

**FORESTS, INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS :
A STUDY OF RAMPA COUNTRY**

**A THESIS
SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

BY

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INTERVENTION OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS: A CASE STUDY**6.0 Introduction**

By now it has been established that the State monopoly over forests resulted in indiscriminate over exploitation of natural resources by forest-based industries and private contractors. The Forest Departments have uprooted and dispossessed the indigenous people from their natural habitats and deprived them substantial access to the forest resources enjoyed by them. The growing concern with depleting forest resources and the dwindling tribals' rights have been responsible for the introduction of institutions like JFM by the state on the one hand, and the entry of Non-Governmental Organisations(NGOs) on the other. The JFM is designed to involve tribals in the conservation of forests and provision employment and access to forest resources to an extent. The inability of the state agencies to work with tribals at the grassroots has provided space for the entry of NGOs. National and international NGOs entered the scene and extended support to local organisations of the people to assert their rights on forest resources. In this context, this chapter is an attempt to study the intervention of voluntary organisations in the Rampa agency. For detailed analysis we considered 'SAKTI'(Search for Action and Knowledge of Tribal Initiative), a voluntary organisation, working for the protection of tribals' rights in the agency area of East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh. The chapter consists of two broad sections. In the first section an attempt is made to assess the extent of NGOs working on forests and tribals in India. The second section is a case study of the intervention of SAKTI and its activities in the protection of tribal rights.

6.1. NGOs AND RIGHTS OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE:

In recent years, growing concern with the forests and indigenous communities has coincided with an increased emphasis on involving NGOs in developmental effort(Prasad 1992). An attempt is made here to identify the number of NGOs working on forest-tribal related activities in India based on the directories prepared by the CAPART. The table shows that there were 1977 NGOs all over India in 1993. This number is only a broad indication but the actual number is likely to be in several

TABLE: 6.1. STATE AND YEAR WISE REGISTERED FOREST AND ENVIRONMENTAL RELATED NGOS

State	All NGOs	Before 1965	1965-70	1970-75	1975-80	1980-85	1985-90	N.A	Total
Bihar	152	5	6	4	11	18	20	4	68(44.7)*
Chandigarh	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Delhi	154	7	3	6	12	15	19	7	69 (44.8)
Haryana	18	-	-	-	-	-	4	2	6 (33.3)
H.P.	19	1	-	1	4	2	4	1	13 (68.4)
J&K	6	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	3 (50.0)
M.P.	49	3	3	2	2	6	9	5	30 (61.2)
Punjab	11	-	-	1	1	1	-	2	5 (45.4)
U.P	233	6	5	7	9	28	35	7	97 (41.6)
Sub-total (North Zone)	643	22	17	21	39	72	91	29	291 (45.2)
A.P	179	2	2	6	20	29	12	3	74 (41.3)
Karnataka	104	4	5	4	8	17	5	8	51 (49.0)
Kerala	83	2	2	2	14	11	8	3	42 (47.2)
Pondichery	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
T.N.	232	6	3	5	16	54	26	8	118 (50.9)
Sub-total (South Zone)	599	14	12	17	58	111	51	22	285 (47.6)
Assam	21	3	1	-	2	2	1	1	10 (47.6)
Manipur	28	2	-	1	3	6	3	1	16 (57.1)
Meghalaya	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1 (33.3)
Mizoram	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nagaland	3	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2 (66.6)
Orissa	105	6	2	5	13	18	11	18	73 (69.5)
Tripura	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
W.B.	257	8	6	13	26	29	17	15	114 (44.4)
Sub-total (East Zone)	422	19	9	19	44	57	32	36	216 (51.2)
Goa	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1 (33.3)
Gujarat	89	14	5	5	5	6	3	11	49 (55.1)
Maharashtra	156	12	8	4	12	11	6	21	74 (47.4)
Rajasthan	65	3	1	1	5	7	8	6	31 (47.7)
Sub-total (West Zone)	313	29	14	10	22	24	17	39	155 (49.5)
Grand total	1977	84 (8.9)	52 (5.5)	67 (7.1)	163 (17.1)	264 (27.9)	191 (20.2)	126 (13.3)	947 (47.9) (100)

* Percentages to All NGOs of respective states.

Source: CAPART, 1993.

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Mizoram	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nagaland	3	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2 (66.6)
Orissa	105	6	2	5	13	18	11	18	73 (69.5)
Tripura	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
W.B.	257	8	6	13	26	29	17	15	114 (44.4)
Sub-total (East Zone)	422	19	9	19	44	57	32	36	216 (51.2)
Goa	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1 (33.3)
Gujarat	89	14	5	5	5	6	3	11	49 (55.1)
Maharashtra	156	12	8	4	12	11	6	21	74 (47.4)
Rajasthan	65	3	1	1	5	7	8	6	31 (47.7)
Sub-total (West Zone)	313	29	14	10	22	24	17	39	155 (49.5)
Grand total	1977	84 (8.9)	52 (5.5)	67 (7.1)	163 (17.1)	264 (27.9)	191 (20.2)	126 (13.3)	947 (47.9) (100)

* Percentages to All NGOs of respective states.

Source: CAPART, 1993.

multiples of this. Among them 947(47.9 per cent) are working on forest-tribal related activities. Among them 48.1 per cent organisations are registered after 1980. This may be because, by 1980 forest resources and tribals related aspects are became a major agenda in global politics as well as funding agencies. Thus, in India the number of the organisations working for the problems of forest-tribal related aspects has increased only after 1980. Among the 947 forest-tribal activity related NGOs 30.7 per cent are working in north zone. This may be because the north zone consists of more number of NGOs when compared to other zones. But on the basis of the proportion of number of NGOs in respective zones 51.2 per cent of east zone organisations are concentrating on forest-tribal related aspects, while among total 643 NGOs in north zone, only 45.2 per cent are focusing on these aspects. Among the NGOs(179 NGOs) which are working in Andhra Pradesh 41.3 per cent of organisations are involved in forest-tribal related activities(Table 6.1).

6.2. SAKTI AND TRIBALS

'SAKTI' is working in Rampa Agency since 1985¹. The intervention of SAKTI can be observed at two levels in the agency area. At one level, it is concentrating on forest-tribal problems and at other level it is working on land problems of the tribal. Depending on the distinct features and nature of tribals' problems SAKTI is intervening through either one of the above aspects. In Marredimilli and Y.Ramavaram mandals SAKTI dealing with forest problems while in other mandals the organisation is working on land problems as well as forest related activities. Since SAKTI activities are mostly issue based and covering a large area around hundred villages. Here we concentrate on the forest-related programmes of SAKTI for the present study.

¹ The objectives of SAKTI can be grouped under three aspects. **1. Organisational Aspects:** i. to improve social education among the tribal people. ii. To organise the tribals through education. iii. To organise the people to protect their rights over forests. **2. Motivational Aspects:** i. to improve the customs and traditions of the tribal that were useful. ii. To assist in improving their art by which they can develop. iii. To help them by implementing Government programmes. **3. Mobilisational Aspects:** i. to protect tribals from exploitation of administration and cheating by the plains. ii. To implement and bring in to force the Land Transfers Regulation Act and prevent them from giving their land to non-tribals.

6.2.1. Forest Related Activities of SAKTI:

Initially, SAKTI started its work with developmental activities. The range incorporates running skill development trainings to providing agricultural inputs. In the beginning of 1985, there were some attempts to train the tribals in dry land agriculture so as to wean them away from the practice of *podu* cultivation. Secondly, it attempted to establish direct link between tribals and ITDA officials and initiated marketing of palm fiber to break the monopoly of the traders. Since 1986-87 SAKTI changed its focus and concentrated on forest and land issues and related problems. And then SAKTI evolved its activities by identifying the following problems in the agency area:

1. Monoculture, especially teak and similar species that do not provide any source of food or income to the tribals unlike the natural forests.
2. Indiscriminate felling of forests by paper mills and other forest based industries, loss of trees like wild mango, which is a source of food for the tribals.
3. Smuggling of timber with the connivance of forest department and employing tribals as labourers in all the logging and sawing operations and are invariably not paid proper wages.
4. Outside demand for the timber encourages tribals to exploit the forests. They are often caught and punished by the department or have to pay regular bribes to the Forest Department staff to carry on with the business.
5. Indiscriminate felling of bamboo in the forests leased by the paper mills, which prevent their natural regeneration. Loss of bamboo implies loss of habitat for several of the tribals.

