

# **Assessing the promise and limitations of Joint Forest Management in an era of globalisation: the case of West Bengal.<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Introduction**

This paper seeks to interrogate the claims of the dominant discourses of globalisation with regard to their compatibility with mechanisms for empowering marginalised communities and providing a basis for sustainable livelihood strategies. These concerns are examined from the perspective of the development experience of India, including the New Economic Policy (NEP) regime initiated in India in 1991, and its subsequent structural transformation towards greater conformity with the imperatives of 'economic liberalisation'. It suggests that the Indian institutional structure of development has been such that resources have been unequally distributed and that this has reinforced certain biases particularly on a caste/class and gender basis. The analysis suggests that these biases have reduced the legitimacy of previous models of resource management and continue to hamper the prospects of current formulations.

These concerns are analysed utilising an examination of the management of forest-based Common Property Resources (CPRs) within the context of rural West Bengal, specifically the system of Joint Forest Management (JFM)<sup>i</sup>. Such an examination is pertinent since those communities dependent upon CPRs for a substantial part of their subsistence requirements are amongst the most vulnerable strata of society. As Agrawal, (1999), Platteau (1999, 1997) and others have argued, these CPRs function as a "social safety net" or "fall-back position"<sup>ii</sup>. This should be seen within the broader context of rural development, since the success or failure of the total rural development environment including poverty alleviation programs, agriculture, rural credit and employment (both on and off farm), will influence the relative dependence on these CPRs. Moreover, the involvement of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), as well as the traditional bureaucracy (the Forest Department and to a lesser extent the Tribal Welfare Department), illustrates the advantages and limitations of this institutional matrix as the focus of rural development.

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JFM consists of a formal arrangement between villagers and the Forestry Department (FD) to get villagers to assist in the protection and rehabilitation of degraded forest. In return villagers receive a share of timber harvest and access to Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs). Pattnaik and Dutta (1997) suggests that the core notion of JFM is that 'local communities can regenerate and protect the degraded forest if they are empowered and compensated for their opportunity cost'<sup>iii</sup>. Whilst 21 states now have some form of JFM in operation, West Bengal has the best known and largest of these schemes, currently having over 3000 Forest Protection Committees (FPCs) protecting well over 420,000 hectares of regenerating public forest land<sup>iv</sup>.

The analysis suggests that the institutional configuration of JFM provides a sympathetic framework for the mediation of the contrasting objectives of dominant sections of the population (bureaucrats, politicians and economic elites), and marginalised communities dependent upon forests for subsistence. However, there is a great deal of variance in the application of this framework, its relevance and benefits to local communities, and its success as a tool of regeneration. Thus JFM serves as a useful illustration of the contention that West Bengal is a notable example of the flourishing of 'bottom up' development in part because of a sympathetic government structure 'from above', since underlying much of the success of cooperative resource management in the state has been the support extended to the most vulnerable sections of the community by the Left Front Government. Moreover, it is an example of the limitations of this support in alleviating entrenched poverty.

The analysis seeks to caution against uncritical acceptance of the success of JFM, especially with regards to the benefits derived by disadvantaged stakeholders and the subsequent redressal of power inequalities on an intra-village (and indeed intra-household) level, which such a system is supposed to entail. The analysis argues that there are important class and gender disparities that function to distort the benefits. This is in keeping with a recognition that any scheme of resource management, or any development activity for that matter, operates within the context of an array of pre-existing and evolving socio-economic, cultural and political variables which influence the operation and outcome of these schemes. These outcomes are further complicated by the uncertainty regarding the impact of globalisation and the influence of global actors in the policy process.

The first section outlines the emerging literature on globalisation and its substantial silences with regards to the implications on poverty and livelihood strategies. Section II outlines the relationship of the rural poor to the environment and other sectors of the economy. This

establishes the context in which JFM is operating. Section III details the way that development, as exemplified by forestry, forestry has evolved since the colonial period. It suggests that its commercial focus excluded the interests of biomass dependent rural population and the ecological needs of the forests<sup>v</sup>. Section IV outlines the formalisation of JFM in West Bengal by examining the 1988 Forest Policy and the specific details of the JFM agreement. Section V analyses the extent that JFM can be seen as representing a qualitative change and seeks to establish how successful it is in establishing a framework for collective action. Section VI places this scheme within the broader context of rural development in West Bengal. The final section concludes and places these initiatives into the ambiguous context of globalisation and the present neoliberal policies.

### **Globalisation of what? Rural Poverty and the silences of globalisation discourse**

There is a burgeoning cross-disciplinary literature addressing various elements of globalisation, although it could be argued that there is a paucity of analysis, both theoretical and empirical, regarding both the impact and responses of those on the margins<sup>vi</sup>. There is an implicit fusion of ‘development’ and ‘globalisation’ as inexorably linked in the neoliberalist vision, which ascribes an inevitability to the process. All too often however, beyond simplistic assumption about ‘freeing up’ markets and ‘reducing inefficiency’, the exact *political* mechanisms for empowerment of those who are assetless or unskilled are not considered.

According to Petras (1993), although in its most general sense globalisation refers to the cross-national flow of capital, goods and technology, accompanying these flows is the attendant development of power relations and institutions that replace and/or transform existing configurations<sup>vii</sup>. These transformations, both in the direction and intensity of transnational flows and in altering power configurations, relate to an underlying tension in much of the debate concerning the promise and perils of globalisation. This involves a contestation of the role of institutions, particularly the state *vis a vis* the market. The ‘counter revolution’ of neoliberalism (Toye 1987)<sup>viii</sup> and the perception of the ‘death of the Developmental State’ is widely perceived to have triumphed in its conceptual hold over development policy<sup>ix</sup>, leading to the promotion of a universal ‘recipe’ for development for all those countries falling under the persuasion of the ‘Washington Consensus’<sup>x</sup>. As Kiely has argued, the advocacy of the primacy of market forces as the ‘engine’ of this

globalisation/development and a 'roll-back' of the state, is premised on an artificial separation of an apolitical market and a single scaled state<sup>xi</sup>. This problematises the traditional pivotal organisational role of the state in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of its citizens. Moreover, the ascendancy of neoliberalist discourse has tended to (falsely) reduce questions of development to managerial vagaries concerning 'good governance', consigned relationships of power to questions of 'social capital', and (re)simplified policy to an emphasis on a generally unspecified 'growth'.

The seemingly politically benign nature of this language tends to completely obscure the true nature of development. As Leftwich (1993) has argued, development

" is not simply a managerial question, as the World Bank's literature asserts, but is a political one. For all processes of development express crucially the core of *politics*: conflict, negotiation and cooperation over the use, production and distribution of resources" <sup>xii</sup>.

To combat these obfuscations it is important to refocus on the actual sources of livelihood, detail the historical evolution of structures of resource distribution and question whether current and proposed institutional matrixes are likely to positively or negatively alter these through an increased engagement with globalisation.

### **Refocusing on livelihoods**

The experience of development in the post colonial era was premised on a strong commanding state and the discourses of development tended to reinforce this discursive "top down" orientation. A refocus on questions of livelihood strategies, and the mechanisms through which a greater command over 'environmental entitlements' for the poorest sections of the community can be achieved is a beginning in redirecting policy priorities in ways which will strengthen the rural areas<sup>xiii</sup>. It is a flawed assumption that leaving distribution to 'the invisible hand' will positively alter this bias, since market-led strategies will tend to distort production towards those with preexisting command over resource distribution <sup>xiv</sup>.

Mainstream development discourse traditionally privileges the market economy as a discrete set of relationships backed by a unified household rather than part of a continuum that also involves both the biomass and the natural 'economies'<sup>xv</sup>. A vital factor in this neglect has been the underestimation of the significance of the biomass economy in the livelihood strategies of most villagers since:

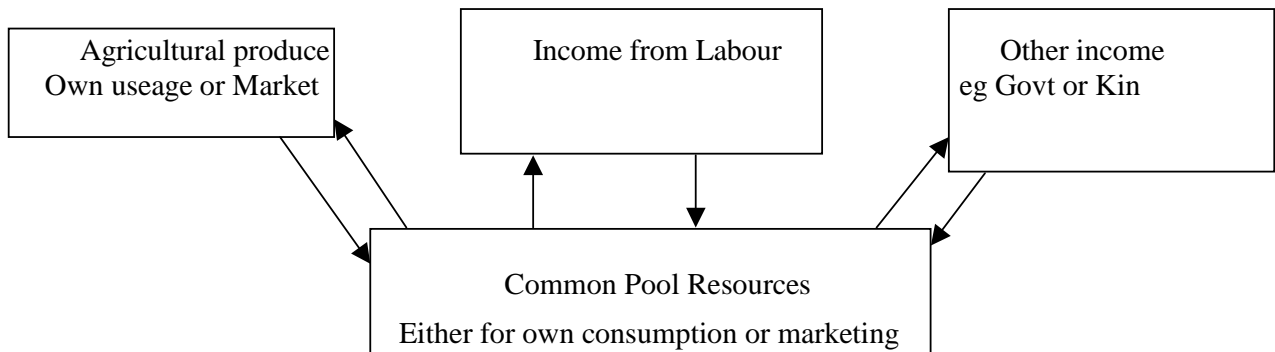
"The poor live within a biomass based subsistence economy...all their fundamental needs (food, fodder, fuel firewood, cowdung, crop wastes, fertilisers-dung manure, leaf litter, building materials-

timber,thatch and herbal materials)are collected from the immediate environment. To these may be added water, which though not biomass itself is biomass related and crucial for survival”<sup>xvi</sup>

