

The Green Queens of India

Nation's Pride



IFS ASSOCIATION

*Dedicated to the girl child. May you grow stronger and mightier to protect
mother nature as she protects you.*

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मंत्री
पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन,
सूचना एवं प्रसारण और
भारी उद्योग एवं लोक उद्यम
भारत सरकार



MINISTER
ENVIRONMENT, FOREST & CLIMATE CHANGE,
INFORMATION & BROADCASTING AND
HEAVY INDUSTRIES & PUBLIC ENTERPRISES
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

प्रकाश जावडेकर
Prakash Javadekar



FOREWORD

The conservation story for India's forest and wildlife is incomplete without the mention of the proactive role played by women in protecting them. Be it the historic Chipko Andolan to the protection of native flora and fauna by the Bishnoi Community, women have led from the front. I personally recollect my visit to the remote village and the conservation of Amur falcons in Nagaland which is a great success story for India. This happened with peoples' participation especially the local tribal youth and women. An entire community that was earlier hunting is now working for its conservation, thanks to proper motivation, training and mindset changes effected by local leaders and civil societies.

Similarly, all the women associated with forestry - from frontline officers to head of forest forces - have been a significant force in preserving our countries forests and wildlife, and striving for a greener future. I congratulate them for their dedication and hard work and wish them all the success in their endeavors.

Date: 08.03.2021

(Prakash Javadekar)

॥ प्लास्टिक नहीं, कपड़ा सही ॥



Babul Supriyo

Union Minister of State

Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change
Government of India



सत्यमेव जयते



बाबुल सुप्रियो

केन्द्रीय राज्य मंत्री

पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय
भारत सरकार

FOREWORD

Mother Nature and mother as protector of nature goes hand in hand. The contributions of women in forestry and wildlife sector deserves special praise. Be it forest frontline or the senior women officers working sincerely towards wildlife conservation and protection, their stories need to be told and retold. India is leading the global conservation scenario for the protection of its wildlife. Be it the largest population of tigers, asian elephants, great one horned rhino or the lesser known but equally charismatic Bengal florican or the pygmy hog, India leads in harbouring their largest populations in the world thereby demonstrating a successful case study for human-wildlife co-existence.

The frontline forest staff and officials deployed across the country have worked tirelessly to save these species and the Ministry has strived towards improving the work conditions especially in remote forest locations. I wish to congratulate the women officers who have collectively come together to compile this book and share their own personal experiences with others, it is hoped that it encourages and motivates many a young children to protect and nurture the environment.

(Babul Supriyo)





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Message

India's forest management history marked a conservation milestone when three women officers joined the Indian Forest Service in the year 1980. Since then, a traditionally all male bastion has gradually opened to women officers. Today, we have 280 women IFS officers serving our nation. These women officers are not only doing exemplary work in the field they are highly accomplished academically and also leading in the central and state government at policy making levels.

Upon request from the Association, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has set up a committee to study and recommend measures required to be taken to improve the working conditions for frontline forest staff on protection duty, and suggest steps for commemorating forest "martyrs" as done with police personnel killed in the line of duty. This committee will examine all possible solutions to ensure the welfare of forest staff, many of whom lose their lives every year in the line of duty.

Let us strive to work collectively towards lauding the efforts of many of these unsung heroes, especially women on this International Women's day.

The voluntary efforts by the women officers to take it upon themselves to put this book together is therefore commendable and I congratulate them for many more such publications.

Dr SP Yadav, IFS
President IFS Association-Central Unit

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Nikitha Boga

**"Environmental living is a matter of
perspective"**



Sonali Ghosh

Prologue

“I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man [woman] whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him [her]. Will he [she] gain anything by it? Will it restore him [her] to a control over his [her] own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj [freedom] for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? ...Then you will find your doubts and your self melt away.”

**Mahatma Gandhi -Gandhi’s Talisman in The Last Phase, Vol. II (1958),
p.65**

The Indian Forest Service (IFS) is one of the three All India Services, the other two being the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Police Service. So, what does it mean truly besides being part of the elite three? It takes a while, but when the realization comes, it is heartening and elating that such services truly keep the nation together by being the critical connectors between Centre-State relations. The form and manner in which they are designed, that a person domiciled of Arunachal Pradesh can serve for a lifetime in the western most part of the country say Rajasthan; thereby bringing in the exchange of ideas and nation building. The other important factor that sets them apart is to be the public face of policy implementation and the opportunity to serve the most impoverished of the people and places thereby getting a chance in truly enriching people’s lives.

