

RESEARCH

**The Van Panchayat Movement and Struggle for Achieving Sustainable Management of the Forest:
A Case Study of Uttarakhand in North India**
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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

THERE ARE NO CONFLICTS OF INTEREST FOR ANY OF THE AUTHORS.

ABSTRACT:

During the nineteenth century, the denial of customary rights of people by the British colonial forest department, led to conflict with the local society. Our study shows how this conflict paved the way for the origin of *van panchayats* (VPs) in the northern Indian state of Uttarakhand at the beginning of the twentieth century. The objective is to analyze such conflicts and see how VPs appeared and eventually evolved into people's participatory forest management. VP as a system was institutionalized in 1931. The end of the British Empire and the emergence of independent India (1947) began a new era in the history of forest management. Several experimental attempts were undertaken. VP rules were revised and amended to accommodate the evolving changes in the relationship between local villages and the state Forest Department. This led to the birth of the system of joint forest management (JFM) in early 1990s. In one sense, VP could be regarded as a people's movement for the restoration of customary rights, which eventually resulted in the Forest Rights Act of 2006. This Act substantially restored people's sovereign rights over forest, independent of either the state or Forest Department interference. Nevertheless, struggle for full empowerment of local villages over their surrounding forests and other resources continues.

KEYWORDS: Colonial forestry • Van panchayat • Joint forest management • Customary right • Uttarakhand

INTRODUCTION

Due to sheer geographical vastness of the Indian subcontinent, centralized state control over natural resources has always been challenged at the local level. Hence, the pattern of resource management has traditionally been the basic unit, i.e., the village. The history of forestry and forest management is not any different in this respect. The village society has traditionally depended on forest resources, which also supplemented agriculture and animal husbandry. The rural communities in India have always exercised customary user rights over forests and other natural resources. Consequently, peasants and pastoral nomads used these as common property resource. It was only the British that enacted laws to lay claim over Indian forests. The colonial forest laws of the nineteenth century were primarily directed towards people's customary

and user rights. This led to "a progressive curtailment of the previously untrammelled rights of use exercised by rural communities all over South Asia," says the noted environmental historian Ramachandra Guha (2001). Series of forest acts enacted by the colonial forest department established claims of the state to forestlands, which had seldom existed before. These acts denied customary rights of people over forests in favor of state control. Customary use was declared as a 'privilege,' not a 'right.' The British did not bother to know that historically there were no government forests in India. The forests have always been of natural growth and enjoyed by the people as common property resource.¹ Furthermore, the people of these regions were dependent on the

utilization of forest products such as firewood and other non-timber resources for their livelihood.

During the nineteenth century, the power of British colonial forest department had expanded and reached the local villages. The denial of customary rights of people by the British colonial forest department, led to conflict with the local society. Since the 1920s, in the state of Uttarakhand in northern India, the idea of establishing *van panchayats* (hereinafter, VPs) originated as a conflict between the people and British authorities for control over natural resources. VPs were primarily grass root organizations that enlisted people's participation (Saxena 1995). They were also one of the largest and most diverse experiments in common property resource management in the state (Arnold and Stewart 1991).

In the 1960s and 70s, pressure on forests in developing countries intensified due to poverty and population growth. Therefore, the forest management authorities were faced with conflict to recognize social forestry as the foundational basis of the socio-economic life of the local population. Hence, during the early phase of forest policies spanning 1970s and 80s, the primary focus was on how to keep the people's use of forest resources to the minimum, while maintaining maximum state control. Consequently, successive government programs provided local people with seedlings for creating woodlots on private land; established alternative energy facilities to reduce firewood use; construction of village infrastructure and/or promoted employment outside the forests, etc. Even though this looked good on the surface, but in practice the local people were kept away from decision-making processes regarding public forests (Arnold 2001). However, these social forestry practices resembled integrated conservation and development projects in protected areas. Thus the aim of the latter governmental projects was to reduce pressure on protected areas by introducing alternative energy facilities and income sources (Salafsky and Wollenberg 2000).

