

Report of Earth Day Celebrations - APRIL 22, 1990.

The Earth Day was Celebrated at 4 places in Sirsi taluka, Uttara Kannada District. Before these celebrations wide publicity was given in interior villages circulating pamphlets regarding Earth Day.

The programmes were held in following villages:

1. Malali.

This is a small village comprising of 50 houses, Most of the people are small and marginal farmers involved in growing paddy. They depend on forests for fodder, fuel and green leaf manure.

A detail discussion was held regarding the causes that are responsible for dwindling of natural forests near their village. The farmers told that the irratic rainfall and decrease of rainy days has affected their crop yield. They also complained government planting efforts which is infirely mono culture plantations of Acacia and Casurina sorrounding the village. The participants and the resource person visited these plantations adjacent to the village and to understand the problem of mono culture plantations. People are concerned about soil depletion due to such mono culture plantations.

The participants concluded that due to degradation of forests the bountiful yields of Mother Earth is decreasing. They resolved to reduce the pressure on forests by constructing ASTRA STOVES. Youth and Elderly people took part in the discussion.

The rest of the day was spent with all the villagers. A slide show was shown to create environmental awareness. About 50 people participated in the discusslon and about 200 people were involved through slide show. A resource person co-ordinated these activities.

2. Goli.

Earth Day was celebrated at Siddivinayaka High School, Goli. The programmes were;

- a) Exhibition of photos on environment.
- b) A group discussion with children about Nature. The Head Master and local people also took part in this diseussion. People shared their experience of destruction of Mother Earth.
- c) A debate competition among school children regarding destruction of Earth and how it can be halted. Many children took part in this competition.
- d) A slide show was arranged for the participants on Earths resources and the destructive process.

About 60 children took part in this workshop. Booklets on nature protection was distributed to participants.

3. Neggu.

A one day function was arranged for a group of villagers at Neggu. This was held at the Vinayak Temple premises. About 250 people too part in this function. The programmes were as follows ;

- Introduction to Earth Day and Speeches.
- Debate competition on saving Earth from destruction
- A slide show on environment protection. This was a very successful programme as majority of people took part in the discussion.

4. Deviname.

Devimane is a interior area in Uttara Kannada. The day seminar was organised at Sri Durga Temple premises. About 250 villagers took part in this function. The programmes were ;

- ~~Introdux~~ Introduction to Earth Day and opening remarks.
- Discussion - Peoples perception, their *concern* over decrease in rainfall, crop failure and destruction of crops by wild animals.
- A consensus was arrived at, wherein people said that it is essential to protect the resources on Earth to get good rainfall and crops.
- A debate competition was organised for village children.
- Slide show.

More than 250 people took part in this function at Devimane.

Tree planting programme was not feasible due to dry season and shortage of water.

The programmes were organised by parisara Samrakshana Kendra Sirsi.

SIRSI.

for Parisara Sanmrakshana Kendr

Date: 23 APRIL 1990.

CHAPTER III : THE STRINGS OF AID

Peoples participation is the rehotoric and stinging the marginal groups is the reality.

In response to the criticisms to the "RED BOOK " on WGFP, the final document or the "WHITE BOOK" (KFD:1991) has coopted the word 'Peoples participation'. It is sprinkled in each section so as to give the feeling that peoples participation is the crux of the WGFP. The rehotoric reads as follows:

"Local people, who are responsible for much of the biotic pressure on the forest, must play a fundamental role in the planning, management and protection of the forest". The document also claims "The main instrument for achieving sustainability is Joint Forest Planning and Management" (JFPM).

The rehotoric is noble, but the reality is disgusting. All these talk of peoples participation gets narrowed down in the next paragraph of WGFP project document. It states "In certain areas of forest, as described under "Zonation", it will be appropriate for the planning process to decide on joint management". The 'participation' will only be practiced in the 'zones', especially in zone IV i.e., degraded areas near the village. The seeds of colonial forest policy has made deep inroads into the concept of 'peoples participation'. The classification of forest areas into zones has been used to restrict peoples participation in the forest proper. The western consultants, with their ingenuity have incorporated the concept of 'Participation' to use people as pawns to establish trees on most degraded areas. And then they call it 'JFPM'.

The most surprising factor is that the colonial ideology is deeply ingrained into the Government order passed by Karnataka State (on 12/04/93, GOK, 1993). The influence of ODA can be gauged from the sentences included in the preamble of the Government Order "The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests has stated the "Process Plan" of the Western Ghat Forestry and Environment Project funded by ODA of the U.K. depends mainly on the JFPM and ODA authorities have insisted for a Government Order authorising the principles of Joint Forest Planning and Management". Obviously, the order is passed not to empower the forest dwellers to control and use of forest resources, but to please ODA to get funds for WGFP. It is the manifestation of government's commitment to secure funds from ODA, than the commitment towards forest dwellers.