Thus biomass dependence is as a consequence of income and other subsistence (such as food from agriculture) poverty, since by and large households tend to substitute CPRs for less time intensive and less seasonally variable options. Whilst all rural households utilise the biomass economy to an extent, those closer to the poverty line rely on CPRs to a greater extent for their subsistence requirements<sup>xvii</sup>. Along with reciprocal arrangements (usually on kinship lines) CPRs may also be used as a hedge against risk in periods where there is a shortfall such as in lean seasons<sup>xviii</sup>

Thus a significant point established by research into the use of CPRs is that rather than seeing an absence from the market economy as an absence from all relations of exchange, it is more accurate to see poor households as existing within a matrix of relations, characterised by these three ‘economies’. A market-only approach may actually decrease the biomass availability since ‘growth’ may be at the expense of the natural (and hence the biomass) economy. Conventional aggregate growth figures will not reflect this, since the depletion of livelihood options for the rural poor will not be fully accounted for since they are substantially outside a market framework<sup>xix</sup>. The relationship of CPR useage to broader livelihood can be conceptualised in the simplified version shown below, where an increase in any of the other three areas (Agriculture, Labour or Other sources) would tend to decrease useage of CPRs, with the opposite also being true:

**Figure 1 Simplified Version of relationship of CPR dependence to other sources of livelihood**



Another significant factor in analysing income poverty and CPR usage is that this has substantial caste/class and gender dimensions. Those low status class/castes (such as STs, SCs) tend to have a higher reliance on CPRs and a disproportionately high relative share of the burden of rural income poverty. This structural inequality in terms of caste is not as significant in West Bengal as in the adjoining 'hindi belt' or BIMARU states immediately to the west. However, despite the Left Front's much vaunted reforms, there remains at least 40 per cent of the population under the accepted benchmark for the poverty line<sup>xx</sup>.

Similarly, women are more dependent upon CPRs for their contribution to the household than men as the extensive Gender and Development (GAD) literature has detailed. The 'gendered' division of labour means that women often perform tasks which are either regarded poorly within the formal market economy or outside it, and thus their contributions to the household is rendered less 'visible', both in terms of status and in consideration within development schemes<sup>xxi</sup>.

In West Bengal women spend on average between 1-5 hours per day working in the biomass economy collecting fuel and firewood and other Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs)<sup>xxii</sup>. According to West Bengal Forest Department estimates women spend on average three times as much time in the collection of NTFPs as men. The processing of these NTFP's is done exclusively by women, with the marketing accounting for approximately two times as much time for women as men. It has been documented that there are as many 189 different types of NTFPs in parts of West Bengal, which in general contribute between 10-25 percent of income for the poorest sections of the community<sup>xxiii</sup>.

An example of the type of NTFPS collected in Tribanka FPC, Bankura is given below:

Firewood Collection (all year), Dry Leaf Collection (February-April), Madhua Flower Collection (March-April), Madhua Seed Collection (Mid June-Mid July), Kurkuri (Mushroom) (June-July), Karani (September-early November), Peal Kend Fruit (Mid April-early June), Sal Seed Collection (June-July), Medicinal Plants (July-September), Green Sal leaf Collection (June-February), Timber (January-March), Grazing (June-July).

The intra-village and intra-household distribution of resources tends to get overlooked in most analysis. This is a significant oversight since this goes some way to understanding the prevailing power relations within villages. Just as significantly, mainstream development theory, particularly economics, has tended to treat the household as unified and has overlooked the fact that there may be intra-household contestation of resources<sup>xxiv</sup>. This contestation of resources has ramifications for the wellbeing of the entire household, since it

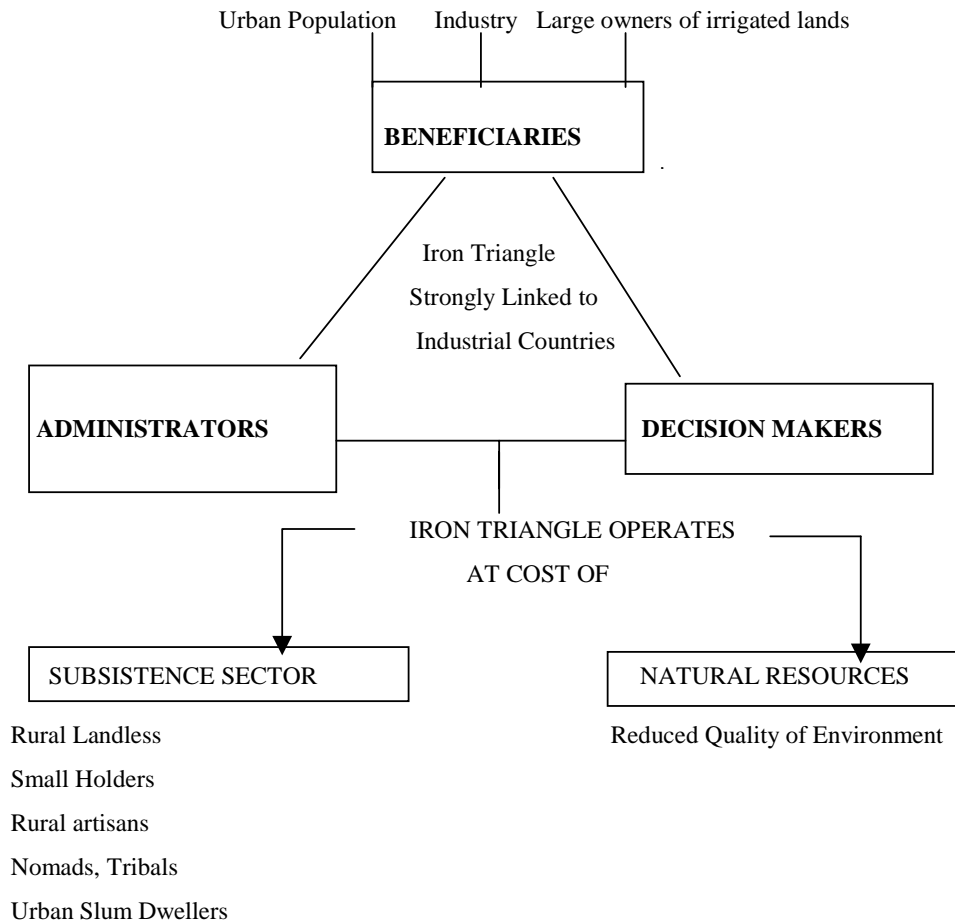
has been demonstrated empirically that men are more likely to spend income on personal, as opposed to family, needs than women<sup>xxv</sup>. In summation, this section has established the relationship of biomass dependence to broader structural inequalities, the next section will outline the historical factors which have perpetuated these biases.

### **Historical sources of current distribution structure**

The distribution of resources and the consequent dependence upon different livelihood sources detailed above has been shaped by the structures established under the rubric of 'development'. The main development strategy of India since Independence has been a centrally planned *dirigisme* (state led interventionist) regime. This has prioritised growth in selected (usually urban based) industries and has been infused with a Nehruvian faith in the 'trickle down' of modernisation, with an array of poverty alleviation plans to diffuse the gains downwards to the vast majority who remain in villages<sup>xxvi</sup>. The main institutions charged with executing this strategy were bureaucracies, which tended to be highly centralised in keeping with India's 'weak federalism'.

Critics argue that this concentration on growth sectors has produced an elite bias, so that the share of resources has accrued to a small proportion of the population. In many ways the structural biases of the Forestry sector is emblematic of the general development experience in India. Historical structures, put in place by the British in order to facilitate the extraction of raw materials, were continued in the independence era. The resource imperatives associated with top-down forestry since colonial times have predominantly been oriented towards elite centred, non-local needs. Those such as Gadgil and Guha (1995) suggest that through the undervaluing of resources by subsidising and externalising the real cost of resources, the dominant sectors of the market economy have profited at the expense of the two other 'economies', since it has relied on a transference of resources into the market economy<sup>xxvii</sup>. Gadgil (1992) argues that this distributive bias is due to the prevalence of what he has described as an 'iron triangle' of interests as described below<sup>xxviii</sup>.

**Figure 2 Relationship developed as a consequence of elite centred resource distribution**



As with all development in both the colonial and post independence period, the state has asserted its legitimacy on the basis of a monopoly of ‘scientific knowledge’. Thus accompanying the economic biases of colonialism was the epistemological construction of a scientific regime premised on the exclusion of a delegitimised local knowledge and its replacement with ‘scientific’ knowledge. The latter knowledge was supposedly decontextualised and thus universally applicable through its dualistic method<sup>xxx</sup>. This scientific knowledge was utilised to frame laws put in place by the British that effectively excluded peasants in order to protect resources in the ‘national interest’. This national interest was imperatives related mainly to ship, bridge and railway building for the British Empire<sup>xxx</sup>. Whilst space does not allow for a full treatment of this evolution, it is important to note that



in the post colonial era the Government continued to have control over the majority of land<sup>xxxii</sup>.

The most significant feature of this evolution was the Amended 1878 Indian Forest Act, when all land was classified into three categories. These three categories were reserved forest, protected forests and village forests. The vast majority of forest was zoned reserved, which was for commercial use, whilst protected forests were generally areas which were inaccessible. The remainder, usually areas of less value, was village forest. The state maintained a right to restrict access to these resources, and held a monopoly on any species deemed valuable. As the protected forests became more accessible through road building, a great deal of it was reclassified to reserve forest<sup>xxxiii</sup>. These early divisions remained the backbone of the Indian Forest strategy for much of the next century, with the 1927 Indian Forest Act strengthening the right of State governments and their Forest Department officials to decide on fate of the forests and by implication, those who wished to access it.

The first area to be placed under this systematic, 'scientific regime' in Bengal was the South West Region. After the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793, there was a massive transfer of land away from the local adivasi population to Zamindars, with the assistance of the Colonial bureaucracy eager for tax revenue. The resource pressures were accelerated in the 1860-90s with the building of railways and roads. These actions were strongly resisted by the santhals and other groups of people living in the region, who had their own well established village arrangements to manage the forests, as well as courts to cope with disputes arising from inter and intra village controversy. As such the Forestry Department, rather than filling a void in management regime, was imposing upon a preexisting system of management.