Nevertheless, until the late 1980s, national forest policies in India emphasized the optimization of commercial forestry, which prohibited local villagers' access to forests (Ota 2014). The result was a rapid and widespread degradation of forests, which exposed the weakness and failure of top-down state forest resource management policies and actions. Frequent conflicts also arose between the forest department and local users of forest resources. It was then that the forestry authorities became aware of the important role forests have played in supporting the livelihoods of local people (Saito-Jensen 2008). In 1990s, the Indian government gradually decentralized the forestry sector to create

greater efficiency, accountability, and cost cutting (Agrawal and Ribot 1999; Edmunds and Wollenberg 2003). A number of studies also recognized that local communities had undertaken sustainable forest management collectively under customary law or pilot project guidelines (Hobley 1996). Hence, the government began to acknowledge a certain right and authority of local communities towards the management of state forests. Since the 1990s this co-management of state forests by both government agencies and local communities has been observed in other developing countries as well (Colfer 2005). It is a concept of co-management that secures the benefit of local people's knowledge in forest management and aims to enhance a sense of ownership and responsibility for the use of resources amongst themselves (Meinzen-Dick and Knox 2001). Following this co-management practice, the number of villages under VP has increased greatly since 1931, when it was first institutionalized in the Uttarakhand state. During the last 80 years or so there has been major change in Indian forest policy, VP rules and people's participation in forest management.

The objective of this study is to analyze conflict between the local people and government under denial of customary right of people by the British colonial forest department, and show how independent India introduced the co-management policy in order to examine the system of VPs as joint forest management (hereinafter, JFM).

This study attempts to review the policy implication of VP rules, which was revised four times since 1931. It presents statistics and references on Indian forest policies, and the people's participation in forest use and management.

CONFLICTS IN BRITISH COLONIAL PERIOD

The Forest Act of 1878 was the first comprehensive piece of colonial legislation that put curbs on local use of forest resources for subsistence in favor of commercial exploitation by the state (more on this later). Peasants and tribal people were the worst affected by this act. They complained, "The forests have belonged to us from time immemorial, our ancestors planted them and have protected them; now that they have become of value, government steps in and robs us of them." (Guha 2001).

The British pursued their project of commercialization of forests for revenue extraction under the guise of 'scientific' and 'sustainable yield' forestry.' However, there was nothing 'scientific' or 'sustainable' about colonial forestry. In fact no such scientific data was either generated or available for analysis. Neither did the British imperial forest department in India bothered to gather such data. Even the so-called colonial 'sustained yield' forestry

did not really mean what it claimed. "Did the consequences match the professed objective of sustained yield? Indeed not. The forest resource base was not used sustainably; rather, the pattern of its utilization is best described as successive overexploitation," say the noted environmental

historian and scientist Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha (1996). Their study also provides data to show how the British forest department generated revenue and surplus under the pretext of 'scientific forestry and sustained yield' principle (Table 1).

Table 1. Revenue and Surplus of Indian Forest Department (1869-70 to 1944-45)
(Stebbling 1927; Gadgil and Guha 1996)

Year	Timber/Fuel (million cuft)	Revenue (Rs million)	Surplus (Rs million)	Surplus/ Revenue (%)
1869-70 to 1873-74	NA	5.6	1.7	30.4
1874-75 to 1878-79	NA	6.7	2.1	31.3
1879-80 to 1883-84	NA	8.8	3.2	36.4
1884-85 to 1888-89	NA	11.7	4.2	35.9
1889-90 to 1893-94	NA	15.9	7.3	45.9
1894-95 to 1898-99	NA	17.7	7.9	44.6
1899-1900 to 1903-4	NA	19.7	8.4	42.6
1904-1905 to 1908-9	NA	25.7	11.6	45.1
1909-1910 to 1913-14	NA	29.6	13.2	44.6
1914-1915 to 1918-19	NA	37.1	16.0	43.1
1919-1920 to 1923-24	NA	55.2	18.5	33.5
1924 to 1925	NA	56.7	21.3	37.6
1937 to 1938	270	NA	NA	NA
1934-1935 to 1938-39	299	29.4	7.2	24.5
1939 to 1940	294	32	7.5	23.4
1940 to 1941	386	37.1	13.3	35.8
1941 to 1942	310	46.2	19.4	42.0
1942 to 1943	336	65	26.7	41.1
1943 to 1944	374	101.5	44.4	43.7
1944 to 1945	439	124.4	48.9	39.3

