Another Arena Of Conflicting Interests: Sanctuaries And National Parks

The development paradigm guiding development thinking and policies in our country in post-independent era has failed to contribute to building a healthy national economy and a just social order. Development 'engineered' by the State has resulted in increasing social inequality widening the gap between the rich and the poor, on the one hand, and accentuating the polarization of the society, on the other.

The development model has served the 'dominant interests' directly and indirectly, subjugating other popular interests. Most policies and programmes of the government to distribute, re-distribute and conserve natural resources have benefitted the 'dominant interests' substantially. By now it is a well known fact that 'land reforms' policy failed utterly and the 'poor tenants, sharecroppers and landless labourers could not benefit to any significant extent. The so-called Green Revolution has benefitted the rich peasants and rendered the small peasants as landless labourers. The story is repeated in the case of the Integrated Rural Development Programme too. The big multi-purpose dams which were once considered temples of development have been dispossessing a large number of marginalised people from their sources of sustenance (such as land and forests). Hence, the contemporary development model in our country has unleashed processes that have deprived a large section of people of their resource base, crucial for their sustenance. People's access and control over natural resources has declined considerably. Their traditional rights over various natural resources are lost and their very survival is at stake now.

The consciousness to conserve wildlife, flora, fauna and natural eco-systems emerged as a national priority in the 1960's and has been pursued vigorously thereafter. This was done by bringing vast areas of forest cover and water-bodies under the protection of protected areas. The modern concept of wildlife sanctuaries and national parks is an essential constituent of this endeavour. Within the last three decades, the number of sanctuaries and national parks in our country has multiplied more than ten times. The legal apparatus of these protected areas ensures protection of "wildlife interests" and largely undermines the "local people's interests". While access of the local communities to these vital natural resources, which are crucial to their economy, culture, religion and political systems is denied, a number of protected areas are being exploited for urban and industrial interests. Large scale tourism is promoted in these areas to earn revenue and poaching is continuing, sometimes in connivance with the park officials. The worst sufferers in this process are the hapless local communities dependent on the natural resources of these areas. Popular collective actions have emerged at various places in the country resisting this process of alienation and marginalisation through conservation. At the same time, big commercial and industrial interests are persistently exerting their clout to harness their share of benefit from such natural resources.

Hence, the important ethical questions that arise here are: Whose "interests" should be given priority? Should the immediate survival needs of the marginalised and impoverished section be totally undermined to attain "absolute conservation" of wildlife, flora, fauna and natural eco-systems? Is the conservation strategy viable without taking into account people's survival needs and people's participation? Should "national interests" as proclaimed (Continued on page 10)
Legal Apparatus For Wildlife Protection In India

India has a long tradition of wildlife preservation. It dates back to the Vedic period. The ancient Hindu scriptures directed people to protect their environment. Conservation of wildlife was embedded in the culture. Various castes groups had one or the other animal as the sacred symbol of their 'gotra'. And the members of those caste groups considered it as their religious duty to protect these totemic animals. Even Buddhism and Jainism which emerged at a later stage in India, too, advocated protection of all 'jiva' or living beings. 'Arthashastra', the statecraft manual written by Kautilya sometime in the fourth century B.C. refers to 'Abhyasaranayas' or forest sanctuaries.

During pre-British period, wildlife and wilderness primarily had three types of values: entertainment value, culturo-religious value and above all sustenance value. While wildlife and wilderness were a source of entertainment for the kings and other elites, for a section of the people they were the culturo-religious symbols. What is more important than these two is that a large number of people derived their sustenance from these resources.

However, one cannot deny that wild animals were killed in that period too. But it was not a matter of concern for obvious reasons i.e., abundance of these resources and proportionately less pressure on them. It was also by and large certain that such killing was not for commercial purposes. During the British period, the Indian society and economy witnessed major changes. In consequence, the socio-cultural importance to wildlife, forests, and other natural resources diminished and the use value of these resources changed significantly. The commercial and industrial interests which emerged as dominant actors in the economic scenario started exploiting precious wildlife and other natural resources ruthlessly. Because of these factors and various other forces the wilderness regions in our country degraded considerably and certain legal provisions were urgently required to arrest this process of degradation and depletion.

