (10)**



The large-scale cultivation of sugarcane and mango orchard in peripheral villages has created artificial dense vegetation cover. This attracts large carnivores viz. Asiatic lion and Leopard to take shelter and raise their young. The straying incidences of lions and Leopards increased to 411% and 386 % respectively in 1999 compared to 1997. The study done by Vijayan and Pati in 2001 reveals that in Talala taluka 72% (16 incidences) and 59% (16 incidences) of the total attacks by lions and leopards respectively took place in farm land. In addition to this livestock kill is on increase in farm land (28% increase in 5 years). The presence of carnivores in farm lands has given rise to fear which affects crop harvesting. Similarly the damage caused by wild herbivores is also affecting agriculture of the region.

- **Extent of damage:**

AKRSP(I) collected information regarding crop damage to the farmers having fields adjacent to the boundary of Gir Protected Area. The 10 farmers having 18 ha. agricultural fields near to forest were studied for a year (2001). The crops grown by these farmers are Groundnut (peanut) in rainy season and wheat in winter season and also have mango fruit orchards. The most of the crops were damaged by wild ungulates viz. Wild bear blubull (antelope), black buck, sambar, chital (spotted deer). The people guard their fields day and night to protect grazing and damage from the wild animals. The damage is tabulated below:

**Damage by wild ungulates to groundnut crop:**

**Year : 2001 (June - October)**

**Village Hiranvell      Number of farmers : 10**

Type of damage	Per hectare crop loss (in kg)	Total area under cultivation (in hectare)	Total Loss (in Kg)	Prevent market rate in Rs (Rs/kg)	Total Loss in Rs.
Seed loss during and immediately after sowing in the month of June/July	12.0	18.0	216	27.50 Seed cost	5940.0
Loss of crop during crop stand till harvesting	225.0	18.0	4050	13.75 produce cost	55688.00
<b>Total</b>		18.0			61628.00

**Source ; AKRSP(I) field study, 2001**

The above table reveals the damage caused to the farmers inspite of guarding crop during the growth period. The another table below show time spent by the farmers in guarding their crop in a years time.

**Time invested in crop protection from wild life:**

**Period : June 2000 to May 2001**

**Village : Hiranvell**

Cropping season	Crop grown	No.of days spent by each farmer in guarding	Total no.of person days by 10 farmers	Local wage rate for guarding per day in Rs)	Total money spent in guarding (In Rs)
Rainy(June-Oct)	Groundnut	85	850	50.00	42,500
Winter(Nov-Mar)	Wheat	40	400		20,000
Summer (Mar-May)	Mango	65	650		32,500
<b>Total</b>		190	1900		95,000

**Source; AKRSP(I) field study, 2001**

Since most of damage took place during night farmers used to move around during night to protect their crop. Some farmers even lay electric wire around their fields which kill the animal. But usually somebody remain present to keep animal away from the crop. The damage is more during initial month of rains as grass regeneration in forest takes sometime after first rains and during summer as domestic cattle compete for dry grass with wild ungulates.

### 2.1.2 Interest of poor people:

The number of households involved in labour is a major factor that determines the quantum of people involved in the Gir PA for collection of NTFPs. More the number of households of labour, more will be the people involved in the trade of NTFPs. This is because these are the areas who collect the NTFPs. Similarly, the number of people dependent of Gir for NTFP collection is lesser in the case of small villages. The labourers and the farmers may have good relationship, which means they will be working on farmers' field hence not going to the forest for collection. The NTFP collection is only subsistence activity as collectors are getting Rs. 50-60 per day.

The availability of employment in and around the village during lean season also determines the number of people going to the forest. For instance, the village Javantri of Talala block has warehouse of a cement factory therefore nobody is willing to go to forest for NTFP collection as poorest get work in loading and unloading of cement bags. Usually fruits were collected from the forest. The items collected are named as - Billi (Aegle marmelose), fruits and leaves, black berry, karamda, Kerda, Hemra, Karkda, Kantola, Vaseti, Imli, Amla, Timru, Ber, Honey. In the year 2001 AKRSP took up the study with the help of a student from Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal. Mr. Tarun V Mapara visited seven villages of Talala and Mendarda taluka and analysed the dependence of poorest people in the Gir PA.

**TABLE : VILLAGE WISE PEOPLE DEPENDENT ON NTFP COLLECTION**

Village	Total H.H	Regular Collectors		No Collectors		*Occassional Collectors	
		H.Hold (No)	%	H.Hold (No)	%	H.Hold (No)	%
Nanikhodiyar	288	20	7	133	60	95	33
Surajgadh	35	08	23	18	50	9	27
Bhalchel	235	40	17	141	60	54	23
Sasan	472	59	13	310	65	103	22
Bhojde	264	32	12	158	60	74	28
Vadla	161	40	25	89	55	32	20
Javantri	283	0	0	212	75	71	25
Hadmatia	439	0	0	351	80	88	20

*\*Approximate figure from the general understanding of the village.*

*Source: Tarun V Mapara, 2001: The study of dependence of the people on the periphery of Gir PA on the NTFPs from Gir forest and the problems faced by them. IIFM, Bhopal.*

The occassional collectors are the major part of the household. When a person is not having any labour and he needs some money, he collects some NTFPs and sells them to get some money. The village wise percent varies from 20-33.