The Government Order on JFPM and VFC (Village Forest Committee) is a classic case of throttling any process of decentralised decision making. It undermines the democratic principles at village level. The foremost disincentive against JFPM process is the area covered under JFPM. The order specifically states that "it shall be introduced in degraded forest land, where the canopy cover is 0.25 and less and government waste lands, road sides etc". Why should peoples be interested in participating in those areas which are already degraded? There is definite link between the concept of 'zoning' in WGFP and allocation of 'degraded lands' under Government Order. The Zone-IV is similar to the area explicitly defined in the government order. The Government has taken the clue from colonial masters and consultants. The passing of an order eliciting peoples participation creates an illusion, however in reality it leads

-33-

CHAPTER IV:

THE IMPACT OF WGFP (Destroying The Biodiversity of
Tropical Forests)

The forests of Uttara Kannada district in Karnataka represents one of the most important regions of high biodiversity. The WGFP has stated that the main objective is to "To maintain the environmental stability of the Western Ghats, to preserve their unique flora and fauna, and to increase understanding of them".

ON POOREST GROUPS

People have lived in midst of forests of Uttara Kannada for centuries. At present only 10 percent of the total geographical area is cultivated in the district. The agriculture is dependent on harvesting of forest resources. There are many people, basically landless or marginal farmers who are using the forest area without land rights to earn some cash income through tree crops or to meet their needs of hunger by growing food crops.

The WGFP has had disastorous affect on the group of poorest people who have been cultivating these forest land. There are numerous instances (Hegde; 1994) in which the KFD under the guise of WGFP has taken control of the lands cultivated by people to establish WGFP plantations. The forest department, has used the WGFP for evacuating the people from these forest areas. In villages like Adike Hosur and Jalavalli it has led to increased conflict between the people and forest officials. In Bhasi and Bellankeri, the poorest people have had to sacrifice their only resource base. WGFP is a conspiracy of silence between KFD and ODA that has led to evacuation of poorest groups from their miniscule survival base.

ON LIVESTOCK

Livestock keeping is one of the subsidiary occupation of the people in Uttara Kannada. Cattle is kept as draught and milch animal. It is an important link between agricultural system, providing inputs (Farm Yard Manure) to grow agricultural crops. The availability of fodder is in short supply and access to grazing areas is one of the major common property resource of poorest groups of people in the region. The availability of fodder was high in the natural forest regions. The gradual conversion of natural forests into monoculture teak and eucalyptus plantations has reduced the availability of fodder. Similarly the spread of exotic weeds like 'Eupatorium' has hindered the growth of grass.

The drive of commercial forestry has made intrusions into the grazing land in the district depriving the scarce fodder resource. Now under WGFP, the ODA funds are being used to 'afforest' the grazing land of the poorest people. Even this 'last resort' of poorest people and that of cattle is being taken away by WGFP. As a consequence, in many villages people have expressed their apprehension over ODA project. A study (PSK;1994) conducted in 25 villages of project area, reveals that in all the 25 villages the people were using the area for cattle grazing, which is converted into monoculture ODA plantations.

The restriction of access to grazing land puts extra pressure on the people to search for alternate areas/sources of fodder. Fodder is imported into the region. The better off farmer has the cash required to purchase the fodder from distant areas. But

CHAPTER - V

SAVING TROPICAL FORESTS: THROUGH ODA OR PEOPLE?

The implementation of WGFP in Uttara Kannada district has completed two years. From the perspective of funders (ODA) and the implementing agency (KFD) WGFP is progressing towards achieving its goal and the policy makers (KFD: Minutes of Steering Committee 1991) have even decided to extend the programme to second forest Circle in Western Ghats, to Shimoga. It seems both the actors, ODA and KFD has the magical power to turn the failure into a success.

The impartial assessment of the WGFP in Uttara Kannada district exposes the repressive nature of the project affecting all the levels in the society. While comparing the objectives of the project to the ground realities, it clearly emerges that the implementation of WGFP has resulted in going against the basic objectives of the Project. Let us examine each of the objectives and its implications.

Ecology: The proposal claims that maintenance of ecological balance and environment stability is one of the basic objective. However, in actual practice WGFP has created ecological imbalance by implementing the policies that are harmful to the delicate ecosystems. The 'Gap plantations' and 'enrichment' plantations are the classic indicators of establishing commercial forestry leading towards destabilising the fragile ecosystems of Western Ghats.

Environment: WGFP was to rehabilitate and protect the major environmental resources of Western Ghats. The major environmental

resource is the forests, which provide basis for survival to peoples biomass economy. By incorporating the 'zoning' concept, the WGFP has expropriated the resource to satisfy the commercial demand of 'elite' group in the society. It has ignored the survival needs of biomass economy in this region.

Society: The project claims to assure the sustainability of people whose livelihood depends on forests. This assurance has remained on paper and at the implementation stage the WGFP has uprooted people from their livelihood base to establish monoculture plantations. It has adversely affected the living standards of people dependent on forest resources by depriving them the access to biomass. It has even denied access to grow food to meet the hunger of poorest sections in the society.

Economy: The project assures sustained yield so as to secure sound economic welfare for future generations. The project is based on this economic foundation to improve the forest stock with 'valuable' timber species. Thus, the entrenchment of WGFP on the commercial criteria will lead to ecological degradation in the long run effecting the survival needs of future generations.

The above facts clearly indicate the failure of WGFP to meet the objectives it has set. Nevertheless, the ODA or KFD do not want to recognise this fact. Both these actors are well versed in the game of rejecting the reality. If we look back at what happened with the Karnataka Social Forestry Project (KSFP) cofunded by World Bank and ODA, it exposes the insensitivity to the real needs of people.