Legal Provisions For The Protection Of Wildlife

For the first time legal protection to wildlife was provided during the British period. The Indian Forest Act of 1865 and 1927 and their amendments provided considerable protection to wildlife by means of the systems of reserved and protected areas.

After independence the Constitution of India recognised the importance of protection of wildlife and included it in the "Directives of State Policy." Article 48 of Constitution reads that the State will endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country. Again, article 51 A spells that, "It shall be the duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures.”

However, the first uniform legal legislation for the protection of wildlife in the country was enacted and enforced in the year 1972. The Act is known as the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. This Act became applicable in all the states except Jammu and Kashmir as it had a similar one for the same purpose. The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 provides for the creation of wildlife sanctuaries and national parks and also specifies the management parameter by indicating the types of activities that are allowed or forbidden in such protected areas.

Under the legal cover of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 within the last twenty years, the number of sanctuaries and national parks has increased about five times and the number of wild animals has gone up consequently. Along with this so-called spectacular achievement what has emerged as a significant phenomenon is the conflict between the local people residing in and around these protected areas and the wildlife. The Gujjars in Rajaji National Park are vehemently opposing the park. People in Nagarhole and Dudhwa have set fires to the forests. In view of this, one has to first critically examine the legal base of these sanctuaries and national parks.

The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 has three main objectives which are as follows:

1. To provide uniform legislation for protection of wildlife throughout the country.
2. To prevent hunting of and trading in wildlife or any product thereof.
3. To set the parameters for the establishment and maintenance of protected areas such as national parks and sanctuaries.
Legal Provisions for Sanctuaries & National Parks

The Act provides that an area can be legally earmarked as a wildlife sanctuary with the notification by the state government. According to section 18(1), "The state government by notification declare its intention to constitute an area other than area comprised with any reserved forest or territorial waters as a sanctuary, if it considers that such area is of adequate ecological, faunal, floral, geo-morphological, natural or zoological significance for the purpose of protecting, propagating or developing wildlife or its environment.

Similarly, section 35 deals with the declaration, management and maintenance of national parks. Subsection 1 of section 35, reads - "Whenever it appears to the state government that an area whether within a sanctuary or not, is by reason of its ecological, faunal, floral, geo-morphological or zoological association or importance, needed to be constituted as a national park for the purpose of protecting, propagating or developing wildlife therein or its environment, it may, by notification, declare its intention to constitute such area as a national park."

It is thus clear that the Act does not provide any scope for public consultation before notification. People's participation in the process of identifying areas for protection, does not figure in anywhere on the government agenda in its efforts towards conservation. The local communities living inside such notified areas and drawing their sustenance and livelihood solely from the surrounding natural resources, all of a sudden find that they have been estranged from their age-old rights over the natural resources.

Further, the only procedure of proclamation as laid down by the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 is through publication of the notification in regional language(s) in every town and village in or around the neighbourhood of the notified area. More often than not, the non-literate inhabitants are not aware of such notices or stipulations, and so the proclamation remains out of reach. Sometimes, the areas may be so remote that the collector may not find it feasible to publicise the notice in such areas.

Moreover, the proclamation basically has two functions - one, to inform the local people about the notification and the approximate situation and the limits of the sanctuary and, secondly, it initiates the process of rights acquisition by stipulating that within two months from the date of publication of the proclamation, the 'interested persons' shall have to prepare their claims and rights in writing. (Clause b of sec. 21). The poor illiterate forest dwellers is thus left in the lurch, firstly by not even being aware of such a notice, and secondly by unknowingly forfeiting his claims, as the said sixty day period may already have elapsed.

Determination and Acquisition of People's Rights

Sections 19, 20, 21(b), 22 and 25 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 deal with the 'rights' of the people within the limits of the sanctuaries. But nowhere does the Act define the exact meaning of these 'rights' and therefore the term 'rights of persons' is subject to much ambiguity.