Moreover, it is neglected in much of the literature that there were consistent attempts to contest the imposition of this system from localised organised movements of dissent. These in fact predate the British and were extensive in the late nineteenth century and twentieth century, often involving thousands of people<sup>xxxiv</sup>.

The period since that time was one of confrontation between the Forestry Department and local inhabitants, leading to eventual accommodation of the demands of the latter by the former. The 1953 Bengal Tenancy Act and the Zamindar Abolition Act were passed in response to decreasing amount of land available local inhabitants. Whilst this was supposed to benefit the predominantly tribal population, in many cases it saw the rapid clearing of the forest by Zamindars before transfer had been finalised<sup>xxxv</sup>.

The tension between these groups over access to resources did not dissipate and in the period March to May 1967, immediately before the famous Naxalite movement, there was over a hundred incidents of seizure of land etc. These involved peasants armed with bows and arrows occupying land<sup>xxxv</sup>. The election of the leftist United Front governments in the period 1967-70 and its mooting of land reforms was significant in providing a sympathetic environment for the development of greater dissenting sentiment. As is well documented elsewhere, this government's ambitions were frustrated by its removal from office, and the mooted land reforms did not occur.

It is this tension rife environment that was the background environment to the now famous 'Arabari Experiment'. At this small research station experiments were constantly being disrupted by villagers grazing cattle or cutting fuelwood. The newly appointed Chief Silviculturist met with the surrounding eleven villages and negotiated a respite from the interference with the research experiments. In return he offered them a 25 per cent share of the final harvest. This negotiation was successful and the first FPCs, formed in 1972, had their genesis out of this collaboration.

Gradually similar schemes began to spread throughout the South Western region. However as Poffenberger points out this was not a systematic evolution and individual FPCs remained isolated from each other and had "little effect on routine forest management systems within the state"<sup>xxxvi</sup>. Agreements began to be encouraged but they were strictly between individual forest officers and surrounding villages, and these officers usually had limited tenure of three years. The national strategy then shifted to an emphasis on Social Forestry programme, introduced ostensibly to solve the fuelwood crisis. This can be seen as a tentative step towards fuller community involvement but with constraints, since although there was greater attempts to involve local communities, it overwhelmingly focussed on commercial objectives.

During this period the mainstream global development institutions began to become more heavily involved in West Bengal. The West Bengal Social Forestry Project 1981/2-1986/7 period had a total budget of \$US43.5 million. The World Bank supplied a credit for 69% of the project cost<sup>xxxvii</sup>. It consisted of four components: "community woodlots (on common land) bund/strip plantations (on state and public land like canals roads tanks) and farm forestry (plantations on private land) and reforestation"<sup>xxxviii</sup>.

This consisted of the planting of Eucalyptus trees, a strategy which within itself has fallen under criticism since its main use is to supply raw materials for paper and pulp mills. Thus a gender critique of these programmes suggests that it was privileging male resource imperatives. The only fuel which it provides are leaves, which are not optimal due to the large amount of oil they contain. Several commentators have therefore criticised the project for what is perceived to be an undue commercial emphasis, since the farm forestry component, conducted on predominantly on private land was the only sector which fulfilled its targets<sup>xxxix</sup>.

Nesbith (1991) found that the project overwhelmingly benefited rich farmers. Furthermore, she argues that the design and implementation of Social Forestry had little involvement of women nor of the more impoverished villagers. However, she suggests that the land reforms of the Left Front Government enabled poorer households to participate in a limited way, which they would not have been able to do otherwise. Whilst the programme did not meet its stated objectives with regard to village woodlots and strip plantations, it did initially encourage the interaction of villagers and forestry staff on a less adversarial basis via its implementation through the Panchayats<sup>xl</sup>. The success of Social Forestry as an implement of World Bank sponsored development is indicative of the broader point that market-led globalisation favours those with assets. Whilst the Panchayats were extremely successful in some areas, the benefits overwhelmingly favoured the so-called 'middle peasant'.

### **The 1988 Forest Policy and JFM: Fundamentals of the policy shift.**

Joint Forest Management in West Bengal is often heralded as a new paradigm in participatory resource management and has been the focus of significant academic commentary<sup>xli</sup>. The policy shift gained support because the reality of declining forest coverage<sup>xlii</sup> and consistent peasant dissent in conventionally managed forests, in contrast with impressive reforestation results in those areas of informal collaboration, began to suggest to those within the Forest Department that such authoritarian measures would not necessarily accomplish their objectives. Thus by the mid 1980's the Forest Department began to encourage its Forest Officers to seek informal agreements with villagers, even offering awards based on the success in forming FPCs, which led to a rapid expansion in their number.

Mounting pressure from low level users, plus the evidence of some success in West Bengal, led to the 1988 Forest Policy of India. This is heralded as a reversal of this culture of exclusion by many commentators and a substantial change in the climate of relations between

people and the Forestry Department. This policy document suggested that local interests in timber and NTFPS had to be accommodated as a first priority and explicitly emphasised the participation of women<sup>xliii</sup>.

The National legislation thus moved closer to what had already been occurring in West Bengal (informally) for some years. According to S.B.Roy of IBRAD there was concern amongst senior forest officers and field staff in West Bengal that unless 'the evolving working arrangements had legal sanction, cooperating villages would stop their protection activities'<sup>xliiv</sup>. In response the West Bengal Government passed the first formal recognition of FPCs in the State, despite the fact that there were over 1,200 FPCs already operating<sup>xlv</sup>. The important features of this resolution were as follows:

- Members allowed 25 per cent of usufructs benefits after the agreed to area had been protected for a minimum of five years, and a further five years before the Forest official were to distribute the benefits.
- Selection of those eligible for participation in the scheme was to be decided by the District Forest Officer in consultation with the relevant Bon-o-Bhumi Sanskar Sthayee Samiti (local political representative) of the concerned Panchayat Samiti.
- The beneficiaries were supposed to be drawn from the economically backward people living in the vicinity of the forests. Furthermore the Gram Panchayat (Village Panchayat) was to extend its support to ensure proper functioning.
- Members of the FPC were able to collect various NTFP without having to pay royalties. These included fallen twigs, grass, fruits, flowers and seeds (excluding cashews). They were to receive 25% of the sale of cashews.
- After every final harvesting members would be entitled to 25% of the net proceeds of the sale from timber poles. Ongoing benefits included one fourth of intermediate yield from coppicing, multiple shoot cutting and thinning as well as an approved price for the depositing of sal seeds and kendu leaves with the West Bengal Tribal Development Co operative Corporation Ltd<sup>xlvi</sup>.

Further changes were made in West Bengal in the following years refining the membership criterion, so that every family could join if they wished<sup>xlvii</sup>. Furthermore the concept of joint membership was introduced, so that if the husband became a member then the wife also automatically became a member, with either having the right to represent the household at any time<sup>xlviii</sup>. Further Amendments broadened the geographical scope of operations to include all of the major forest areas in the state<sup>xlix</sup>

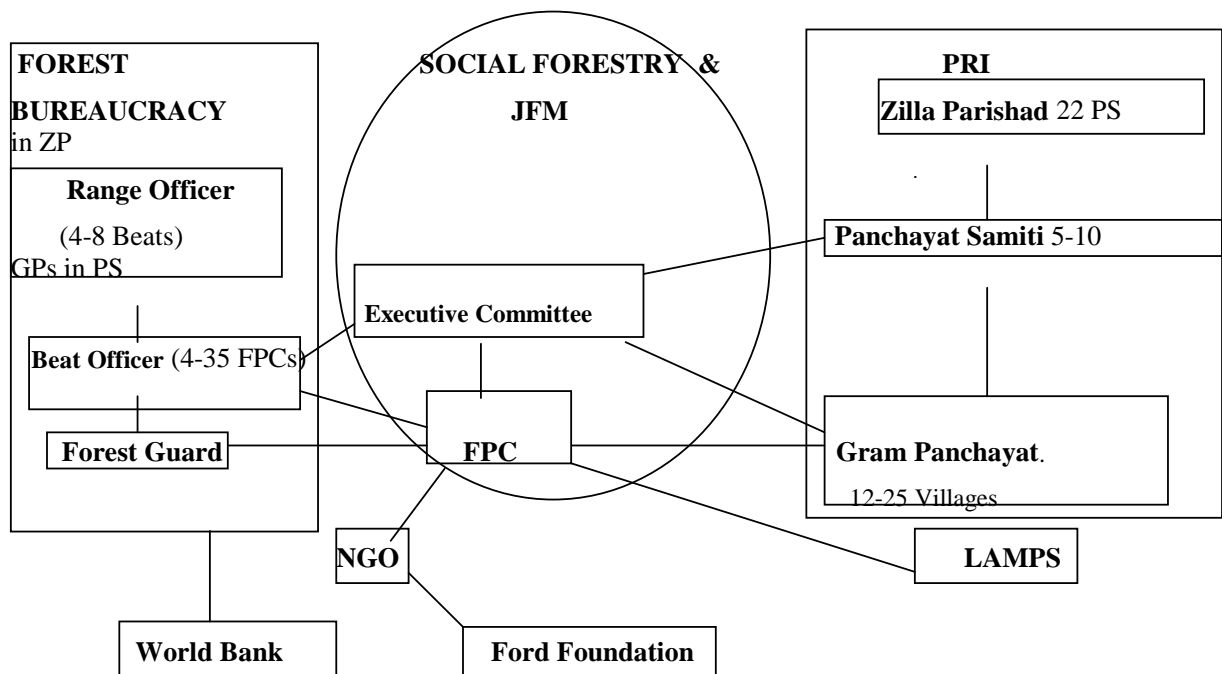
The formalisation of the relationship saw the formation of an institutional structure, including an Executive Committee, in which both the Forestry Department and the Panchayats featured strongly. This is in keeping with other Left Front strategies to involve the Panchayats more

explicitly in the bureaucratic structure as the primary instrument of rural development. The beat officer was designated member and secretary of the executive committee, and was required to convene meetings to elect representatives once a year. If the District Forest Officer decided that members were contravening the 1927 IFA, they had the right to cancel the FPC or the executive committee. The Bon-o-Bhumi Sanskar Sthayee Samiti of the respective Panchayat Samiti was empowered to monitor, supervise and review the functioning of the FPC.

