

CENTENARY 2009

**100 YEARS
OF SERVICE**

SIKKIM FORESTRY



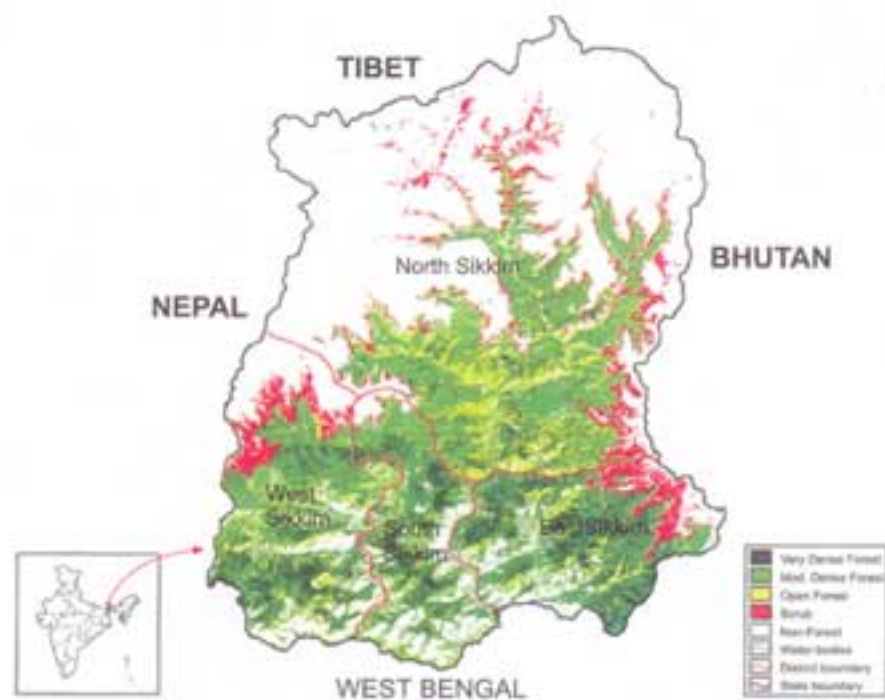
SIKKIM FORESTRY

A

100 YEARS

OF SERVICE

1



A hundred years is a long time in the history of management of an organization. The second Five Year Plan document of the Government of Sikkim covering the period 1961-'66 mentions, *inter alia*, "The Reserve Forests and Goucharan were surveyed and demarcated in 1909; the Khasmahal forests have not been surveyed or demarcated. There is a Forest Manual which serves as a statute book compiled in 1909 and supplemented from time to time. No rights and concessions exist as far as Reserve Forests are concerned. In Goucharan the local people have the right of free grazing and collection of deadwood and fodder. They have similar rights in Khasmahal forests to a free supply of their requirement of timber and firewood but this can be availed of only after obtaining formal permission of the Forest Department."



1909 therefore, benchmarks the beginning of forestry organization in Sikkim. Thanks to the then ruler, the 10th Chogyal of Sikkim who is being honoured by naming the historical Rabdentse forest as the Sidkeong Tulku Bird Park and whose dynamism, prudence, sagacity and farsightedness brought management of forests of Sikkim under an organized Government organ and on a scientific line. Dillu Singh Ghaley, the Bengal forester, deputed to serve the Darbar was entrusted the responsibility of laying down the foundation of this great forestry edifice.





3

Much water has flown down the Teesta and the Rangit rivers since this futuristic move was adopted by Chogyal Sidkeong Tulku. We owe our present forest wealth to this great soul and to that community of committed foresters who meandered down the green line working indefatigably under successive regimes and governments to protect this heritage. Together they have bequeathed us in as unalloyed character and composition, the forest-crop as best they could have envisaged.

As we step further into the second centenary of forestry in Sikkim we must not lose sight of or fail to highlight the last one and a half decades when the present government took up the management of this resource as a mainstay activity duly formulating a series of policy, administrative and legal measures to reinforce this base. It has now become a people-

centric programme rather than a government-christened populist paradigm.