**TABLE : SEASONWISE PEOPLES INVOLVEMENT IN NTFPs COLLECTION**

Items of collection	Available duration (in days)	No.of H.hold involved	Person days spent in collection	Opportunity cost @ Rs.50 /day	Income from selling collected produce
<b>Monsoon Season</b>					
Vaseti	10	390	3900	195000	127050
Kantola	20	42	840	42000	3600
Billi (L)	30	250	7500	375000	130650
Karkada	10	410	4100	205000	31680
Hemra	05	20	100	5000	50
Jamun	20	410	8200	410000	35450
Karamda	20	410	8200	410000	30820
<b>Winter Season</b>					
Kerda	20	20	1400	20000	1500
Billi (F)	60	430	25800	1290000	260250
Kantharia	30	42	1260	63000	375
Amla	60	410	24600	1230000	100740
<b>Summer Season</b>					
Timru	60	270	16200	810000	125560
Imli	60	200	12000	600000	15235
Ber	60	270	16200	810000	28130
Honey	NA	166	-	-	31500
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>129300</b>	<b>6465000</b>	<b>922590</b>

*Source: Tarun V Mapara, 2001: The study of dependence of the people on the periphery of Gir PA on the NTFPs from Gir forest and the problems faced by them. IIFM, Bhopal.*

The above table shows that earning from selling of NTFP is lesser than the prevalent wage rates in the village. The data of the above table reveals that earning from Billi fruits is maximum but if we compare it with the existing labour rate at the area, it is not matching to that. Therefore table clearly reveals that in the absence of employment opportunity people are trying to meet the shortfall of their earning. The Gir ber is collected by 52% of the people as it did not have much demand while imli (Tamrind) gets low price due to absence of market. The Jamun (Black berry) and karamda (Carissa congesta) are bartered with the grains from the farmers. They are not getting proper market prices as they are doing it illegally.

#### **SWEET EXPLOITATION**

Mohammed Gulu Makrani is a young man of 21 years of age. He is one of the two members of the family who are involved in the NTFP trade. He goes along with his father for gathering NTFPs. He can also identify some medicinal herbs.

An ayurvedic doctor from Talala has approached him and they both have become good friends. This doctor has given Mohammed a list of medicinal herbs, and made arrangements with him to supply as much of the medicinal herbs as he could find. Mohammed brings 1-2 bags of herbs for doctor. In turn the doctor gives him Rs.100-200 per bag which is enough to make Mohammed happy. This amount is no way related to the actual price of the product. The doctor also told Mohammed to approach him in case he needs money any time. Mohammed is happy as he gets much more than the daily wage earning.

### **2.1.3 Interest of Maldharis:**

Concern for maintenance of bio diversity and wildlife has resulted in displacement and resettlement of people. In the Gir protected area (last abode of Asiatic lion), Maldharis (livestock owners fully dependent on cattle for livelihood) have been living in the Gir forests for generations. They are purely vegetarian, bold and amiable people living in small settlements locally known as "nesses" scattered all over the forest. They sell dairy products and dung manure of their livestock (Buffalo & cows). The three main categories viz Rabari, Bharwad and Charan/Godavari has been categorised as schedule tribe due to their socio economic backwardness and isolation from mainstream in PAs.

- **The resettlement Trauma:**

In the year 1972 Gujarat government issued order about resettlement. In compensation to this drinking water, primary school, approach road and community center were provided by the government.

The 592 families out of 768 permanent Maldharis were proposed for resettlement but only 458 families could be actually resettled. Land could not be allotted to 176 families, hence they did not shift outside the forest.

The cost of resettlement scheme was put at Rs.4.50 million spread over a period of 5 years. The resettlement process continued from 1873-1987, during which 591 families were resettled. The 5204 ha. placed land at disposal of the revenue department but only 3044.82 ha. was released for resettlement. Similarly the total expenditure made was 5.8 million in the period which shows that programme was grossly underestimated.

The state government finds several problems still associated with the Maldharis. An important issue which has not been resolved so far is that of the non permanent Maldharis who are living in the forest without any locus stand. In addition there is unregulated growth of Maldharis. Some nesses have got transformed into villages. Moreover changes have occurred there in the life style of Maldharis with the entry of market economy. Earlier the Maldharis used to sell ghee (clarified butter). Now they sell milk to make more money. They have trends of possessing more milch buffaloes and thus exerting more pressure on the forest. In addition to this, some maldharis keep livestock of outside farmers for grazing which increases further more competition for grass and water with wild ungulates.

After 20 years of resettlement of Maldharis, it is clearly emerged from their field situations that policy and strategy adopted has not achieved significant results. Around 45 percent of the resettled families have left the resettled sites. These families were either gone back to Gir forest or become labourers. The perdition pattern of lion as studied by Dharayan et.al in 1998 reveals the dependency on wild ungulates was 62% as against 38% on livestock. Therefore Maldharis inside the Gir may not be threat to bio-diversity particularly lions.