The Executive Committee consists of: “(a) Sabhapati or any member of Bon-o-Bhumi Sanskar Sthayee Samiti of local Panchayat Samiti. (b) Gram pradhan or any member of local gram panchayat(s). (c) Elected representatives of the beneficiaries (not exceeding 6) (d) Concerned beat officer (member secretary)”.

The full structure of JFM can be represented in diagrammatic form as below. Those in the largest circle (Joint Forest Management) are involved directly in JFM. Similarly those who are in more than one circle (either Forest Bureaucracy or PRI) have other activities, (since the Forestry Department conducts other programmes and the PRIs are involved in a broad range of development activities). Those outside these contribute in an indirect way, either through training (NGO) or funds (World Bank, INGO).

**Figure 3 The Institutional Matrix of JFM in Bankura District**



This institutional matrix, as an 'ideal type', concurs with much of the theoretical literature concerning the factors necessary for institutions to have the robustness to sustain collective action<sup>i</sup>. Most successful cases of community involvement usually involve pre-existing institutions and ideas that were adapted and built upon, since there were 'moral norms' already established<sup>ii</sup>. Furthermore if there is to be trust built up around these institutions they must be perceived as 'transparent, accountable, participatory and fair' by all stakeholders<sup>iii</sup>.

This revised institutional configuration (JFM) has many advantages from that which prevailed in previous years. In the exclusionary model that prevailed, there was no recognition of the livelihood needs of those in surrounding villages. Since there was no legitimacy (other than coercive) imbued in this system from the perspective of the villagers, there was little incentive for villagers to report offenders or to restrain their own illegal activities in accessing forest resources. By implication monitoring of vast tracts of forest by a small number of forest department officials is problematised. This had the effect of degrading the forests, as well as the cause of consistent clashes between representatives of the state apparatus (mainly police and forest department representatives) and villagers.

In contrast, JFM represents a significant shift away from this adversarial culture. It contains mechanisms to for incentives to internalise the negative externalities which occur from individuals pursuing self interest against the broader interest of the community. As an 'ideal type' this structure has the advantage of being inclusive at the planning and monitoring stages, as well as giving adequate institutional support from broader agencies of rural development. Agrawal (1994) has summarised the problems of collective action on the basis of four features, (highlighted in italics below), all of which can be seen to be overcome in an 'ideal type' of JFM<sup>liii</sup>.

Firstly, *the creation of boundary and authority rules* is achieved through microplans and agreements established in consultation with representatives from all involved sectors of society (FPC, FD, PRIs). Boundaries are demarcated and rules established determining which parties are allowed to use which resources and in which quantities. Secondly, regarding *the effective monitoring of rules*, members of FPCs monitor these rules. The members of the FPCs are dependent on the resources and so there are incentives for them to monitor effectively. This is point borne out strongly by case studies that suggest that those FPCs dominated by adivasis have a much greater success rate, since by and large they have a greater interest in protecting the resources. Thirdly, *the penalties for violating these rules* are

community sanctioned, since if the forests are rehabilitated in the manner agreed then all villagers will not receive their share of harvest. Fourthly, the executive committee's structure and its collaboration with the PRIs provides *a forum for dispute resolution*.

The next section will review the success of this institutional matrix, as drawn from my own field research with 6 FPCs in Bankura, as well as incorporating the insights of other case studies and the Forest Department's own Monitoring and Evaluation reports.

## **V Assessing JFM: A new paradigm, panacea, palliative or placebo?**

My own study in Bankura district has found a great deal of variance in the rates of compliance, the robustness of the institutional mix, as well as the benefits flowing to FPC members. Members of 6 FPCs were interviewed, as well as the corresponding Beat Officer, Gram Panchayat Sarpanch and Bon o Bhumi Sthayee Samiti member<sup>liv</sup>. Further information was obtained from microplans and infringement records where available.

In the best cases, there was steady flow of benefits to the members of the FPC and the scheme functioned as a broader instrument of empowerment in giving security and additional income. For example from the 4 occasions the harvesting activities were carried out by the Tribanka FPC, 5 967 mandays of employment were created, which yielded a total of Rs 264 984 for the 140 households in this FPC. Additionally each FPC member received around Rs1000 as share of the profits of the harvest, which had been conducted four times. Moreover, with assistance from the forestry department, sal plate making machines was purchased as well as a pond which was used for pisciculture. In this case JFM was assisting the predominantly ST village towards greater security. Significantly, the Tribanka FPC was run entirely by women, which is the case in less than one percent of all FPCs<sup>lv</sup>.

At the other extreme, another FPC (Laltagora) had not even been registered even though it had existed since 1994. Since the members were only protecting eucalyptus forest they received far fewer everyday benefits and did not have a functioning Executive Committee, nor any knowledge of the existence of a microplan. These two examples represent an extreme in the functioning of JFM, with the other six displaying elements of each. This was evidenced in almost all aspects.

As per the formulation of microplans, there was again wide variance. Some (such as Katabari and Tribanka FPCs) viewed microplans as an ongoing interaction between villagers and the forestry department, where plans for the village could be formulated. In others it was

apparent that the microplanning was run predominantly by the Forestry Department, with villagers clearing the plan<sup>lvi</sup>.

In most cases there was well formulated rosters of duty, usually involving 5 people per day in patrolling the forest, with the frequency of duty varying depending on the size of the FPC. Most FPCs have a land/person ratio of approximately 1 hectare per person. In the most effective cases, the Executive Committee was made of those who had recognition within the village as capable and broadly represented different interests within the village. In many cases there was a core group who were kept on, with poorly performing members replaced.

The role of the Beat Officer emerges as the cornerstone of the relationship between the FD and FPC. However, there is a great variance in the experience levels and enthusiasm of Beat Officers. Similar observations were made concerning the role of the Bon o Bhumi Sthayee member and the Gram Panchayat member. In the most effective FPCs, these members of the Executive Committee were committed and there was greater interaction between the FPC and the broader institutions of development. This resulted in a greater emphasis on bringing in alternative sources of income, such as sal plate making, mushroom marketing or pisciculture.

These results broadly concur with the findings of the Forestry Department's own Monitoring and Evaluation wing, which is prepared on the basis of a survey of 150 different FPCs throughout the State each year. According to the Forestry Departments own 1996/7 Monitoring and Evaluation report, it was found that in only 53% of the FPCs surveyed had had a microplan prepared, with the corresponding figure being 63% in the 1997/8 version<sup>lvii</sup>. In the 1997/98 report only 23% of FPC members felt that the plan developed under the microplan would meet their needs<sup>lviii</sup>.

Poverty remains a significant problem in these areas and accounts for the overwhelming motivation behind lack of compliance, particularly in the lean season, which in Bankura extends from March to May. During this time there is an increased useage of forest products and increased infringements. The Monitoring and Evaluation reports suggested that only 34% of FPC members felt that the benefits accrued from the forest floor due to JFM would be enough to sustain them through the lean season<sup>lix</sup>. However there was also locational factors at work, since those areas which had access to nearby markets to sell illegally obtained products also had the highest rates of infringements.

There was some differences in the way that these infringements were dealt with, and to some extent the punishment was community sanctioned. In some FPCs, a fine of 50 Rupees was levied on the first two occasions, before being handed over to the FD a third time. In most



cases the offender had to appear in front of the entire FPC and apologise. If still they did not obey the rules they were struck off the FPC register.

There was some scope for improving these conditions through the creation of other sources of employment or food sources. Thus in the Talldanga Range as a whole the number of infringements almost halved, (from 125-70) in a single year (1994/5-1995/6), due in large part to the effects of irrigation measures and an increase in employment through participation in forestry activities.

The question of women's *effective* participation is also far from unproblematic in this scheme. Joint membership is definitely an attempt to involve women in a more effective participatory manner, and is viewed by most commentators as more effective than in those states where there is only one representative per household<sup>lx</sup>. The most common obstacles relate to meetings being held at times when it is not feasible for women to participate owing to other household responsibilities and many case studies highlight barriers to the effective participation of women<sup>lxi</sup>. For example in the 1997/8 report it was found that in only 43% of AGMs were any women present in their sample and in most cases their involvement was small. Both the 1996/7 and 1997/8 reports detail the small attendance of women at AGMs or monthly meetings<sup>lxii</sup>. Furthermore, most case studies report obstacles in dialogue due to a lack of respect for the opinion making of women within the decision making and arbitration institutions, which is exacerbated by the scarcity of women within Executive Committees and in the Forestry Department. Moreover, joint membership does not within itself guarantee increased entitlements to women, since there is often an appropriation of these funds by men, as Sarin's 1998 study in Midnapore indicated.

The impact of JFM as an instrument of redressing intra-village inequalities is mixed. For example in the 1996/7 Survey report only 50% of respondents had joined the FPC, with more than a quarter of those not joining citing class differences as the main reason<sup>lxiii</sup>. However, some respondents in our research who were of SC or ST background reported that they felt that their status had risen in the village as a consequence of the extra responsibility they were given through involvement in the FPC.