Further, the Act only considers rights in over the land comprised within the limits of the sanctuary. Hence, legally landless labourers, artisans, forest land cultivators are assumed not to possess any 'right' effectively, even if they have a long history of inhabitation in the area and their life system is inextricably linked with the land, which also means that no cognisance would be granted to the numerous tribal families who have traditionally been holding land without any legal documents. Even the traditional rights of collecting minor forest produce and other forest produce which are crucial for their sustenance are not recognised as 'rights' under the WPA, 1972.

Compensation

Since, to efficiently and effectively manage such protected areas, human habitats are displaced from their home ground, hence, it becomes important to provide for due compensation.

However, the Act does not provide any specific guidelines with regard to compensation, for the collector or any other official vested with the power and responsibility to settle the claims of the people. Although with respect to compensation the Act provides 'the collector may either proceed to acquire such lands or rights, except where by an agreement or the owner of such land or the holder of rights and the government the
owner or the holder of such rights has agreed to surrender his rights to the government, in or over such land, and on payment of such compensation, as is provided in the Land Acquisition Act, 1984 (1 of 1984)."

The entire deliberations of this Act does not recognize the traditional customary rights of the indigenous people. The Act thus dispossesses them of their resource base on which their life system has been traditionally dependent.

Restrictions and Prohibitions

The Act legally curtails the rights of free movement of the local people inside the sanctuary, and puts restrictions on inhabitants inside these areas. The Wildlife (Protection) Act minutely details out the type of person(s) who can legally enter and reside in the sanctuary for specific purposes (See 29). The WPA thus does not provide any legal protection to the forest dwelling tribal with regard to their ancestral settlements.

The Act strictly prohibits any kind of destruction, exploitation or removal of wildlife and any activity causing damage to the habitat of any wild animal. This provides ample scope to the government to put any restriction on the local people. Thus, the Act prohibits entry into the sanctuary with a weapon, effectively curbing the forest dwellers from carrying traditional tools like axe, bow & arrow etc. But what has direct and more serious implication for tribal life and economy is the restriction and sometimes prohibition of grazing and movement of livestock.

Wildlife Protection Amendment Act, 1991

The Amendment Act, 1991 belied all the hopes of the people. Neither people’s participation was considered nor their interests given priority. However, it does mention "— individuals and NGOs must take an active role in the implementation of the Act". So the one role mooted out for the NGO’s has been that of helping the officials in detecting offenses or contravention of the rules.

Conclusions

It thus becomes clear that the WPA is a regulatory apparatus rather than a positive agent of change to serve social needs. The Wildlife (Protection) Act asserts that local interests and priorities are subservient to the interest of wildlife which is, at the moment, considered as ‘national interest’ and global priority. But the Act although prescribing all sorts of restrictions and prohibitions for the people, does not deter the government from acquiring land within the sanctuary and national parks for other purposes, e.g., hydro-electric projects, roads, factories and other state enterprises.

How far and how long can such trends be allowed to continue in the democratic socio-political set-up, is the all-too-important question. This becomes essential to deliberate upon especially when a sizeable population, living in abject poverty, solely dependent on their surrounding natural resources for their sustenance is being subjected to unfair restraints and pressures.

- Dr. Nalin Ranjan Jena
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL No.</th>
<th>State/UT*</th>
<th>Geog.area* Sq.Km.</th>
<th>Forest area* Sq.Km.</th>
<th>% of Forest area to geog. area</th>
<th>Area Under N.P &amp; San.**</th>
<th>% of area under NPS to forest area</th>
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<td>1.</td>
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<td>5068.12*</td>
<td>17.34</td>
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<td>Goa (including Daman &amp; Diu)</td>
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<td>1050</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>453.96*</td>
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<td>75.5</td>
<td>400.00*</td>
<td>2.51</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>Nagaland</td>
<td>16550</td>
<td>8625</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>222.36*</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Orissa</td>
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<td>69655</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>7185.93*</td>
<td>12.07</td>
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<td>2993</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>246.50*</td>
<td>8.79</td>
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<td>31151</td>
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<td>9632.43*</td>
<td>30.02</td>
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<td>2483.63*</td>
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<td>7144</td>
<td>86.2</td>
<td>776.99*</td>
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"DECLINING ACCESS TO AND CONTROL OVER NATURAL RESOURCES IN SANCTUARIES AND NATIONAL PARKS"

