



PARTICIPATORY FOREST MANAGEMENT IN JUNGLE MAHAL IN POST COLONIAL PERIOD

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Abstract:

The introduction of scientific forest management in Modern India was started in mid Nineties by the colonial rulers. Colonial Power used forest for their own interest. Post-colonial forest policy and management initially was a legacy of colonial hangover. In 1988, a dramatic shift was seen in Indian forest management system -that is Participatory Forest Management. In South-West Bengal from early 1970's a model of participatory forest management was initiated. Govt. of West Bengal formally accepted the model in 1989. At the inception Joint Forest Management system became a great success. Gradually it lost importance. Change of policy and framing new policy in context of globalized economy has become inevitable.

Key Words:

South West Bengal, Joint Forest Management, Forest Protection Committee (FPC), Degraded Forest, Regeneration of Forest, Arabari Model, Forest Dweller, Forester, profit sharing.

Introduction:

The introduction of scientific forest management in colonial Bengal, other parts of India, Asia and Europe was started at different times out of a wider concern that timber supply was being diminished by reckless felling when demands were increasing. In August 1864 Dr. Anderson, Superintendent of The Royal Botanical Garden, Calcutta, was appointed as the first Conservator of Forests in Bengal. This incident marked a beginning in formal arrangements of forest management in India. In 1871 the Bengal Forest Rules came into force. Studies in colonial forestry in India treat modern forestry as mere territorialization. K. Sivaramakrishnan stated, 'unlike previous studies of colonial forestry in India, for other studies that treat modern forestry as territorialization writ large, I distinguish here between the import and effects of procedures like reservation and protection.'¹

Pre independence Forest Management in Jungle Mahal area: Forest in west Bengal is concentrated as –

1. In the northern hill and terai region.
2. South western districts of Bankura, undivided Paschim Midnapore and Purulia and

¹Sivaramakrishnan.K, 'A Limited Forest Conservancy in South West Bengal, 1864-12', The Journal of Asian Studies, Vol.56, No.1, Feb, 1997, p .76

3. Sundarbans.

The forest management in these areas have undergone significant changes over the period starting from the adoption of scientific forest management practices in the year 1864 during the colonial era. Before 1864 the forests of the area were under the control of local kings and landlords. People of this area used to enjoy certain customary rights to meet their needs from the forests and had access to the forest areas. Previous Jungle Mahal is now south-west part of west Bengal. The objective of the present study is to analyze the forest management through active participation of jungle fringed people. The study area is:- Bankura, Purulia, undivided Midnapore, Birbhum and undivided Burdwan. The forests of this area were under the successive kingdoms of the Mauryas, the Guptas, the Palas, the Cholas, the Turko-Afghans. Defacto control, however, rested with the local kings like, Mallas of Bishnupur. After the introduction of Permanent Settlement Act the colonial government allocated the territories including the forest land to the local landlords. Thus, the entire forest area came under the control of local landlords. The landlords cleared the forests and converted them into cultivable land to generate revenue. In mid 19th century a change ensued in forest management in India. On 3rd August, 1855 Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General of India reversed previous laissez faire policy to establish the Indian Forest Department and annexed large areas of sparsely populated lands in India. These lands were declared protected areas and staffed by foresters, fire guards, rangers and administrators. Over the next decades, forestry in India became an international profession with global specialists ruling an empire, trees and grasslands.² The new environment policy of the British was a shift from Adam Smith's individualism to Benthamite collectivism and this leads to intervention of the state in the sphere of environment. This policy also was a policy of territorial expansion of British empire in India along with territorialization after 1850. It is perceived that there was also an anomaly in reservation and protection of the forest. K. Sivaramakrishnan wrote, ' They indicate that regions like South West Bengal became zones of anomaly to forest reservation in the late 1800s in ways historically prefigured by their encounter with colonial land and political administration in the preceding hundred'.³ Forest management in colonial India is not only a history of extraction and destruction of forest but conservation of forest in British India too – we find a large number of government official, a section of enthusiastic British professionals of various field and also the Raj initiated the process of scientific preservation of Indian forest. E. P. Evans, G. F. Pearson and many other conservationists recorded their narratives regarding Indian forests and its scientific management. In 1894 E. P. Evans wrote, 'India held a particular allure for civil and government specialists throughout the 19th century. The subcontinent with its vast forests, savannas and grasslands studded with exotic animals and fauna, beckoned to young British graduates who saw not a wild waste of jungle and savanna but a frontier of new knowledge, adventure and discovery. British investment in India's economy and infrastructure increased steadily throughout the 19th century. Administrators hired specialists in Botany or forestry from a number of European countries, particularly Germans such as Berthhold Ribbentrop, who was Inspector General of forests in India from 1888 to 1900'.⁴