In the pre-colonial time, the small landholders could supplement their subsistence holding with forest produce like wild grains, fruits, leaves, flowers, *mahua*, etc. They could freely graze their goats and cows in the forests. But all this could not be done when the British government took over fallow lands, grazing grounds and forests. The tribal people had a deep knowledge of the forest and their lives were intimately integrated with their environment. The forest laws restricted their movement and seriously threatened their way of life. The British forest policies also promoted the mono-specie hardwood trees

over multi-specie and diverse vegetation regime, which the people preferred for their livelihood. The consequence of this colonial commercialization was the loss of community control over forests. The British lacked the understanding of the vital dependence of agrarian life on the forest and grazing lands. The interdependence of hills, forests, grasslands, and agriculture has from time immemorial created a complex agro-pastoral production system. This required the development of a fairly widespread system of common property resource management, "with grass reserves walled in and well looked after, oak forests managed by

the village community, and sacred groves lovingly protected." (Guha 2001). But this complex system broke down under the hammer blow of colonial commercialization of forests and other natural resources.

In 1922, the nationalist leader Gobind Ballabh Pant published a booklet *The Forest Problem in Kumaun* (Pant 1922)². This pamphlet showed how the indefeasible rights of the people of Kumaun were trampled through colonial encroachment and exploitation. Before the British takeover, the people of Kumaun followed a system of natural conservancy through sacred groves. Every hilltop was dedicated to a local deity and trees or other vegetation was treated with great respect. Nobody dared to touch them. Whenever a tree was cut, another was planted in its place. Grass and fodder reserves were always maintained. Even cultivated lands were covered with trees. A natural system of conservancy has existed in the Kumaun region whereby the woodlands were regarded as being within the purview of the village itself. All the forest produce was available to the inhabitants of the village, i.e., fuel, fodder, wood, medicinal plants, fruits, flowers, leaf manure, etc. (Guha 2001; Pant 1922). However, this colonial control over natural resources and denial of access to people led to serious conflict. This conflict in the Himalayan hill region forced the British to pass rules for the formation of *van panchayats* in 1930s. This meant the villagers could elect a council of five to nine members (called *panch* in Hindi) whose head was the *sarpanch*⁴. It was empowered to regulate grazing, cutting of branches, collection of fuel, distribution of forest produce, etc. Soon it was noticed that the VP forests were much better managed and conserved than the colonial forest department 'reserves' (Guha 2001).

When India attained independence from the British Raj in 1947, the colonial authoritarianism gave way to a democratically elected government of India (Chandra 2000; Guha 2007). Popular pressure was exerted to sensitize the needs of the people for forest and other natural resources.

APPEARANCE OF JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT

A system of Joint Forest Management is such a policy of co-management that has been implemented since the early 1990s, and is widespread in India. The objective of JFM was to achieve better forest resource conservation by creating partnerships between the forest department and forest management committees (hereinafter, MC) (Khare A et al. 2000). In other words, JFM recognized the importance of meeting the livelihood needs of the forest-dependent population for fuel wood, fodder, minor forest

produce, and small timber. This recognition formalized the importance of local village communities as co-managers of forests, while at the same time established their rights to forest products (Saito-Jensen 2008). The Indian National Forest Policy of 1988 had previously recognized the needs of the forest-dependent population for firewood, livestock feed, non-timber forest products, and timber for domestic purposes. The Ministry of Environment and Forests incorporated the previous policy when adopting JFM strategies. As of 2006, 27% of Indian forests (17.3 million-ha of forest land) have been reserved for 85,000 JFM schemes under forest department partnership control (Saito-Jensen 2008). Furthermore, it has also provided incentives for involvement of local people through Joint Forest Management Committees in forest protection. Presently, there are 274,134 JFM Committees managing 671,428 km² ha involving 3,862,811 people of forest area (MEF 2012). JFM projected areas have been steadily increasing (Table 2). The Japanese Bank for International Cooperation and the World Bank has also provided financial support to these JFM initiatives.

Table 2. Change of JFM's Number (MEF 2006; 2012)

JFM	Village number	Area (km ²)
2004	84,632	173,320
2006	106,482	224,392
2011	274,134	671,428

The JFM scheme has been widely adopted in India and can be considered a success. However, it has also been the subject of growing criticism and concern among many scholars and non-governmental organizations. They have argued that JFM committees received few benefits from the JFM. Some concern had also been raised about the inequitable distribution of benefits among MC members of the VP. There were still more apprehensiveness that the JFM scheme had an adverse impact on inter-village benefit distribution (Saito-Jensen 2008). Nevertheless, recent assessments suggest that the forest cover has increased in India, largely because of afforestation and reforestation as well as the expansion of tree planting on farms, etc. Total forest and tree cover 789,164 m³ was marked according to India State of Forest Report 2013 (Figure 1).