From the time when the Imperial Forest Service was created way back in 1865, the Indian forest service has witnessed a sea change in its functioning and structure. One major milestone in this being the first induction of 3 women officers in the year 1980. Since then, there has been no turning back and the cadre strength of women IFS officers has grown from a mere handful to over 250 serving officers today. These women officers along with the women personnel down the ranks have been a formidable force to reckon with as they bring in their natural traits of effective communication, sincerity and dedication to the service. This book is a fitting tribute to this small but

strong cadre of Indian Forest Service women officers and the multifarious skills that they bring to the service has now been highlighted through this compilation of case studies, best practices and life experiences as shared by the woman officers themselves in what may truly be termed as a creative common collective!



Chapter One

The Historical Perspective



In former days the forester, when on furlough from India in England, was frequently asked the question “what do you do in the forests?” and as a rule, being unprepared to explain his multifarious duties in a few words, he commenced a hesitating reply, as was relieved when the subject was dismissed by the remark, “oh, you plant trees, I suppose.” ...the planting of trees.. is in India one of the least frequent duties of the forest officer and when now undertaken is mostly for experimental purposes, with a view to study the habits of some valuable species. The Executive Forest Officer is therefore a planter of trees by profession, he is rather the agent for a vast estate that is chiefly concerned with forestry... and to these accomplishments he can add some hobby which has its foundation in a love of nature, and at the same time success in keeping his health, he has the certainty of contentment, so fast as that can be secured by constant occupation, for he will never have an idle hour. (Excerpted from Forest Life and Sport in India, 1910 by Sainthill Eardley-Wilmot, C.I.E, Inspector -General of Forests, Govt of India)

1.0 The Beginning of a Legacy

The origin of the prestigious Indian Forest Service starts from the days when the British government in India started to model its administration based on utilitarianism. By the early 1860s, 'Prevention of Famine' and 'Environmental health' became important considerations. This led to the creation of the elite 'Imperial Forest Service' and appointment of the German Forester Brandis as Inspector General of Forests in 1864. Initially, the admission to the service was not based on technical considerations but based on the pursuit of adventure and sports and acquired love for forest life, knowledge of the country, people and languages. Interestingly, during the initial years, the service comprised volunteers from Indian Medical Service and the Army. Each 'Province', headed by a Chief Conservator of Forests, was divided into 'Circles' headed by a Conservator. Circles were further divided into 'Divisions' comprising major or minor 'Charge' headed by Deputy Conservator of Forests and the latter by Assistant Conservator of Forests. Divisions were in turn divided into ranges and beats headed by Ranger and Foresters or Forest Guards respectively. Indeed, the Indian Forest Service currently has a structure which has remained more or less similar since colonial times.



The Imperial Forest Service Officers were trained from 1867 to 1885 in France (Nancy School) and Germany (Hanover). From 1885 to 1905, they were trained at Cooper's Hill, London, and later, from 1905 to 1926, training was conducted at the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburgh. The Imperial Forest Research Institute, Dehradun, was established in 1906. The Forest Research Institute had trained Imperial Forest Service officers from 1927 to 1932. The subject of 'Forestry', which was managed by the Federal Government, was transferred to the 'Provincial List' in 1935, hence recruitment to the Imperial Forest Service was discontinued. Later, the Indian Forest College (IFC) was established in 1938 at Dehradun. Officers of the Superior Forest Service selected by different provinces/states were trained.



As India got independence in 1947, the princely states were merged with the parent state provinces, resulting in steep increase in forest area in many of the provinces. It was challenging to re-organise the services as most of the personnel of the Indian Forest Service of British origin left India, with the remaining opting for premature retirement by 1949. The main responsibility of managing the forests of India was left to the handful of Indian Forest Service officers of Indian origin and those in the Superior State Forest Service of different States. This situation demanded a brand-new forest service with all-India character again.

The Indian Forest Service was constituted in the year 1966 under the All-India Services Act, 1951, by the Government of India. Serving members of the State Forest Service were inducted into Indian Forest Service and designated as 'Initial Recruits'. Now the recruitment is done by the Central Government through a highly competitive exam by UPSC. Each state has a separate cadre. Joint cadres also exist for Union Territories and some states. The Indian Forest Service Probationers inducted into the service are trained by Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy, Dehradun. The service attained its new milestone when three lady officers were inducted in the year 1980. Since then, each year, lady officers continue to join and contribute to the service immensely.



One is often asked why the Indian Forest Service was designated as an All-India Service and what distinguishes us from the rest. For this we would like to turn the pages of history and refer to the classic parliamentary debate 'Creation of Certain New All India Service', dated 6 December 1961, which took a resolution for recreation of certain All India Services.