### **2.1.4 Interest of Women:**

In the families of poor people men and women both work to earn money. The men usually works in the farmers field while women go to collect fuelwood, grass or sometimes fruits from the forest. In case of Siddhi community (An African origin tribe) men do work on farmers field or work as a driver while women collect fuelwood either for domestic consumption or selling purpose. Similarly in the case of Maldharis (PAstoralists) women collect grass and cow dung in the village boundary or near by forest while men go inside the forest with the cattle for grazing.

In the year 2000 AKRSP had done an exercise in some of the villages using Gender segregated work (Harward Framework). The table below clearly shows that in most cases, women are mainly using the forest in addition to their household work.

**DEPENDENCE OF VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS ON THE GIR PROTECTED AREA:  
EXERCISE DONE WITH SIDDHI WOMEN AND MEN SEPARATELY**

**Name of the Village** : Shirvan (Forest village)  
**No. of Households** : 50-52 nos  
**Dominant caste** : Siddhis (An African origin tribe)  
**Date** : November 11, 2000

Activities performed in the forest	Possible usage	Location	Done by women	Done by men	Time required in a day	Time required in a year	Factors deciding the quantity
Fuelwood collection from the Forest :  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Locating the dry twigs inside the forest</li> <li>Gathering and making bundles of dry wood</li> <li>Carrying (Headloading) to their destinations</li> </ul>	For domestic consumption  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cooking food</li> <li>Heating water for bathing</li> <li>Poors don't have sufficient clothes to prevent cold during winter</li> </ul>	Sanctuary	* * *	* *	3 hrs	200-250 days	1. FD officials allowed together 2. In winter due to cold 3. In summer more due to collection for rainy season. 4. Almost every household collect 5. Each bundle weight is 30-50 kg depend on carrying capacity 6. Usually for consumption of 30kg bundle
Fuelwood collection from the forest:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Locating the dry woods inside the forest</li> <li>Gathering and making bundles</li> <li>Carrying (Headloads) to their houses</li> <li>Next day carry it to the market at Ankulwadi/ Rasoolpura</li> </ul>	For domestic purpose purchased by the villagers.	Sanctuary	* * *	* *	4-5 hrs for collection and 3 hrs for marketing	120-130 days	1. FD Officials allow to collect 2. In summer demand more on villagers stock the wood for rainy season. 3. In summer siddhis have less labour opportunities hence extract more wood 4. In winter less as villagers using crop residues as a fuel. 5. Sometimes Siddhis get labourers' work in fields.  6. Bundle weight around 50kg
Cattle grazing in forest  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rainy season</li> <li>Winter season</li> <li>Summer season</li> </ul>	Free grazing in the forest	Sanctuary	*	* * *		150-180 days	1. FD officials permission 2. In rainy and winter season villagers are busy in farming and labour work 3. In summer FD restricts 4. Man guard cattle if they graze far from village 5. Free grazing allowed upto 3 km from village boundry to graze their cattle in the sanctuary area

Activities performed in the forest	Possible usage	Location	Done by women	Done by men	Time required in a day	Time required in a year	Factors deciding the quantity
Grass cutting and collection:  • Carrying to house	• For own cattle consumption • For selling to the farmers	**	*		4-5 hrs	15-30 days	1. As long s FD officials permits 2. During summer season more 3. In drought situation requirement is more 4. Most of villager keep for themselves as it is not sufficient for even for their cattles.
Plantation work inside the forest	Labour wages	Sanctuary and National Park	*	*		15-30 days	1. As and when FD provides opportunities 2. Contract is given to local people. 3. 8-10 households get the job.
Removal of lanterna weed from the forest	Labour wages	Sanctuary and National Park	*	*			1. As and when FD provides opportunities 2. Contract is given to, local people. 3. 8-10 households get the job.
Fire line	Labour wages	Sanctuary and National Park	*	*			1. As and when FD provides opportunities 2. Contract is given to local people. 3. 8-10 households get the job.
Wood for home construction			*	****			Depends on the requirement very occasionally
Activities performed in the forest	Possible usage	Location	Done by women	Done by men	Time required in a day	Time required in a year	Factors deciding the quantity
Fruits collection from the forest: Jamun, Billi, Amla, Tubers, Rayan, Tamrind, Karamda, Umada, Behda, Timru, Gunda	For consumption	Sanctuary	**	*  *		40 days	1. Most of the fruits are for own consumption when ever required  2. 10-15 households do collect the fruits and sell for earning.
Honey collection	Selling/ consumption	Sanctuary		****		15 days	Person who collects honey usually get a work of 15 days.
Leaves collection from the forest: Timru, Sag, Khakhra, Neem, Bili.		Sanctuary	****	*			1. Cannot collect for last 4 years - Quantity is also reduced. Sometimes collects for own consumption. 2. 50,000 to 90,000 bundles were collected 4 years back. 3. Bili leaves during the month of Savan

**DEPENDENCE OF VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS ON THE GIR PROTECTED AREA : Exercise  
done with Charan women and Kant Darbar Men**

**Name of the Village** : Karsangadh (Forest village)  
**No. of Households** : 38 nos (5 H.H Charan ; 5 H.H Rabaris and 22 H.H Khant)  
**Dominant caste** : Khant Darbar  
**Date** : October 12, 2000

