

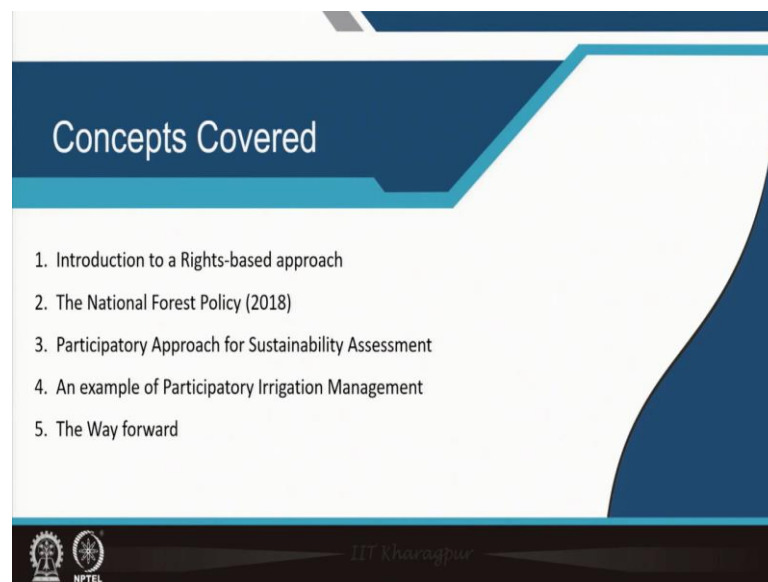
Sociology and Resource Management
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Module - 04
Participatory Approaches to Resource Management in India
Lecture - 16
Rights-based approaches to natural resources

Hello everyone. I welcome all of you back to the course on Sociology of Resource Management. So, today we will begin with the last module of this particular course that is module 4, where we will be covering the participatory approaches to resource management in India and in this particular module.

In this first lecture of this particular module, we would be talking about the rights-based approaches to resource management and I would be specifically focusing on the forests with a bit of focus on the water, issues of water as well drawing on multiple studies that have been talking about the need and significance of rights based resource management.

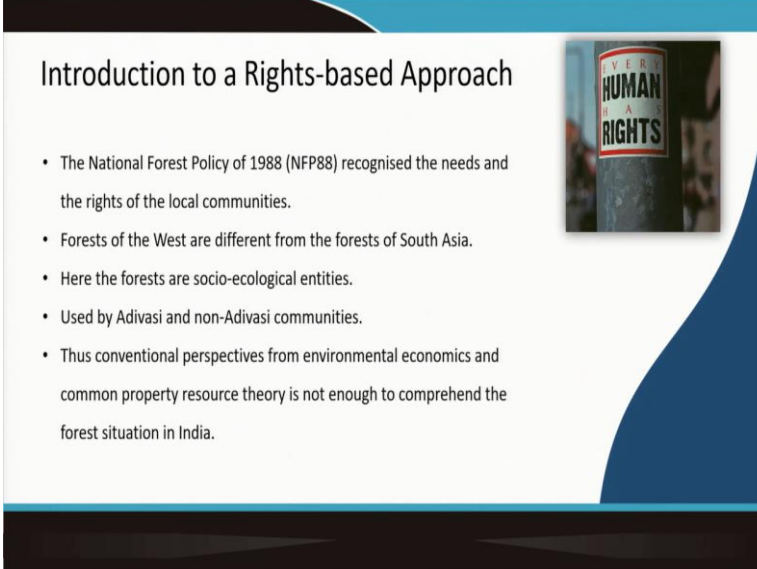
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So, this forms the outline of today's class. We will first introduce the premise of rights-based approach with respect to a very important and fundamental participatory policy that is the National Forest Policy of 1988 many of you might have heard about it.

It had been one of the most path breaking legislations which first introduced the idea of rights based or participatory resource management in India and then we will also be a little critical about this NFP and we would be discussing about particular problems particular issues with this policy and after this we will look at the participatory approaches for sustainability assessment and finally, we will briefly discuss an example of participatory management in the Pawla village and conclude.

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Introduction to a Rights-based Approach

- The National Forest Policy of 1988 (NFP88) recognised the needs and the rights of the local communities.
- Forests of the West are different from the forests of South Asia.
- Here the forests are socio-ecological entities.
- Used by Adivasi and non-Adivasi communities.
- Thus conventional perspectives from environmental economics and common property resource theory is not enough to comprehend the forest situation in India.

EVERY HUMAN RIGHTS

Now, before we start to talk about the rights-based resource management, participatory resource management, we have to very critically I think understand the premise of this kind of an approach with specific reference to India and here I would be introducing to all of you, I would be teaching from a particular paper that had been published very recently by Professor Sharachchandra Lele - I would be briefing from that paper.