The colour, cast and criteria; the tools, techniques and technology; the aim, objective and utility of forests and forestry have undergone metamorphic changes as the world adopts newer and technologically sharper methods and measures to fight such deadly and disastrous adversaries as the scourge of pollution, climate change and global warming. Appropriately, the department now has been rechristened as the Forest, Environment and Wildlife Management Department.

The initial years of the last century witnessed a plethora of felling, foraging and free play of human activities that dented and denuded a substantial percentage of forest resource particularly in the foothills for purpose of settlement and agriculture and above all to augment the meager revenue base of the Darbar. The mode and method of forest usage however, was strictly restricted and regulated by the newly constituted Forest Department; so much so that one of the illustrious forest officers went ahead with imposing a fine on his wife for collecting a bundle of firewood without obtaining prior permission from his Department! Such stories of trials, tribulations and

triumphs; hazards, hostilities and horror; myth, mystery and musings and of adventure and adversaries have indelibly bedecked the lives and times of our great forefathers of forestry.

While it is not possible to telescope all the events and information, measures and milestones, contributions and cornerstones that went into the making of this great institution of forestry and the toils and turmoil that formed part of the struggle to protect this open wealth, it would be sufficient for the present to highlight landmark policy, administrative and managerial inputs that strengthened the base and bastion of forestry practices in Sikkim.





© U. Lachungpa

MILESTONES

1909: Forest Department set up. Reserve and Goucharan forests surveyed and demarcated; Forest Manual, a statute book for department adopted for operationalisation; Sidkeong Tulku, the then Crown Prince of Sikkim pioneered the step ably aided by Dillu Singh Ghale, the Bengal Forest Officer on deputation to Sikkim.

1919: Rai Sahab Bhim Bahadur Pradhan joins Forest Department and becomes Forest Manager after five years of service.

1930: German scientist Ernst Schaefer expedition to Sikkim and identification of SHAPI or Himalayan Tahr at Phimphu, North Sikkim as distinct variety; advocacy for its total protection.

1945-46: Forests vested to the Darbar from under the ownership of landlords in different districts, a task ably implemented by Atal Singh Dewan, Range Officer.

1952: First Cadastral survey to demarcate Revenue and Forest Lands.

1972: Indian Peafowl introduced into lowland Sal forests, South Sikkim.

1976: Extension of Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 to Sikkim

1977: Khangchendzonga National Park (KNP) of area 850 sq. km. declared.



1984: Kyongnosla Alpine Sanctuary and Fambong Lho Wildlife Sanctuary, East Sikkim; Shingba Rhododendron Sanctuary, North Sikkim declared.

1987: Maenam Wildlife Sanctuary, South Sikkim, declared.

1988: State formulates and adopts Sikkim Forests, Water Courses and Road Reserve (Preservation and Protection) Act, 1988.

1988-'89: Forest Survey of India completes Forest Resource Survey of all districts.

1995:

❖ Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) Government announces and

adopts "Harit Kranti Dashak" for greener Sikkim through people's participation.

❖ Cattle grazing in Reserve Forests, an age-old practice that had led to depletion of forest wealth, banned.

1997:

❖ Ban on use of non-biodegradable materials like plastics, polybags etc.

❖ KNP extended from 850 to 1784 sq. km. (25.10% of total geographical area).

1998:

❖ State award "Rajya Van Samrakshan Evam Paryavaran Puraskar" constituted.





- ❖ Rathong Chu hydro-electric project and 170 sq. km. proposed firing range in North Sikkim, abandoned.

- ❖ Barsey Rhododendron Sanctuary, West Sikkim declared.



- ❖ Introduction of participatory forest management involving active peoples' participation through Joint Forest Management

Committees (JFMCs) (26 June 1998).

- ❖ Subsequent notification issued for Eco-Development Committees (EDCs).

1999:

- ❖ Dr. Pawan Chamling, Chief Minister of Sikkim adjudged Greenest Chief Minister of India by Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment.