Demands on timber supply for British built rail tracks, steam driven locomotives, local burning and grazing, fire wood demand in burgeoning villages sky rocketed, the timber supply created a critical shortage by the time of Lord Dalhousie.⁵ India's forest administrators feared the potential longterm environmental effects of deforestation caused by indiscriminate logging. Contemporary climate theorists also warned that the destruction of forest by artificial interference eventually would affect cycles of rain and evaporation, resulting in vast desert areas and the potential ruin of civilization if deforestation continued.⁶

²E.P. Stebbing, *The Forest of India*, Vol.1. Edinburg, 1922, pp.68,249

³Sivaramakrishnan.K, ' *A Limited Forest Conservancy in South West Bengal, 1864-12*', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.56, No.1, Feb, 1997, p. 76

⁴Evans. E.P., ' *Ethical relation between man and beast*', *Popular Science Monthly*, pp. 634-46

⁵Sivaramakrishnan.K, ' *Colonialism and Forestry in India: imagining the Past in Present Politics*, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol.37, 1995, p 14-17 .

⁶a) Lord Mayor of London and Lord Lovat, *The British Empire Forestry Conference*, London 1920

Colonial forest policies and forest management was unapologetically imperialist. At the beginning of the colonial rule attempts at conservation in India had failed for lack of political support. As early as 1805 the British government used Indian timber to meet the needs of British ship building during the Napoleonic war. They requested the East India Company to investigate the feasibility of harvesting timber. The company appointed Captain Watson as India's first conservator of forest in 1806. His aim was to ensure a steady supply of timber to the company. But after 1815 (Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo) pressure came from Indian wood merchants who objected strenuously to a tax that cut severely into their profits and from peasants and forest fringed people who faced traditional access to the forest sharply curtailed and East India Company allowed the free market to operate as it had before.⁷

It is clear from the above discussion that the forest policy of the colonial power in India was framed for the interest of the British empire, not for the mere preservation of ecology and no doubt not necessarily for the interest of the forest people of India. But it is clear that a mechanism of preservation and scientific management of forest was initiated in the mid 19th century. It is natural that a policy of an independent nation in any sphere of administration should be people friendly and for the interest of the stake holder. In the above context, policy of forest management in independent India specially in study area will be studied on the basis of following questions:

1. How scientific is forest management in post independent India?
2. Is it participatory or fully state controlled?
3. Is Joint Forest Management (JFM) a saga of success?
4. what is the role of Indian forester in Joint Forest Management (JFM)?
5. How far increase in forest cover area is ecologically helpful for the Indian forest?
6. Political will and function in JFM.

In the constitution of India, 'forestry' appears on the 'concurrent list.⁸ Central as well as state governments have control over forestry activities but the central government, as a policy-making body, has overriding authority. However, the state governments have the management authority. The organizational structure and operating procedures of the state Forest Departments, as descendants of the colonial system of management, are almost similar in all the states of India. Conservation of forest formed an integral part of the ancient Indian civilization. In medieval period, Turko-Afghans and the Mughals also looked after the forest in a centralised way. The forest policy in India changed over a period of time. The arrival of the colonial British and their perception about modern forest created enormous change in the forest cover, forest resources and the rights of the tribal people in India.