But, before that just a glimpse of why we needed rights-based approaches to resource management that was primarily because for a very long period of time. If we see the trajectories of different resource based legislations in our country, we could have observed that most of them were extremely top down without any kind of participation from the local level - from the local communities.

And this particular fact that most of the legislations, so for instance we had the Indian Forest Act, we had the Wildlife Protection Act. So, most of these legislations had no provisions of settling the rights of the communities, of the local communities and on the

contrary what many of these legislations did was that they severely curtailed the pre-existing rights of many of these indigenous traditional communities across our country - communities who had essentially looked after the resources for generations - their rights were very severely and in a ruthless manner curtailed as a result of these kinds of legislations. So, for instance if we take the case of Wildlife Protection Act, we would be able to see that by introducing different zones, as inviolate zones of different zones, in the forest, as inviolate protected areas like the national park the wildlife sanctuary.

So, this creation of these zones essentially meant that all kinds of human livelihood needs, all kinds of human needs their presence in the forest areas would be completely debarred would be completely excluded. So, the human communities a lot as we know that a lot of tribal communities for instance are dependent on the forests for their own livelihoods. So, many such other communities as well completely lost all of their erstwhile rights from these forests and also from their traditional patterns of resource management.

And there was a particular time during the 19- during the late 1970s early 1980s when the state bodies came to realize that without active cooperation of these local communities conserving the resources for instance conserving the forests, conserving the water bodies would no longer be possible because there was a very very prominently growing antagonism between the state bodies and the local people because of these continued presence of the exclusionary policies.

So, I think that the National Forest Policy actually marked the advent of thinking of this particular thought about the participatory rights-based resource management practices in India. So, I will come to specific cases. I will first start with discussing this particular paper from that had been has been authored by Sharachchandra Lele where he actually very nicely documents this particular history of forest management and how we particularly arrived towards the significance of the participatory approaches.

So, I will teach you from this specific paper. So, Sharachchandra Lele in this paper, that I will be sharing with all of you, he actually narrates how across the globe particularly during the 1990s we saw that different nation states were transferring rights or rather they were returning the lost rights over the tropical forests to the local communities.

And the reason was primarily as I was telling you that the antagonism was brewing at such a level that it was not possible for the state agencies to manage the forest area single handedly without any kind of cooperation from the local communities. So, the national forest policy was a very very significant advent of the rights based legislations, the national forest policy of 1988 started with recognizing the needs of the local communities as a large policy objective and participatory forest management was the first policy instrument that was designed, I will come to the case of joint forest management later where it would be easier for all of you to understand the particular aims and objectives of participatory forest management, but during this time participatory forest management became one of the major policy instruments to conserve the degraded forest lands of our country.

And also, what is important for us to understand here, drawing on this article, is that the conventional perspectives from environmental economics or even we can say common property resource theory had never been very very adequate to understand the specific problems associated with the forestry sector in our country.

And this has a particular reason, because we had seen and as also the author mentions here that in the West - it is a very as we very commonly say, that environmentalism in the north and environmentalism in the south they are they are very distinct by their own nature. So, in the west we find that there are large examples of scientific forestry. So, scientific forestry for instance treats the forests simply as a set of trees - simply as a zone of wilderness.

But, in South Asia in countries like India, it is very different primarily because a lot of communities are dependent on the natural resources like the forests like the water bodies like the rivers for their own livelihoods and in the process since they are dependent on these particular tracks of resources, for their own livelihood in the process they have actually conserved them in a brilliant manner for generations and we have to recognize this.

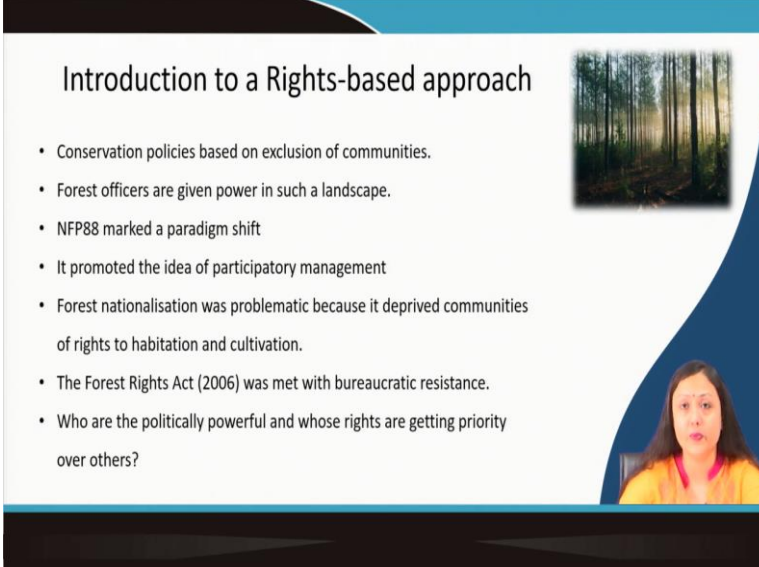
So, the scenario in South Asia I would say is quite different because as I was telling you that the forests in South Asia have a very distinct socio ecological entity. They are very diverse they require locally specific knowledge intergenerational knowledge as I was