The other problems are harassment by the police, low control on pricing and grading of minor forest produce and cheating in the weighing and exploitation of

tribal women by non-tribal men who live with these women while they are in the agency and left them very often with the responsibility of bringing up the children.

The intervention of SAKTI in forest issues and related problems can be grouped under six broad categories i.e. forest based industries and the intervention of SAKTI, issues against state and private contractors management, issue of minimum wages, issue of exploitation of tribal women, efforts for the betterment of the state marketing agencies and protection of forests and rights of tribals through *nurintadavi* programme.

6.2.2. Forest Based Industries in East Godavari District and Intervention of SAKTI:

Rajahmundry is the biggest traditional market centre in South India for timber. Today, number of major and minor industries in the district such as saw mills, paper, plywood, match etc., are depended on Rampa forests to meet their timber requirements. There are nearly 125 timber and bamboo depots and several forest-based industries in the district. The important forest based industries in the district are: Andhra Pradesh Paper Mills Ltd. at Rajahmundry, Godavari Plywood Ltd. at Rampachodavaram, Government saw mill at Rajahmundry and several private saw mills and match industries. All the industries are depended on Rampa forests for their timber requirements. Other industries using forest resources, particularly wood, in the district includes Sugar and Sago factories, Motor Vehicle Body Building Units, tobacco barns and transmission poles etc.

Apart from the above the industries in the district, the Paper Boards Ltd. at Sarapaka of Khammam District, A.P.Rayons Ltd. at Kamalapuram, Warangal District, Singareni Collieries Ltd. at Kothagudem are also to be dependent on the supply of hardwood, timber and pulpwood from the forests of East Godavari agency area.

Paper mills, Godavari Plywood Ltd. and A.P.Rayons are exclusively depended on the forests of the Rampa agency. The Paper mills due to the shortage of bamboo switched over to hardwood a decade before. The Rayon is a new entrant, which has

brought in the eucalyptus monoculture plantations by the government. Another industry is Plywood Industry, which prefers softwood and it operates through selective felling, prefers mango, jack and jamoon trees, which are a source of sustenance for the tribals. These trees are rich source of food for over three months for tribals. As we observed in earlier chapter, tribals collect unripe mangoes and peel and slice and use in curries throughout the year. And tribals depend on ripe mangoes during April and May for their food. They keep mango kernels, which are pounded and used for making roties. Jack is another important tree, which contribute substantial food for the tribals during June and July. Some times they sell jackfruits in the weekly market to meet their cash requirements. On an average, each household earns Rs.200 to Rs.300 during the season. But the state management of the forests for the industries hardly reveals the impact of the growing destruction on the forest dwellers, their livelihood sources and the ecosystem revolving around the forests.

So, SAKTI observes and checks the operations of forest based industries to prevent the illegal extraction of timber by making the tribals to involve in the forest protection activities and also filing cases against the indiscriminate felling of trees. The following case studies reflect the destruction by the industries and the nature of the involvement of SAKTI.

Case of A.P.Paper Mills:

Paper industry is one of the major industries in terms of dependence on forest resources particularly, bamboo. A.P.Paper Mills Ltd. of Rajahmundry is a major industry in the district that depended on Rampa forests for bamboo. In 1975 when the lease was executed in favour of A.P.Paper Mills Ltd. the agreement envisaged that the yield of bamboo would be 100,000 tones. However, at present the condition of coupes is such that yield of only 60,000 tones of bamboo are possible. This could imply that the lease has degraded the forest to this extent. While not only penalty has not been imposed for such degradation, the lease has in fact been rewarded by diverting 15,000 tonnes of bamboo, which is meant for public consumption.

Gadgil(1989) revealed that there was a qualitative difference in the way tribals traditionally harvested bamboo and the way the industry did. The tribals took out one or two clums at a time from each clump. This did not disturb the thorny cover of the short branches that form the base of each clump. The mill on the other hand was silviculturally prescribed to remove a much larger number of clums from each clump, and in the process, to carry out an operation of deliberately cleaning the thorny cover at the base of each clump(Gadgil 1989b). The clearing of the thorny cover from the base of a clump exposed young shoots to grazing by pigs, monkeys, cattle(Prasad 1985). And also the lease conditions of A.P. Paper Mills stipulate that the extraction of bamboo is to be done in line with certain silvicultural principles as laid down by the department from time to time. In practice, compliance with these conditions is ensured in the field through close supervision of labour by 'mukadams'. But rarely adhere to silvicultural prescriptions.

In 1970's it was the practice to employ one mukadam to supervise about 25 labourers working over an area of 50 hectares. Now the same one mukadam is supervising 400 labourers who work over an area of 400 hectares. Thus the mill is reducing expenditure on such essential supervision and allowing the forests to be extracted without adequate control and adherence to the norms to which they are bound by the agreements. SAKTI motivated the tribals on the degradation of the forests due to the operation of paper mill and formed them into pressure group by creating awareness on the silvicultural principles laid down by the department for the extraction of the bamboo. And the tribals pressurised the department to take necessary action to prevent extraction of bamboo against the silvicultural principles.

Case of Godavari Plywood Ltd. (GPL):

GPL was started as a joint venture in Rampa Chodavaram in 1972. Forest Department entered into an agreement to supply annually a quantity of 7000 cum. of wood to the factory for a period of twenty years. The royalty was fixed at Rs.70 per cum. for ply logs (about 120-cm. girth), Rs.35 for saw logs (75 to 120 cm. girths) and Rs.12.50 per tonne of fuel wood. The Government has leased out 25 per cent of the reserved forests of the district, which is about 60,780 hectares of 20 coupes to GPL

for a period of 20 years. The factory started working from 1976 and worked in 9 of the 20 coupes (average size of coupe is about 3000 hectares). During the period of 1976-87 the factory worked only in 9 coupes out of 20 coupes which was about 27000 hectares and actual number of trees felled per hectare works out to be a little over one tree on an average. First priority is ply logs to a minimum girth of 150 cm. The minimum girth for a mango tree to be felled was fixed at 150 cm. and therefore all the mango trees felled were of ply logs variety, since mango tree was the first choice of all plywood factories. In fact most of the mango trees felled in this region were supposed to be over hundred years old with an average girth of 300 cm.

Since the Forest Department did not provide tree-wise statistics, Puttakota coupe is chosen for a detailed analysis and the preponderance of the mango tree in the trees felled by the factory is quite evident from this sample. There was extensive violation of several stipulations. For instance, with a view to avoid interfering with the stream flow, it was stipulated that no tree within a distance of 20 meters from a stream or river should be felled. But in Puttakota 119 trees felled, mostly mango trees, were within these prohibited limits (Narasimha Reddy 1995). This makes for greater soil erosion and evapo-transpiration. In this manner the GPL has cleared the forest coupes of Valamuru, Satlavada, Kakuru, Eagavalasa, Pullangi and Kota. Due to the felling, a pineapple plantations of tribals was destroyed in Aragatla coupe and in the Eagavalasa coupe several jack fruit trees raised or tended by tribals were lost.

Mango, jack, sago and jeeluga trees are very important in livelihood of tribal in Rampa region. They themselves won't cut any of these trees even in their podu cultivation. The destruction of these trees, especially mango trees by GPL had brought about devastating deprival to the tribal population and far reaching irreversible damage to the eco-system. SAKTI has documented such violations and anomalies extensively, motivated the tribals in the villages to report such violations to prevent tree cutting and fought legal battles right up to the High Court and got stay order on felling of these trees. After lifting the stay order, A.P. Government revised the rate charged for trees allotted to the GPL. The revision was contested in courts and cutting of trees has been stopped pending disposal of this litigation. When the

government conceded to allow the company to fell the trees, SAKTI again approached the High Court and stayed the felling invoking forest conservation act of 1988.

Besides the exploitation of forest resources by the industries, contractors who enter into forest also smuggle the timber logs or cut into the size of fuel-wood for transportation to the market, by misusing the permit which they have for industrial exploitation. SAKTI initiated to stop the smuggling through court and also by motivating the tribals to preserve their forest from such activities.