Activities performed in the forest	Possible usage	Location	Done by women	Done by men	Time required in a day	Time required in a year	Factors deciding the quantity
Cattle grazing in the forest  Stay in the forest with the cattle	Free grazing in the forest during rainy and winter season	Sanctuary		* * * *	4 hrs	4-6 months	1. FD officials allow
Cattle grazing in village boundry	For free grazing	Village	* *	* * * *			
Grass cutting and Collection :  • Care of cattle in house • Milking • Milk selling and cattle feed purchasing	For own cattle consumption	Sanctuary	* * * *  * * * * * * * * * * * *	* *   * *	4-5 hrs	60-75 days	1. As long as FD officials permits 2. During summer it is restricted 3. Women cut (20 Bhar i.e.30kg)/ grass and carry it on head. Sometimes harvesting site is 2-3 km away from village
Collection of cow dung from grazing site	Selling to the farmers as a compost	Sanctuary	* * * *				
Fuelwood collection from the forest	• For cooking the food • Heating water for bathing	Sanctuary	* * * *		Once in a week's time Around 4-5 hrs	300 days	8-10 women go collectively in the forest for fuelwood collection.
Keeping money after selling the various produces.			* * * *				

While doing the exercise with the Charan caste women whose main occupation is cattle rearing in Karsangadh, we found that it is women who takes lot of decision on its own. They were also happy with the occupation though residing near the forest. The similar exercise was also conducted with the maldhari families who are now settled and practicing Agriculture. The men seems to be happy with the agriculture but women showed displeasure over removal from the Gir forest. When probed deeper it was found that they were satisfied with their animal husbandry occupation inside the Gir in contrary to the agriculture. The Harward framework exercise on access and control in Agriculture and Animal Husbandry showed that women had more access and control in Animal Husbandry occupation than the Agriculture. The results are tabulated below:

**Control and access by Harvard Framework of Charan/Maldhari women in Animal Husbandry Occupation:**

Village : Karshangadh  
 Date : October 24, 2000  
 Number of women: 7  
 AKRSP members: 2

Time	List of Animal Husbandry activities	Control	Access
During day	Cow dung collection	100%	100%
	To fill drinking water for animals	50%	75%
	To feed cattle	0%	25%
	Milking of animals	80%	50%
	To fill pots of milk and retail selling.	100%	100%
	Preservation of milk	100%	100%
	To prepare ghee and curd	100%	
	To maintain accounts for selling milk	75%	100%
	To cut grass and bring it for cattle	100%	80%
	Concentrate and cattle feed purchase	75%	25%
	Care of animals	25%	75%
	To bring doctor for animals.	0%	0%
	To take the animals for grazing	0%	0%
	To keep milk for domestic consumption	100%	100%
	To prepare dung cake	80%	100%
	If a woman get animal from her parents house in marriage then whose ownership on that animal?		100%

**Note : Women receive income directly, and have control over it. Income is regular.**

*The household are mainly dependent on animal husbandry for livelihood*

**Control and access by Harvard method of women in Agriculture**

Village : Gadakiya  
 Date : October 24, 2000  
 Number of women: 9  
 AKRSP members: 2

Time	List of Agriculture activities	Control	Access
During day	To do Weeding	25%	100%
	To cut grass	25%	100%
	To give water to crop for irrigation	0%	0%
	To go out for labour work and farm labour	00%	30%
	To cook food for labourers and take lunch to farm	25%	100%
	To collect stones and crop residues from the fields		
	To keep grains for household use	25%	80%
	Preservation of grains		
	To keep seeds for next year sowing	50%	50%
	Decision for crop selection	75%	100%
	Selling of the product	60%	40%
	To grow vegetables for household purpose	75%	40%
		70%	30%
			100%

**Note : Women receive no income, and are dependent on their husbands for any financial needs. Income is irregular.**

*These farmers are Maldharis who are earlier rearing cattle in Gir Forest but now settled out after rehabilitation. Their occupation is now changed from Animal Husbandry to Agriculture*



### **3 Conservationism**

#### **3.1 Interest of Forest Department :**

The control and management of forest under scientific prescriptions by the state Forest Department in India started in the nineteenth century. Forest management in India was based on principles borrowed from Germany, France and England. The concept of management of forest resources through a strong institution of Forest department was borrowed by Brandis (1897).

The Gir Sanctuary (which was earlier the Private Hunting reserve of then Nawab of Junagadh) was declared in 1965 as it was realised that the ecosystem is deteriorating very fast, so there was urgent need to start an extensive ecological research work in Gir forest. In order to initiate ecological research in Gir forest, Gir lion Project was started by Bombay Natural History Society in 1969 with the financial assistance of Smithsonian Institute and Yale University of USA.

#### **3.2 Problems Identified:**

- Degeneration of indigenous ecosystem
- Domestic livestock graze within sanctuary and this number gets trebled during summer.
- Wild ungulates species disappeared due to loss of grass.
- Few large tree now remains in the Sanctuary
- In absence of natural prey, the lions feed on domestic livestock
- Encroachment on the border
- Domestic livestock of remaining Maldharis competing with wild ungulates for fodder.
- Illegal grazing by cattle of surrounding villages
- Excessive forest fires
- Religious values
- Wild herbivores damaging crops.