telling you that many tribal communities and other communities as well have used their local indigenous knowledge to conserve and preserve these tracts of land.

And many of these forests are very diverse and these areas have been historically settled and used by different kinds of communities, Adivasi communities and non Adivasi communities and that is why access to the forest is- it is not very easy to control neither by the individuals nor by the state because many of these resources are local level common pool resources. So, it is not possible for a single centralized agency or single body to have complete control on many of these resources.

And it is very interesting here, Sharachchandra Lele writes and I actually quote from the paper, “the problem of how to manage forests is not just one of how to manage a complex common pool resource, but also for what purpose and for whom?”. This is a direct quote from the paper and these two questions in the end for what purpose and for whom are the main questions that have been raised here.

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Introduction to a Rights-based approach

- Conservation policies based on exclusion of communities.
- Forest officers are given power in such a landscape.
- NFP88 marked a paradigm shift
- It promoted the idea of participatory management
- Forest nationalisation was problematic because it deprived communities of rights to habitation and cultivation.
- The Forest Rights Act (2006) was met with bureaucratic resistance.
- Who are the politically powerful and whose rights are getting priority over others?

So, let us go back a bit into the history, if we look back, we can see that the conservation policies for the forests were always based on exclusion of the local communities because it was considered that these communities would be an integral threat to the forests and then what happened that alienated from the forests which they heavily depended on the local people were forced to theft, giving forest officers police powers in a landscape populated by marginalized illiterate communities which led to punishments and even

eventually to rent seeking and exploitation. So, this national forest policy of 1988 actually shifted the priority of the forestry from production to environmental and local benefits by introducing the idea of participatory management.

However, as I was telling you the example of joint forest management - it is believed that the joint forest management program of the 1990s were for a long period of time, simply a shift on the paper, because it did not have a statutory backing nor did it mandate that all resource use areas be handed over to the communities.

And also its very important to mention here that it did not even give complete autonomy to the communities to manage the resources as per their own needs and to this end there had been several problems with these participatory policies that we would be discussing, the process of forest nationalization was problematic for different reasons and it was problematic not only because it deprived the communities of access to the forest, but also because they deprived them of their rights to habitation or cultivation.

So, there was one very important rights-based legislation that was passed sometime like I would say that some years after, several years after the advent of joint forest management. So, this was a historic legislation the Forest Rights Act of 2006 and this act for the first time recognized the rights of the forest dwelling communities, the tribal communities as well as the other traditional forest dependent communities who are not tribals. And this kind of participatory legislation rights - a typical example of a rights based approach the forest rights act witnessed if we see the entire process before the implementation of this act we will be able to visualize that this act witnessed a lot of resistance bureaucratic resistance because the forest rights act in spirit substantially devolved away all kinds of powers from the state bureaucracy and here for us to foreground maybe concerns about social justice and equity, we have to take a kind of a political ecology perspective here which questions the assumption of a neutral and undifferentiated public minded state.

So, we have to remember that the state is not a monolithic entity and the kinds of ways in which it makes this process of bureaucratic resistance is actually very important if we are to understand the politics of rights-based legislations in India.

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The National Forest Policy (2018)

- Revisions for NFP 1988 was long overdue.
- The National Forest Policy (2018) returns to state managed forestry and promotes neoliberalism.
- Forest development corporations are to be the institutional vehicle.
- Production Forestry and Public-Private partnerships.
- This has decimated biodiversity, dried up streams and undermined local livelihoods.
- Community participation being lost again.

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Now, given the changing times also the revision of our forest policy in 1988 something that we visualized the first advent of this national forest policy - this was long overdue. And there was very recently couple of years back in 2018 a new draft forest policy which returns in large ways to the state managed forestry of the 1950s, but as the author says and I am still drawing on Sharachandra Lele's paper that there had been a major neoliberal turn to this particular draft, National Forest Policy of 2018 the particular amendments that had been made.