FOREST POLICY IN INDEPENDENT INDIA:

Table 1. Three Phases of Forest Policy in Independent India

Period	Objectives
1947-1976	Forests for timber and industry, neglect of village commons
1976-1988	Commercial forestry continues with greater vigour on forest lands, but more funds for social and farm forestry on non-forest and private lands to meet people's demands
from 1988 onwards	Participatory Forest Management, and a radical shift from the earlier revenue orientation, conservation as a priority

Source: [Khare, A.](#) ; [Sarin, M.](#) ; [Saxena, N. C.](#) ; [Palit, S.](#) ; [Bathla, S.](#) ; [Vania, F.](#) ; [Satyanarayana, M.](#) (Editors: James Mayers and Elaine Morrison), Joint forest management: policy, practice and prospects, World Wide Fund for Nature – India and International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) United Kingdom, 2000, p.41

b) Ribbentrop, Forestry in British India, p- 37,38,43

c) John Nisbet, 'Soil and Situation in Relation to Forest Growth', Indian Forester, Vol.20, 1894, p- 3

⁷ Thomas Munro, 'Timber Monopoly in Malabar and Canara', in Major- General Sir Thomas Munro: Selections from his official minutes and other writings, ed. A.J. Arbuthnot, Vol.1, London 1881, p - 178-87

⁸ Basu Durgadas, The Indian Constitution.

The post-colonial period starts with the Independence of India and continuing till date. Since 1974 the Independent India formulated policies for forest conservation and management. These policies were formulated with national interest and changes were brought about in the forest cover of the country.

Joint Forest Management in India: The Government of India formally adopted community-based forest management on July 1, 1990 which laid down broad guidelines for an institutional arrangement involving the local people to jointly protect and manage the forest resources in return for benefits from it.⁹ The village committees in association with the FD will manage specific forest blocks. Forest protection is the responsibility of the people. It brought positive effect in forest protection and management directed to the participation of 17 states in JFM by 1992 with 2 million hectares of forest land under protection.

FOREST POLICY IN WEST BENGAL:

State forest departments did lose some power as a result of the introduction of concurrent status of Forestry; however, they still retain considerable powers to determine the management of their own forests. In the case of West Bengal, it is seen that JFM programme was started in early 70s of the 20th century, though this kind of forest management system came into existence on the basis of new forest policy of 1988. Joint Forest Management in West Bengal has evolved over a period comprising of three phases:

1. The first phase 1972-1982, marked by the emergence of joint management system.
2. The second phase 1983-89 marked by informal expansion of the programme.
3. The third phase 1990- till today: marked the consolidation of the programme.

The main objectives of this programme are to:

- a) increase forest cover and productivity.
- b) increase ecological benefits.
- c) meet community consumption needs.
- d) enhance community source of income.

This forest management system was started in a remote village of a West Bengal district Midnapore named Arabari, which has become a widely popular model of forest conservation and this model came to be known as Arabari Model which has found national and international acceptance. The experiment was started by the Forest Department of West Bengal in 1971-72 in the Arabari Forest Range which is located in East Midnapore Forest Division, about 30 kms away from Midnapore town and 200 km west of Calcutta.¹⁰ In 1972, as part of its project, Resuscitation of Sal Forests of South-west Bengal, the Forest Department launched an experiment in natural forest regeneration in Arabari. The then DFO, Dr. A.K. Banerjee, soon after taking over charge, realised that it was difficult to regenerate and protect the Arabari forest without the co-operation of the local people who depended on the forest for fuelwood, fodder, wood, grazing of animals, minor forest products and even cash income from sale of fuelwood. Consequently, he started meeting people in the neighbouring villages and informally discussing with them the need for forest protection and regeneration.¹¹

In pursuance of 1952 Policy, the Government of West Bengal through the enactment of the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act of 1953 included all privately owned forestland to be vested without encumbrances but compensated for income foregone, to the Government on April 1, 1955. Through the Land Reforms Act of 1955, all unutilized land under private tea gardens (the majority of which was forest) was also assumed by the government. Beside a small part in North Bengal, most of it was in

⁹Singh, 2008

¹⁰Singh Katar, Peoples participation in managing common pool natural resources : lessons of success in India ,IRMA ,Working Paper Series,1992,Anand ,Gujrat,p26

¹¹*Op.cit.*p.26

South-West Bengal, generally low height closed and opened dry forests of Sal and its associates. It took a few years for the government to bring the acquired forests under legal status of 'Protected Forest' of Indian Forest Act, 1927. The acquisition of private and tea garden forests under the management of the government is apparent from data on the legal status of forest in West Bengal in 1951, 1964 and 1971 (Table no.2).