6.2.3. SAKTI and Management Operations by the State and Private Contractors:

The logging operations are handled directly by the Forest Department in the district through three logging divisions. The logging divisions and the Forest Development Corporation are pursuing measures to maximise their revenues at the cost of the natural forests and survival of the tribals. This can be observed at three levels i.e. i. by allowing forest contractors into the forest for the transportation of the timber, ii. issuing pattas to unreserved lands to the non-tribal of plain areas and permitting them to harvest the time as well as transportation, and iii. issuing licenses to the non-tribals for mining operations in protected forests, which are meant for community enjoyment.

i. Felling and Transportation of the Timber:

Forest Department undertakes the felling as well as the transport of the timber to the depots normally located at the nearest road point. The billets left behind and unfit for timber purposes, termed full wood, are lifted by contractors who are given transport permits for the same. The contractors find it lucrative to collect and transport the valuable wood from the middle of the forest of Rajahmundry misusing the same permits issued by logging divisions and Forest Development Corporation. The entry of other than forest department staff is not allowed as per the New Forest Policy of 1988. The New Forest Policy (1988) clearly lies down that all felling and the Forest Department alone should handle transportation operations within the

forests. But more often, these smugglers who are well connected, manage through the check-posts, manned by a forest guard, lowest in the hierarchy in the Forest Department and enter into the forests.

ii. Issuing Pattas to non-tribals for Unreserved Lands:

Another problem is with unreserved land. The unreserved lands were equally good forests the tribals look to clear the tree growth and bring the land under cultivation. The private contractors were allowed to purchase wood from the patta lands of the tribals with the permission of the Tahsildars and later the Collectors till 1980. Not with standing the damage caused by the mismanagement of the forests, the revenue and the Survey and Settlement Department have also given a legitimate looking into the forest for the smugglers by issuing D'form pattas in reserve forests fraudulently to non-tribals. Thus the Government authorities are restricted entry of tribals into the reserve forests at one side and another side it issued D'form pattas even in reserve forests and permitting them to transport the timber from the lands. SAKTI identified this type of problems and motivated on their rights and violation of the act by the officials by issuing pattas to non-tribals and helped them to take the matter to concern officials as well as to approach Court. The following cases reflect the process of violation of the rules by the Government officials and involvement of SAKTI.

i). This is a case of a non-tribal who got settlement patta for 400 acres of land covering with virgin forest and applied for the permission to fell and transport the timber. The Settlement Officer has issued settlement pattas in Y.Ramavaram mandal to the lands having virgin forests and also unfits for cultivation to non-resident non-tribals during the time of survey and settlement operations. In the case of a non-tribal who have patta of this kind in Perikavalasa village managed to get clearance certificate from Revenue and Forest Departments by stating that there is no considerable tree growth in the particular land. But the District Forest Officer sent a report to Settlement Officer to cancel the patta by stating that the land is covered with thick natural forest. Then the Officials of revenue and forest department are dismissed the application of pattadar to transport the timber from the land and ordered for enquiry. But the pattadar got favourable order form the court to cut the forest by

depositing Rs.21 lakhs. The Commissioner of Survey and Settlement has visited the village and reported that the land is with virgin forest with valuable timber species and he cancelled the patta. But by the time of all the procedure completed the entire forest was cut. The Government can neither save the forest nor confiscate the guarantees due to further litigation.

ii). This is a case of a non-tribal forest contractors and eleven others who were given pattas for 80.34 acres of land in Chintalapudi, a tribal village in the interior forests of Y.Ramavaram mandal. In each acre there was nearly 200-250 teak trees, which comes around 40,000 trees in the entire area. The pattadars were originally the ryots of the erstwhile Muttadar of Mohanapuram Mutta and Settlement Officer granted them pattas under the A.P.Muttas (Abolition and conversion in Ryotwari) Regulation Act 1969 in 1975. The land for which pattas have been granted is with virgin forest that was never brought under cultivation. The Settlement Officer should not grant the pattas to the above persons without conducting proper enquiry and spot inspection of the land.

Even though to fell the trees, the pattadars have to obtain felling permission to cut the trees on the patta lands. Under sub-section (3) of section 28-B of Forest Act the Government has been given power to exempt any forest or class of trees grown therein from all or any of the provisions of the section. It is clear that since the above provisions were felt to be inadequate to protect the private forests in the scheduled areas as well as the scheduled tribes from exploitation of non-tribal timber merchants. The then Collector of East Godavari district proposed amendment to chapter - III A of Forest Act of 1967 and it was accepted and amended in 1988. Based on this initially District Forest Officer refused permission to pattadars of land to cut trees. Then he filed writ petition (No.14329/88) by challenging the provision of Chapter III-A and amendment there to. It was dismissed in 1989. Then he filed review petition (No.7433/89) which was also dismissed. So he carried the matter to Supreme Court and filed civil appeal (No.962/89).

While the matters were existing as stated above the pattadar made representation to the government and also to the Department of Energy, Forest, Environment Science and Technology(DEFEST) seeking the exemption from the provisions of Chapter - III A of the Forest Act 1967. Then the Chief Minister issued orders but stayed its implementation. After renewed efforts the state government and DEFEST instructed the DFO not to interfere in the matter of felling of trees growth and issue of transit permits and enabling them to cut and remove the forest growth from the concerned area. Then SAKTI filed a writ Petition in High Court against that order and that order was dismissed.

iii. Issuing of Licenses for Mining Operations in Protected Forests:

The state government is empowered to notify or declare any forest or wasteland, which is the property of the government or which is placed under their control for management and which is not included in the reserve forest to be 'protected forest' (section 24 of A.P.Forest Act of 1969). By this provision A.P. Government was notified 18 villages in Rampachodavaram range as 'protected forests'. But over a period of time Forest Department and Department of Mines granted lease of nearly 915.29 acres of protected forest to Hyderabad Abrasive Ltd, Adivasi Integrated Corporation, Sangam Minerals, Girijan Minerals belonging to twenty non-tribals and a tribal. The lease period ranges from five years to twenty years. Due to the mining operations of graphite and laterite, these villages were completely denuded of forests. Thus due to issue of licenses for the mining operations in 'protected forests' tribals lost access even in protected forests which actually meant for community enjoyment at one side and at another side the trees on which they depended for their survival have lost in mining operations. Nearly 5000 trees were felled in Tadepalli and Ivampalli area of Maredimilli mandal. In the process tribal lost mango, jack, jeeluga and tamarind trees on which they depended to meet their food. For instant, 350 mango trees were felled during the mining operation. The natural springs have dried and tribals of these villages are suffered for drinking water due to these felling. These mines have destroyed forests and caused soil erosion. SAKTI

mobilised local tribals against the mining operations and also educated on the legal aspects in granting lease in the agency areas. And also approached Court for the cancellation of the lease orders on the following grounds.

- i. The A.P. Scheduled Areas Land Transfer Regulation Act of 1959 prohibits transfer of immovable property situated in the agency areas to non-tribals.
- ii. The National Forest (Conservation) Act of 1980 restricted the state governments of other authorities from de-reserving any forestland or any portion thereof for any non-forest purpose without the approval of the central government. As per this Act, non-forest purpose means breaking up or clearance of any forestland or portion thereof for any purpose other than afforestation.

Based on the report of the joint inspection of different officials court prohibited the mining operations in other than the area which they had already completed mining. However, they permitted to remove material already dug up under the supervision of the Joint Collector, Assistant Director of Mines and Geology and Conservator of Forests.

6.2.4. SAKTI and the Government Marketing Agencies:

SAKTI has taken initiative to create awareness among the tribals on marketing systems and protect them from cheating by the marketing agencies. It has taken up several issues like cheating in weighments, problem of fixation of the prices of the forest produce, membership in the marketing agencies to educate the tribals on marketing of their produce. In this context SAKTI played two different roles. On one hand SAKTI attempted to bring the tribals into the fold of government marketing agency(GCC) and on the other, it has initiated measures to protect the tribals from traders.

SAKTI and Girijan Co-operative Corporation (GCC):

Girijan Co-operative Corporation (GCC) has been the only cooperative institution in the agency areas for the procurement of MFP and agricultural produce

from the tribals and for the supply of daily requirements at fair prices. The main objectives of GCC are:

1. To purchase the produce brought by the members through agency of primary society and market it to the advantage.
2. To take up forest contracts of bamboo coupes, fuel and minor forest produce from the government to facilitate the tribals for their betterment of life and
3. To supply the daily requirements at fair prices to the members through the agency of affiliated society.