Now, still we can find that India's diverse forests which provided livelihoods to so many people are completely under threat and these forests provide very important MFPs they provide firewood, fodder, bamboo and a variety of other goods they also help the downstream population by regulating streams, flows, sediments - they offer biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

But, the new forest policy however, focuses on how the forest land can be diverted for different kinds of activities different kinds of capital oriented activities, different kinds of activities like dam construction, mining, agriculture, et cetera and if you remember about the imperial forest department which was the sole owner and defender of the forest estate in the colonial times - they were actually focusing on the same, they were focusing on optimizing products and profits for the benefit of the state.

And this particular revision of the National Forest Policy of 2018 actually reminds us that the post independence policies forest policies in instead of focusing on this kind of rights based approach in spirit, they are still continuing with the statist approach and forests are we still see that forests are viewed only as a source of raw materials for industry while the local communities are completely exploited for cheap labor.

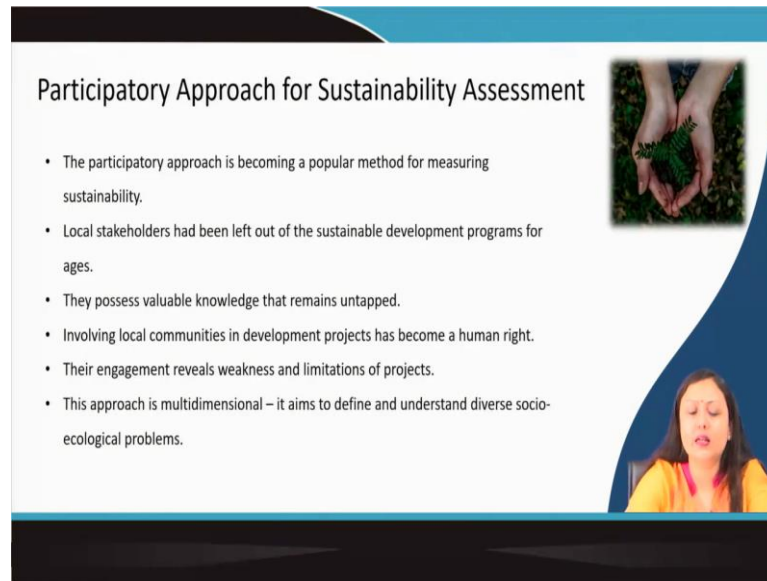
Now, this 1988 National Forest Policy which marked a paradigm shift, recognized the multiple duties of the forests and prioritized environmental stability over revenue maximization. It also stated that the primary charge on forest products must be to meet the requirements of the forest dependent people and furthermore the policy also emphasized people's involvement in forest production and regeneration, recognizing the limitations of the state managed forestry.

Subsequently Joint forest management was established in 1990 to put the concept of public participation into practice, but what began - this I would also be coming to the critiques of joint forest management later, but let me tell you in a nutshell that what began with high hopes of participation gradually devolved into a national farce. Thousands of village forest communities were formed, but their autonomy, their jurisdiction was severely still curtailed.

Donor money was largely spent on plantations, but when the funding ran out the projects were suspended. The concept of people's participation by executive order was too shaky and unbalanced. Unfortunately, in the 2018 forest policy what we find is the production forestry and plantations have become the new thrust area. Forest development corporations are to be the institutional vehicle. They will now enter into public-private partnerships to bring corporate investments into forest land.

Production forestry has led to monoculture and this has decimated diversity dried up streams and undermined local livelihoods. Public private partnerships will entail more destruction with the profits ending up in corporate hand. If local communities had a say in forest governance, they would as is obvious challenge this production forestry model. So, there is little about decentralized governance in the draft policy - although we find the term community participation being tossed around very liberally.

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Participatory Approach for Sustainability Assessment

- The participatory approach is becoming a popular method for measuring sustainability.
- Local stakeholders had been left out of the sustainable development programs for ages.
- They possess valuable knowledge that remains untapped.
- Involving local communities in development projects has become a human right.
- Their engagement reveals weakness and limitations of projects.
- This approach is multidimensional – it aims to define and understand diverse socio-ecological problems.