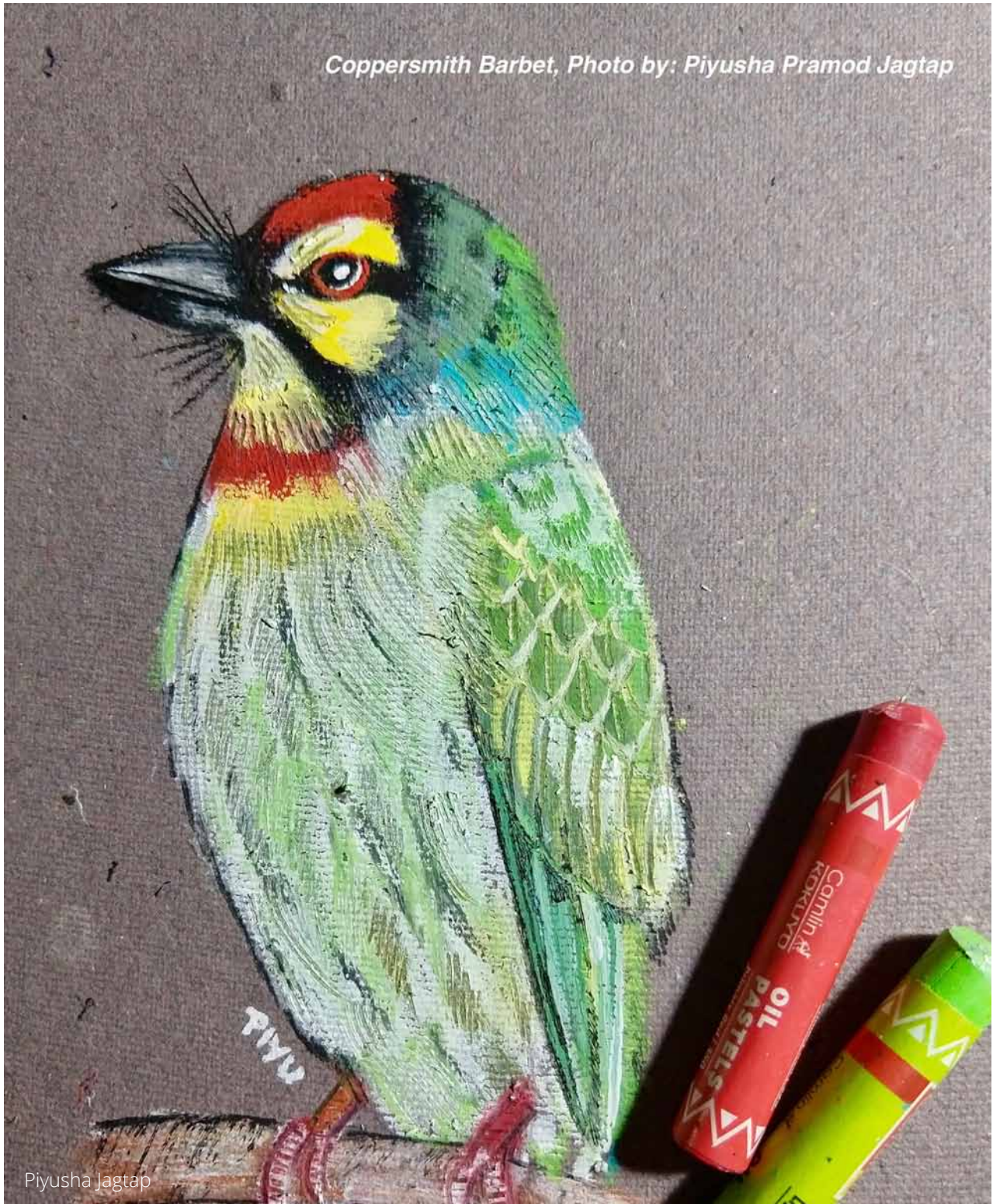
The debate was led by none other than Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri, the then Home Minister of the country. It begins with his invocation that “when an officer from a State comes to the Centre – to the Central Secretariat – he brings along with him his practical experience, his field experience. And similarly, when an officer who has been working in the Secretariat for quite a long time goes to a State, he is able to derive further practical experience. He faces practical difficulties and learns a good deal about the actual difficulties which have to be overcome in the field of his activities.”

The debate then ends with his remarks, “Dr. Kunzru has already mentioned forests being our national asset, and it is essential that we should keep in view the requirements of the whole country in so far as these forests are concerned. I might also mention that afforestation or deforestation in one State may have considerable effect on another State. For instance, the flood control schemes in the Damodar Valley require that in order to prevent serious floods in West Bengal, there should be afforestation in the upper reaches of Damodar and its tributaries in Bihar. There are even now centralised at the Forest Research College and Institute at Dehradun which shows that forestry is the field which is particularly suitable for an All-India Service.” Such were the prophetic lines and the vision that as a service, it has grown from strength to strength and lived up to the expectations of our legendary statesmen.



" Piyu Bole" - a series of the young green queen and her service to the environment.

Coppersmith Barbet, Photo by: Piyusha Pramod Jagtap



Piyusha Jagtap

In the following pages, a narrative is being attempted to capture the early elements of women entry into the service. It is truly inspiring as they pave the way for the rest of the generations.