Table2: Legal Status of Forest Area in West Bengal (area in sq. km.)

Year	Reserved forest	Protected forest	Un classed State Forest	Private Protected forest	Tea garden forest	Other private forest	Total forest
1951	6,845	17	128	-	258	5007	12256
1964	7000	3512	520	593	244	118	11987
1971	7054	3772	1053	0	0	0	11879

Source: Government of West Bengal, 1964

Through the 1952 Forest Policy the government tightened its grip on the forests, considering it as national wealth. During this period, some new Acts (e.g. Wild Life Protection Act 1972, Forest Conservation Act, 1980) were also introduced, with a significant impact on forest regulations; depriving people further of their customary (unaccepted by the government) rights. Nevertheless, during 1960-89, denudation of forest, deforestation and over-felling continued to take place in a very large way. By 1971 all forests in the state were owned by the government, including previously private and zamindari forests. The government accepted virtually no customary rights of the people or the private corporations such as tea companies. This may look like an overstatement but we would quote for example from the Tenth Working Plan for the Darjeeling Forest Division (1967-68 to 1976-77), Vol.1 page 39: "Rights: None exists; Concessions: Khasmahal tenants are permitted to enjoy the privilege of grazing their cattle in the forest areas above 8500 feet elevation". The First Working Plan for the East Midnapore Division of Southern Circle (1871-1883) discussing the rights of the people in the forests (mainly protected forests, of South-West Bengal) reports 'None exists' Settlement officers were as far as we know not appointed to enquire into these rights being extinguished, as they might be expected to do under section 29 of the IFA. This is clearly a major recent watershed in drastically altering people's customary rights over local forests. The role which the resulting alienation of people played in souring Forest Department -Community relations and converting the forests into de facto open access areas, and contributing to their degradation together with the state policy of commercial exploitation, cannot be understated. The Central Government followed up the 1952 policy promoting industrial needs by sponsoring a scheme of fast-growing industrial plantations on 'wasteland' and also on clear felled primary forestland (as in Arunachal Pradesh). During this period all states including West Bengal began planting fast growing species such as Eucalyptus, Acacia, Kadam, Semul and others with rotation as short as 10 to 20 years, often after clearing natural forest.

Scaling up Participation in Forest Management (1980 – Present) In 1988, the Central Government issued the new forest policy. The policy shifts from that of 1952 was dramatic. The policy recognized that the first charge of the forest was to the tribal and the poor people living near or in the forest and the forests should meet their needs. By this policy change, though in a general sense and with restrictive features, the government recognized the entitlements of the people in the forests adjoining to them. This policy was followed by a Central Government order providing measures of how the policy can be made effective and it wanted the states to follow the Arabari principle of sharing the usufructs of the forest with the fringe people in lieu of their co-managing the forests with the Forest Department. Thus was born Joint Forest Management (JFM) in India. In West Bengal, the state government came out with three JFM orders separately for South-West Bengal, North Bengal and Sunderbans in 1989, re-issued in 1990. The resolutions are more or less the same with some variations in benefit distribution. The Second World Bank Project starting in 1992 spread over 5 years (later extended by two more years) focused its major attention to promote JFM in West Bengal. In the year 1992 and onwards,

consistent with the policy of the Eco-development Projects sponsored by GEF and supported by the Government of India for Tiger Project areas of India including Buxa Tiger Project of North Bengal, the West Bengal Government accepted the concept of Eco-development committees with people residing on the fringes of the protection areas of West Bengal. The major focus of the project was to wean the people away from the dependence of the protection areas by investing in village development and thereby improving the economic status and the livelihood of the people.