The procurement of MFP and agriculture produce is one of the important functions of the corporation. The produce brought by tribals is generally purchased at the shandies, domestic requirement depots and other purchasing points specially set up by the corporation. The corporation has monopoly right for the collection of MFP from the tribals for which fixed amount of rent is paid to the Forest Department. There are 29 Primary Cooperative Societies under GCC in the district in which all the members are tribals. Tribals collect tamarind, myrobalum, honey, brooms, medical roots, barks, seeds, gum cariah, etc., and sell to the GCC. The Primary Marketing Society, while fixing the purchase price for the MFP, used to take into consideration the wholesale market rate and deduct forest rentals, trading charges, transport cost and establishment charges.

SAKTI studied the fixation of rates and other aspects and attempted to educate tribals. As per their observation while fixing the purchase price, GCC is deducting the purchase tax (to be paid by GCC to the commercial tax department as first purchaser) and also 15 per cent as handling charges. This results in a decline of purchase prices. The private traders with slightly higher price are purchasing items from the tribals illegally. SAKTI educated the tribals and represented the matter to the authorities for subsidy in these matters.

And also SAKTI observed that GCC paid Rs.49.1 lakhs as purchase tax in 1987 while it collected Rs.11.69 lakhs. This is because of the low membership in the

societies. The membership in 30 societies does not exceed 2,000 each when as every tribal sells some thing to G.C.C. So with this limited membership societies does not benefit much to the tribals. On this issue SAKTI motivated the tribals and mobilized the public attention and filed a writ petition in High Court to enroll new membership in G.C.C. And other aspects which got SAKTI's attention is the elections for 30 societies, which are affiliated to GCC were not held since 1983. SAKTI believes that the conducting elections regularly will promote the membership of tribals and also promote confidence among them that the GCC can run by themselves. Hence SAKTI filed a writ petition in High Court and drawn the attention of the government.

Indian Tobacco Company (ITC) is promoting tobacco cultivation in the tribal areas of Godavari and Khammam districts since last thirty years. So Tribals lease-out their land for this crop and loose the land once for all. SAKTI made survey about the alienation of tribal land under tobacco cultivation, the indifference of ITC and Bank Officials. The report has prompted the G.C.C. to extend credit facilities to this crop. SAKTI also convinced G.C.C. to increase the procurement price of tamarind and other MFP.

The merchants as well as GCC field staff cheats the tribals at the shandies(markets) in weighments, grading and pricing in the sales of agricultural produce as well as MFP. To help the tribals and to educate them about the exploitation of the traders SAKTI is organising weighing balance in shandies where the tribals can check the weight of their produce before they sell. This increased the awareness among the tribals regarding the pricing and weighing practices and tribals are questioning the traders as well as GCC about weighing practice. This led tribals to fight against unfair trade practices in shandies.

6.2.5. SAKTI and Implementation of Minimum Wages:

The intervention of SAKTI in implementation of minimum wages is at two levels. It pressurises the government departments to maintain the uniformity in minimum wages fixed by the different departments at one level and at another level SAKTI motivates the tribals to get the prevailing wage rates. The major employment

sources in the region are bamboo-felling operations of paper mills, Forest Department works and construction works. There are three types of minimum wages for different activities fixed by different state agencies. These are:

- i. The state government from time to time revises the minimum wages for different categories of works under Minimum Wages Act. The Assistant Labour Officer is to enforce these wages.
- ii. The District Collector (who is also the chairman of ITDA) every year revises the daily wages.
- iii. Every year Forest Department will fix the wages for every operation. But the wages fixed by the department should at least be equal to the wages fixed by the Government.

SAKTI have studied minimum wages fixed by all these three departments and found that the Forest Schedule of Rates(FSR) are woefully lower than the other two. For instance if the rate for extraction is Rs.810 per 1,000 bamboo, the department pays Rs.600 in some cases and Rs.450 in others. As against a minimum wage of Rs.795, the department is paying Rs.480 to 330 in some categories(Indian Express, 28 April, 1992). And for stacking, that the minimum wage notified in the State Government Gazette is Rs.250 while in FSR it is Rs.160. Thus there is difference in the wages fixed by the different departments for the same work.

Another thing is that, while the Government is specifying the minimum wages in the State Government Gazette, the forest department brings out a manual for works and strangely marks it 'confidential'. The rates are to be notified publicly but the department keeps it as secret. SAKTI has taken the issue of the FSR that are lower than the minimum wages fixed by the government as well as not notifying the wages to the people. And SAKTI filed a writ petition in High Court particularly regarding the differences in the wage rates of FSR and that of wages fixed by the government and got the attention of the government authorities.

On the other level SAKTI involved in the implementation of the minimum wages. When minimum wages are revised SAKTI attempted to bring the awareness among the tribals on the prevailing minimum wages rates and organise them towards getting the minimum wage. In this regard, SAKTI filed nearly 79 cases for Rs.16.4 lakhs. Out of which 43 cases were settled and labourers got Rs.6.79 lakhs. Most of the cases filed by SAKTI are from Rampachodavaram(29.1per cent) and Marredimilli(22.8per cent) mandals where forest works have been concentrated(Table 6.2). The filed case are mostly against forest contractors(24.0per cent), irrigation department(15.2per cent), R & B(10.1per cent) and 15.2 percent cases are filed against to the Tribal welfare Department(Table 6.3). The cases filed were mostly against contractors of various departments in which concerned department officers were also respondents in the cases. As in the traditional institutions where tribals themselves present their problems before their village council, SAKTI made an attempt to revive the same nature among the tribals and trained them by promoting self-confidence to present their problem before the officials. All these were fought by the tribals themselves.

6.2.6. SAKTI and Women's Rights:

Traditionally women play very important role in the forest economy. Identifying men with hunting and women with food gathering, tribal women provides up to 80 percent of the daily food where as men contribute only a small portion by hunting in tribal society, even in cultivation, women participate equally, if not more,

TABLE: 6.2. MANDAL-WISE MINIMUM WAGES CASES FILED BY SAKTI

Sl. No	Mandal	No.of cases filed	Percentage
1	Rampachodavaram	23	29.1
2	Maredimilli	18	22.8
3	Addateegala	10	12.7
4	Y.Ramavaram	11	13.9
5	Rajavommangi	7	8.9
6	Gangavaram	8	10.1
7	Devipatnam	2	2.5
8	TOTAL	79	100

Source: SAKTI Records.

TABLE: 6.3. DEPARTMENT-WISE MINIMUM WAGE CASES FILED BY SAKTI

Sl.No	Department	No.of Cases	Percentage
1	Forest Contractors	19	24.1
2	Minor Irrigation Dept.	12	15.2
3	Tribal Welfare Dept.	12	15.2
4	Roads & Buildings	8	10.1
5	Panchayat Raj	9	11.4
6	Agriculture Dept.	5	6.3
7	Horticulture Dept.	1	1.3
8	ITDA	3	3.8
9	Other Depts.	10	12.6
10	TOTAL	79	100

Source: SAKTI Records

as men. But due to reservation of the forests, deforestation and growing commercial interest over forests, the tribal women are forced to go out to work for their livelihood. The non-tribal men who came to the agency area for various works attract the tribal women by giving presents. The most common problem is that the floating non-tribal population as employees, contractors entice the tribal women keep them and left them with the burden of looking after the children. Several such women were supported by SAKTI in filing cases for maintenance in the court of Sub-Divisional Magistrate and also in High Court. SAKTI trained the women to argue most of their cases themselves in the court of Sub-divisional Magistrate. Like this SAKTI helped 36 tribal women to file maintenance cases. Among these most of the women are from Rampachodavaram(58.3per cent) and Maredumilli(27.8) mandals(Table 6.4). This is because the migration of non-tribal population is higher into these two mandals where most of the forest works as well as all government offices of the agency area are concentrated. The following cases show the nature of the problem and its severity.

TABLE: 6.4. MANDAL-WISE MAINTENANCE CASES FILED BY SAKTI

Sl.No	Mandal	No. of Cases	Percentage
1	Rampachodavaram	21	58.3
2	Maredimilli	10	27.8
3	Addateegala	2	5.5
4	Y.Ramavaram	-	-
5	Rajavommangi	1	2.8
6	Gangavaram	1	2.8
7	Devipatnam	1	2.8
8	TOTAL	36	100

Source: SAKTI Records

i. This is a case of tribal woman, who works as wage labour in forest operations. The concerned forest contractor, under whom she works, married her and deserted after some time. Vempa Gangamma, belongs to Koya community of Erlapalli village in Ramapachodavaram mandal. A non-tribal contractor married her and left her with a child. Then she moved to court for maintenance. The lawyer pleading for the tribal lady drafted as concubine in the affidavit. The sympathetic Sub-Divisional Magistrate, knowledgeable of the fact that unlike the Hindu Society the concept of prostitution and concubinary does not exist in tribal societies, awarded a maintenance of Rs.300 for her and Rs.200 for the blind son. The non-tribal husband challenged and won the case in the district sessions court on the basis of the Hindu Marriage Act. Then SAKTI helped her to move to High Court which reminded the case to the lower court to decide the paternity of the son, without touching the issue of concubinary and thus disposed off the case. But in the court, the Mobile Sub-Divisional Magistrate has adjourned this case 18 time such that Gangamma fed up with these adjournments and accepted to compromise for Rs.3000.