1.1 A Tribute to those who left us

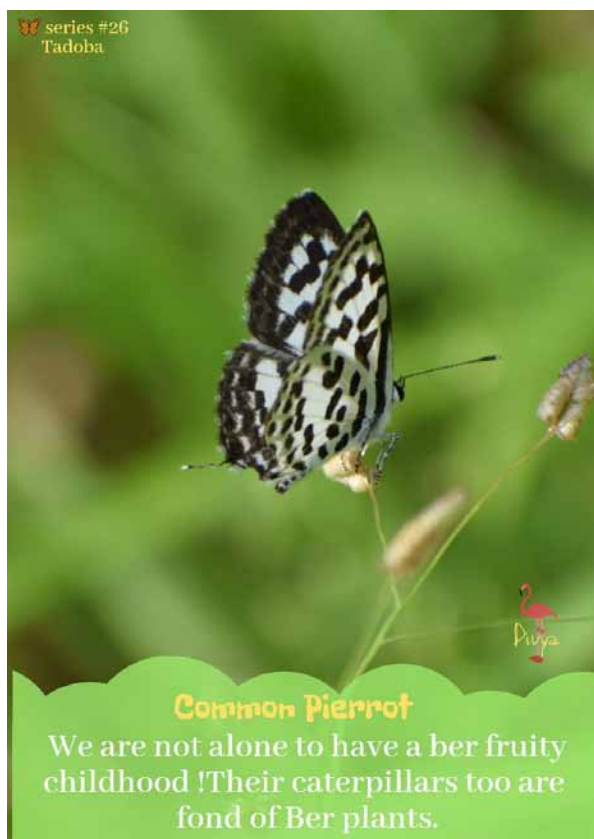
Smt. Anjana Dutt (1959-1999)

Born in Farrukhabad, Uttar Pradesh in the year 1959, Smt. Anjana Dutt was inducted in merit for the 1982 batch of Indian Forest Service. All through her training, she had many a feather in her cap by performing excellently in sports, cultural and academic faculties. She finished first once again in inter-seniority of the 1982 batch. She then started her career in Uttar Pradesh from Nainital, where she was posted in Almora and Dehradun districts as DFO Territorial, Civil Soyam, and Project Director Watershed Management Directorate respectively. On 15 July 1999, as Project Director in Doon Valley Watershed Management Directorate, Dehradun, she was visiting Rainiwala village with a team of about 30 officers from four states working in watershed management. Dedicated to the cause of people's participation in natural resources management, she took her last breath pursuing her vision at the site where she collapsed on the day



Anshu Yadav

Smt. Anjana left behind the unfulfilled task of institutionalizing participatory natural resource management in Uttarakhand. Her innovative styles of involving people in improvement of natural resource management attracted the attention of one and all since 1986 when JFM was a little-talked-about issue. With strong professionalism and deep knowledge of social forestry, she exhibited a remarkable knack of amalgamating professional objectives.



Smt. Shobha Subramaniam née Mishra (1961-2009)

Born on 22 August 1961 at Jabalpur, Ms. Shobha Subramaniam had education in different towns and cities of Madhya Pradesh. She had a brilliant academic record and completed her M. Sc. in Zoology from Bhopal University in 1983 and started her career as a Junior Scientist with the Union Carbide at Bhopal. Selected in the IFS batch of 1987, she underwent training in IGNFA, which gave her a wide view of forests and its management. She was allotted Madhya Pradesh Cadre and was posted in Hoshangabad in the year 1989 as a probationer. Ms. Subramaniam married Mr. K. Subramaniam, fellow officer of IFS of the 1984 batch, and served as DFO in tribal districts of Narayanpur, Betul, Kanker.

After the bifurcation of the State of Madhya Pradesh into two states, she opted for the more challenging infant state of Chhattisgarh. During all these years working in the field, she made it a point to involve local people in all forest-related activities and tried to make people positive stake-holders in all government-related programmes. Acknowledging Ms. Subramaniam's competencies, relevance of experience, track record and cultural fitment, she was called in the State Planning Commission to serve as Member Secretary on her promotion as Chief Conservator of Forests in 2007, wherein she was instrumental in making the State Annual Plan for 2007, 2008 and 2009. Her efforts and contributions were widely appreciated. She was known for her quick understanding of varied subjects and prompt decision-making ability. She was a passionate and humane forester and administrator and her qualities had endeared her to all who came in contact with her. Ms. Subramaniam breathed her last on 10 November, 2009. We revive our vows to continue her legacy.



1.2 The Pioneers

Mrs. Veena Sekhari, 1980 (Retired PCCF& HOFF, Uttarakhand)

“Women must work in the field if their field requires it, regardless of difficulties, so they can prove themselves. They should not go seeking comfort after taking up a job in the forest service. However, the forest department must also make necessary provision for women staff, like separate rooms and toilets in the forest area.”