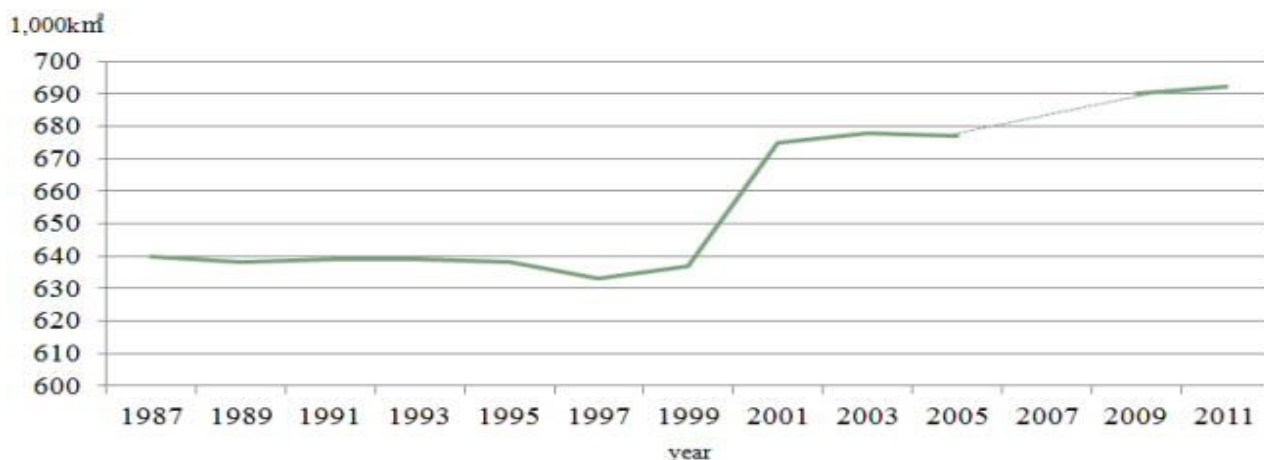


Figure 1. Change of Forest Cover in India (FSI, 1987- 2011)

A system of JFM was introduced in several states. Decentralization of forest control went a long way in addressing the grievances against the forest department (Guha 2001). But JFM also solicited complaints from the people suggesting overwhelming interference of the forest department in local management of forests.

In 2006, the Indian parliament passed the Forest Rights Act, which for the first time, fully recognized the rights of people over forests and other related natural resources and made these rights independent of the encroachment of forest department (Bhullar 2008). Forest Rights Act is intended to restore people's sovereign right over forest, independent of either the state or Forest Department interference.

VAN PANCHAYAT FOR ANCESTRAL FOREST CO-MANAGEMENT

This study provides data to analyze the functioning of VPs and JFM in the Indian state of Uttarakhand. Located in the northern part of India (Figure 2), it comprises an area of 53,743 km², of hills covers 53,483 km² (UFD 2013) or 92.57%, and the rest of 7.43% is characterized by plains. The annual average temperature in the state ranges from 10 to 20°C and the annual rainfall ranges from 1000 to 1500 mm in the middle of the Himalayas (FSI 2015). The forests mainly comprise of Himalayan *Chir* pine (*Pinus roxburghii*) and *Banji* oak (*Quercus leucotrichophora*, hereafter Oak) covering 26.1% and 20.2%, respectively of the woodlands (UFD 2013). The state has two divisions – Kumaon and Garhwal. Around 12.6% of the hill area is cultivated and 65% is forested (ibid.), signifying the importance of forests to people's livelihood.