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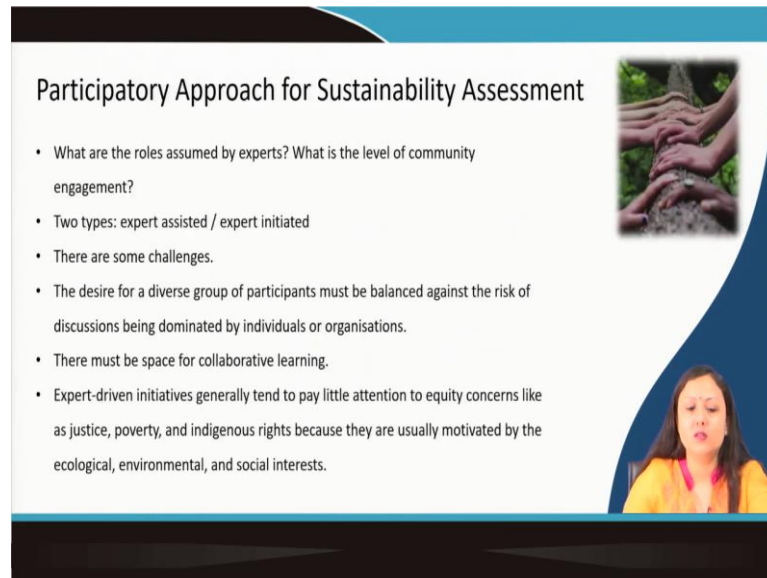
Let us now talk about a very important approach which is participatory, but it brings to the forefront the local people living in the forests. The participatory approach is becoming a very very popular method for measuring sustainability because for ages as we were discussing we had seen that local stakeholders have been left out of the sustainable program development assessment and decision-making process.

And we also find that extensive research on sustainable communal resource management such that there is a great deal of inherent wisdom and knowledge in communities regarding natural resource use and the social capital available to manage it. This valuable knowledge is often left untapped because experts do not include them in these development programs.

Researchers and sustainable development experts we see that they have increasingly tried to involve local communities in different development projects and thus we can say that the participatory approach relies on the knowledge of the key stakeholders or beneficiaries about the local context in defining sustainability and it must be remembered that local communities may not have the knowledge of or access to monitoring data that are instrumental to robust assessments but, involving local stakeholders in different kinds of development projects has to be treated right now as a basic human right. Because local communities may have different perspectives and opinions on the utility and success of these projects - the sustainable development projects and these differences would

actually help to indicate implementation weaknesses or limitations where improvements can actually be made.

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Participatory Approach for Sustainability Assessment

- What are the roles assumed by experts? What is the level of community engagement?
- Two types: expert assisted / expert initiated
- There are some challenges.
- The desire for a diverse group of participants must be balanced against the risk of discussions being dominated by individuals or organisations.
- There must be space for collaborative learning.
- Expert-driven initiatives generally tend to pay little attention to equity concerns like as justice, poverty, and indigenous rights because they are usually motivated by the ecological, environmental, and social interests.

So, when we talk about participatory assessment approach, we have to understand the primary goals and objectives of each assessment. The level of community engagement, the roles assumed by researchers, experts, etcetera and participatory approaches in this way can be of different types either expert assisted where participants drive the sustainability indicators selection with the help of experts or they can be expert initiated where the experts provide the participants with a pre existing framework developed by them which is used as a starting point followed by participatory assessment. Mostly due to accessibility, measurability, efficiency, ease of use and reduced time requirements - the expert initiated approach is a more extensively practiced strategy for sustainable assessment and in these cases this type of - type of approach can be further divided into community based or system based approaches. In community-based approaches the community members are the participants and the researchers only facilitate discussions and allow the participants to define problems and carve out solutions whereas, in systems based approaches participants are a mix of representatives from public-private and governing sectors that can influence the behavior of the system that is under analysis.

Now, there are some limitations, the desire for a diverse group of participants must be balanced against the risk of discussions being dominated by individuals or organizations

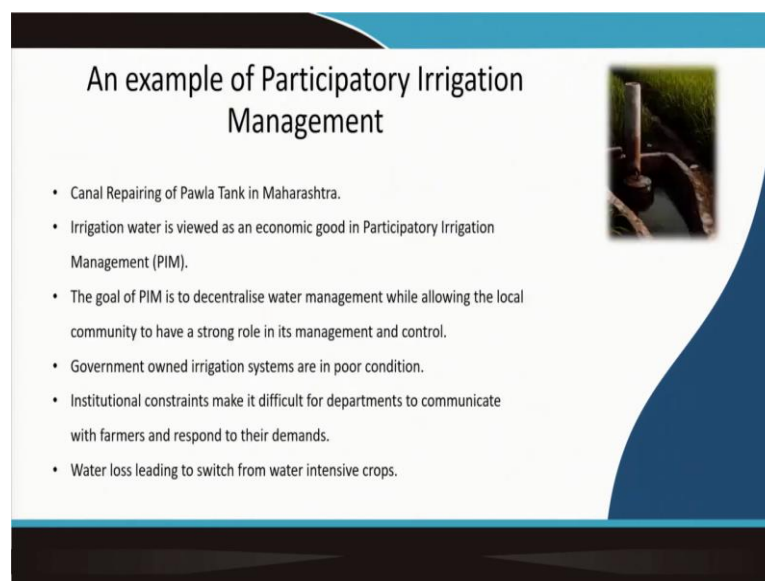
with better access to information. For example, forest managers judgments or ideas are swiftly agreed upon by farmers implying some level of deference to the managers.