To ensure that the PA is managed scientifically the staff has been given the following mandate :

#### **3.2 Protection against :**

- Illegal removal of forest produce
- Poaching
- Land encroachment
- Fire

#### **3.4 Wild life Management:**

- Habitat improvement
- Ensure supply of water to wild life
- Handling of problematic animals
- Health cure
- Research and monitoring

#### **3.5 Eco development work**

- General resources in the village so that farmers can rely less on forest
- Alternate source of energy
- Fodder plot development
- Water resource availability
- Individual beneficiary schemes
- Economic upliftment of villages

#### 4. AKRSP(I)'s efforts on giving the people a voice

AKRSP(I)'s initial activities were in response to the 1985-87 drought and hence a fodder farm was initiated and attempts were made to motivate villagers to increase the productivity of their gaucher (revenue) land. The fodder farm proved unviable in the good monsoon. In addition to this, Biogas programme was also initiated in the year 1986. So far the organisation has constructed more than 3500 plants in Talala and Mendarda talukas) in and around the Gir Sanctuary area villages. In 1994, four to five villages (includes two having Gir oustees) were motivated after exposure visit to Bharuch. However, land permission delays due to indifference of district authorities led to villagers giving up efforts after 2-3 years. Efforts were also made to involve village communities in the development and management of forest lands adjacent to the village on the periphery of the Gir Lion Sanctuary. Systematic efforts were tried after the results of Participatory Rural appraisal which revealed peoples problem regarding availability of fuel wood and fodder. According to the rural communities the solution was on conservation of the area alongwith Natural Resource Management with an emphasis on Biogas and Animal Husbandry. Accordingly, AKRSP(I) had initiated a three pronged interventions in villages on the periphery of Gir PA. While attempts were made to work with the forest department for creation of a buffer zone to reduce people's dependency on the PA for fuelwood and fodder, the results were not very encouraging.

##### ***Costly catastrophes of lack of communication***

In Hiranvel village of Talala taluka, a 12.5 ha. plot was taken under JFM in 1992 by AKRSP(I). The existing Gram Vikas Mandal (Village development body) decided to take up plantation on the plot. The plantation work was successfully carried out by the GVM, but the protection miserably failed due to the following reasons :

- The watchman selected by the GVM to protect their plot was lured by the local forester to guard the FD promoted plantation by offering higher wages.
- The forest department took up plantation near the village boundaries, which formerly the villagers were using for grazing their cattles, leaving the villagers no other option but to use the plantation done by the GVM.

This is a prime example of costly catastrophes than can occur when there is lack of coordination and communication between the Forest Department and NGO .

Another effort of afforestation work of JFM was taken up in Nataliya village. However a conflict within Nataliya and with neighbouring villages, between people who wanted to use the plot to harvest grass and those who wanted free grazing, led to destruction of the protective fence. The plot was then abandoned.

#### **4.1 Afforestation efforts on Revenue Land:**

A study exercised carried out by AKRSP(I) in 1989 showed that almost 28% of the Common Pool Land Resources (CPLR) was encroached upon. This has increased substantially in the last 10 years. However, efforts by religious bodies - cow protection, youth clubs, Swadhyay Parivar etc. have succeeded to some extent in CPLR management. Involving villagers for CPLR management on grounds of religious duty

seems to draw a better response in this district as many self initiated groups are functioning successfully for many years.

A few NGOs in other areas have experimented with horticultural development by the community on gaucher land with some degree of success as farmers see more sense in horticultural species rather than timber/fuel species.

The results of afforestation in revenue land, which started in 1994, can be summarized as follows:

- (a) **Low interest of farming community:** Since the value of private land is extremely high and labor rates from agriculture are high, privatisation through encroachment of CPLR is a wide spread phenomenon cutting across class and caste. Our two attempts to involve poor people in accessing common land did not work as even the poor showed a preference for growing groundnut rather than trees. In most of the villages CPLR is used for soil mining to a very great extent and the soil mining is done by the entire village with the powerful taking greater advantage, as the addition of the soil is useful for groundnut cultivation. The classical watershed approach of top to bottom treatment leading to ground water recharge is not very visible in their villages where most farmers have their own well and meet their individual requirements of fuel and fodder. Poor farmers are interested in CPLR but for privatising it for cultivation so that they also can become prosperous like other farmers. They felt that animal husbandry did not hold economic promise and would rather focus on agricultural labour or on their own private farming. However dependency of poor for fuelwood, fodder and non timber forest produce on forest land i.e. Gir is quite high (refer table no... ) especially for the poor in the peripheral villages. The few villages where CPLRs encroachment was less had large population of PAsoralists and in these villages there was CPLR management. However, this is declining as PAsoralists are shifting to agriculture in Junagadh. In fact the only PAsoralists whose major source of income is from animal husbandry are the Maldharis who are oustees from Gir and have been allotted poor quality of land on the fringes of larger villages. Unfortunately they have very little access or control over the CPLR of larger villages where they are resettled.
- (b) **Panchayati Raj Institutions and CPLR:** As an institution the panchayat is not concerned and it is only some individual sarpanches who have been supportive in taking initiative for CPLR management. Most sarpanches found that removal of encroachment affects their re-election prospects and therefore do not take a stand. Some Panchayat leaders are guilty of encroachment themselves and not in a position to take a strong stand. The village level groups formed by AKRSP(I) also did not prove very effective because they could not cope with infra village conflicts.
- (c) **Role of state:** Both at the village and district level the state provides little support for development of CPLRs. Getting permission to develop that land proved to be a nightmare. In one village, Vallabhgadh, where AKRSP(I) was working with Gir oustees, it took 4 years for the Collectorate to eventually inform the villagers that permission was denied. Regularization of encroachment periodically done by the state government which undermines efforts of NGOs and others for removal of encroachment. At the village level, little support is available for removing encroachers.
- (d) **Land records and ground reality:** In Junagadh a study in 20 villages was done which found that 72% of revenue land was encroached and the land records were not updated. In lot of cases the CPLRs are managed privately though village records say otherwise. In fact, land record upgradation is a major issue by itself,