In the last few years what has surfaced as a significant issue is the conflict between parks and people. People's movement at the grassroots is emerging not only in India but also all over the world, especially in the developing countries over the issue of state-sponsored conservation strategy in the form of wildlife sanctuaries and national parks. These struggles are certainly the manifestation of the assertion of the rights by the marginalised populace over the natural resources, which are the main source of sustenance for a large section of them. These collective social actions at micro level further posit macro questions with respect to priorities of the present development paradigm and conservation strategy. Hence, the serious implications of the issues both at micro and macro levels compel all the concerned persons to pore over the problem more deeply and diagnose all the dimensions of such "conflictual conservation".

The practice of conservation of wild species and ecosystem originated way back in 700 B.C. But the concept of national park emerged over a century ago and since then it has spread widely around the world. It was strongly felt by the developed world that the fast pace of depletion of wild species including wildlife must be arrested urgently. To operationalize their advocacy, various international bodies such as International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural resources were formed and a number of other existing bodies included this in their agenda. The developed countries encouraged the "less developed countries", to adopt the conservation strategy and philosophy which accords utmost priority to "wildlife interests" and completely neglects "local people's interests". Special efforts were made to popularize the concepts of wildlife sanctuary and national park.

The basic idea behind sanctuaries and national parks is to set apart an area as a protected one for exclusive preservation of wild animals, flora and fauna. Such areas are to be kept out of any kind of exploitation by human beings, even though they may be dependent on these areas for their sustenance.

Dimensions of Sanctuaries and National Parks in India

India became a part of the global effort of conservation of wild species and biological diversity and adopted the concepts of the wildlife sanctuary and national park. The first national park in India was set up in the early 30s. Since then there has been enormous increase in the number of such protected areas as evident from the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Sanctuaries</th>
<th>No. of National Parks</th>
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<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<td>1985</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>75 (19 Tiger Reserves)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>633</td>
<td>147 (proposal)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As the table shows, within a period of 30 years the number of sanctuaries and national parks multiplied seven and fifteen times respectively. Hence, more and more forest lands have come under protected zones.

Official sources reveal that currently 3.5 percent of the total land in the country is under sanctuaries and national parks and it is proposed to further increase this area to five percent. Calculations show that, at present, more than 19 percent of the total forest is under sanctuaries and national parks which directly covers the homeland of about one-fifth of the total tribal population in the country. If the number of people living in the periphery of these protected areas and partially dependent on these natural resources, is counted it will be astronomical. With further increase in the number of such protected areas more and more tribals will have to concede their homeland and more and more people
both tribal and non-tribal, dependent on forests will be deprived of their crucial natural resources.

The trend of growth in the number of sanctuaries and national parks in our country over the last three decades, and the future plan makes one sceptical to ask is it simply the pro-conservation mindedness of the government which is the sole causative factor of this trend? Probably, certain broader socio-political factors are playing a crucial role behind the conservation strategy.

To begin with it would be interesting to find out the basic difference between a sanctuary and a national park. The chief difference lies in the legal stringency. While a sanctuary allows the retention of some rights of the people in the protected area, a national park strictly prohibits all sorts of people’s rights. The current philosophy does not see a role for permanent human settlement including forest dwelling tribals, even though some communities still maintain a hunter-gatherer economy and others have a regular forest resource dependency.

The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, under the provisions of sanctuary and national park ignores the historically evolved symbiotic relations between forests and forest dwellers and drastically curtails their traditional rights to use forest resources. The Act does not encourage human habitation inside the sanctuary and park as it considers the local inhabitants as a major threat to wildlife and eco-system. People’s interests and wildlife interests are perceived to be antagonistic to each other.

The Act also vests immense power with the government agencies to protect wildlife and the natural ecosystem and does not consider it necessary at all to involve the local people in the process of the constitution of a sanctuary or a national park or in their management. The Act plays a role of an alienating agent for the people who are dispossessed of their natural resource base. Besides the formation of sanctuaries and national parks, two other developments have further strengthened the process of alienation for the local people and these are the creation of biosphere reserves and the Project Tiger.