Many critiques suggest that an overtly commercial bias remains in JFM. Astute observers of CPR management such as Jodha (1998) and Sarin et al (1998) suggest that the commercial imperatives of the forestry department are still misaligned with the livelihood necessities of the rural poor (Sarin et al 1998p328). In *all* the FPCs I surveyed, economic betterment was cited as the major reason for villagers being involved in the FPC. Whereas, in *all* of the interviews with Forestry Department staff, conservation of trees was cited as the primary

concern. There is a subtle, though significant difference in these perspectives, and may add some credence to the critiques such as Jodha (1998), who argues that the system is little more than a palliative to appease villagers so that they will not erode timber harvest potential.

There is little evidence that JFM has actually altered the predominance of 'the iron triangle' in its hold over the command of the resources, even though they are conceding 25% of the net profits. Moreover eucalyptus plantations are still predominant in many areas, despite villagers in my interviews asserting that these trees dried the soil and diverted the water away from fields. This would suggest that the FD's own orientation is still very much geared towards the satisfaction of these larger commercial imperatives. Other States have set the profit sharing figure at 50%, which would seem to indicate the slight arbitrariness of the percentage for profit sharing. In terms of livelihood provision, the most significant source of everyday livelihood is NTFPs rather than timber<sup>lxiv</sup>. Jodha argues that the access to NTFPs occurs only because the FD finds them hard to collect or market and thus scornfully suggests that the collaboration is "half hearted"<sup>lxv</sup>

In terms of changing the relationship between the Forestry Department and villagers there is little doubt that there is now less hostility. However FPCs members emphasised that the FD was still very much in control since they retained the power to dissolve the FPC. Moreover, the State government continues to dictate the terms under which villagers participate, as well as the benefits they are able to derive as a consequence of this involvement<sup>lxvi</sup>. This would seem a typical relationship in the many schemes which are styled as 'participatory development' such as JFM. There is often obfuscation of the key notions since a decentralisation of responsibility is (falsely) implied to involve an equal devolution of power and benefit.

### **JFM as an extension of the logic of West Bengal development experience:**

It was suggested in previous section that JFM must be viewed in terms of the broader rural development environment, since the success or failure of the broader development structures will contribute to pressure upon the safety net of forests. The work of many scholars indicates there is scope for both optimism and reservation regarding development within rural West Bengal<sup>lxvii</sup>. Most argue that the tenure of the Left Front Government has led to a more equitable rural society which has diminished the relative vulnerability of a large proportion of the rural populace in West Bengal<sup>lxviii</sup>.

However, the gains from the Left Front's initiatives are far from evenly distributed, with some schemes, such as land reform, immunisation and the panachayats having greater

success than others, such as literacy<sup>lxxix</sup>. My own research found that both the vested (patta) land and sharecropping (Barga) reform measures, whilst limited in their scope, were of some significance in adding to food security.

Similarly, there was wide variation in my own survey in the provision of deep (for drinking) and shallow (for irrigation) tube wells. Although the exact extent and success of the irrigation programme is the source of considerable scholarly debate in recent years, my own research found that this had had a considerable effect in assisting food security. The addition of another crop per year has assisted not only those who cultivate this land, but has contributed as an extra source of income for agricultural labourers.

The Panchayats are a very important factor in the success of rural development in West Bengal<sup>lxxx</sup>. As Kohli (1987) has argued, a fundamental success of the politicised PRIs has been the separation of economic (social) and political power<sup>lxxxi</sup>. Similarly, surveys by Dreze indicated that the Panchayats have shown less leakages in their distribution of poverty alleviation funds than other states<sup>lxxxii</sup>. These institutions have been progressively empowered since 1985-6, when decentralised planning was introduced in West Bengal. Of the total grant extended to Bankura district for example, 91.16% went to the District Panchayat Fund<sup>lxxxiii</sup>. This was divided so that 50% went to the lowest level Gram Panchayat, 20% to the Panchayat Samiti and 30% to the Zilla Parishad<sup>lxxxiv</sup>. In financial terms therefore the West Bengal has been very effective in promoting the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments<sup>lxxxv</sup>.

It should also be stressed that in the process the Left Front has endeavoured to restore an amount of legitimacy to the institutions of rural development process as much more representative of all those in the community. They are the exception in holding panchayat elections every five years. According to Partha Chatterjee, the progressive ideology which has shaped the transformation of rural society has been fundamentally influenced by peasant resistance and a legacy of a politicised peasant (led) agenda<sup>lxxxvi</sup>.

JFM should be viewed as following similar impetuses, in that its historical development and agenda can best be viewed as accommodating contesting interests rather than a forest department scheme initiated by a far sighted forestry official and 'pushed upon' villagers. There has not been sufficient recognition of the historical and cultural antecedents from the 1760s onwards which provided the basis for the formation of Forest Protection Committees (FPCs). This scholarly bias has tended to understate the history of agitation and the accompanying grassroots political/cultural ideology, which provided the impetus for its development and spread. This is evidenced by the fact that the South West region continues

to have the greatest proportion of FPCs. In 1994 whilst the region contains approximately 1/3 of the states total forest area, it had 73 % of the FPCs<sup>lxxvii</sup>. This is not the case for the recent spread of JFM initiatives, which have been much more 'top down' in their formation with encouragement by State governments and the World Bank and suggests that replicability is far from unproblematic<sup>lxxviii</sup>.

Those such as Chopra (1995) have argued that the relative success of the Joint Forest Management experience in West Bengal was a major contributing factor in the recommendation by the Ministry of Environment and Forests for a shift in policy which culminated in the 1988 Forest Policy<sup>lxxix</sup>. In turn, it can be argued that a major contributing factor in the proliferation of JFM in West Bengal was the implicit and explicit support extended to its formative stages from the Left Front Government and its bureaucratic structure.

The example of JFM demonstrates the broader applicability of the Left Fronts development logic, including the PRIs and their associated programmes, land reform measures and the extension of irrigation. It also illustrates that there has been strong limits to what these reforms have been able to achieve, as there remains areas where a substantial proportion of the population is not receiving these programmes or is doing so in an insubstantial manner. The evidence from Bankura suggests that the strength of the Panchayats are a major factor both in supporting the functioning of JFM but also in providing other sources of livelihood options. Consequently, there is a wide variance in the financial and technical support that each village receives from the Panchayats.

## **Liberalisation and Rural Development**

The policies and effects of the New Economic Policies are highly contested and it is not possible to give more than a broad brushstroke picture of their impacts. It can be said briefly however that the 2000 Budget, and the accompanying *Economic Survey*, clearly outline the Central Government's priorities. These relate chiefly to "public finance, capital markets, inflation and balance of payments"<sup>lxxx</sup>. Agriculture is given a very low priority and matters related to the biomass economy, or the environment, hardly rate as much as a passing mention. This would seem an oversight, to put it kindly, since an extremely noteworthy feature of the liberalisation regime has been the diversion of resources from community to private control as well as an accelerated rate of resource use and accompanying biotic pressure<sup>lxxxi</sup>. Given that the vast majority of the population are dependent upon these latter

elements for a large part of their livelihoods, it would seem reasonable to assert that the first priority of the governments policy direction is more framed towards attracting foreign investors.

The stronghold of pro-liberalisation advocates on the direction of Indian public policy, approaching something of a consensus amongst the mainstream parties, (elements of the left and the *swadeshi* faction notwithstanding), is illustrative of a typical transnationalised state whose “ policies and institutional arrangements are conditioned and changed by the power and mobility of transnational factions of capital”<sup>lxxxii</sup>. Driven by a perceived need for fiscal restraint and an ideological commitment to market-led solutions, the state has substantially retreated from any perceived social responsibilities. Rather than systematically trying to identify the political causes of inequality, they have adopted almost wholesale the prescriptions of the Bretton Woods Institutions, despite the overwhelming evidence in many countries that this leads to increased inequality. This has broader linkages to the global economic order, or as Kiely observes “the triumph of neoliberalism can be seen as a reflection of the dominant interests in the global economy”<sup>lxxxiii</sup>. Within the rural areas, this has translated into the following measures<sup>lxxxiv</sup>:

- 1) Actual decline in Central Government Expenditures on rural development. This has
- 2) Reduced transfers to State governments,
- 3) Reduced spread and rising prices of public distribution system<sup>lxxxv</sup>.
- 4) Reduced access to rural credit because of financial liberalisation<sup>lxxxvi</sup>.

The effects of this has been a reversal in the trend of the 1970s and 1980s, which saw a consistent decrease in rural poverty levels and in the levels of inequality in consumption expenditure. Whilst there is little doubt that the impact of the biases in development has historically been to divert funds away from the vast majority of the population, it bears emphasis that poverty in India had been falling steadily in the 1970s and 1980s, especially outside of the stagnating BIMARU states<sup>lxxxvii</sup>. In those states that have made a concerted effort to alter entrenched inequalities in asset holding, increase employment in the rural areas, improve agricultural productivity and provide social opportunities, such as West Bengal and Kerala there has been a considerable impact<sup>lxxxviii</sup>.

The transnationalised state that has emerged in the post 1991 era is centred on an inflow of foreign investment to spark an increase in economic growth and alter the macro-economic variables. In this perspective poverty alleviation programmes and rural development is

replaced by a 'trickle down', which will presumably flow after the fiscal obsessions of Washington have been observed. Such a sectoral strategy is justified within the neoliberalist paradigm so as to increase efficiency and increase growth rates<sup>lxxxix</sup>. However as Dreze and Sen (1995) argue, such a strategy assumes a certain level of capabilities, which enable the capacity to take advantage of changing opportunities *a la* the 'East Asian miracle'. As Herring (1999) recently argued "rapid growth may be a solution for the poor with some assets, contacts, mobility, energy and low risk aversion, but do nothing for the most intractable poverty"<sup>xc</sup>.