- ❖ Government adopts new nomenclature 'Forest, Environment and Wildlife Management Department' in tune with changing focus and shift in approach and objective.

- ❖ Smriti Van (Memorial Forests) concept by Hon. Chief Minister at Bulbuley above Gangtok to take forestry



programmes to people's level. All strata of people, individuals, institutions, clubs, societies and non-governmental organizations participate by planting trees in memory of children, marriage, death etc. at a common venue and care, own and nurture trees to maturity. Smriti Vans now at each Panchayat Unit.

- ❖ Government formulates, adopts State Forest, Environment and Land Use Policy in view of growing concern for protection of forests, environment and wildlife vis-a-vis increased developmental tempo.



2000:

- ❖ Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve with area 2619.92 sq. km. declared.



- ❖ Total wildlife protected area 30.77% of total geographical area which is the highest in the country.
- ❖ Eco Clubs and Green fund for Schools and Colleges.

2001:

- ❖ Sacred peaks, caves, rocks, lakes, 'chhortens' and hot springs notified.
- ❖ Scaling of important peaks including the Mount Khangchendzonga banned.
- ❖ Network of JFMC/EDCs and Watershed Development Committees (WDCs) created.



- ❖ State Biodiversity Park at Tendong, South Sikkim established.

2002:

- ❖ Environmental Education introduced in Schools from Nursery to Class-8.



- ❖ State Medicinal Plant Board (SMPB) set up to concretize action plan on medicinal plants in the State with Hon. Chief Minister as Chairman.

- ❖ Herbal Gardens created in different Panchayats; care and management with technical inputs from the forest department.



2003:

- ❖ Eleven Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Sikkim identified and recognized by government.

- ❖ Government of India, through its scientific wing, the Forest Survey of India records increase of forest cover in the state by 2% between the period 1994-2003, the result of department's relentless regeneration efforts and the Government's intense policy focus.

2004:

- ❖ Green Indicators, 2004 a report developed by Noida – based group finds the Forest Protection Index of Sikkim to be the highest in the country (0.903).

- ❖ First state in Himalayas to use Global Positioning System (GPS) to survey and demarcate Reserve Forest boundaries.



2005:

- ❖ Sikkim Ecology Fund and Environment Cess Act, 2005 framed. This Act provides for levy of cess on industries, traders and consumers for articles which pollute environment.

- ❖ Ban on killing of wildlife strengthened.

2006:

- ❖ Regulation of Trekking Rules, 2006 notified.
- ❖ Kitam Bird Sanctuary, South Sikkim declared.



© J. B. Subba

- ❖ Sikkim to go organic; ban on chemical fertilizers, pesticides to save our fields from the scourge of pollution.

- ❖ Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary, East Sikkim declared.





❖ State Green Mission, one of the most innovative and effective policy articulations by State Government to realign people to the giant task of protecting, managing and regenerating the greenery in the state on their own with the Department guiding and supervising various operations.



❖ Constitution of State Biodiversity Board to oversee and manage the rich biodiversity of the State.



© U. Lachungpa

❖ State Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (SBSAP) documented.



❖ Wetland Conservation Programme formulated and six wetland complexes included in National Wetland Conservation Programme.

2007:

- ❖ State Glacial Commission formulated.
- ❖ National Bamboo Mission launched.



© J. B. Subba



2008:

- ❖ Eco-Tourism Directorate created.

- ❖ Hamro Van media venture on local cable TV launched for awareness.
- ❖ Chogyal Palden Thendup Namgyal Park, Gangtok, created.
- ❖ Sikkim Forests, Water Courses and Road Reserve (Preservation and Protection) Act 1988 got assent from President of India (16 May 2008).