Consequences of Sanctuaries and National Parks

In India the subsistence rural economy is mainly based on forests, agriculture and livestock, and very few tribal communities thrive on purely hunting and food gathering. Agriculture and livestock economy is also deeply linked with forests. Apart from the economy, the politics, culture and religion of the communities living in and around forests have evolved in close interaction with the woods. So forests play a crucial role in the life systems of these tribal, non-tribal and nomadic communities who have been historically living in close proximity with forests. One finds numerous instances of tribal uprisings in the history of India which emerged to protect their rights - access to and control over their natural resources, i.e. forests. It is also true that these people are deprived of the fruits of development.

As mentioned earlier, the provisions of a sanctuary and national park prescribe the customary rights of the people. They face the situation of displacement from their social, economic, cultural and ecological milieu. Without providing any alternative, the local inhabitants are forced to give up their forest based culture, occupations and economy.

The people living in and around sanctuaries and national parks are neither allowed to collect timber from the jungle for constructing and repairing their huts and traditional community centres, nor to collect roots, fruits and tubers for consumption, nor even herbal plants which, for most of the people, are the only known and available medicines. The forest-dwellers are forbidden to collect firewood from forests. What is far more serious is, they are prohibited from grazing their cattle inside the notified sanctuary or park area.

The main source of employment and income for the tribes is various minor forest produce. Studies in Chirwa, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Bihar reveal that over 80 percent of the forest dwellers depend on the forests for between 25 percent and 50 percent of their food. During the lean months, mahua, mangoes, other fruits, tubers, roots, leaves, wild animals and birds are their only food for survival. These minor forest produce play a major role in providing income and employment to the impoverished and marginalised tribes. The declaration of a sanctuary or national park dispossesses them of this crucial source of income and employment. In Phoolan Ki National Park in Udaipur district and Sitamarhi district in Bihar, the people are not allowed to pluck Tendu patta at all. Tendu patta worth crores of rupees are 'stolen' by the outside contractors or allowed to go waste.
Besides all these, when the illiterate tribal unknowingly contravenes any rule of the sanctuary or national park, the innocent person faces the wrath of forest officials. The intricate rules and regulations of the sanctuary and national park which are beyond comprehension of the ignorant tribals provide an opportunity to the forest officials to indulge in corruption and to extract bribe from the impoverished people.

Though the Act imposes all kinds of restrictions on traditional rights of the indigenous people, it does not deter the government from acquiring any portion of the national park or sanctuary for the so-called developmental activities. Many times roads are constructed and railway lines are laid through the protected areas. Even the principle of maintaining ‘contiguity’ in the national park and sanctuary areas is often violated. For instance, the 2500 square kilometers contiguous Terai-Bhabhar forests have been broken into four separate tracts, between the river Yamuna and Sarda, by a rash of encroachments: the Rishikesh-Haridwar railway line, the Kumaun-Cilca power canal, a large army ammunition dump and a colony of Tehri Dam oustees. Besides all these, lands within the national parks and sanctuaries are indiscriminately acquired by the government for setting up of industries and mining activities. The cases of Kaziranga and Sariska testify this. Illegal poaching by the rich and influential also continues unabated. The recent incident of poaching in Corbett National Park is an example which is not an aberration, but a regular feature. Hence, all the above issues boil down to denial of people’s access to and control over natural resources in sanctuaries and national parks.

The very act of conservation has a dimension of destruction and destitution. And this dimension has long been overlooked without any concern for those who become the victims of conservation. Hence, any conservation attempt must adopt a holistic approach. The focus of state-sponsored conservation should not be confined to only flora and fauna or the bio-diversities. Such a myopic vision should be broadened by encompassing the human beings and their habitat as much as the other species in their habitat with the inclusion of human beings as an essential part of conservation strategy. The conservation perspective must take cognizance of the integrated and interdependent natural system, of which flora, fauna and human beings are integral constituents.
SECOND DROUGHT WORKSHOP AT MARATHWADA REGION

PRIA in collaboration with Jan Jagaran Yuvek Mandal, Aurangabad, organised a two day "Workshop on Drought Scenario in Marathwada Region", during 17-19 June 1993. The basic objectives of this workshop were to understand the causes of drought and the impact of this tragic phenomenon on the region as well as to review the state government's drought mitigation policies, strategies and programmes. It was also an attempt to deliberate upon the efforts made by the Non-Governmental Organisations in their drought mitigation programmes, the impact of these efforts (in the short term and long term), with the aim of developing a collective understanding. About forty NGO representatives from six districts of Marathwada region attended this workshop. A follow up plan is also being prepared. For further information please write to PRIA or Jan Jagaran Yuvek Mandal, 139, Jai Vishwa Bharati Colony, Aurangabad - 431005.