But in another case of Matla Lakshmi, who was also cheated by a non-tribal contractor, the High Court was ordered for DNA test to establish the paternity of the child.

ii. This is a case of an employee who works in forest department and married a tribal girl who was a daughter of his sub-ordinate. Janardhan Rao worked as Forester

in Chinna Beerampalli of Rampa Chodavaram mandal and married a daughter of a Forest Watcher belonging to koya tribe. He stayed with her for 16 years and left her with three children. Then the tribal girl came to know that her husband was already married even before their marriage. Then she approached court for maintenance with the help of SAKTI and after a long period of struggle she got orders to get maintenance from her husband.

iii. In another case a non-tribal teacher married a tribal woman who was already married and deceived her after he was transferred from that village. Ganapathi is a non-tribal who worked as a teacher in Pedda Geddada village. At that time, he attracted Lakshmi who was already married and made her to take divorce from her husband and he has married her and stayed with her for three years. After three years he got transfer to another mandal and left the village and did not turn up again. After repeated attempts to convince him, Lakshmi approached Court for maintenance with the help SAKTI. All the above cases show that the opening of agency area not only resulted in destruction of forest resources but also effected tribal women.

6.2.7. SAKTI and Protection of Forests and Rights of Forest Dwellers:

SAKTI also involved in protection and regeneration of the forest resources by involving the tribals. By studying indigenous forest management systems SAKTI has taken initiative to promote forest protection committees in the villages by considering indigenous institutions and their management systems. For the effective involvement of the tribals SAKTI attempted to build their programme by considering the tribals' knowledge and culture in preservation of the forests, collective responsibility and ownership on the resources as well as distributional systems of traditional institutions.

SAKTI started its' forest protection activity through tribals in 1993 which is called as 'nurintadavi' programme. The literary meaning of 'nurinti' is hundred houses, which is commonly used in the tribal communities of the region. The main objective of the programme is to involve the tribals to protect their forests. Under this programme SAKTI is covering nearly 40 villages in six mandals of the agency area

and formed forty village level committees. Among them 42.5 per cent of committees are formed in Maredimilli mandal and followed by Y.Ramavaram mandal with 25 per cent of committees (Table 6.5). One interesting feature of this programme is 42.5 percent of committees are carrying their activities in unreserved forests where there is no control of Forest Department and even in reserved forests SAKTI did not associated with the Department. As it believes to regenerate the forests one need not take permission of the forest department and also since the tribals' have right to collect forest produce in non-plantation areas it concentrated in such areas to regenerate the trees on which tribals traditionally depended for their survival.

i. Selection of the Location:

Every village has specific locations on which the villagers generally depend for collection of food, MFP and other resources. The people have more association with such locations on which they depend for their day to day life and have knowledge on the plant diversity and fertility of the area. SAKTI identified such locations by having series of discussions with the respective villagers.

TABLE: 6.5. MANDAL WISE NO.OF VSS FORMED BY SAKTI UNDER NURINTADAVI PROGRAMME

Sl.No	Mandal	Forest Area		Total	%
		Reserved	Unreserved		
1	Rampachodavaram	3	4	7	17.5
2	Maredimilli	17	-	17	42.5
3	Devipatnam	2	2	4	10.0
4	Gangavaram	1	1	2	5.0
5	Y.Ramavaram	-	10	10	25.0
6	TOTAL	23(57.5)	17(42.5)	40	100

Source: SAKTI Records

ii. Selection of the Species:

Village level committee decides the plants, which they want to grow. One can observe that teak, eucalyptus and bamboo are planted in JFM while in *Noorinti Adavi*

fruit bearing trees like mango, jack etc., and MFP trees are planted on which tribal depended for their survival. The trees preferred by the tribals under this programme are tamarind, ganuga, soapnut, amla, custard apple, mango and neem. SAKTI provided seeds except for mango for which seedlings were provided.

iii. Management:

The Management of Nurintadavi is only by the village level committee. But SAKTI paying some wage for watchmen who protects the plants from grazing. In plantation work a member from each household will have to participate in the activity voluntarily. The day on which the activity is carried will be decided in the their village council meeting. SAKTI made an attempt to relate the activity with the traditional institutions and its nature and using these as a platform to create awareness on the forest legislations and other developmental activities of the government among the tribals. This promoted collectivity as well as some feeling of ownership among the tribals, which they lost due to the reservation of the forests. Apart from the plantation in specific locations, SAKTI provided some plants to farmers to plant in their patta lands. Under this nearly 584 households are benefited in 39 villages (Table 6.6).

TABLE: 6.6. MANDAL WISE NO. OF VILLAGES AND PATTADARS COVERED UNDER PLANTS DISTRIBUTION

Sl.No	Mandal	No. of Villages	No. of Pattadars
1	Rampachodavaram	14 (35.9)	304 (52.1)
2	Maredimilli	14 (35.9)	145 (24.8)
3	Devipatnam	6 (15.4)	65 (11.1)
4	Gangavaram	5 (12.8)	70 (12.0)
5	TOTAL	39 (100)	584 (100)

Source: SAKTI Records

Thus SAKTI as an outside institution is organising and motivating the tribals to fight for their rights on levels. One side it motivated the tribals to fight against the illegal exploitation of the forest resources on which they are depended for survival all through the centuries by the industries, contractors and state agencies. By motivating the tribals on the forest laws and limitations as well as responsibilities of industries and organised them to fight against the illegal exploitation of the forest resources on which they depended for their survival. It prevented further destruction of trees like mango and other fruit bearing trees. And also SAKTI intervention is mostly issue based, it drawn the attention of the Government authorities to pursue the problems of the tribals.

And on another side SAKTI educated and organised the tribals to protect themselves by using modern legal institutions from exploitation of the outsiders. This intervention made tribal to approach Courts and Government officials to represent their problems, which promotes self-confidence among the tribal communities. And also it involved the tribals in forest regeneration activities on the basis of their traditional institutions, which might prevent further degeneration of indigenous institutions, and their collective responsibility in preservation of the forest resources as well as community-based interests. In this SAKTI's intervention is an experiment in a forest-tribal belt by generating consciousness among the tribals on the elements of exploitation and destruction of their livelihood.

CHAPTER-7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The thesis is based on the premise that even today forests are important source of livelihood for the indigenous communities. For them forests provide food, fuel, medicine and fodder. Nearly, 60 per cent of forest produce is consumed as food by the forest dwellers. About 75 percent of indigenous communities supplement their food by tubers, leaves, flowers and fruits all the year round (Khare, 1998). However, forests are also an important source of minor forest produce like seeds, gums, waxes, dyes, cane, grass etc., on which indigenous communities dependent to earn cash. The income from the minor forest produce(MFP) varies from state to state, ranging from 50 to 55 per cent. In the course of long history of interaction with forest resources forest dwellers have evolved their own institutions to prevent destruction or over use of these resources which are associated with cultural and religious mechanisms of control.

The level of dependency of these communities on forests is based on the extent, nature as well as ownership on forests. Traditionally forests were under community ownership which were based on traditional rights as well as indigenous systems of conservation(Singh, 1986; Thomson, 1986, Colchester, 1986; Ostrom, 1990; Atchi Reddy, 1991; Singh Kartar, 1994 and Pathak, 1995). Over the years there has been erosion of the symbiotic relationship between forests and forest dwellers. On the one hand, State has established its control and declared forests as State property by various legislations, which have restricted tribals' access to the forests and on the other hand, along with the decrease in the area of forests, the extent under reserve forests has been increased over time by which has decreased tribals' access to forest and they have lost their traditional rights further. And also the commercial plantations by clear felling of the natural forests have changed the nature of the forests, which resulted in the loss of bio-diversity on which the indigenous communities depended for their survival.