Drivers of the Policy Changes in West Bengal: In the post-colonial period, the driving forces for the changes that have taken place in policy and forest management in West Bengal have been analyzed. There has been a major (although as yet incomplete) change away from 'Classical Forest Management' pattern towards Joint Forest Management (JFM). Participation of the people in state forest management, albeit in the very restricted form, made its appearance for the first time in about 150 years ago. (Although on the other hand in the significant areas of West Bengal's forests that were nationalised after independence the people initially enjoyed extensive use and management rights, until the state extinguished rights by 1971) The Forest Department realized over the 1970s and 1980s that it is beyond them to manage the forests with the forest staff or according to the forest management system that it had adopted in the postcolonial period. For a long while they thought that protection could be improved by increasing the number of staff. Leaving aside the increase in the 1960s to 80s, the staff number went on swelling 22 even in the immediate past decade. The State Report of West Bengal Forests for the year 1990-91 mentions the number of senior posts as 120 and 6,345 posts of all other categories. In 2001, it reports 239 and 11,778. In other words, the Department has increased its staff by about 100% in 10 years without any significant gain either in the forest area, the quality of forest and its ecosystem. Neither has the Forest Department been capable to close the gap between demand and supply of the major forest produces. It has been commented by some that this might indicate that perhaps JFM has been part of the continuing strategy of expanding and extending the Forest Department 'empire'. But how and why such massive staff increases took place is certainly intriguing, as in most other states' recruitments have been strictly limited since the late 80s, leading to another type of crisis. Social Forestry did not 'wean' local people away from the use of state-appropriated forest as a common property resource. The people disposed the additional wood produced by them in their own land to cater to industrial and urban needs (as was probably intended). Their dependence on the local forest for firewood and grazing was not reduced. The people at large, but particularly those near the forest, had shown their disapproval for the Department's way of functioning through a number of local but violent protests which resulted in the death and injury of a number of people including both activists and Forest Department staff. The 1980s saw the forest staff more or less staying away from their duty of forest protection partly due to the violent nature of protests as well as mafia operation in timber smuggling. A small number of forest staff realised the value of participation as the way out of the impasse and they worked proactively to bring about the change, and indeed, with people taking over a large part of protection this impasse was effectively resolved. It became clear from two success stories (namely of the Arabari experiment in the 1970s, and farm and social forestry in the 1980s) that local people would constructively assist in the growth and development of forest provided they had benefits from its management. The Arabari experiment also indicated that the people were not thieves as they were being labelled, but long-standing users who had to satisfy some legitimate demands namely their home needs of and subsistence support for their livelihood from the forest resources. The problem lay in people being deprived of their customary access through declaration of local Common Property Rights as 'national' forests as least in South-West Bengal. The change in the central policy of 1988 was another driving force that expedited the implementation of participatory forestry management. In addition, some enabling features helped in driving management towards participatory management.

Joint Forest Management in South-West Bengal: Delusion and Reality

Table 3: Forest cover area of South West Bengal

District	Geographical area	Very dense forest	Moderate dense forest	Open forest	Total	Percentage of forest cover	Change compared to 2015	Scrub
Bankura	6882	220	388	662	1270	18.45	8	29
Burdwan	7024	58	91	186	335	4.77	18	07
Birbhum	4545	01	32	144	177	3.89	01	11
Paschim Midnapore	9368	239	591	1321	2151	22.96	- 19	20
Purba Midnapore	4713	02	198	620	820	17.4	-4	02
Purulia	6259	37	745	561	904	14.44	33	21

Source: Compiled from Annual Forest Reports ,Govt.of West Bengal .