Clearly, if at all was there an example of breaking the glass ceiling then it is with the induction of the three [One of the 3 women officers inducted in the 1980 batch, Smt Meera Iqbal subsequently resigned from the service and is known to have settled abroad. All attempts to reach out to her have been in vain for compilation in this book.] women IFS officers including Smt Veena Sekhri in the 1980 batch. She also went on to become the first woman PCCF (Principal Chief Conservator of Forests) & HoFF (Head of Forest Force) of Uttarakhand and in the country.

With an illustrious career that spanned over 3 decades, she took up some innovative approaches to addressing human-animal conflict by taking up community outreach and awareness programs. Recalling her days as DFO serving in Gorakhpur (in the undivided Uttar Pradesh), Kedarnath forest Division and then in Yamuna and Shivalik circles at senior level, her advice to the young officers joining the service is “there is nothing called as best posting. Every posting has its own charms, challenges and lessons etc”.

And this is the mantra that has followed during her career and even post retirement where she is happy engaging herself in social service and learning new skills such as Vastu, meditation and Yoga.



Smt. C. S. Ramalakshmi, 1980
(Retired Spl. PCCF, Andhra Pradesh)

“In my opinion, forestry and allied subjects are feminine in nature and women officers are more suitable to serve. Women are best natural-resource managers at home and outside. If women are managers, sustainability of physical and financial resources will be at its best. Women have more opportunities to exhibit their talent now compared to our times. Digitisation and technology have erased limitations of women in the work environment. Women must believe in themselves and follow their heart”.

Mrs. Ramalakshmi as one of the three women officers of the 1980 batch needs no introduction. Born in a well-educated farmer's family, Mrs. Ramalakshmi was exposed to rural scenarios and was brought up in an environment close to nature. While Mrs. Ramalakshmi was enrolled for a Ph.D. at Andhra University, she came across a newspaper ad inviting applications for IFS Examination and applied casually. Her parents were a bit worried with her application because of their limited exposure to work-life in forests. However, they eventually agreed.



To her great surprise, she received a call letter to appear for an interview, though she was unaware that there were no women in IFS till then. Mrs. Ramalakshmi was asked questions related to her academic background and on the importance of forests to local villagers. There was also some discussion on women carrying head-loads of firewood for domestic consumption vis-à-vis commercial business – how a women forest officer can tackle this problem as men forest guards have to face tough resistance by women wood collectors in villages. She remembers to have answered, “*There are no easy solutions to this problem. For women in poor families, it is a question of meeting the immediate requirement of fuel for cooking against conservation of resources for future.*”

She recalls her first posting in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh in 1983. During that time IFS officers were not posted in subdivisions. This posting exposed her to coordination work with other departments for promoting social-forestry activities. Territorial functions like forest protection and wildlife conservation and forest regeneration work were equally important for her.



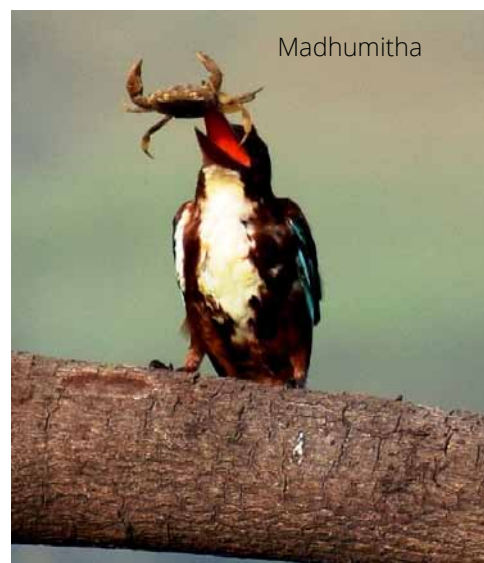
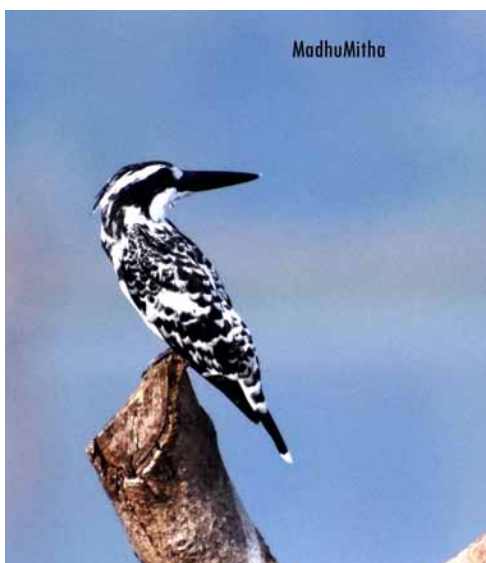
Mrs. Ramalakshmi says that her best posting in forestry was Divisional Forest Officer in Karimnagar East division in Telangana. The division had a very rich, high teak forest without any permanent road and mostly Naxal-infested areas. Touring and making night halts in interior forest areas was her routine for more than 20 days in a month. In this division, she was also entrusted with implementation of development schemes for the poor like housing, PDS, income generating schemes etc. On one hand, she had to implement development schemes for the poor and on the other hand, she had to book the same people as offenders in forest protection. She was also entrusted with responsibility of providing relief to the victims of the Godavari flash floods in 1986. The Govt of AP awarded Mrs. Ramalakshmi with the 'Uttam Seva Medal' for her meritorious work in relief and rehabilitation work to aid the flood victims.