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In this context the present study is an attempt to study the relationship between indigenous people and forests and their institutions and changes that have taken place due to State intervention by establishing control over forest resources.

7.1. FOREST POLICIES: RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

During the early period of British rule interest was not shown in the India's forests and the people depended on it. But during the early years of 18th century as a result of the railway expansion there was an unprecedented assault on the more accessible forests. Large areas of forests were destroyed to meet the demand for railway sleepers the depredations awakened the British rulers and in order to safeguard their long-term imperial interest, forests were gradually turned into State monopoly. Laws were enacted through which the rights of indigenous people over the use of forests and their traditional community ownership were progressively curtailed.

7.1.1. Forest Policies during Colonial Period:

The first attempt in establishing the State control over forests was the enactment of Forest Act of 1865, which facilitated acquisition of forests by the State and in 1878 the customary rights of indigenous people were also curtailed. The 1878 act expanded the powers of the State by providing for 'reserve forests' which were closed to the people and by empowering the forest administration to impose penalties for any transgression of the act. The forest policy of 1894 further consolidated the position of the State by enabling it to take over all forests, including private and community forests. These policies did not recognise the conventional practices of conservation of indigenous people. The State imposed its own method of conservation by imposing rigid restrictions on these communities and exploited the forest resources on which their economy and culture largely depend. This was further strengthened by the Act of 1927.

The colonial forest policy was mainly based on commercial interests and it aimed at supplying timber and other resources to forest-based industries at the cost of the needs of indigenous communities. The forest laws affected the tribals, by making

their hunting and food gathering activity illegal and by questioning or even denying their traditional rights over forest resources. The creation of reserve forests came in conflict with the practice of shifting cultivation on which tribals depended for their survival. Slowly losing control over their lands and their means of subsistence and forced into forest labour in the felling and hauling operations.

7.1.2. Forest Policies during Post-colonial Period:

After independence, instead of addressing the problems of indigenous people through the introduction of forest policies that showed more sensitivity to the needs of indigenous communities maintained a surprising degree of continuity with the colonial predecessor. Forest reservation and 'scientific forestry' continued in the 'national interest' to satisfy India's large and growing industrial, commercial, communications and defence requirement (Jewitt, 1998). There is continuity between colonial and post-colonial forest policies. As a result the old 'conservation oriented' approach of forest management has been replaced by a 'production oriented' approach to meet the demand of expanding industries. A massive programme was started to replace the existing forests with fast growing trees for industrial use. Vast areas of natural mixed forests were cleared and replaced by commercially useful species such as teak, eucalyptus and tropical pines.

The most important characteristic of the colonial and post-colonial forest policies had been the increasing assertion of State monopoly rights over forests. This was determined by the interest of dominant class at the expense of indigenous communities. These communities are increasingly denied their rights in forests, which they had considered their communal property. The progressive assertion of State monopoly rights over large areas of forests by turning them into 'reserves' has resulted in the large-scale eviction and uprooting of traditional tribal villages. The reservation of forest tracts, which denied tribals' access to the forests on which they depended for centuries and in the process separated them off from their life supporting systems and reduced them to a casual labour in forest operations.

In this context, an attempt is made to study the change in relationship between indigenous people and forests and their institutions due to the intervention of the State and other external interventions and effect on their living conditions. For detailed analysis we have considered Rampa Country, a forest-tribal area of East Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh, which has witnessed a series of rebellions of indigenous communities against the establishment of State control over forest resources and denying their access.

7.2. STATE CONTROL OVER FORESTS AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN 'RAMPA' COUNTRY

Rampa country is a forest-tribal belt of East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. There are five tribal communities in the region and their economy is agro-forest based. Though there were some amount of interaction with the plains, the tribals of the region were relatively isolated from the plains. This isolation was progressively reduced with the establishment of British control over the region.

The whole history of establishment of colonial authority over the region and State ownership on forest resources and management can be analysed under three broad time periods. In the first phase the intervention of colonial authority was at two levels. At one level they established colonial authority over the general administrative structure and at another level they extended Abkari Act of 1864 and also Scheduled Act of 1874 and introduced several taxes as well as new administrative mechanisms and police force. This resulted in entry of people from plain areas as traders and forest contractors. The acts, heavy taxes, entry of police force and traders and contractors had affected the tribals.

The second phase is from 1888 to 1955 in which the ban on the entry of forest officials into the region was lifted. During this phase colonial administration established its control over forests by declaring forests as State property in 1890. At one level colonial authority attempted to regularize the timber extraction by implementing certain felling rules and establishing check posts. At another level they attempted to reserve the forests by giving compensation to the muttadars. Restrictions

on *podu* cultivation, creation forests reserves, increased axe tax, introduction of opium into the hills for revenue, prevention of the customary right to make toddy and collection of forest produce which were measures that drove the tribal people of Rampa to rebel repeatedly against the process of reservation. Thus it shows that the process of reservation was completed only after 1955 in the Rampa region.

In the last phase one can observe the intervention of the State at two levels. One is through forest and their management and the other is through developmental programmes mostly by introducing commercial crops. The State intervention into the forests has brought two changes in the relationship of tribals with forest resources. Firstly, it restricted the entry of tribal communities into the forests by the reservation of large tracts of forests on which they depended for their survival. Nearly 90 per cent of forests in Rampachodavaram and Addateegala ranges were reserves after 1966. Secondly, the State allowed industries and private contractors to exploit the forests and also introduced commercial plantations by destroying natural mixed forests. In early 1960s Forest Department, began the extraction of bamboo and timber from the forests to meet the raw material requirements of the Paper Mills and other forest based industries and also to meet the growing demand for firewood and timber in the markets of the plains. For instance nearly 31,638 hectares area is under different working circles which were meant to meet the demands of forest based industries. And nearly 37,303 hectares of natural forests is cleared and replaced with commercial plantations. Although the work of these commercial plantations provided an alternative source of employment and income for the indigenous communities of Rampa, the policy of extending plantations is not free from the adverse effects on the life-style and economy of these communities.

Another intervention of the State in this period is through developmental programmes. State introduced cash crops like cashew, lime etc., in the region by providing some incentives like loans, fertilizer, clothes etc. to tribal who cultivate these crops. This brought two changes in the tribal economy of this region. One is it facilitated the entry of non-tribal cultivators into the region. Since tribals do not have knowledge on the cultivation of these crops non-tribal cultivators took the advantage

of needs of cash of tribals and leased-in cashew fields at the time of flowering by advancing the loans to the tribals. Two, these resulted in the decline of employment in agriculture when compared to the shifting cultivation. In the whole process tribal rights are viewed as an impediment in their scientific and economic exploitation.....the defacto and conventional command of the tribals over forests resources was completely denied in the perception and he is reduced to the status of merely a casual wage-earner(Haimendroff, 1985). This transformation might be resulted in destruction of the old mechanisms and the relation with forests, which were based on community ownership and survival.

7.3. EXTERNAL INTERVENTIONS IN NATURAL SUBSISTENCE TRIBAL ECONOMY

To study the effects of the State and other external interventions on to the natural subsistence tribal economy we have considered two villages in the Rampa region. One is an interior (deep forest) village- G.M.Valasa, with less external interventions and other village- Kannaram is adjacent to plain with several interventions where we have also found other interventions by the private agencies like industries and private traders. We have considered this village to observe the contrast with G.M.Valasa- an interior village with less external interventions. State intervention in these two villages is at two levels. One is through the reservation of forests and commercial plantations by clear felling of natural forests and introduction of land settlement operations by which individual title(*pattas*) were issued for land. Other is through developmental programmes mostly by introducing commercial crops through various programmes like IFAD and Social forestry. Since Kannaram lies adjacent to the plain area

7.3.1. Indigenous Communities and Interaction with Forests:

Traditionally the tribals of Rampa subsist by food gathering, shifting cultivation, collection of minor forest produce. They collect large variety of fruits, leaves, tubers and roots, which are available through out the year. Besides these, they depended on the pith of caryota palm, jackfruits, and the kernels of mango stones for food. During the summer they depend on caryota juice than on cereals. In the long

course of interaction with the trees and plants they have evolved their systems of user rights and conservation systems. All forest resources within the vicinity of the village are under community ownership. But they have specific systems of user right and the methods of distribution of the products of these trees on which they depended. All these systems are based on the community benefit by associating with various cultural and religious mechanisms and maintained by the village council, which prevented the destruction or over use of these resources.