2009:

- ❖ Awarded following appreciation from Centre for Development Finance, a prominent NGO:
 - ★ First in Natural Resource Management
 - ★ First in performance in Land Use and setting up of State Council for Climate Change.
 - ★ Second best ranking in Environmental Sustainability Index;
- ❖ Tinkitam *Fairieanum* Conservation Reserve, South Sikkim for the protection of orchid *Paphiopedilum fairieanum* and its environment under declaration.
- ❖ Working Plan under completion; Wildlife Management Plans under implementation.
- ❖ Terms of Reference (TOR) signed between department and Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) funded externally aided project with focus to promote ecotourism and natural resource conservation.





This gist indicates that most of the policy, legal and administrative milestones for sound and sustainable forestry and environment have been achieved. Programmes and projects implemented during the last 15 years or so show that the long term goal of maintaining a balance between environment and development is visibly met with. We aim to not only achieve desired goals but surpass national level targets under the able guidance of the greenest Chief Minister in the country.

Our endeavours in all fields of forest, environment, land-use and wildlife management and conservation, have excelled that of most other states, a fact concurred by independent research institutes and other scientific bodies.

A department which performed most functions of other Departments such as Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Land Revenue, Tea Gardens, Fishery and Sericulture; a Department born 100 years ago nourished by successive bands of eminent foresters from Dillu Singh Ghale, Rai Saheb Bhim Bahadur Pradhan, Dak Man Lama, Arjun Singh, M. M. Rasaily, K C Pradhan, P O Pazo, P S Moktan, N. C. Shenga, P. K. Basnett, T. R. Sharma, T. R. Poudyal, D. B. Shrestha and down to S. T. Lachungpa, the present Head of the department, without in any way forgetting the contribution of the innumerable forest family members from the Forest Guards up, it has in its journey from a primitive past to the Information Technology age metamorphosed into a modern, apparatus teeming with some sophisticated technical hands in the care and custody of an eminently pro-environment Government.

As we prepare to enter the second century of forestry practice and environment management in Sikkim it would not be out of place to touch upon salient policy, legal and administrative enunciations of

100 YEARS OF SERVICE



© H. Lachungpa



the present Government under Dr. Pawan Chamling, Hon. Chief Minister, that have given this Department a new direction, dimension and destination.

The State Green Mission is one such arm which reaches out to envelope a wide cross section of society to the task of greening and beautifying Sikkim, through them, with them. This pioneering step is a bold departure from the traditional method of resource management in which the Department had a policing and a custodial role and responsibility which virtually delinked the people from the mainstay management practice. The overwhelming response and mass participation by the people to this programme has strengthened the hands of the foresters and developers. Thus there is a visible paradigm shift in the policy towards conservation of our forest wealth.

That true forestry and conservation of natural resources should be placed in the hands of the people to whom this resource primarily belongs both as a life support system and incremental accrual of it for their household needs is now an established government arrangement. The apparatus through which this goal is achieved is the constitution and adoption of Joint Forest Management Committees in all the villages and that of Eco-Development Committees in the fringes of Wildlife Protected Area Network. People, obviously being prime stakeholders, in the devolved structure, will plant, nurture and harvest the forest crop, availing of as much as one-fourth of the produce as their share. The State is proud to present today as many as 158 Joint Forest Management Committees and 57 Eco-Development Committees successfully working hand in hand with the forest officials, implementing programmes, operating funds independent of Government intervention.

Such decentralization and devolution of powers and functions have revolutionized the forestry format and conservation agenda. This augurs well for the next century of forest management and protection.

On the auspicious occasion of the Centenary Celebration 2009 the forest fraternity is deeply obliged to all members of the civil society, farmers, non-governmental organizations, self-help groups, forest management committees, various individuals, institutions, scientific bodies, traders, hawkers, teachers, student community, politicians, planners and policy framers, press and media, judiciary, tourists and tour operators: as a matter of fact, all people we perceive as stakeholders of this vast reservoir of renewable resource who have extended their hand to its protection, propagation and management over these years constituting an inalienable link with the foresters. We solemnly subserve ourselves to them for the holy task of protecting this asset, our irreplaceable natural heritage.





© U. Lachungpa



Forest, Environment & Wildlife Management Department
Govt. of Sikkim, Deorali, Gangtok 737102