Even after retirement, Mrs. Ramalakshmi continues to reinvent herself, and has a very active professional life. Her passion and profession are the same, be it in forestry, environment and climate change or rural development or human resource development or agriculture and allied sectors or women empowerment. What she wanted to pursue in post-retirement phase, the government gave her an opportunity to do the same. At 60 years, officers retire formally from service, but their mind and body do not. She lives life on her own terms and conditions.



Smt Savita Anand , 1981 (Retired PCCF & HoFF , Rajasthan)

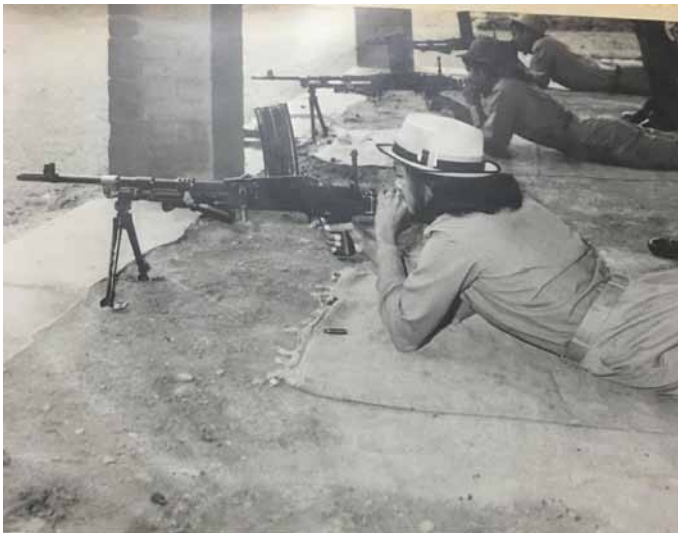
Dr Savita Anand, the first lady Indian Forest Service officer of Rajasthan Cadre and the fourth in the country has many firsts to her credit, besides being the first lady forest officer to hold the position of PCCF (Head of Forest Force) in Rajasthan. An excellent communicator, she conducted an in-depth analysis of the 'Parameters Determining Success of JFM in Mewar Region of Rajasthan and Recommendations to Enhance Performance', for which she was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Rajasthan. She retired as the Principal Resident Commissioner, Government of Rajasthan, New Delhi, equivalent to Secretary to the Government of India, on 30th September 2016, the first Forest officer to hold this position.



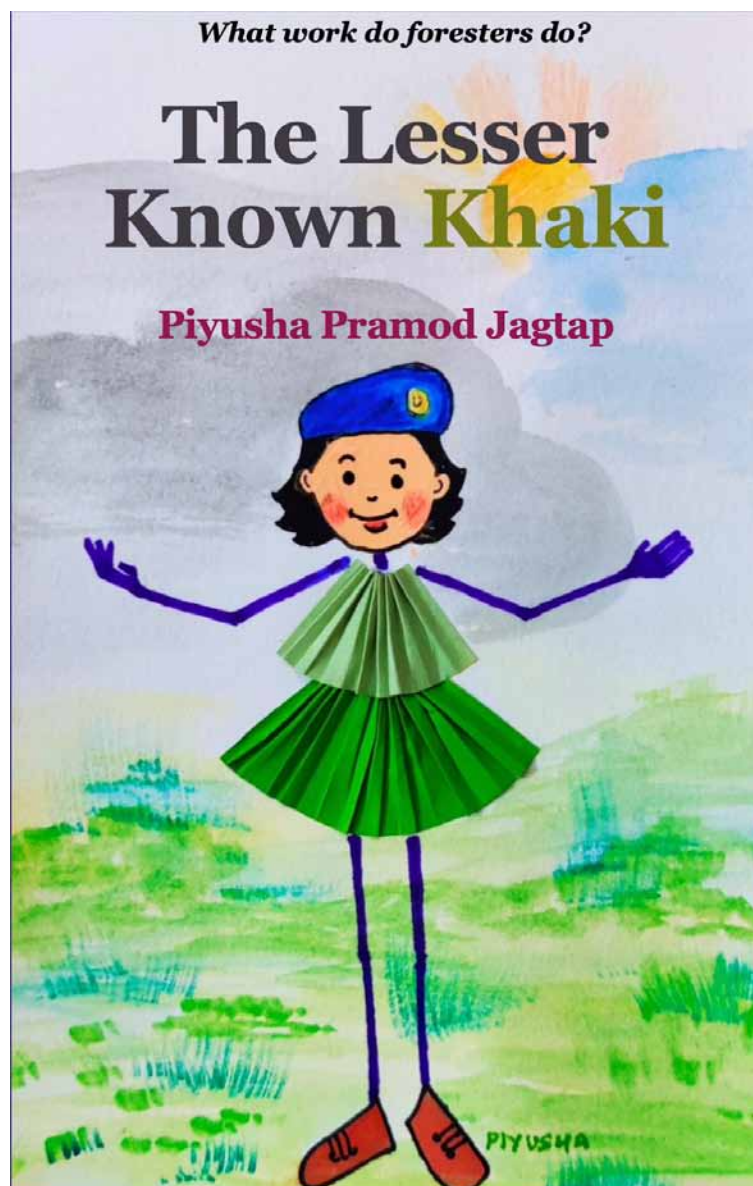
Dr Gopa Pandey, 1982 (Retired PCCF, Madhya Pradesh)