However such subtleties are ignored in the universal recipe for globalisation and economic integration which India is now undertaking. Globalisation is viewed as a panacea, and its claims are bolstered by the prescriptive 'science' of neoliberal economics. In many ways therefore the ruling classes of India are again obscuring the deep seated power relations which fashion the distribution of resources under the guise of 'scientific' management. An interesting comparison can be thus be drawn between the discourses which privileged 'state led' exclusionary structures in the pre-liberalisation era and the 'market-led' privileging in the post liberalisation period. In both cases, development discourses masquerading as science legitimised certain interests to the detriment of others.

## **VI Conclusion: The ambiguous position of JFM in an era of globalisation**

The paper has thus attempted to give a brief outline of the need to refocus on policy which safeguards and promotes livelihood strategies. It suggested that the historical economic and political development of India, 'the half hearted state capitalism', has meant that there is a large proportion of the population that are without a secure command of resources.

Furthermore that the current phase of haphazard neoliberalism continues to decrease the livelihood options as the price of basic commodities is increasing without a committant growth in rural employment to offset its effects, and diverts resources towards those in structurally privileged positions. Thus globalisation should be seen as an extension of the politics of exclusion and contestation rather than as a distinct occurrence.

Joint Forest Management occupies an ambiguous position within the era of globalisation. In its evolution it can be seen as an extension of the logic of the broader development ideology of the Left Front Government. Whilst it has rightfully been lauded nationally and internationally as a significant demonstration of the capacity of communities to co-manage natural resources, its efficacy is highly varied. JFM exemplifies that replicating and

sustaining the positive achievements of a particular micro-level renegotiation of inequalities into a broader national agenda, under the guise of 'participatory development', is far from unproblematic.

Moreover, whilst it has demonstrated the possibility of operating both as a safety net and as a facilitator of greater livelihood options, in other cases it appears little more than a tool of cooption by the 'iron triangle' so that timber harvest will not be disrupted. Whilst it incorporates a laudable degree of participation and is more sensitive to livelihood needs, it remains a 'top-down *and* bottom-up' approach which does not necessarily prioritise the needs of its supposed beneficiaries. To a limited extent this confirms that there is a male dominated 'middle peasant' strata circumscribing the limits of reform, but it also suggests that there is potential for further redressal of this in the future<sup>xcvi</sup>.

However the same can not be said for all of the other states which have taken up JFM type schemes, and in many cases, as has been argued by several commentators regarding Karnataka, this has been a top down initiative<sup>xcvii</sup>. This is driven in part by donor pressure, partly by 'efficiency' considerations in an era where tightening of expenditure is a strong motivation. Moreover, the continued endorsement of Eucalyptus plantations, in West Bengal and elsewhere, remains contentious, in that they are fast growing but also dry the soil and have little benefit for forest products.

Globalisation in the neoliberal version ascribes a place for non-statist actors such as voluntary organisations and NGOs. Unfortunately the use of these participatory schemes, is also part of the Washington Consensus and this may simply be part of an ideological agenda to 'rollback the state' as Roger Jeffery has suggested about the World Bank's support of an 'entrepreneurially' focussed JFM in India<sup>xcviii</sup>. Consequently the proliferation of JFM type initiatives must be viewed with some scepticism. In many ways the retreat of the state from positive interventions and the cowering postures of India's leaders before the edifice of the (post?) Washington Consensus offers little positive for rural development, nor to the vast majority who are dependent upon it. The experience of JFM, as well as the broader rural development experience in West Bengal however suggests a crucial role for an appropriately located sympathetic state apparatus in extending capabilities and altering preexisting inequalities<sup>xcix</sup>.

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- <sup>i</sup> As Beck has noted, there are other types of CPRs within West Bengal such as Rice gleaning. However an examination of gleaned and other non forest products, such as fish are beyond the scope of this analysis. T. Beck *The Experience of Poverty* Intermediate Technology Publications 1994
- <sup>ii</sup> J.P. Platteau 'Mutual Insurance as an Elusive Concept in Traditional Rural Communities' *The Journal of Development Studies* Vol. 33, No 6, August 1997, pp764-796, Frank Cass, London., J. P. Platteau 'Traditional Systems of Social Security and Hunger Insurance: Past Achievements and Modern Challenges' in E. Ahmad, J. Dreze, J.Hills and A.K. Sen (eds) (1999) *Social Security in Developing Countries* Oxford India Paperbacks New Delhi p112-171 and B. Agarwal ' Social Security and the Family: Coping with Seasonality and Calamity in Rural India' in Ahmad et al (eds) (1999) p 171-247. See also John Toye 'Nationalising the Anti Poverty Agenda' in *IDS Bulletin V* 30 No2 April 1999 p 11
- <sup>iii</sup> Pattnaik, B.K. and S.Dutta 'JFM in South West Bengal: A Study in Participatory Development' *Economic and Political Weekly* December 13 1997pp 3225-3232.
- <sup>iv</sup> Pattnaik and Dutta 1997p3225.
- <sup>v</sup> This is not to dismiss the substantial role of population growth in the degradation of resources. In West Bengal, with a population density of 766, this growth has obviously created biotic pressure. However, in order to understand the role of this growth is to also analyse the relationship between population growth rates, migration and broader structural factors which perpetuate poverty. The combination of these factors is complex and beyond the scope of this analysis.
- <sup>vi</sup> This critique can be extended to the paucity of treatment extended to poverty more generally in disciplines which supposedly have a global focus, such as International Political Economy (IPE) or International Relations (IR) more generally. For an examination of these issues see R. Tooze and Craig N. Murphy 'The Epistemology of Poverty and the Poverty of Epistemology in IPE Mystery, Blindness, and Invisibility' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 1996 V 25 No 3 pp 681-707. Notable exceptions to this include Ankie Hoogvelt 1997 *Globalisation and the Post Colonial World: The New Political Economy of Development* and Ray Kiely and Phil Marfleet *Globalisation and the Third World* Routledge London and New York..
- <sup>vii</sup> J.Petras 'Globalization: A Critical Analysis' *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 1999 Vol 29, No 1, pp3.
- <sup>viii</sup> J Toye 1987 *Dilemmas of Development*, Oxford Blackwell.
- <sup>ix</sup> See Kiely 'The crisis of global development' in Ray Kiely and Phil Marfleet for an examination of the context of this take over of the discipline by neo-liberalism. Also Fine 1999 'The Development State is Dead: Long live Social capital' *Development and Change* Vol 30. p 1-19.
- <sup>x</sup> As Pieper and Taylor (1998) have detailed, this has been assisted by the focus of the 'Washington Consensus' shifting more explicitly towards a withdrawal or rollback of the state and its concomittant responsibilities in the social sector, with a concentration on transforming economies towards greater 'market friendly' fundamentals, including devaluation of currencies and the removal of any distortionary measures such as subsidies to improve fiscal deficits and cut debts. Pieper and Taylor 'The revival of the liberal creed: the IMF, the World bank, and Inequality in a Globalized Economy' in D. Baker, G. Epstein and R.Pollin (ed) *Globalization and Progressive Economic Policy* Cambridge University Press 1997pp40.
- <sup>xi</sup> R. Kiely 1995 *Sociology and Development: The Impasse and Beyond* London UCL Press



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<sup>xii</sup> Leftwich 1993: 630 quoted in Kiely p 135

<sup>xiii</sup> The term 'environmental entitlements' is borrowed from Mearns et al (1998) 'The Institutional Dynamics of Community Natural Resource Management': paper presented at the 1998 IASCP Conference. They have extended Amartya Sen's famous terminology which was first utilised to explain the existence of famines despite adequate food supply.

<sup>xiv</sup> C.T. Kurien *Global Capitalism and the Indian Economy* 1994 Orient Longman p92

<sup>xv</sup> In this I am following the conceptual framework of Shiva *Ecology and the Politics of Survival: Conflicts Over Natural Resources in India*, 1991p28. Sage Publications New Delhi/Newbury Park/London and United Nations University Press, Tokyo.

<sup>xvi</sup> CSE 1995 in Rao 1995b:1752

<sup>xvii</sup> Studies by Beck and Ghosh (1999), Jodha (1986), Beck (1994) and others have indicated that all rural households are dependent upon CPRs for a substantial proportion of their livelihood, with the non-poor have a much less significant reliance on CPRs than the poor. Jodha's (1986) study of 12 districts in 7 semi arid states indicates that all rural households rely on CPRs to some degree. However CPRs contribute only 1-4% of income and only 8-32% of fuel and firewood needs for non poor households. This is in comparison to the poor households where CPRs supply 91-100 per cent of firewood and 66-84 per cent of domestic fuel needs.

<sup>xviii</sup> See B. Agarwal (1999) and P. Dasgupta *An Inquiry into Wellbeing and Destitution* 1993 Clarendon Press, on this point.

<sup>xix</sup> This is hardly surprising given that theoretical surveys of the field of development economics, traditionally viewed as a subset of neo-classical economics, attribute little importance to the human/environment nexus, despite the fact that in all developing countries there are is substantial proportion of the poor who are directly dependent on the environment to satisfy their subsistence needs Dasgupta's critique of pivotal texts within the field is testimony to this fact. Dasgupta 1993 pp 273.

<sup>xx</sup> It is significant that this percentage has decreased from more than 70 per cent in 1973. C.P. Chandrasekhar, and A. Sen 'Statistical Truths: Economic Reform and Poverty' *Frontline*, February 23 1999 p 100-102. Having stated that, one must be careful in taking poverty lines as definitive benchmarks, since they may not fully account for those with insecure command over resources. For example it was recently claimed that over 70 per cent of the total population of India may be described as having insecure claims to food (see John Harris 'Against conventional wisdom' *Frontline* March 31 2000 p 71.