since in some cases, even after encroachment is regularised, the land records are not updated. Transparency in land records is almost negligible.

No one can argue against the need to preserve the home of the Asiatic lion i.e. Gir Sanctuary, though the ways to do this can be debated. The national park is free from human habitation but the periphery of Sanctuary has 54 settlements of 350 Maldhari families. There are around 97 villages having habitation of 1.36 lakhs population. The forest department policy aided by considerable World Bank funds is to relocate Maldhari families, so that they themselves and their cattle cannot compete with wild ungulate for food and water. The conflict between the needs of communities and endangered species is an issue of concern.

Involving people in forest management may be seen as a viable option for better conservation and management of the forest. It will be a major shift which can transform government controlled policies and attitude from centralized management to decentralized management. According to Saxena (1999) it is a possible way through which the interest of people and of long term sustainability are harmonized in a mutually supportive manner. Datta (1999) identified it as a sustainable interface between the Forest Department and the local community/communities' efforts to protect forest.

To hear the unheard voice of people AKRSP(I) started series of meetings with the various primary stakeholders residing in and around Gir PA. The various issues emerged from these meetings held during the year 2000 are summarized below:

<p><b><u>Issues of landless women</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survival at stake</li> <li>• Fuelwood scarcity</li> <li>• Grass unavailability for cattle</li> <li>• No money to refill LPG cylinder</li> <li>• No preference for Labour work inside the forest</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Issues of Landless men</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not allowed to collect NTFP</li> <li>• Oftenly blamed for forest fire</li> <li>• Not allowed to move at night</li> <li>• Restriction in increase village habitation as commons are now under forest land.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Issues of the Farmers</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No transparency on compensation of cattle killing</li> <li>• Revenue and forest land demarcation not clear</li> <li>• Permission for construction of basic amenities in forest land denied</li> <li>• Crop damaged by wild animals not compensated</li> <li>• Restriction on peoples' movement inside PA at night</li> <li>• Villagers' involvement in desiltation of dams inside the forest denied.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Issues of Maldharis</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coerced to leave nesses</li> <li>• Declining water table during summer</li> <li>• Improper resettlement package</li> <li>• No basic amenities in Nesses</li> <li>• Harassment and restriction on social movement.</li> </ul>

**Source : AKRSP(I) field study, 2000 in 29 villages of Talala and Mendarda blocks of Junagadh district.**

### **ACT AS A SAVIOUR**

It was a pleasant winter night in one of the Gir forest villages. A meeting of villagers was organised by an NGO well-known for its forestry work in Gujarat.

The meeting was started by explaining to the villagers about the importance of the forest and its role in our routine life. The one way dialogue continued for 10 minutes, and the villagers listened carefully.

After the discussion, one villager told a story.

There was a big sheth (Baniya) well-known for his honesty, trade and social concerns. He had only one son in his family and he used to love him more than his wealth. There was a river in the village and the son demanded to take bath in the river. His father denied him as the river was too deep to bath. But the son kept demanding on and on. Finally the father agreed to the demand and sent his servant along with his son. The Baniya clearly explained to the servant that "when my son takes bath in the river, you must take care of his precious clothing." The servant was obedient and assured the sheth that he would follow his instructions.

The son and the servant went to the river. The son took off his clothing. The Servant started looking after them by sitting near the clothing. After a few minutes, the son started drowning and was shouting for help. The servant was listening, but thought that he was supposed to look after only the clothing. Why should he be bothered about the son?. Eventually the son died, and the sheth lost his son because of the servant.