“I never felt treated in any different way as compared to my male colleagues and after about eight years, a boss of mine pointed out during a tour to forests that how I felt being addressed as ‘Sir’ by my staff. In fact everyone, senior or junior, treated me as an officer on par with others both in IFC and state. There were no concessions for tours or meetings and actually, it never occurred to me either”.

For officer trainees (OTs) at the forest academy until year 2003 or so, Gopa Mam would remain the quintessential out-of-league Prof! OTs still remember her first session where she opened her lecture with a clipping from a Bollywood film depicting a dashing young man enacting the role of a forest officer, beating up the timber mafia goons! She is the one who told us the logic behind the thirty three percent forest cover and the changing roles that a forest officer must have to keep up the ‘paradigm’ shift. For women OTs she was a shero who gave advice on how to walk away from hostility as a result of gender bias, yet keep the chin and head held high. The crispness of her saree, the lilt in her stride, the adage to never drape a shawl (as it restricts body language) and the ever-graceful voice, truly groomed and honed a young woman into a young woman officer. Clearly a great teacher and even a greater human being.



A doctorate in Ecology, it is not only her stints with the Forest academy but even her field experience, be it as a Lecturer in Lucknow University, Uttar Pradesh prior to joining the service and then subsequently to serve across the tribal dominated districts in undivided Madhya Pradesh that shaped her thinking and many of her contemporaries in the 1980s to give birth to ideas such as Joint Forest Management. Clearly, community engagement was here to stay and woman officers with their natural traits of better communication skills fitted in perfectly in the scheme of things. It is with this experience that she was suitably able to represent Indian delegations in international fora such as FAO. Post retirement she is a busy- bee actively balancing guest teaching sessions at the forest academy and taking time off as a doting grandmother. She has been the main source of inspiration for this compilation and has provided nuggets of information and photos carefully archived with her and also from her memory. Wish they could clone her for the training academies!



Mrs. Aruna Basu Sarcar, 1983 (Retired PCCF, Tamil Nadu)

“Be well-learnt about your profession, technicalities, and give preference to working at grassroot level. Mobile apps, digital and video conferences are good, but first work down-to-earth towards the welfare of needy people. Be proficient in field inspection and delivering field inspection notes, maintaining a culture of plantation journals, survey maps for plantations, particularly about transparency in measurement books for construction work. Be compassionate to the ignorant and needy people in society. Discriminate between good and bad. Ours is a technical service, so we need not compare ourselves with other administrative services.”

A Woman of true grit and spirit, Aruna Basu Sarcar, in her career served in field and office work in different capacities – Divisional Forest Officer in Territorial Charge, Social Forestry, Divisional Manager – Government Tea Estate, General Manager – Tamil Nadu Forest Plantation Corporation and subsequently as Trust Director, Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve. She has written five

Forest Management Plans and is a recipient of Brandis Award for ‘Best Research article on Endangered Plants’, and has published scientific papers in Current Science on endangered tree species. Ms. Sarcar is a prolific writer on scientific issues and has written two books on ‘Common Flora of Tamil Nadu Forests’ and ‘Field Survey Methods’ for writing management plans. After retirement, she is working and fighting for Tribal Forest Right Act in Tamil Nadu. She has started Nivedita Foundation with the main objective of giving relief to them from acute oppression and exploitation, mainly by the forest department, in addition to charity activities.