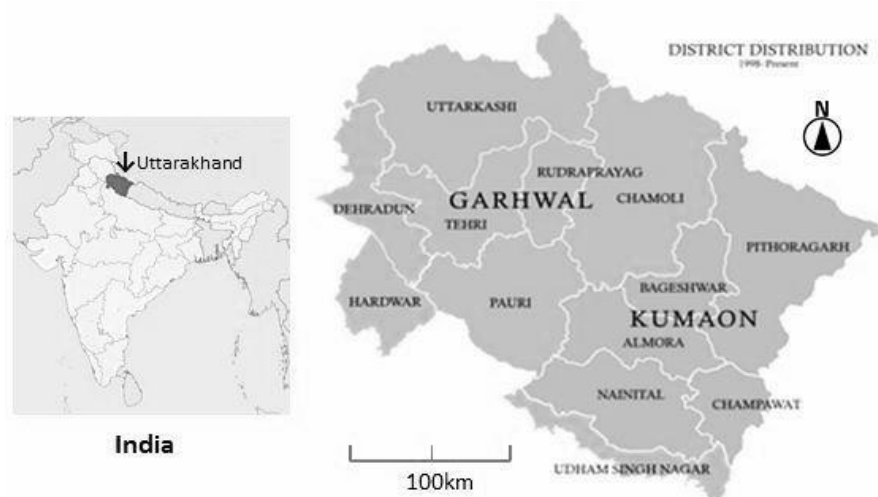


Figure 2. The State of Uttarakhand

In advance of JFM, during the nineteenth century the decentralized forest management had already been in practice in the state of Uttarakhand. This co-management constituted the self-initiated forest protection group called *van panchayat*. As mentioned earlier, "van" means forest in Hindi, and "panchayat" is the local self-government at the level of a village. The VP than is governed by a set of elected representatives by the villagers, called the "panch." "Van panchayat" therefore refers to "panchayati forest" or locally controlled forests. So VP had appeared due to the local resistance against state ownership and management of forests under British rule in Uttarakhand. The colonial Forest Department promulgated three settlements between Forest Act of 1878 and 1917 to regulate the forests of Uttarakhand. The areas under these settlements were quite extensive. All but the cultivated lands were brought under the control of the forest department and a wide range of restrictions was imposed on grazing, lopping, and collection of forest products. This brought severe hardships to the people and triggered several social movements, protests and agitation in the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand.

In 1916, a group of Indian elites formed the Kumaon Association to look into the forest management problems in the Kumaon region. These problems were derived from state action on reserve forests without the consent of local users/villagers. The association organized the people in Uttarakhand to take forest issues to the government (Ballabh and Singh 1988; Guha 1983). These protests resulted in the setting up of a Forest Grievances Committee² by the state to redress people's grievances. The committee realized that any further effort to impose strict forest regulations was likely to lead to bloodshed. The committee recommended reclassification of forests and the formation of VPs instead. Those forests that had low commercial value but high value for the local people were classified as Class I reserve forests and placed under the revenue department. Class I forests were dominated by broad-leaved trees, mainly oak. Hence, the state government did not show much interest in commercial logging, although it imposed restrictions on such by villagers (Somanathan 1991). Thus, it can be said that the VPs took shape in response to the people's movement against forest reservation in the beginning of the 20th century (Guha 1983; Singh and Ballabh 1991).

AFTERMATH OF VAN PANCHAYAT

Looking at the modular example of Uttarakhand, VPs can be considered an effective tool to conserve biodiversity at a local level. Without the participation of the community, it is not possible to

conserve these forests in the long-term (Rawat and Rawat 2010). Empowering the community on the outskirts of reserved and protected forests to nurture trees and consume forest products is a good and practical policy option, considering the deficiency of financial resources. It has been argued that the full participation of women is the key to its success in many villages (Agrawal 2002).

Let us look at one example of when the control is taken over from the local community. The case of Pakhi VP illustrates the effect of the top-down planning and implementation of a 'participatory' forestry project. In this case, the state government of Uttarakhand had tightened its control over the VP management. It received a large amount of money from the state government along with more bureaucratic control over management. As a result, local governance over forests became disempowered (Sarin 2001).

Local power in the VP system in general is in decline because of the increasing control by the Forest Department. This resulted in the overall loss of autonomy and intensified conflicts within and among the MCs of the VPs (Ballabh et al. 2002). Furthermore, there is a quantitative and qualitative decline of once dense and well-managed VP forests in the Kumaon hills of the central Himalayas (Balooni et al. 2007). Formal and informal institutions of common pool resources management in Kumaon have either eroded completely or faced challenges during the past two decades. This situation demands appropriate policy measures (ibid.). From previous studies, it is clear that VPs had once increased the access of local communities to forest resources and demonstrated potential for better forest management. According to Agrawal (2005), in his book "Regulatory Community", VPs demonstrated good examples of decentralized resource management that benefited local communities. With a backdrop of a brief overview of VP, this study targets the formation of VP and sees how VP institutionalized the system and how local institutions successfully achieved sustainable forest management.