Table 4: Forest Cover in South West Bengal (Sq. Km) 1385.68 (From Remote Sensing Data)

1964		1984		1988		1988 as per RS data		1991		1991 as per RS data		1991 as per RS data	
Re FL	% Re FL	Re FL	% Re FL	Re FL	% Re FL	Re FL	% Re FL	Re FL	% Re FL	Re FL	% Re FL	Re FL	% Re FL
Bankura	1385.68		1482	21.54	1482	21.54	1696.81	24.66	1482	21.53	1815.22	26.38	
Burdwan													
Birbhum													
Paschim Midnapore	167524		1709	12.14	1709	12.14	2078.91	14.76	1709	21.14	2230.67	15.84	
Purba Midnapore													
Purulia	866		876	14.00	876	14.00	1114.07	17.80	876	14.00	1158.56	18.54	
Total	3926.92	14.43	4067	14.94	4067	14.94	4889.79	17.96	4067	14.94	5204.45	19.22	

Source: State Forest Report on West Bengal Forest, 1984

Table 5: Forest Cover in South West Bengal of 2017

District	Geographical area	Very dense forest	Moderate dense forest	Open forest	Total	Percentage of forest cover	Change compared to 2015	Scrub
Bankura	6882	220	388	662	1270	18.45	8	29
Burdwan	7024	58	91	186	335	4.77	18	07
Birbhum	4545	01	32	144	177	3.89	01	11
Paschim Midnapore	9368	239	591	1321	2151	22.96	- 19	20
Purba Midnapore	4713	02	198	620	820	17.4	-4	02
Purulia	6259	37	745	561	904	14.44	33	21

Source: State Forest Report on West Bengal Forest, 1984

In our study area comparison of forest cover in 1964 and 1984 manifest that in south-west Bengal it slightly increased from 14.43 percent to 14.94 percent. Though Forest department's data on forest cover does not show any change in the forest cover in the area in the following years. But Remote Sensing Data (RSD) indicates an increase from 14.94 percent (1984) to 17.96 percent (in 1988) and then to 9.22 percent (in 1991) (Table No -A). The forest cover including the forest created outside the recorded forest area is 15.68 percent of the geographical area as assessed by the GIS Cell of the West

Bengal Forest Department in the year 2006 on the basis of satellite image.¹² As per classification of satellite image the vegetation cover of the state is more than 27 percent of the geographical area as in 2006.¹³

Table 6: District wise distribution of Geographical and Recorded Forest Land in South West Bengal

District	Geographical area (Sq.Km.)	Recorded Forest Area	Percentage of Recorded Forest Area
Bankura	6882	1482	21.53
Burdwan	7024	277	3.94
Birbhum	4545	159	3.50
Midnapore	14081	1709	12.14
Purulia	6259	876	14.00

Source: State Forest Report 2011-12, p.14

After introduction of Forest Protection Committee in West Bengal in early 70s of 20th century in Arabari and its success story during the last quarter of the century and first decades of the 21st century has given rise to few questions no doubt. Anuradha Joshi commented that JFM was a case of forest bureaucracy acting in an innovative non-self interested fashion, at some cost to its own power. Moreover, the initiative for involving people in forest management came from the Forest Department before organized demands for participation from forest communities.¹⁴ Experiment of protection of forest and improvement of forest in south-west Bengal was started in early 1970s. Thereafter informal Forest Protection Committees (FPC) spread rapidly, even before they were formalized through the adoption of JFM as policy by the West Bengal government in 1989. By 1988 there were already 842 FPCs protecting approximately 29,519 hectares of land. ¹⁵ As on 31.03.2015 there were 3592 JFMCs working to protect the state forest.¹⁶ In the above context the argument is institutional forest management has been increased in south-west Bengal but the scientific management to preserve our forest and ecological resources is absent because i) there is loop holes in forest management policies, ii) lack of political will, iii) absence of efficient management system, iv) impact of globalization and other policies of government on forest management. To clarify the above statements, three narratives have been presented below –

- i) Narratives of bureaucrats and frontline workers of forest department;
- ii) Narratives of political ideologist,
- iii) Narratives of forest dependent people or forest community.