<sup>xxi</sup> The reality of this division of labour and its attendant consequences have been visible to policy makers since the landmark report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India Towards Equality (1974), which documented through the use of extensive empirical evidence that much of what was officially seen as development was worsening the position of women. M. Sarin, (with L.Ray, M.S.Raju, M. Chatterjee, N. Banerjee and S.Hiremath) 'Gender and Equity Concerns in Joint Forest Management' in In A. Kothari, N. Pathak, R.V. Anuradha and B.Taneja (eds) (1998) *Communities and Conservation: Natural Resource Management In South and Central Asia* Sage Publications New Delhi 1998 p324. See also Sara Ahmed *Gendering the Rural Environment: Concepts and Issues for Practice* Workshop Report (April 23-24), Institute for Rural Management, Anand 1993; S. Arya 'Women' in Alternative Survey Group (1999) *Alternative Economic Survey 1991-1998: Seven Years of Structural Adjustment*, Rainbow Publishers Limited, Delhi p169-175; B. Agarwal 'Rural Women, Poverty and Natural Resources: Sustenance, Sustainability and Struggle for Change' *Economic and Political Weekly* October 28 1989 ppWS 46-64. M.Chatterjee 'Women in Joint Forest management: A case study from West Bengal in M. Chatterjee and S.B.Roy (eds)1995 p53-73; M. Chatterjee and S.B. Roy (eds) (1995) *Reflections on Gender Issues in Joint Forest Management* Inter-India Publications, New Delhi.; S.B. Roy 1995; S.B. Roy and M. Chatterjee (1994) *Joint Forest Management: A Training Manual* (Forest Studies Series F 001) Inter India Publications New Delhi. pp166-172

<sup>xxii</sup> Chatterjee 1995: 59

<sup>xxiii</sup> Beck and Ghosh 1999; Pattnaik and Brahmachari 1996. A study by Malhotra et al in Midnapore district showed that 16.44 per cent of income of households was derived from NTFPs. This is in keeping with Beck and Ghosh's analysis which suggests that CPRs formed at least 10-25% of income for the poorest sections of the community. See Tony Beck and Madan Ghosh 'Common

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Property Resources and the Poor in West Bengal: Findings from a Seven Village Study' *Economic and Political Weekly* 1999

- <sup>xxiv</sup> G. Hart 'From Rotten Wives' to 'Good Mothers': Household Models and the limits of economism *IDS Bulletin* Vol 28, No3 1997 p14-25
- <sup>xxv</sup> B. Agarwhal 1989 pWS47; Dasgupta 1993; Dreze and Sen 1995
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Maheshwari provides a good overview of the development of these programs. S.R. Maheshwari (1995) *Rural Development in India: A Public Policy Approach* Second edition Sage Publication New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London
- <sup>xxvii</sup> M. Gadgil and R.Guha (1995) *Ecology and Equity: The Use and Abuse of Nature in Contemporary India* Oxford University Press, Dehli.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> M. Gadgil 'State Subsidies and Resource Use in a Dual Society' in A. Agarwal (ed) *The Price of Forests: Proceedings of a Seminar on the Economics of the Sustainable Use of Forest Resources* Centre for Science and Environment 1992
- <sup>xxix</sup> A. Agrawal 'Dismantling the Divide between Indigenous and Scientific knowledge *Development and Change* 26, 1995pp413-39; T. Banuri 'Modernisation and its Discontents: A Cultural Perspective on the Theories of Development'. In F. Apffel-Marglin and S. Marghlin (eds) *Dominating Knowledge: Development Culture and Resistance*. Oxford Clarendon Press 1990; F. Apffel-Marghlin 1996 'Introduction: Rationality and the World' in F. Apffel-Marghlin and S. Marghlin (ed) *Decolonising Knowledge: From Development to Dialogue* Oxford Clarendon Press. S. Marglin 'Towards a Decolonisation of the Mind' in F. Apffel-Marghlin and S. Marglin (eds) 1990.
- <sup>xxx</sup> B.J Krishnan 'Legal and Policy Issues in Community Based Conservation' in Kothari et al 1998; E.C. Robinson *Greening at the Grassroots: Alternative Forest Strategies in India* Sage, New Dehli, 1997; M.Gadgil and R.Guha *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India* Oxford University Press, Dehli 1996; Ramachandra Guha 'Dietrich Brandis and Indian Forestry: A Vision Revisited and Reaffirmed' in Poffenberger, M and B.McGean (eds), 1996 p86-100; Gadgil and Guha 1995
- <sup>xxxi</sup> The transfer of land away from community control was institutionalised by the formation of the Imperial Forest Department in 1864 and the first Indian Forest Act enacted in 1865 For further details see B.J Krishnan 1998 pp350; Robinson 1997; M Gadgil and R Guha 1996, 1995. In the time between this and the revision in 1878 there was a heated debate concerning the appropriate mix of power that should be assigned to the Government vis a vis the Villages. For an account of these debates see R. Guha (1996) 'Dietrich Brandis and Indian Forestry: A Vision Revisited and Reaffirmed' in M Poffenberger and B.McGean (eds) pp86-100.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Robinson 1997 p 25
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Poffenberger, Dasgupta 1994
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> It is widely documented through villager's oral evidence that after the passing of the Act forests became substantially degraded, with Zamindars attempting to clear as possible before the transference of land. Some reports suggest that this was done in as little as 5-6 months in some instances. Oral histories of this period are detailed in Chatterjee and Roy (eds) 1995 p103
- <sup>xxxv</sup> Poffenberger 1996
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Poffenberger 1996 p 142
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> C. Nesbith 'Gender, Trees and Fuel : Social Forestry in West Bengal, India' *Human Organisation* Vol 50, No 4, 1991p339
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> Other states did not have the reforestation component. Robinson 1997 p17
- <sup>xxxix</sup> It follows a similar outcome to other social forestry programmes elsewhere in India. The target was exceeded in the case of farm forestry, village woodlots were less than half of their target and strip

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plantation were less than 90 per cent of target. Robinson 1997p 18. For examples of this criticism see Alvares 1994; Gadgil and Guha 1996

- <sup>xl</sup> Thus Poffenberger (1996) argues that Social Forestry was significant in establishing the rapport which would later convert into JFM.
- <sup>xli</sup> Sarin et al 1998; Pattnaik and Dutta 1997; J.M Baland and J.P.Platteau 1996 *Halting degradation of natural resources: is there a role for rural communities?* Oxford, England : Clarendon Press ; New York : Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; Poffenberger 1996, 1995; Chatterjee and Roy 1995; Chopra 1995; Gadgil and Guha 1995; Mukherjee 1995; Palit 1995; Roy 1995; Sarin 1996, 1995
- <sup>xlii</sup> According to recent government claims approximately 23 per cent of India's land mass is state owned which is classified as forest (Sarin et al 1998:324). Moreover these estimates include all forests, much of which is regenerated plantation and forests and also includes land which has been seized as forests but has very little forest cover left. More accurate figures are reflected in satellite data from the National Remote Sensing Agency, which suggest that in 1972-5 16.9 per cent of the geo-area was forested, falling to 14.1 per cent in 1980-1. Agarwal 1989pWS-56 Approximately 95 per cent of land classified as forests are now government owned and consequently the access to and usage of these resources is highly restricted
- <sup>xliii</sup> GOI 1988: quoted in Sarin, M., (with L.Ray, M.S.Raju, M. Chatterjee, N. Banerjee and S.Hiremath) (1998) 'Gender and Equity Concerns in Joint Forest Management' in Kothari et al (eds) pp323.
- <sup>xliv</sup> S.B. Roy 'An Assessment of JFM in Regeneration and management of Degraded Sal Forest in West Bengal' paper presented at International Association for the Study of Common Property (IASCP) Conference Vancouver , British Columbia, Canada 10-14 June 1998.
- <sup>xlv</sup> Resolution of the Government of West Bengal Forest Department Forest Branch, on the 12th of July, 1989. See Pattnaik and Dutta 1997 p3225. Orissa had passed a similar law in 1988. For an outline of the development of JFM within Orissa see Pattnaik and Brahmachari (1996)
- <sup>xlvi</sup> The above points are a summary of the Government of West Bengal Forest Department Forest Branch Resolution No.4461-For./D/IS-16/88 Dated 12th July 1989, quoted in Roy, S.B. and M. Chatterjee (1994) *Joint Forest Management: A Training Manual* (Forest Studies Series F 001) Inter India Publications New Dehli. pp166-172)
- <sup>xlvii</sup> This was part of the 1990 Amendment
- <sup>xlviii</sup> This was part of the 1991 Amendment. Cited in Roy and Chatterjee 1994
- <sup>xlix</sup> In 1991 the West Bengal government issued three more similar policy orders which incorporated the North Bengal plains, Darjeeling hills and the Sunderbans under forms of JFM each with their own restrictions on use. Pattnaik and Dutta 1997 p3226. These included restrictions on the upper limit size of poles, restrictions on collection of NTFP in National Park core area of Tiger reserve and sanctum sanctorum of sanctuary. Further, Medicinal plants in N. Bengal were allowed to be collected strictly on the basis of micro plans.
- <sup>1</sup> Bac, M., (1998) 'Property rights regimes and the management of resources' *Natural Resources Forum* , United Nations Elsevier Science Ltd, Great Britain pp263-269.; Jodha 1998; Kothari et al 1998; Platteau 1997; Baland and Platteau 1996; A. Agrawal, (1994) 'Rules, rule making and rule breaking: Examining the fit between rule system and resources use' in Ostrom et al (eds) *Rules, games and common pool resources* Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press 1994p267-282.; E Ostrom (1991)*Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* Cambridge University Press
- <sup>ii</sup> Baland and Platteau 1996 p126
- <sup>iii</sup> Kothari et al 1998:42. Jodha (1998) refers to this as 'social capital': "implying culture and mechanisms promoting trust, sharing and group action" Jodha, N.S. (1998) 'Poverty and Environmental Resource Degredation: An Alternative Explanation and Possible Solutions' *Economic and Political Weekly* September 5-12 pp2389.

