

Chapter 1

Introduction

In India forest resources constitute the second largest land use after agriculture with a coverage of 78.29 million ha or 23.81% in 2011 (Anon. 1) of the total land mass. Apart from climatic deterioration, the gradual depletion of forest cover and increasing dependence of rural folk has given rise to sort of conflict of interest among diverse user groups and associated management problems. The primary stakeholders happen to be the forest communities or people living in and on the forest fringe areas earning substantial part of livelihood in the form of fuel wood, fodder, fruits, flowers, fencing materials etc. The traditional right and interest of forest communities, and their livelihood and primary stakeholder concern were hardly addressed to in the forest management policy before and immediately after independence. It is estimated that 60 million indigenous people are totally dependent on forests, 350 million people are highly forest-dependent, and 1.2 billion are dependent on agro-forestry (World Bank, 2006). The forest-dependent poor lack the basic necessities to maintain a decent standard of living, such as sufficient and nutritious food;

adequate shelter; access to health services, energy sources, safe drinking water, and education; and a healthy environment.

In West Bengal total recorded reserved forest area 7054 sq. km, 3772 sq km protected forest, per capita forest is 0.02ha for the whole of West Bengal.(Source: Official website of Bankura Forest Department)

Total forest area of Bankura District, which comprises of three Divisions viz, Bankura (North) Division, Bankura (South) Division and Panchet Division, which is about 1463.56 sq km territorial forest jurisdiction and covers 21.27 % percent of the total land area of the district. Per capita forest in this district is 0.046 ha, whereas the figure is 0.02 ha for the whole of West Bengal. Reserved Forest – 44.48 Sq. km. Protected Forest – 1391.95 Sq km. Un-classed State Forest – 27.13 Sq. km. (Source: Official website of Bankura Forest Department)

In Forest areas, majority of the population depend on the forest for various purposes like grazing, firewood, collection of Sal leaves & seeds, mushrooms etc. Since the pressure on the forests is high therefore, some minimum amount of forest degradation is almost become unavoidable. However, the joint Forest Management has taken roots in the District and its contribution for greening and conserving the forests of the district is immense. The Joint Forest Management (JFM) aims at all round development of forest fringe areas.

Total forest area of Alipurduar District, which comprises of two Divisions viz, Buxa Tiger Reserve East and Buxa Tiger Reserve West that is about 740 sq km territorial forest jurisdiction and covers 10.49 % percent of the total land area of the district.

An emphasis on the potential of forests to contribute to poverty reduction, however, is limited by the fact that national economic planners and policy makers do not often recognize the extent to which forest resources contribute to the rural economy and rural livelihoods. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) for most countries tend to show little awareness of the potential contribution of forests to alleviating poverty, or at best are vague about how the potential can be harnessed. National forest action plans tend to ignore poverty altogether or simply assume that changes in institutional arrangements in sustainable forest management will address poverty. Consequently, there is a need to provide documentation in a form that will highlight the economic value of forests for poverty reduction in order to facilitate better incorporation of forests in poverty reduction strategies, and to encourage appropriate investment.

The people of forest fringe area have a long traditional relationship with the forest. Once they were involved in all the activities under project mode in the forest for their livelihood and they are protecting the forest from time immemorial but now a day most of them are involved in planting and felling of trees only. Consequent to that they are living in object poverty (specially the forest fringe area people of North Bengal) and searching for alternative vocation/enterprise accordingly they have resorted to rain fed agriculture (very subsistence level as the forest soils are very poor in fertility status), besides animal rearing involved in MGNREGA, innovative enterprise development (making plate from Sal leaf, managing picnic spot etc.), wage labour in the local and distance area. The people of forest fringe area living in remote area devoid of facilities of training, transport

marketing and others means of communication to the development department for their sustainable livelihood.

Another important feature is **elephant depredation**, which is a major concern for the people of forest fringe area in both Bankura and Alipurduar districts. They frequently encroached the residential area and destroy the crops (rice, wheat, maize and potato), damage the property, destroy the house even loss of life also happened in extreme cases. The infiltration is due to fast growing elephant population and insufficient availability of food. The department of forest has implemented the CSS elephant project to combat the situation.

Forest department Govt. of West Bengal as a whole should make a qualitative changes in the selection of species besides their traditional/predominant species taken into account of the need of the forest fringe people, faunal diversity may be considered as an option.

The revival of democratic system of forest management “people and forest” in the name of JFMCs(Joint Forest Management Committee), implementation of scheme MGNREGS, a State Plan, 13th finance commission, to be implemented or if implemented, to be monitored rigorously so that the improvement in the living condition of the forest fringe area population have been enhanced significantly.

The idea of sustainable livelihood encompasses a gamut of concept. It is generally analyzed within the framework of natural, human, social and economic capital. Natural resource base and how it sustain rural livelihood and improves the economic and social condition of the people is a matter of concern for study area in Bankura and Alipurduar districts. So far as the

development of natural resource base like geo- hydrological area, the development and management of watershed is an essential component for the development of the environment and the socio economic aspect of the forest fringe area people (Chakraborty *et.al.* 2009).

Involvement of women in the economic activities in the innovative enterprise in rural nonfarm sector is higher than that of men in farm sector but more involvement of the women folk in the form of SHG is required. The Bankura and Alipurduar districts are lagging behind in this regard.

The livelihoods of people in the context of forest fringe communities are largely in the form of subsistence agriculture. Conservation of forest resource and management in the of reserved areas which are predominantly occupied by subsistence farmers to be develop on sustainable basis (Divine Odame Appiah, 2009).

The poor people in tribal dominated area had a great deal of forest dependence but as the time passed by the dependency on forest due to illiteracy, unemployment, loss of customary right to access the forest resources the fringe area people often donot fell motivated to protect the forest so a cohesive trust between various agencies is the need of the day (Dutta *et.al.* 2010).

So, the topic was chosen for the development for the people of the forest fringe area specially the two districts of West Bengal by uplifting the alternate livelihood by assessing their present status of living pattern.

Objectives of the study:

General objective:

- To assess the livelihood pattern for sustainable development of forest fringe area people.

Specific objective:

- To study the socio economic profile of the respondents.
- To identify the distinct livelihood pattern.
- To assess the differences between the two districts under study in the light of socio economic profile, livelihood and income.
- To assess the interaction of the variables in the form of antecedent (personal and socio economic) and consequent variable (distinct livelihood pattern).
- To construct a paradigm for economically viable & sustainable livelihood pattern.

Limitation of the study:

The study was undertaken in a limited area of forest fringe area's people in the villages of Porobasti, Pampubasti in Alipurduar District and Srikrishnapur, Sagrakata in Bankura district of West Bengal. The investigation was based on the opinion express by the respondents from the recollection of memory by grandsons. The findings of the experiments can therefore be applicable only in such areas where similar type of condition exists in respect of social, agro ecological and economic factor of forest fringe area. Being a student of M.Sc. (Ag.) beside the course and credit system the time available for collection of information is very less. It is also sometime happened that due to their preoccupation they are not willing to cooperate or providing any time for discussion. The findings of the study and its general application may not be possible but under similar situation the application may be possible.