In the *podu* cultivation they select a patch of land for clearing according to their need and also availability of family labour. Hence the differences in the size of *podu* patches is lesser when compared to the patta lands. These differences are not considered as the basis for their economic status of respective household. In the process of clearing they spare the trees which are associated with their day to day life. There is also mutual cooperation among the households in the production activities. So it indicates the traditional system of production is based on the survival aspect and also equal and collective in nature.

Traditionally, they also have various restrictions on the collection and exploitation of forest resources for different uses like medicine, building of houses, fuel-wood etc. The village council maintains these restrictions in which every one has the right to express their opinion. Thus, the indigenous institutions are not only based on the community ownership but also maintains the sustainability of the forest resources.

As a result of the intervention of the State and other private agencies the indigenous institutions are undermined and the indigenous communities are affected in terms of food gathering, production, and collection of MFP.

7.3.2. Impact of External Interventions on Indigenous People:

i. Food Gathering: As we mentioned earlier State intervened into the natural subsistence tribal economy by the reservation of forests, land settlement operations and also through developmental programmes. The reservation of the forests as well as

commercial plantations by clear felling of natural forests has affected the availability of food from the forests. In both the villages, the availability of the species on which tribals depended for food have declined. Another policy of the government which has seriously affected the food supply of the tribals in this area is the granting of rights to the Godavari Plywood Limited (GPL) to fell mango trees in the forests. The supply of kernel of mango stones, which are a main source of food during the rainy season, has dwindled due to the felling of the fruit trees on a large scale.

ii. Shifting Cultivation: Shifting cultivation is another aspect, which effected by the reservation of the forest. As we have observed, to increase the dwindling area of forest in the country, the Forest Department has realigned the boundaries of the reserve forest. In the process, the Forest Department drew boundary lines closer to the villages by leaving smaller area as unreserved for the community enjoyment. Due to the limited availability of area, the fallow period was shortened from 10-15 years to 2-3 years in G.M.Vasala where every household practicing *podu* cultivation. Since only one hill was left unreserved in Kannaram only 8 households are practicing *podu* cultivation in 9.5 acres of land.

iii. Food Production: Government issued land title (*patta*) to the land by land settlement operation in early 1970s in the both villages. Land titles (*patta*) were not given to the *podu* lands. Under *podu* cultivation food grains are dominant crops. In *patta* lands cashew and lime are cultivated in G.M.Valasa while only 18.6 per cent of *patta* land are under food crops. While in Kannaram the percentage of *patta* lands under food crops is higher when compared to G.M.Valasa. It does not mean that tribals of Kannaram are practicing settled agriculture. Selling of the natural manure and lack of ploughs, which traditionally tribals do not use in cultivation, indicates that due to the non-availability of land for *podu* they are cultivating on *patta* lands on which they do not have knowledge of cultivation. The commercial crops, which are introduced into the villages, are not even generating additional employment in agriculture and it further resulted in entry non-tribal cultivators by leasing in the lands of these crops. In Kannaram- the adjacent village, 66.7 per cent of the households are lease out their cashew fields to the non-tribals cultivators and became the labourers in

the same field to watch the crop. In G.M.Valsa, 37.3 per cent of patta land is under cashew though there is no yield from the cashew crop due to the cold weather of the area. This indicates that due to incentives that the government is providing to cultivate the cashew crops tribals are cultivating but benefits did not acquire to them.

iv. Community Ownership on Trees: Another important aspect, which was ignored by these interventions, is the ownership and distributive aspect of the indigenous institutions. As we observed earlier, traditionally all the trees especially tamarind of the villages were under community ownership. Ever since individual ownership rights were granted in 1970s in the villages, tribals on whose land these trees are there have enjoyed the usufruct of these trees. With the exception of the trees on the village site, all trees have thus become the private property of the owners of the land. Due to this not only the number of community trees by which every one gets equal share declined but also there is unequal distribution of trees based on the size of the landholdings. Households who own large holdings have more number of trees by which they earn more income than other households. Another interesting feature seen was the decline in number of community trees was higher in the village, which have more outside interventions. Thus the distributional aspects of the indigenous institutions on the basis of community requirements are totally destroyed by the land settlement operations which introduced private property in community based tribal economy.

v. Livestock: With increasing monetisation of the economy, cattle, goats and poultry, which in the past had only a use value, have acquired an exchange value. At present, goats rearing have become the common practice in both the villages. But in interior village the number of livestock population as well as percentage of livestock owning households have declined due to the reservation of the surrounding forests which has lead to decrease in grazing area. While in other village the number of livestock population has increased slightly, where the forest resources have already declined and herding the cattle and goats become the important source of income to the tribals of the Kannaram. So the proportion of the sales of livestock are higher in Kannaram than the G.M.Valasa that too in households with lesser landholdings.

vi. Minor Forest Produce: Minor forest produce is a major source of cash and employment to the indigenous communities. Due to the clear felling of natural forests for commercial plantations the number MFP species as well as the availability is declined. This resulted in decline of number of households who involves in this activity as well as number days of employment that generated in both the villages. But this trend is higher in Kannaram than the interior village.

One can observe that the traditional activities of food gathering, shifting cultivation, availability of MFP and community trees on which they depended for survival have declined in both the villages but the decline is much more in the village with more interventions when compared to the interior village. One can also find that the unequal distribution of land, ownership of trees as well as livestock among the households in the Kannaram when compared to the other village. As a result of the decline of traditional resources and non-availability of alternative sources of employment the tribals are forced to depend on outside economy to meet their subsistence. For instance, in Kannaram the number of households who have taken loans from various sources is higher than G.M.Valasa. Nearly 60 percent of them have borrowed cash from the trader cum moneylender in Kannaram while it is 24.4 per cent in G.M.Valasa. One also witnessed that as a result of decline of forest resources the proportion of selling of food grains to meet their cash requirements is much higher in Kannaram when compared to other village.

The intervention of State by reserving the forests undermined the survival question of the indigenous communities by denying their traditional rights and their institutions. The land settlement operations transformed the commonly held resources into private property, which resulted in unequal distribution of these resources by destroying the traditional distribution and management aspects of community based indigenous institutions. As the external interventions are increasing the tribal communities are being alienated further from their traditional resources without any proper alternative sources of employment and income.

When the problems of tribals are intensified, alternative institutions in the tribal-forest belts emerged to either promoting forest conservation systems by involving the tribals with usufruct rights, or by educating and organising these communities to protect their rights. In this context, we have examined Joint Forests Management (JFM) which introduced by the State and Voluntary Organisations. To study the nature and functioning of JFM we have considered a Vana Samrakshana Samithi (VSS) village called Gandhinagaram and to study the intervention of NGO we have concentrated on SAKTI.

7.4. JOINT FOREST MANGEMENT AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

JFM involves people in forest conservation by giving usufruct rights over the allotted forest area. It provides incentive to the people to take up several protection methods to protect the forests from the exploitation and also generated managerial skills among the members. It is too early to evaluate JFM since in the state of Andhra Pradesh and it is introduced in 1992 and in the study area in 1995. But the level of participation of the people in decision making as well as implementation may ultimately decide the success or failure of the programme. In this context we have examined the nature of the tribals participation in decision making and implementation of VSS activities.

In the forest-tribal belt JFM is an alien institution, which is not related to their traditional village council. Maintaining minute book, accounts, conducting meetings within the guidelines of JFM have become difficult to them and made them to depend much more on forest officials. So any members who have some education and exposure to the outside world can become the members of VSS executive committee, which is different from the traditional structure of village council. Since it is not related to their tradition community organisation they are not using any traditional methods of community organisation like informing and involving all the members. In the Ghandinagram VSS, participation of the members is very less. The members, who are attending the meetings are also not depended much on forests and own more than six acres of land. It shows the participation of the members in decision making is very less.

When it comes to the activities of VSS, all members are not participating. The managing committee will employ the required labour for each activity. In the process all the members are not getting employment. In the VSS those who have less landholdings are participating in labour activities than the other. Though JFM is creating employment to the tribals but as a whole it is unable to develop collective responsibility among the members as they have in their community organisation.

Thus, a contrast can be observed that those who have large landholding are participating in general body meeting where decisions are suppose to be taken while the members who own less landholdings and those who depended on forest much are involving in the implementation level i.e. labour activities. The VSS committee was sanctioning loans from the VSS funds to those who have more land and less depended on forests. If it continues with this trend it may become an institution under the control of some section of the community as other formal institutions.