The elite organisation working in forest development are like the servant. They are not bothered about the problems of villagers. Their major concern is about conservation of environment even if it is detrimental to the survival of farmers" –

***As said by the farmer.***

If we analyse the points made by the villagers, most of them reflects the impact of PA on their survival. The villagers consider the forest as a resource, which can meet their subsistence needs. The forest department being a custodian of the forest has ecological and environmental concerns as a priority. Therefore it is a conflicting situation among ideology and the livelihood. The conservation values of the forest department are as under

### **CONSERVATION VALUES**

- Largest compact tract of dry deciduous forest in the semi arid Western part of the India
- Last home of "Asiatic Lions" Panthera leo persica last surviving gene pool on earth.
- Highest concentration of top carnivores - lions and leopards (over 500)
- The single largest population of marsh crocodiles in the country
- Catchment area of seven major rivers which sustain economic prosperity
- Ecologically security and environmental amelioration for the region.
- Important biological research area with considerable scientific, education, aesthetic and recreational values
- Mother of cultural and religious evolution in Saurashtra

Some how human being is missing from these heritage and conservation values. Conservation and development in the PAs has thrived on either. The forest should not be treated as treasure, which needs to be protected at the cost of livelihood, creates human wildlife conflict. Self-restriction and rational use may create a bonding and affection for the forest as a regular provider. Therefore conservation is needs to be

redefined as not only preservation but also rational use. Similarly, the concept of Development, needs to be revised by incorporating conservation and social concerns along with economic concerns. There should be provision of peoples' involvement and primacy of their institutions (as viable means of decentralized planning and implementation. This may be the primary reason of limited success of eco development programme. The main objective of Eco development is to develop alternatives to the bio mass resources that are presently obtained from the protected areas. People have accepted the LPG connections, stones for housing, mango grafts for plantation, underground bores of ground water exploitation, boundary wall to prevent wild ungulates intrusion to farmers' field etc. Unfortunately most of the inventions are for the farmers having land but poorest have not been able to gain much as nothing is done for their livelihood. So far 5600 LPG connections were distributed but cooking habit cause lot energy wastage hence cylinder emptied in 3 weeks time. Efforts were done for judicious and safe use of LPG but impact is very limited to change the cooking or fooding habit. The various schemes promoted as Eco development are now leading towards individual beneficiary schemes.

### **5. The Gir that can be!**

Many protected areas were established to protect fragile environment, outstanding scenery, wildlife or places for recreation. This approach exclude many groups and has led to conflicts with local livelihoods and with other forms of land use. The conservation targets in protected areas are achieved significantly, but it has raised considerable conflicts between the conservation agencies and local rural population.

In the case of protected area, the food security and water security should be ensured rather than the focus on relocation. The primary reason for the villagers' hostility is the loss of their traditional rights. The villagers who had been living in harmony with the nature since decades, feel robbed when their areas suddenly declared sanctuaries or national parks without consulting them. The given options are impractical. In addition to this, the cumbersome government procedure prove to be a hurdle for community participation. The policies for compensation especially result in large scale antagonism. It also looks surprising that in one land which is degraded, government seek people's involvement under Joint Forest Management to raise forest cover while on the other hand we disallow people's entrance in the protected areas. The first paragraph of Government of India, 1990 GR describes, The National Forest Policy, 1988 envisages people's involvement in the development and protection of forests. The requirements of fuelwood, fodder and small timber such as house building material of the tribals and other villagers living in and near the forests, are to be treated as first stake holder on forest produce. The policy document envisages it as one of the essentials of forest management that the forest communities motivated to identify themselves with the development and protection of forest from which they derive benefits. PAs have been established for the principal objectives for conservation of wild animals and wild plants. The objectives address protection and maintenance of natural ecosystem naturally with the sole responsibility of forest department wing of wild life.

There are several examples now where people have been successfully involved in conservation of Protected areas in India. The forest department made it possible in Srisailem Tiger Reserve in AP. Similarly in Sariska Sanctuary and Kokrebellur sanctuary community took initiative to protect the forest. The joint efforts of FD and community succeeded in Kailadevi. National Park, Dalma National Park and Rajaji National Park. The recommendation of International Workshop on a Decade of JFM

held in June, 2000 at ICFRI, Dehradun also emphasised on JFM in PAs and addressing peoples concerns in PAs.

Gir protected area apart from being an important ecological resource also serves as a major resource base for the livelihoods of the communities residing in the villages around Gir forest. The Siddhis and Maldharis are directly dependent upon Gir for their livelihood while livelihood of farmers having land is impacted indirectly in favourable or infavourable manner. Within the directly dependent community, the livelihood of marginalised and poor people is adversely affected by the present protected area regimes. They in turn are causing negative impact on the forest to sustain their livelihood.

The farmers enjoy good standard life due to indirect benefits accruing to them by presence of Gir forest. This includes good ground water availability favourable climate and fertile soil. These people are negatively impacted due to destruction of their crops by wild ungulates which causes various conflicts.

The people's involvement in Gir PA management will be a challenging task and needs some initiative from all the stakeholders. There are several cases where forest department has helped the community to conserve their CPR in productive basis.

#### **A SPIRITUAL WAY OUT**

The Madhavram Gau Seva community (Service to cow) is an spontaneous organisation build up by villagers themselves for taking care of holy cows of the village. The Ramrechi village is at 3 km. distance from Talala taluka. Gram Panchayat of Ramrechi is actively performing responsibility of managing the fodder plot of 60 acres. In addition to this 15 acre more land is donated by Shamjibhai Dedaniya. There are around 994 stray productive cattles managed by the villagers. The 35-40 youths have form the group under the leadership of Shri Shamjibhai and Nanjibhai who are influenced people of the village and helping out the management of 75 acres of grass land. The fodder is grown on land in which most of the farmers volunteer the cultivation operation till harvesting which was then stored and fed to the cattle residing in the campus of the organisation.