Although, the process was participatory by definition, the participatory approaches' goal could not be materialized due to the forest managers dominant role which we find in several cases, but that in joint forest management particularly, that despite being in pen and paper that it should be a participatory approach the state officials the forest bureaucracy actually takes over the entire process.

It actually - they basically co-opt the system of forest management in the name of participatory forest management. Now there is also a very critical role that the researchers have to play here because the researchers should assist multiple stakeholders in comprehending the system dynamics, in defining the stakeholders' roles in the decision making process in order to secure compliance and trust in different kinds of management strategies.


And community - we would always say that community engagement in decision making process has a very positive impact on increasing the sense of ownership right and ensuring social justice among community members about different kinds of assessment - sustainability assessment.

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An example of Participatory Irrigation Management

- Canal Repairing of Pawla Tank in Maharashtra.
- Irrigation water is viewed as an economic good in Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM).
- The goal of PIM is to decentralise water management while allowing the local community to have a strong role in its management and control.
- Government owned irrigation systems are in poor condition.
- Institutional constraints make it difficult for departments to communicate with farmers and respond to their demands.
- Water loss leading to switch from water intensive crops.



Now, let us explore one particular case study that documents the experiences of canal repairing of the Pawla tank through participatory irrigation management in the Nandurbar district of Maharashtra.

So, this study highlights the approach strategies used by the Development Support Center and the many lessons to be learned from this field experimentation and implementation. Now irrigation water is particularly viewed as an economic good in participatory irrigation management. The goal of participatory irrigation management is to decentralize water management while allowing the local community to have a very strong role in not only management, but also control.

So, this participatory irrigation management intervention is required since the government owned irrigation system are in most cases in poor condition due to a variety of issue including lack of accountability of government departments in terms of quality supply and revenue generation. There are usually no effective coordination mechanisms between different departments that deal with agriculture and irrigation.

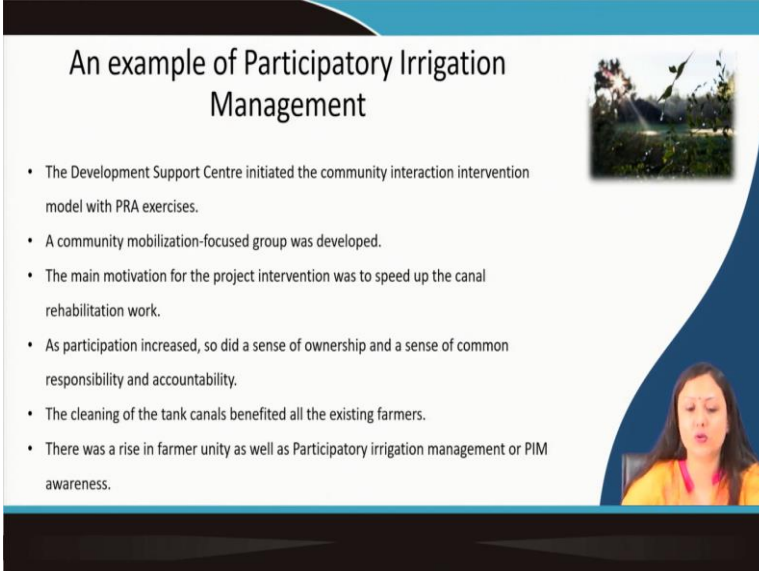
Insufficient allocation for maintenance and operation because of poor water pricing and policies, subsidies on irrigation water are insufficient which do not even cover the capital costs for regular maintenance in most cases. Poor services and inequitable distribution of water dissuades farmers from paying, inadequate irrigation water availability at the lowest outlets, low yields that occur because of ineffective water use technologies.

Now institutional constraints such as centralized control and top down approaches usually make it very difficult for departments to communicate with farmers and respond to their demands. The key to repairing the sectors flawed functionality in this case, it is a very useful example is community participation involving the stakeholders.