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- liii Agrawal p282
- liv The FPCs were Katabari, Jadavnagar, Tribanka, Lagardangga Lotihir, Dalangora, Laltagora Taldia
- lv 20 FPCs are run entirely by women according to Chief Conservator of Forests Shri R.M. Das
- lvi Sarin et al have made similar observations about the functioning of JFM 1998 p330
- lvii *West Bengal Forestry Project Survey Monitoring Report (1996-97)* Monitoring and Evaluation Wing, Forest Directorate, Government of West Bengal p 5. *Survey Monitoring Report of South West Bengal (1997-98)* Monitoring and Evaluation Wing Forest Directorate Government of West Bengal p3.
- lviii *Survey Monitoring Report of South West Bengal (1997-98)* Monitoring and Evaluation Wing Forest Directorate Government of West Bengal p3
- lix Monitoring & Evaluation Wing 1997/8 p2. In a similar study Mukerjee (1995) documented cases where due to increased vulnerability, without concomittant alteration to the distribution regime, participants abandoned cooperative mechanisms Mukerjee cited in Pattnaik and Bramachari 1996 p973
- lx Sarin et al 1998p 334
- lxi Sarin 1998, 1996; Chatterjee, M. and S.B.Roy (ed ) 1995
- lxii Monitoring and Evaluation Wing 1997/8 p4 also Monitoring and Evaluation Wing 1996/7 p5. In this latter report it was found that in only 15% was the attendance of women more than 10.
- lxiii Monitoring and Evaluation Wing 1996/7 p3
- lxiv . Studies by Malhotra et al (1991) show that the income made from timber over a 10 year period in Midnapore was only 1/3 of that made by NTFPs. quoted in Pattnaik and Brahmachari 1996 p 968.
- lxv .Jodha 1998 p2389.
- lxvi Pattnaik and Dutta 1997 p3232
- lxvii S. Kar *Towards a New Social Destination* (1999) 3 Volumes Report Submitted to Government of West Bengal (Unpublished), also Kar (1991) *Rural Development in West Bengal: A Quest* Sarat Book House Calcutta, as well as Sengupta and Gazdar (1996), Lieten, Dreze
- lxviii B. Chatterjee 'Poverty in West Bengal: What Have We Learnt?' *Economic and Political Weekly* November 21, 1998.; Lieten, G. K. *Development, devolution, and democracy : village discourse in West Bengal*. Sage Publications, New Delhi/Thousand Oaks, Calif 1996.; S. Sengupta and H. Gazdar 'Agrarian Politics and Rural Development in West Bengal' in Dreze and Sen (eds) *India:Selected Regional Perspectives* Oxford University Press,1996, p129.;K. Westergaard, ' Peoples Participation, Local Government and Rural Development: The Case of West Bengal, India, Centre for Development Research, CDR Research Report No. 8, Copenhagen 1986.
- lxix see Kar 1999 for details of the immunisation programme. There is currently considerable debate surrounding the literacy programme in the state, with accusations that many neo literates were falling back into illiteracy due to lack of follow programmes.
- lxx Mukhopadhyay 1998 p19-28; Lieten 1996, Kar 1999, 1991
- lxxi Kolhi 1987 *The State and Poverty in India* Cambridge University Press
- lxxii J. Dreze "Poverty in India and the IRDP Delusion" *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol 39, September 29 1990 p A95-104
- lxxiii Of the remainder The District Municipal Fund received 6.84% and the Incentive Fund 2.00% see *Recommendations of State Finance Commission West Bengal* p104
- lxxiv *Recommendations of State Finance Commission West Bengal* 1995 p 104
- lxxv Mukherjee ' Welfare oriented Growth' *Frontline* April 9 1999 p136; Ghosh 1991

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- <sup>lxxvi</sup> P Chatterjee *The Present History of West Bengal : Essays in Political Criticism* Oxford University Press 1997 p67
- <sup>lxxvii</sup> Pattnaik and Dutta 1997 p3227
- <sup>lxxviii</sup> Karlsson details how the Radhas who live in the Buxa Tiger reserve have received nothing from the World Bank sponsored eco-development project. Their role has been confined to supervision of forest regeneration without any benefits. Infact he suggests this has been counterproductive to their livelihoods since they have seen a reduction in their employment and access to forest resources. See B.G. Karlsson 'Ecodevelopment in Practice:Buxa Tiger Reserve and Forest People' *Economic and Political Weekly* July 24 1999p2087-2094
- <sup>lxxix</sup> K. Chopra 'Forest and Other Sectors: critical role of Government Policy' *Economic and Political Weekly* June 24, 1995p 1480
- <sup>lxxx</sup> Jayati Ghosh 'A misleading Survey' *Frontline* March 31,2000 p101
- <sup>lxxxi</sup> For example A Kothari 1999 p 147-157; A. Kothari 'Environment and the New Economic Policies' *Economic and Political Weekly* April 29, 1995 pp 924-928 ; J.Ghosh, A.Sen and C.P.Chandrasekhar, 'Privatising Natural Resources' *Economic and Political Weekly* September 23, 1995 p2351
- <sup>lxxxii</sup> S.R. Gill 'Neo-Liberalism and the Shift Towards a US-Centred Transnational Hegemony' in H. Overbeek (ed) *Restructuring Hegemony in the Global Political Economy: The rise of transnational neo liberalism in the 1980s* Routledge London and New York 1993 pp261
- <sup>lxxxiii</sup> Kiely in Kiely and Marfleet p 35
- <sup>lxxxiv</sup> Ghosh p102
- <sup>lxxxv</sup> Swaminathan has recently made a persuasive argument for the extension of the PDS system, since in those cases where there is a greater spread of the scheme, such as in Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andra Pradesh, there is also a greater uptake in its use. These states accounted for more than 50% of the total offtake of food grain in 1995, with the BIMARU (Bihar, Madya Pradesh, Rajastahn and Uttar Pradesh) states accounting for only 10%. See M. Swaminathan *Weakening Welfare: The Public Distribution of Food in India* LeftWorld Books, New Delhi.
- <sup>lxxxvi</sup> Information taken from interview Basudevpur Beat Officer 13/03/00
- <sup>lxxxvii</sup> See footnote lxxx
- <sup>lxxxviii</sup> For example more than 60% of rural employment created in the off farm sector was through government intervention. See T.N. Srinivas (2000) 'Poverty Alleviation' in *Eight Lectures on India's Economic Reforms* Oxford University Paperbacks, for a more derogatory view of these interventions. According to a recent survey by Prabhu (1999), West Bengal is one of the few states to have recorded an increase in its real per capita government revenue expenditure in the post-reform period in expenditure on both Social Services and Human Priority in the periods 1986-96K.S Prabhu,. 'Social Sectors During Economic Reforms: The Indian Experience' *Oxford Development Studies*, Vol 27, No.2 1999 pp197) . Social Sevices increased from 130.73 rps to 145.37 rps This includes expenditure on 11 items including education, medical and public health, water supply and sanitation, housing, urban development, welfare of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes, social security and welfare, nutrition, relief on account of natural calamities and others. In the same period expenditure on Human Priority increased from 58.93 rps to 62.64 rps. This latter category extends to elementary education, public health, family welfare, water supply and sanitation and nutrition
- <sup>lxxxix</sup> For an early outline of the assumptions later adopted as the New Economic Policies see J.N. Bhagwati ' Poverty and Public Policy' *World Development* Vol 16. No.5 1988 pp539-555.
- <sup>xc</sup> R. Herring 'Persisitent Poverty and Path Dependency Agrarian reform: Lessons from the United States and India' *IDS Bulletin* v30 no2 1998 P20 For a further discussion of these issues see Gaiha and Kulkarni 1998 'Is Growth Central to Poverty Alleviation in India' *Journal Of International Affairs* 1998 Fall. Although I have already alluded to the fact that there is large conceptual problems with aggregate growth rates as indicators of

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economic robustness, it should also be mentioned that infact growth rates are lower now than in the pre reform period, despite several good monsoon years. Thus even by their own flawed criteria the 'reforms' are not performing up to expectations. On this point see P.K. Chaubey, (1999) 'Poverty' in Alternative Economic Survey Group (eds) p145

<sup>xci</sup> For an examination of these issues, with special interest on JFM in Karnataka see S. Lele 'Godsend, Sleight of Hand, or Just Muddling Through: Joint Management in India' Paper Presented at the 1998 IASCP Conference, University of British Colombia, Vancouver.

<sup>xcii</sup> See Lele (1998) and Jeremy Seabrook 'Development as Colonialism: the ODA in India' *Race & Class*, 37, 4, 1996 p13-29, both of which focus on Karnataka.

<sup>xciii</sup> The World Bank staff stated in explicitly in a workshop in Hyderabad in 1994 the desirability of the state relinquishing the functions of forest mangement to NGOs and private industries. Roger Jeffery has recently asserted that the World Bank sees JFM as an integral part of the rollback of the state. In Madhya Pradesh for example, it has been explicit in requesting that the development of entrepreneurial expertise and farm forestry be the major focus of JFM. See R. Jeffery 'Introduction' of R. Jeffery (ed) *Social Construction of Forestry in India* Centre for South Asian Studies, Edinburgh 1988.

<sup>xciv</sup> Mick Moore 'Politics against poverty: global pessimism and national optimism' *IDS Bulletin* v30 no2 1999 p33-47.