During the monsoon to look after the fodder plot, one chowkidar (guard) has been appointed. Gaurakshak Yuva Group has voluntarily agreed to take the responsibility of feeding fodder to stray cattle, give drinking water, and take care of sick cattle.

#### **Source of Income:**

1. Each family donate money by organising social and religious functions.
2. Donations were received during the marriage ceremony
3. Fund collection by auctioning cow dung
4. Money collected by selling the cow to well being families.

#### **Use of Income :**

1. Arrange fodder for cattle
2. Animal care and immunization
3. Permanent housing for the cattle.

**Note :** Forest department is cooperating the villagers even though all the village common land has been transferred as forestland after declaration of Gir PA. By respecting religious sentiments of the people FD is gaining trust of people.

The above experience shows a way of mobilising people on spiritual thinking. But this is only possible by massive awareness campaign and better and periodical communication among themselves. Looking at the social structure of the region, most of the villages have majority of patel families who are practicing farming and are Vaishnavites. They worship Lord Krishna and Cows. They don't harm cows and do not even tolerate cows being hurt. The people's religious sentiments can be translated into respect for life for all especially wild life. Another successful movement in Saurashtra and around Gir is the Swadhyay movement.

### **SWADHYAY MOVEMENT**

Most development efforts begin their day by assuming that man is guided in the conduct of life by bounded rationality and opportunism bordering on quite. These efforts restrict success if self interest persists. In Swadhyaya movement efforts were made to enable the human to discover the good and the noble residing in self and others by inspiring moderation over excess and aggression.

Beginning in 1985, following programmes were started by Dadaji Pandurang Shastri Athavale.

- ◆ Bhaktipheri (good will visits) by thousands of followers throughout the India.
- ◆ Amruthalayan (village temples) built by the joint efforts of the villagers where persons of all creeds, castes and economic status meet to worship in unity and discuss ways to improve village life.
- ◆ Yogeshwar Krushi (farm denoted to God) where devotees from the village give a few days of labour in a year as a concrete expression of their devotion to God. Produce is offered to the needy.
- ◆ Matsyagandhar (floating temples of God), fishing boats built by fishermen and women in the villages. Fishermen operate these boats voluntarily a few days each in a year as expression of devotion to God. Harvest is shared by the needy.
- ◆ Vrikshamandirs (Orchards of God) which are raised by devoted followers by each of them offering a few days of voluntary labour in a year.
- ◆ Nirmal neer (Pure water tanks) may or may not be for irrigation. Tanks are created by devotees from a cluster of villages for a period of 10 days in a year. The Swadhyaya movement is found very effective in Saurashtra region of Gujarat and expanding all over the India.

To win massive support of people in the field of conservation of Gir PA mass campaign is required to create awareness about the issue and its treatment leading to a mass movement. This can also be aimed to forge links with popular ethical and environmental movements, such as Swadhyay and Swaminarayan so that the campaign has a mass appeal across caste and class.



World-wide, it is being realised that one major step towards wildlife/biodiversity conservation is creating a stake for local communities. The biological diversity of any area is a local resource, in that it forms the basis of the livelihood security of local community. The same biodiversity is also a national and global resource. It is therefore the responsibility of all beneficiaries to share the cost incurred in conservation. However in reality the division of costs and benefits in the arena of wildlife conservation so far has been heavily skewed in the favour of the national and global society. The local community does not have much of voice in decision making.

The local human communities residing amidst wildlife and other biological resources have paid almost all the direct cost of conserving them. These are as follow:

- Loss of access to basic need
- Damage caused by wildlife
- Loss of self respect and dignity leading to cultural disruption
- Loss of significant opportunities for livelihoods and development without alternatives
- Loss of power as communities reduced to receiving and decisions made centrally.
- The wild life (protection) Act is not very conducive to benefit sharing and participation of local communities.

It is therefore, need to empower local communities to take part in planning, implementation and monitoring of PAs and to guarantee them security of tenure over resources of survival and livelihood. The present status of Protected Areas can be concluded in following ways:

- Livelihoods are directly dependent upon the protected area regimes.
- Current approaches are not effective in addressing the livelihood related issues
- The inadequacy of the current approach is both at implementation as well as policy level
- There exists a potential for development of livelihood pattern in the area
- Protected area management requires a conservation as well as development approach.

## **6. Acknowledgement**

I am thankful to my following colleagues for helping me in preparation and submission of the paper for the Conference.

1. Apoorva Oza, Chief Executive Officer for guiding me on the theme of the paper
2. AKRSP(I) Field staff of Gdu spearhead Team for providing necessary information related to the subject
3. Nira Joshi, Programme Specialist (Research and Monitoring) for editing the report
4. Safiya Yuusuf, Secretary for typing the report

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**April, 2002**

***AGA KHAN RURAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME  
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***A Paper to be presented in the International Conference  
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***Title of the Paper  
Consumerism Versus Conservationism And its Reflection on  
Human - Wildlife Relations: A Case of Gir Protected Area***

***April, 2002***

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