Increased management incentives, accountability, agricultural and commercial production and cost recovery are all possible with a decentralized approach to water resource management and governance. And, here we see that the local farmers in the Pawla irrigation - they use the Pawla irrigation tank as a traditional supply of irrigation water. The farmers claimed that there were no problems absolutely no problem 6 to 8 years back and that there was adequate water.

But, in the recent years inadequate maintenance and the lack of understanding of the canal infrastructure have resulted in massive water losses. Their cropping pattern has shifted in response to water availability. For example, farmers switched from water intensive crops like wheat to less water intensive crops like coriander, mustard and gram during the Rabi season.

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An example of Participatory Irrigation Management

- The Development Support Centre initiated the community interaction intervention model with PRA exercises.
- A community mobilization-focused group was developed.
- The main motivation for the project intervention was to speed up the canal rehabilitation work.
- As participation increased, so did a sense of ownership and a sense of common responsibility and accountability.
- The cleaning of the tank canals benefited all the existing farmers.
- There was a rise in farmer unity as well as Participatory irrigation management or PIM awareness.

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The DSC initiated the community interaction intervention model with participatory rural appraisal exercises conducted throughout the potential project regions. A community mobilization focused group was developed along with water users' association (WUA) committees in the earlier stages of the project to identify and understand the needs and objectives of the farmers.

This is to give you a sense of how very effectively community driven approaches - participatory approaches can be made to use. The main motivation for the project intervention was to speed up the canal rehabilitation work due to weak infrastructure and a wasteful canal network system. Participatory walk surveys were undertaken by the DSC team, WUA and farmers to identify the problems and their extent.

While the money was spent on actual labor, the DSC and the WUA acquired confidence in their ability to work together on these projects. The process of community governance was tough at first, but as participation increased the process of community governance

was tough at first, but as participation increased. So, did a sense of ownership and the sense of common responsibility and accountability.

The team discovered that community participation exceeded expectations. The WUA satisfied the needs of participatory irrigation management while also creating a model, a general model for collective community government. The cleaning of the canal network and desilting of minor canals and distributaries led to an increase in irrigated area under the canal system, shift in cropping patterns, changes in farm input including high yielding varieties and an increase in productivity and total production. The cleaning of the tank canals benefited all the existing farmers, including the tail end users a more equitable distribution of irrigation water was also noticed. Previously farmers from Pawla village were only growing coriander due to lack of irrigation water but in the year when this observation was made they had planted wheat as well. Among the social impacts there was a rise in farmer unity as well as participatory irrigation management. WUAs who were in charge of monitoring the restoration worked well together to ensure excellent governance in the irrigation system.

Thus, this kind of a participatory management approach shows that efficient operation is possible through decentralization and collaboration between the communities and resource user institution.

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The Way Forward

- Global economic pressures are being pitted against people's claims to customary rights and livelihood.
- Several institutional arrangements can be found within the agenda of decentralised natural resource management.
- Another common argument in support of community-based natural resource management is the indigenous/knowledge women's systems
- Local communities are familiar with local ecological practises and processes, and they can manage resources using traditional access and management methods

Now, we must understand that at the end of the day conservationists, developmentalists, women activists, tribals and other marginal groups all have very different perspectives and emphasis on issues like conservation subsistence needs of the poor, economic growth, models and sustainability of critical resources, threats to ecosystem and issues of equity and distribution of costs and benefits in the management of natural resources.

The focus on environment development relationship has reframed the challenges of natural resource control and management as it reflects global economic pressures that are pitted against people's claims to customary rights and livelihoods.

And as we see that political and economic conflicts deepen livelihoods and commercial interests are caught in a never-ending conflict that would be very hard to resolve. Various natural resource management approaches have been outlined over time both formal and informal arrangements to support participatory processes on the basis of efficiency, involve local people and building a partnership between the state and the community through appropriate institutional arrangements.

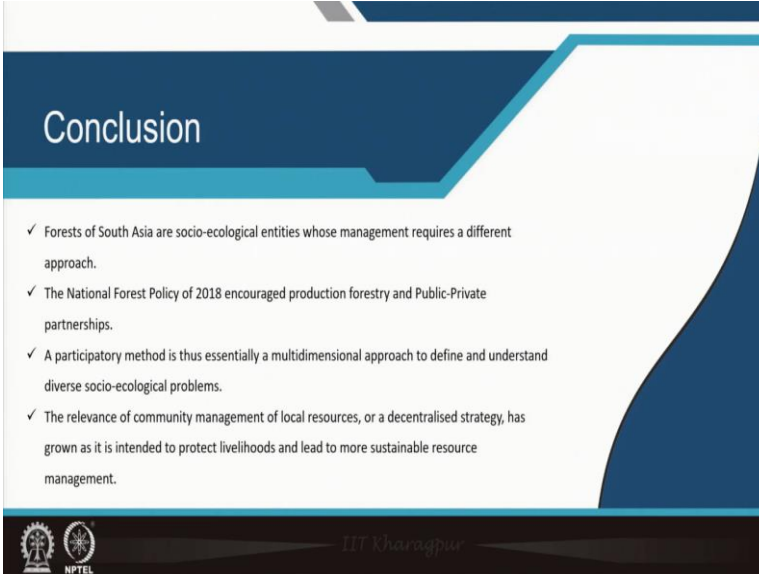
Several institutional arrangements can be found within the agenda of decentralized natural resource management including self initiated user group's, formal community groups established through government initiatives like the joint forest management or watershed management and institutions of local self government like the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