7.5. INTERVENTION OF NON-GOVERMENTAL ORGANISATIONS:

Another institutions, which involve in tribal-forest relation by educating and organising indigenous communities are Non-Governmental Organisations(NGOs). By 1980, forest-tribal related problems have become one of the main agenda of international agencies which resulted in increase in the number of NGOs after 1980 that are working on forest-tribal related aspects, particularly in India. But the activities of these organisations do vary based on their nature of intervention and their programmes. In this context we made an attempt to study the nature of the intervention of NGOs in Rampa region. For the detailed analysis, we have considered SAKTI which is a big organisation in the region in terms of funding as well as coverage of the activities. We have taken forest-related activities of SAKTI for the study though it also focusing on land problems of tribals in that region.

SAKTI concentrated on educating and organising the tribals on indiscriminate exploitation of the forests by the State as well as private agencies. SAKTI educated the tribals to approach courts on the illegal exploitation of the forests by these

agencies and pressurised the government to take necessary steps to prevent depletion of the forest resources on which tribals depended for survival.

SAKTI contributed to the betterment of the tribals, by promoting confidence among these communities to represent their problems to the officials, some times in lower courts without an advocate. This experiment was done particularly regarding cases of implementation of minimum wages and maintenance for women. Another positive contribution of SAKTI is Noorinti Adavi Programme by which it attempted to reconstruct the relation and responsibility of traditional institutions towards the forests. Under this programme, SAKTI attempted to regenerate the forests by planting species on which tribals depended traditionally. Hence this activity is interlinked to the indigenous institutions, which are based on survival aspect with a nature of collective and equality, where all the households are participating in the activities voluntarily. The organisation is spending just Rs.50 per month on each village other than maintenance of nursery. This is more cost effective than government sponsored JFM. Since the government is pumping money in JFM, the sustenance of similar kind of voluntary activity for the same cause is doubtful.

7.6. CONCLUSIONS

The intervention of the State into natural subsistence tribal economy can be grouped into two categories: one, restrictive intervention through forest policies and the other is protective intervention through various institutions and developmental programmes. The State restricted shifting cultivation, grazing, collection of minor forest produce on which tribal depended all through the centuries by establishing its control over forest resources through various legislations. The rights of the tribals have been progressively curtailed and restricted the use of forest resources by the indigenous communities have declined. The monoculture plantation by clear felling of natural forests has further destroyed the resources on which tribals depended for food. Thus the availability of food, land for *podu* cultivation, MFP has declined and forest dwellers have become dependent on the outside economy to meet their subsistence needs. Forests works are also not generating adequate employment to the tribals. As we have observed, forests works are available once in two\three years and labour

requirement to these works have also declined from 50,000 labourers during early 1970's to 5000 labourers at present.

To compensate the loss due to the reservation of the forests State has taken some protective measures for the betterment of the tribals through various institutions. State established ITDA to implement developmental programmes, GCC to provide marketing facilities and JFM to involve the tribals in forest conservation and regeneration. In agricultural development, the major contribution of ITDA in the region is the introduction of commercial crops like cashew, lime etc., under IFAD and Social Forestry Programmes. Tribals are also responding positively towards these crops though they do not have proper knowledge on method of cultivation of these crops. This intervention not even generated additional employment opportunities to the tribals but further resulted in leasing out the lands to non-tribal cultivators of the plain areas. GCC has not been taken any initiative to promote marketing of these crops to reduce the tribals' dependency on non-tribal cultivators.

Thus, the intervention of the State with protective measures is inadequate to compensate the loss it generated by its intervention into forests through restrictive measure. The protective mechanisms, which the State introduced into the tribal economy, are not related to the forests and knowledge of the indigenous communities and institutions. Even in activities like JFM, by which State attempted to involve tribals in protection and regeneration of the forests by giving usufruct rights, traditional institutions are ignored. Hence, whatever the intervention to protect the tribals further alienated them from their traditional life supporting systems and increased dependency on outside economy instead of integrating the tribals with the external economy, society and polity. The intervention of NGO also help the tribals to obtain the benefits from those programmes introduced by the government. Further the NGOs organised them to protect their rights within the given legal frame.

Thus, there is substantial evidence to say that the interventions of the State i.e. restrictive as well as protective interventions have not only denied the indigenous people rights over forests and undermined their institutions which were community

based. These interventions alienated indigenous communities from their traditional life supporting systems instead of integrating them into mainstream society. Thus, it can be argued that the Indian Forest Act does not comply with constitutional provisions to ensure equitable distribution and use of forest resources (Singh 1986).

Kothari (1998) observed that forests can not be saved by centralised ~~is~~ because these agencies that have usually ignored indigenous structures and institutions rather than building on or making use of them. *These institutions do* not manage to gather support of local communities who are alienated by inappropriate laws, policies, institutions and attitudes. And the laws relating to conservation do not adequately take into consideration customary practices. These are non-participatory in nature, in that centralised bureaucracies almost exclusively hold the powers and functions for planning and implementation. Thus law and policies dealing with forest resources have separated local communities from natural resources and ignored institutions, practices and beliefs, which encouraged sustainability. Thus, there is a need for review of the legal structure regarding forest resources on the basis of the needs of forest dwellers to make it more people-oriented.

There is an extensive debate on the questions of State's monopoly rights over forests, and forest management systems. The issues in contention include the use of forest resources for subsistence or profit, the proprietary claims of individuals, communities and the State and finally on the alternative strategy. One can group these arguments under three approaches, i.e. i) conservationists' approach, ii) industrialists' approach and iii) people-oriented approach.

The conservationists' concern has been overwhelmingly with the maintenance of ecological balance and the protection of endangered species of mammals such as tiger, rhinoceros and elephant. They have argued that commercial forestry has contributed significantly to the decimation of biological diversity and to an increase in soil erosion and floods. But they have been insensitive to the rights of villagers those who depended on nature for their subsistence (Guha 1994). They support state's

control over forests, even if they insist that the State enforce only their definitions of forests.

The industrialists' view of nature is simply instrumental and they consider forests as a source of industrial raw material. Thus, the industrialists had been content with letting the State management forests, so long as they were assured of abundant raw material at rock bottom prices. They are characteristically opportunistic on the question of forest ownership; calling when it suits them for the privatisation of forest land, and when it does not, for the provision of subsidised raw material from State-managed forests (Kannan 1982).

The people-oriented approach view forests as a source of survival and subsistence for those who have an acute dependence on the forests. They call for a reorientation of forest policy, so that it would directly serve the interests of indigenous communities. And further demand for a total State withdrawal from forest areas; these can then revert to the control of villages communities, which they believe have the wherewithal to manage these areas sustainably. As suggested by Gadgil et.al (1994) there should be devolution of the power down to the level of local user group in the tribal and village hamlets; reduction in the powers of bureaucratic machinery rendering them publicly accountable down to the local level and elimination of subsidised supply of natural resources to the urban-industrial as well as intensive agriculture sector (Gadgil et.al. 1994).

It should be emphasised here that the devolution of conservation to the local communities does not mean that State agencies and other external institutions have no role. A central challenge will be to find ways of allocating limited government resources so as to obtain widespread replication of community initiatives. Thus, the existing conservation institutions and professionals need to shift from being project implementers to new roles, which facilitate local people's participation, planning and implementation. The whole process should lead to local institution building or strengthening, there by enhancing the capacity of people to take action on their own (Pimbert and Pretty 1998).

The declaration, management and monitoring of not just 'village forests' but also 'reserve' and 'protected forests' must involve local communities as equal parties. *The preparation of management plans should show how the twin objectives i.e. conservation and ensuring needs of forests dwellers are sought to be met* (Ashish Kothari, 1994). Hence, we need to systematically encourage and enrich the bulk of Indian forests by species that yield such non-wood forest produce at one level. At an other level need to create management systems that will generate a genuine economic stake for local inhabitants in ensuring that forest stocks are replenished by species more useful to the local people. Besides this, conflict management needs to be built into the institutional structure. Where the indigenous communities have already been protecting their resources over a period of time, traditional institutions have evolved territorial demarcations, access controls and means to tackle intra and inter-community conflicts. These should be encouraged.

Thus the essential pre-condition for achieving success is that the State divests itself of control of forest resources and transfers this 'into the hands of those whose survival directly depends upon their careful management' (Fay, 1989). Such move should be built on indigenous institutions and initiatives. Thus the emphasis at all times should be on building on existing local institutions and initiatives, rather than on imposing change from outside.