The formation of VP since India's independence (1947) shows the continued dependence of people in this region on the VP forests for their livelihood. The number of VPs has increased gradually since the 1990s (Table 3). A drastic increase in their formation coincided with the appearance of JFM (Nagahama 2013). They have been cited as successful examples of people's involvement in forest management (Ballabh et al. 2002) and the longest standing example of JFM (Gairola and Negi 2011). However, since 2007, their numbers seems to have reached a saturation point. Our research will continue to monitor their progress

as the new data becomes available. See Table 3 below.

Year	VPs' Number	VPs' area(km ²)
1930	42	NA
1940	212	NA
1950	822	NA
1960	1,767	NA
1970	2,600	NA
1980	3,500	NA
1990	3,995	NA
1994	4,665	3,258
2001	NA	4,047
2002	6,839	NA
2003	7,482	4,699
2004	11,555	5,174
2007	12,089	5,450

Table 3. Growth of VPs in India
(Rawat 1999; USG 2007; Gairola et al. 2011)

The first state VP Rules were enacted in 1931, and these have been revised in 1978, 2001, and 2005

(USG 2005). The rules have been augmented and modified from time to time. In the current rules revision, the number of articles was increased. There are 58 rules with subdivision at present. Since 1931, the VPs have been governed by the VP Rules under the Uttarakhand Panchayati Forest Act (hereinafter, VP Rules). The VP members follow these rules, whereby the state government grants any village community the right of governance in the reserved forests (Indian Forest Act 1927). The revenue department and the forest department jointly adjudicate the rights of VPs. All administrative powers are vested with the revenue department, while the forest department holds technical powers over the management of forests (Saxena 1995).

Forest comprises an important part of the VPs. When the VP rules were enacted in 1931, Class I forests comprising the group of broad-leaf trees were de-reserved from government control, and most VPs were formed for the management of civil forest areas. Table 4 shows forests are controlled by various agencies. The land had already been categorized into forest types depending on its legal status, i.e., protected forest and reserved forest under forest department; civil/soyam⁴ forest under revenue department and VP; panchayati forest under VP which is categorized both civil/soyam forest and reserved forest; and private forest (Balooni et.al 2007).

Table 4. Forest types depending on its legal status (km²)
(UFD 2011)

Legal Status/ Management	Reserved Forest	Protected Forest	Unclassed/ Vested Forest	Total
Forest Department	24,121	99	55	24,275
Revenue Department	NA	4,769	NA	4,769
Forest Panchayat (VP)	488	4,962	NA	5,449
Other Govt.& Agencies	34	NA	124	158
Total	24,634	9,829	179	34,651

In 1990, Uttarakhand had more than 4,800 VPs, covering 244 km² of forest areas in more than six districts of the state (Gairola et al. 2011). According to the data in 2011, 12,089 VPs manage 5,449 km² of forestland (Table 5), which is about 16 % of the total forest area in Uttarakhand (UFD 2011). It would indicate that VPs have had a widespread impact on co-management of forest resources. VP would be regarded as a people's movement for the

restoration of customary rights. Eventually, VP resulted in the Forest Rights Act of 2006.

However, there has been continuous decline in the authority of VPs (Negi 2012), and local people's participation in forest management has been insufficient at micro-level (Nagahama et al. 2016)

The 1976 Rules provided further powers to people for electing their own representatives to manage panchayat forest. Compared with the

previous rules, the newest 2005 Rules are more interventionist in that control of bureaucracy which has been broadened and deepened due to hierarchy of plans including the composite management plan, micro plan and annual implementation plan. After these plans could be implemented, bureaucratic approval has been made mandatory (Gairola 2011). The formulation of the micro-plan requires gathering village level data

every five years. But this participatory process hasn't been properly undertaken. Furthermore, election is mandatory every five years according to the rules, but there are many VPs where elections have not been held for several years (Negi et al. 2012). Nevertheless, the institutions of VP are required to strengthen democratic character at the local level in addition to exercising technical and financial power.