TRAINING ON ALTERNATIVE LAND AND WATER MANAGEMENT, PHASE III & IV

During July 26-30, 1993, PRIA organised the third phase training workshop on "Alternative Land and Water Management" for Elta Parishad members at Kasturbagram, Indore. During the workshop participants shared their field level efforts and experiences, after the second phase training held earlier in February. Discussions were held on how to carry forward the process. Consequently, individual participants prepared their action plan as to how to move forward their plans and learning needs and processes, etc. Participants were also informed about Kasturbagram's work towards this issue, through lectures and field visits.

During August 18-21, 1993, the fourth phase of this training was held at the Experimental Farm and Nursery of Alternative Agriculture Resource Centre, Chetna Vikas, Wardha. This training programme was a combination of theoretical discussion, demonstration and practice on the field. A field trip was also organised to understand how villagers adopt/practice this method in their village. The subjects discussed were perspectives of alternative farming, how natural resources are being used in agriculture, types and function of land and soil, nursery preparation, how to raise fruit bearing trees, concept of watershed and watershed development, how to increase productivity through alternative farming practices, how to develop wastelands and also how to have an interaction with the villagers to know how all these activities can be carried out at the village level. As a follow up it was decided that (1) participants will practice these methods in their areas and document their efforts (success, failures, etc.) (2) A one month training programme on various aspects of Alternative Farming will be organised during mid-December and mid-January, 1994, and a 15 days training programme on watershed and watershed development concept will be arranged during February 1994. Both these training will be held at Alternative Agriculture Resource Centre, Chetna Vikas, Wardha.

DROUGHT WORKSHOP AT DUMKA

During July 4-5 1993, Manavi of Bihar, organised a "Drought Workshop" at Social Development Centre in Duddhan, district Dumka, Bihar. Manavi had been studying the district level drought situation in Bihar, since the last few months. The focus of this workshop was to share these findings with the groups, analyse the causes of the drought and formulate a strategy towards a long term intervention on this issue. Fifty-five activists, NGO representatives, experts and political workers from various parts of Bihar and even outside Bihar participated in this workshop. A follow up meeting was held at Madhubir during 12-14 August 1993. Another meeting has been planned for another meeting has been planned for early November at Palamau.

PRIA participated in this workshop and facilitated the pre-workshop preparations and the post-workshop follow-up process. For details please contact - Manavi, Professor Colony, Shiv Pahar, district Dumka, Bihar - 814101.

NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON NATIONAL PARKS AND SANCTUARIES

PRIA in collaboration with The Rural Litigation and Enforcement Kendra, Dehradun is going to organise a national workshop on "Declining Access to and Control over Natural Resources in National Parks and Sanctuaries" at the Forest Research Institute, Dehradun during October 28-30, 1993. The overall focus of the workshop is to understand the issues and causes of the problems in these areas and to understand the nature of government policies with respect to National Parks and Sanctuaries. The workshop also hopes to evolve certain follow up strategies towards this end. Those who are interested on this issue, should please contact us.
Suggested Reading on Sanctuaries and National Parks:

Books


Articles


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by the State and its agencies be supreme, even if these conflict with "survival interests" of local communities? How should such conflicts of interests be reconciled? Why should violence, decapitation and confrontation be the only forms of repeatedly utilized measures to deal with such conflicts? Are there ways of governance that attempt to resolve such growing "conflicts on access to and control over natural resources"?

This issue of Land and People focuses on some of the major emerging issues of state-sponsored conservation strategy designed to protect the "wildlife interests" through sanctuaries and national parks, without taking into consideration the interests of those communities which have depended on and protected these.