i) Narratives of bureaucrats and frontline workers of forest department: - Forestry in most developing countries has been policing oriented focus on keeping forest community out of forest areas in the interest of conservation. But scholars of forest management are in consensus that forest communities have to be involved in the management of forest. However, JFM type arrangements will succeed or not in other context is an empirical question. No doubt in the beginning JFM in south-west Bengal was successful to increase the canopy of forest. Now the example of Dr. A. K. Banerjee, D.F.O of Midnapore who was the father of modern Indian forest management system started it when he failed to protect felling of Sal trees (*Soria Robusta*) from a land of silviculture experiment. He met the villagers and asked them the reason for their illegal cutting of trees. In response they informed him that their necessity of fuel compelled them to cut trees. Realizing their problem, he chalked out the participatory

¹²State Forest Report 2011-12, P.12

¹³ Op. Cit p.13

¹⁴Joshi Anuradha, Roots of Change: frontline workers and forest policy reform in West Bengal, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Feb 2000, p.2

¹⁵Roy. S.B, "Forest Protection Committees of West Bengal, India: Emerging policy issues", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.27, Issue-29, July 18, 1992, p.1528

¹⁶ Annual Report, State Forest Department, 2017-18, Govt. of West Bengal, p.69

forest management programme. The Government of India also acknowledged his programme. JFM represents a significant policy shift in Indian forest management. JFM represents a conceptual change: shift from mere commercial production of woods for market to fulfill the exclusive needs of the forest communities, i.e., non-timber forest products (fire woods, grasses, leaves etc.) which are important to livelihood of forest communities; from mono-culture to mixed forests; from plantation of a similar age to plantation of diverse ages and significantly the most important feature was custodial management through policing to participatory management. These are the return of the traditional rights of the forest dwellers which they are used to enjoy since thousands of years ago. All these are the keys of success of Arabari model.

In case of success of JFM in West Bengal it is widely established by the researchers. Anuradha Joshi vividly discussed the role of progressive foresters in success of JFM. Beside this, various accounts are available in this regard. For example, we can cite the World Bank report of 1995, accounts of Burki 1996 and Lustig 1995. All these accounts seem to be polarized accounts and common in the literature in development studies. Anuradha Joshi brings out the contradiction and inconsistencies in these accounts after a detailed scrutiny and collected evidences from the field data. Her argument was that along with the bureaucrat the frontline foresters and their union play a vital role in success of JFM. Now the question is why the frontline workers and their union were so progressive. In this case I do agree with Anuradha Joshi's explanation regarding their progressiveness and their vital role in JFM –

1. left orientation of the association of the frontline foresters which was people friendly also, 2. In the early and mid 70s of the 20th century there were many confrontations between forest communities and foresters throughout Bengal over the illegal felling of tree and several workers were physically assaulted and murdered.¹⁷ Anuradha Joshi commented, “naturally issues of worker safety became a central concern for the association. It saw cooperation with the people as the only realistic way of ensuring safety”.¹⁸

ii) Narratives of political ideologist: - Jungle of south-west Bengal was a centre of Maoist activities in early decades of independence. In early 60s of 20th century the CPIM led two united front governments, the activity of CPIM and coming of CPIM led left front government in West Bengal in 1977 created a feel-good atmosphere in every sphere of life of a state like West Bengal where political unrest was a regular incidence. In post 77 eras there was an enthusiasm in every sphere of administration, political workers, villagers and also in the mind of farmers. Land use pattern was changing due to the operation Barga in West Bengal. Naturally demand of rights over forests was taking place in Bengal, though it took a decade to frame a policy to give limited right to the forest community over forest resource through JFM resolution, 1989. Profit of selling timber from forest was distributed among the members of the Forest Protection Committees (FPC). From field-based data I can cite here a single example of profit sharing. The name of the FPC is Jhilabaid Bana Surakkha Committee. Total number of beneficiaries is 41. Area under the FPC is 14 hectares. Type of forest is degraded Sal (*Shorea Robusta*) and mixed hard wood species. Forest division is Bankura North and Forest Range is Kanchanpur. First felling of trees occurred here over an area of 7 hectares in 1998. Profit sharing – each member received Rs.2000/- in 1998. Regeneration of Sal forest – Sal saplings were planted in that 7 hectares of land but none survived. Saplings of Akashmani, Kaju etc were planted in that place. Present status of the FPC- lack of enthusiasm on the part of both foresters and beneficiaries for the upgradation of the forest. Annual meeting – held regularly. Illegal felling – outsiders illegally theft near about 200 matured Sal trees in last two decades. Recent development – in 2016 an orchard has been grown up in the barren land adjacent to the forest and Rs. 80,000/- was allocated for cutting trench surrounding the protected forest and the beneficiaries benefitted from this work.