The relevance of community management of local resources has grown as it is intended to protect the livelihoods and lead to more sustainable resource management as sustainability has actually become a buzzword nowadays. Another common argument in support of community based natural resource management is the indigenous knowledge of the women which are anchored in specific community or culture.

And I quote a very powerful excerpt from Vandana Shiva's work here who argues that, "developing world women tribal and peasants act as intellectual gene pools of ecological categories of thought and action." So, women's responses in many cases we have seen that women's responses to environmental challenges are actually mediated from their everyday experiences, their livelihood systems, their labor division and also several experiences unwanted experiences unequal access to productive resources, but also from their very discrete knowledge and information.

So, local nongovernmental organizations have attempted to develop alternatives for managing the local resource base tying gender equity to issues of social justice, poverty and indigenous people's rights. Local communities have a larger stake in the sustainable use of resources and are better positioned to respond and adapt to specific social and ecological situations as well as include local interests and preferences according to the arguments for social justice and local people's rights. It is also believed that they are familiar with local ecological practices and processes and they can manage resources using traditional access and management methods.

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Conclusion

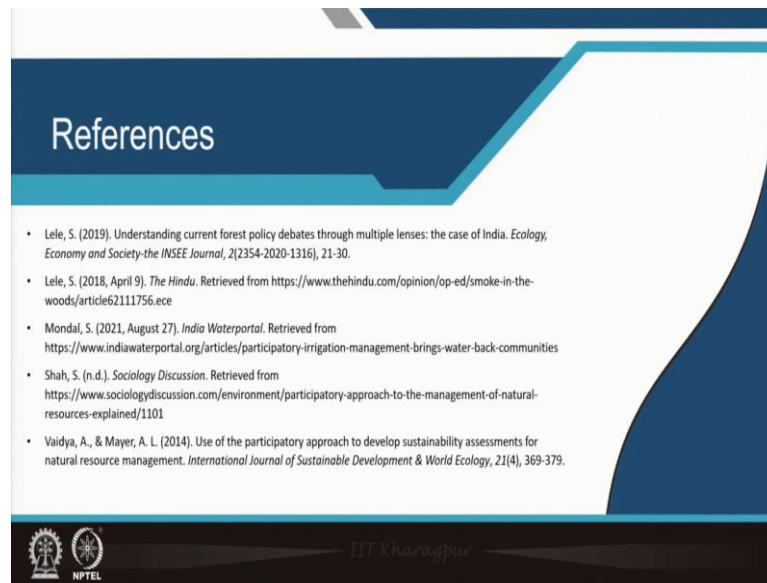
- ✓ Forests of South Asia are socio-ecological entities whose management requires a different approach.
- ✓ The National Forest Policy of 2018 encouraged production forestry and Public-Private partnerships.
- ✓ A participatory method is thus essentially a multidimensional approach to define and understand diverse socio-ecological problems.
- ✓ The relevance of community management of local resources, or a decentralised strategy, has grown as it is intended to protect livelihoods and lead to more sustainable resource management.

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Finally, let us quickly go through some of the key points discussed in our class today. Forests of South Asia are discrete socio ecological entities whose management requires a different and multi-stakeholder approach. The National Forest Policy revision of 2018 encouraged production forestry and public private partnership largely mimicking the forest legislations in the pre colonial and the post colonial period rather than arriving at a practical participatory resource management approach.

A participatory method is thus as an essential multi dimensional approach to define and understand diverse socio-ecological problems. The relevance of community management of local resources or a decentralized strategy has grown as it intended to protect livelihoods and lead to more sustainable resource management.

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So, all these references have been used in the making of this lecture. And these would also be shared with you and I would be requesting all of you to go through these references for a detailed and a deeper understanding.

Thank you for joining today's class and we will again meet in the next lecture.