

FOREWORD

A century ago, the first National Forest Policy of India (1894) classified the forests as firstly protection forests, required to be preserved for ecological reasons, secondly economic forests for meeting the timber and industrial needs of the country or thirdly forests in and around the villages, to meet the needs of local populations. The Royal Commission on Agriculture (1928) suggested two divisions in the Forest Department; one to manage the first two categories of forests for the country's needs and the second for forests intended to benefit the local villagers.

Now, in 1993, the most frequently discussed subject in forestry circles in India and other parts of the world is Joint Forest Planning and Management (JFPM). The idea is to work the forests subjected to biotic pressure, with the people as partners, while providing them with a share of the benefits. There is therefore a strong sense of a return to older ideas. However the third category forest referred to in the 1894 Forest Policy Statement and by the 1928 Royal Commission on Agriculture, the "Village Forests" have either been brought under the plough or totally decimated. The JFPM areas of today are the Reserve Forests and not the community privilege forests of past years.

The Reserve Forests are the areas from which the people were barred by law but could not be kept away in practice. The JFPM premise thus flows from an acceptance of the need to adapt to the present realities, through multiple-use under collaborative management.

I have been a forester for four decades and a witness to these changes. I am grateful to the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation for providing the opportunity to record these observations and I acknowledge the help of many former colleagues.

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