¹⁷Kohli. A, Democracy and Discontent, Cambridge University Press, 1991

¹⁸Joshi Anuradha, Roots of Change: frontline workers and forest policy reform in West Bengal, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Feb 2000, p.18

My observation is from existing literature and field survey is that the initial enthusiasm started to diminish gradually and the JFM is in dismal condition.

iii) Narratives of forest dependent people or forest community: - History of Indian forest is history of protest. From colonial to neo liberal 21st century's authoritative forest administration raised obstacle and curtailed the right of the forest dwellers. They revolted against the state. Professor Dev and Malhotra and professor Poffenberger argue that in many parts of south-west Bengal, forest dwellers and forest dependent villagers spontaneously starting protecting forest near their villages since the early 1980s.¹⁹ According to Sivaramakrishnan JFM is the latest struggle in a long line of tribal struggles against state control over forest. Initially it was a struggle against various intruders in forest in modern times. In colonial era in Jungle Mahal the British met fierce resistance from the tribals through sporadic rebellions in Chuar unrest 1767-1800, Naik revolt 1806-16, Kol insurrection 1831, Bhumij revolt of 1832-33 and Hul rebellion of 1855. In spite of these resistances the British and the zamindars continuously kept converting the forest lands into agricultural lands. Thus, the tribals lost around 31 percent of the forest land originally enjoyed by them as natural right.²⁰ So there is a continuity of resistance from Chuar rebellion to FPC formation in 1990, according to subaltern accounts. The Subaltern account focuses on the stories of formation of autonomous community forest management groups. High dependency on forest resources was the primary force behind such forest protection movements. Various subaltern accounts regarding autonomous forest management are available. From these accounts I am presenting here three incidents – 1. Emergence of a FPC in Chingara, west Midnapore to protect a small Sal forest begins in 1984 2. In the Jamboni range in west Midnapore a protection movement to prevent efforts to clear forest lands for cultivation in 1985 3. In 1985 one youth leader who heard of the SEP (Socio Economic Project) at Arabari wanted to have a similar project in his village in Midnapore but was unable to do so in 1985 because official government order had not passed.²¹

Findings: -

1. The initial enthusiasm created by the JFM in West Bengal has started to settle down and dismal from the beginning of the 21st century.²²
2. JFM failed to fulfill the needs of the forest dwellers and forest fringed people.²³
3. Effect of policy change on JFM- within a few years of introduction of JFM in West Bengal the new economic policy took places in the agenda of the Left Front government which was fast moving towards a top-down approach to planning. It is a shift from participatory management to capital intensive policy. In the era of liberal economy ecology is also a commodity.
4. One of the main objectives of JFM was regeneration of Sal forest. But unfortunately, failure of policy implementation led to degradation of Sal forest instead of regeneration.²⁴
5. Shortcoming in the implementation of JFM programme- social fencing of the forest cannot be sustained without satisfying the socio-economic and cultural needs of the villagers who depend upon agriculture-based peasant economy.
6. West Bengal will have to go many more miles to fulfill the JFM resolution of 1989.

¹⁹ Dasgupta. S, Adibasi Politics in Midnapore, c 1760-1924, Subaltern Studies, Vol.4, Ed R. Guha, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1985

²⁰ Dasgupta 1985

²¹ Sivaramakrishnan. K

²² Martin. M & Chakraborty. S, No Truck with Green, Down to Earth, Vol. 4, 1996, p.45

²³ Burman. J.J, Encroachment of Forest Department into the Development Field, *Mainstream*, Oct 12, 1996

²⁴ Saha Rabindranath, *Evaluation of JFM as a tool for sustainable forest management*, Banabithi, April 2007, Department of Forest, Government of West Bengal, Kolkata.