



1068C102

FOREST AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES



Module-3

Community and Conservation

Conservation strategies are not new in our country. We often ignore that in India, forests are also home to some of the traditional communities. In some areas of India, local communities are struggling to conserve these habitats along with government officials, recognising that only this will secure their own long-term livelihood. In Sariska Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan, villagers have fought against mining by citing the Wildlife Protection Act. In many areas, villagers themselves are protecting habitats and explicitly rejecting government involvement. The inhabitants of five villages in the Alwar district of Rajasthan have declared 1,200 hectares of forest as the Bhairodev Dakav 'Sonchuri', declaring their own set of rules and regulations which do not allow hunting, and are protecting the wildlife against any outside encroachments.

The famous Chipko movement in the Himalayas has not only successfully resisted deforestation in several areas but has also shown that community afforestation with indigenous species can be enormously successful. Attempts to revive the traditional conservation methods or developing new methods of ecological farming are now widespread. Farmers and citizen's groups like the Beej Bachao Andolan in Tehri and Navdanya have shown that adequate levels of diversified crop production without the use of synthetic chemicals are possible and economically viable. In India joint forest management (JFM) programme furnishes a good example for involving local communities in the management and restoration of degraded forests. The programme has been in formal existence since 1988 when the state of Odisha passed the first resolution for joint forest management. JFM depends on the formation of local (village) institutions that undertake protection activities mostly on degraded forest land managed by the forest department. In return, the members of these communities are entitled to intermediary benefits like nontimber forest produces and share in the timber harvested by 'successful protection'. The clear lesson from the dynamics of both environmental destruction and reconstruction in India is that local communities everywhere have to be involved in some kind of natural resource management. But there is still a long way to go before local communities are at the centre stage in decision-making. Accept only those economic or developmental activities, that are people centric, environment-friendly and economically rewarding.