Table 5. VP Information for the State of Uttarakhand (USG 2007; UFD 2011)

Division	District	Total Area (km ²)	Total Forest Area (km ²)	VP Area (km ²)	VP number	VP Area/ Total Forest Area (%)	VP Area/ VP no. (km ²)
Garhwal	Tehri	3,642	3,216	132	1,332	4.1	0.10
	Uttarkashi	8,016	7,217	73	644	1.0	0.11
	Pauri Garhwal	5,329	3,851	528	2,431	13.7	0.22
	Dehra Dun	3,088	2,018	77	215	3.8	0.36
	Rudra Prayag	1,984	1,804	207	574	11.5	0.36
	Chamoli	8,030	5,061	1,884	1,082	37.2	1.74
	Haridwar	2,360	724	0	NR	0.0	NR
Kumaon	Almora	3,139	2,362	699	2,199	29.6	0.32
	Bageshwar	2,246	1,102	388	822	35.2	0.47
	Champawat	1,766	1,323	312	629	23.6	0.50
	Pithoragarh	7,090	2,053	871	1,666	51.3	0.52
	Nainital	4,251	2,982	281	495	9.4	0.57
	Udham S. Nagar	2,542	938	0	NR	0.0	NR
Total		53,483	34,651	5449	12,089	15.7	0.61

DISCUSSION

VPs for grass-roots organization emerged out of persistent conflict between the government and people over the control of forest resources. VP was an example of age-old institution, which appeared in the state of Uttarakhand (previously Uttar Pradesh) in 1920s and institutionalized in 1931. Hence, it provided a useful insight for the implementation of JFM in post-Independent India which was invited for the scheme at national level. It seems that VP led to the birth of the system of JFM in early 1990s.

The system of VP is unabolished for 85 years, and drastic increase in the number of VPs since the 1990s paved the way for the development of JFM. India is the first country in the world to introduce a management policy between the government and local people. Initially, JFM appeared to have provided benefits to the local people in forest management. It also seemed to enhance a sense of ownership and responsibility among the local people for the use of natural resources. Consequently, participatory forest management seems to have prevailed.

However, it could be argued that VP might be deemed as participatory forest management at present. In operation, the "VP Rules" (*Panchayati Rules*) were revised several times leading to the

strengthening and re-establishment of government control over forests. With the loss of autonomy of the people's institutions at the grass-roots level, the conflict once again arose. But the situation was finally resolved in 2006 with the passage of Forest Rights Act in the Indian Parliament, which fully restored people's customary rights and made it autonomous of any government or state interference. However, only social awareness and political consciousness among the local people can guarantee these rights today and in future.

NOTES

1. On the eve of the debate on the forest act in 1871, one Mr. Narain Row of Nellore put forth this idea in, Memorandum on the Forest Bill, 8 May 1871, Nellore, Board of Revenue Proceedings Numbers 5739-789, Tamil Nadu Archives of India, Chennai. Referred in, Guha (2001).
2. This is a very versatile tree that grows all over India and is used by the tribal people as a source of natural food and brewed liquor.
3. According to Forest Grievance Committee for Kumaon (1921), it settled the rules as follows; 1) Demarcation; forest boundary pillars often come too close to cultivation or buildings. 2) Lopping restriction, 3) Restrictions on grazing, 4) Exclusion of sheep and goats from reserves, 5) Employment of forest guards to enforce numerous rules and regulations and their constant interference with women and children, who under the customs in vogue in Kumaon are the chief people to exercise on behalf of the villages such rights as lopping, collection of minor produce, grazing etc., 6) Large number of forest cases which either have compounded or fought out in criminal courts, 7) Unsatisfactory methods of dealing with indents for timber, 8) Rules regarding fire protection, 9) Strict restriction on the exercise of minor rights to those which are formally in the rights lists.
4. Leader of a panchayat who is an elected head of a village-level statutory institution of local self-government called the panchayat.
5. Civil/soyam forest is managed by the Gram sabha (village council), and usually people have unlimited rights and concessions for use, whereas the forest department controls the reserve forests where people have limited rights and concessions. As for Table 4, civil/soyam forest is categorized as protected forest in legal status.

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