Dr. Rekha Pai, 1983
(Retired PCCF, Uttarakhand)

It was a proud moment for the country when we got Dr. Rekha Pai working as the first women Inspector General of Forests (IGF) at the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC). Her initial years were spent in the field (erstwhile UP hills) that gave her a good insight into working with communities and the implementation of integrated watershed. During her 34 years of long career, she has also worked in various capacities at the Central and the



State Government. At the Central Government, she worked for more than a decade dealing with various issues related to Forest Protection, a Sustainable Forest Management of Forest Policy, Community Participation, externally aided projects to name a few. In the State of Uttarakhand, she dealt with issues related to forest protection, particularly with respect to forest fires, Joint Forest Management and Climate Change.



Dr Amarinder Kaur , 1983 (Retired PCCF& HoFF, Haryana)

“The Almighty has blessed Women with a natural trait of nurturing and protecting. We are fortunate to be a part of a profession and a domain where we have an abundant opportunity to undertake some meaningful and impactful contribution for the wellbeing of Nature. Extending beyond the frontiers of Environment & Forests, Nature holistically includes Society and other related aspects also. As catalysts, we can enable and empower the underprivileged and latently talented Indians, especially Women, who can act as our messengers in furthering this cause”.

Dr Amarinder Kaur, has worked for the major portion of her career in the field of forestry extension and publicity. This included spreading forestry messages through print and electronic media as well as organizing forestry training cum awareness camps for farmers, NGOs, students, defense personnel and rural women. She obtained her Doctorate in assessing the impact of forestry extension activities on rural women in Haryana. She was also instrumental in setting up the Vulture Conservation and Breeding Centre (VCBC) in Pinjore in 2003. She nurtured the VCBC, developed mechanisms for its regular funding by the government, and played a proactive role in getting multi-dose vials of diclofenac for human consumption banned in July 2015 by the Drug Controller of India.





Smt. Rebecca Nayar, 1984 (Retired PCCF, Odisha)

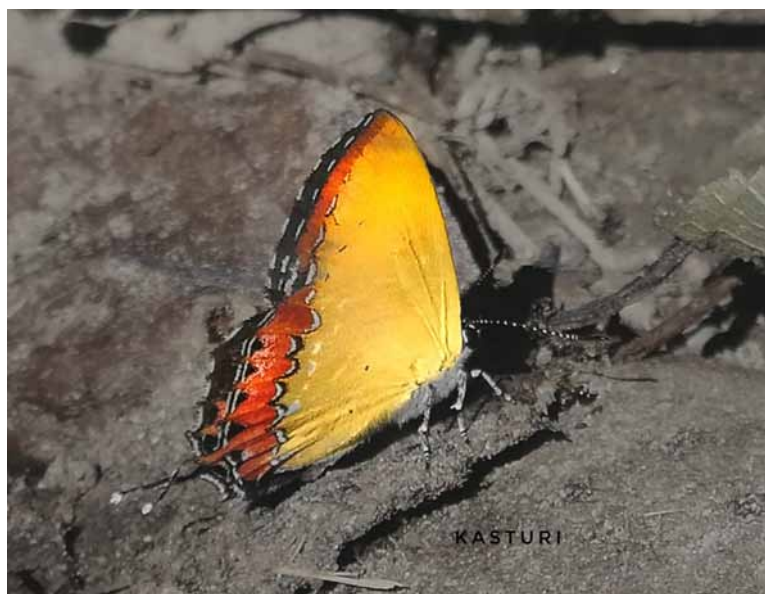
Lone woman officer of the 1984 batch and the first woman Forest Officer in Odisha state, Smt. Rebecca Nayar has done her Masters in Botany and has had the privilege of working in all the wings of the Forest Department (Territorial & wildlife, Tendu leaf, Orissa Forest Development Corporation, Working Plan, Social Forestry, World Food Programme, etc).

She was posted as the first Director (Biotechnology)-cum-Additional Secretary, Science & Technology Department of the State. She was instrumental in formulating the First Biotech-Pharma-IT Park in Orissa and Biotechnology Policy of the State. She was awarded 'Outstanding Officer of the State' in the year 2004 and also received the award 'Outstanding service' in 2010. Post retirement, Madam has continued with her hobbies of painting and jewelry design truly personifying the multi-faceted personalities of the green queens.



**Smt. Ranjana Kala, 1985 (Retired
PCCF& HoFF, Uttarakhand)**

Smt Ranjana Kala became the second woman PCCF& HOFF for Uttarakhand after Smt Veena Sekhari. A postgraduate in Physics, she has taken up works related to protection, conservation and development of forests. She has also worked for almost 10 years in Watershed Management Directorate on State deputation. She has had the experience of working in externally aided watershed development and livelihood improvement projects that have immensely benefitted the local communities especially women in the hilly state. She feels that community participation is the corner stone and processes and policies for the same must be formulated through action research carried out in project mode.



Smt. Archana Singh, 1986 (Retired PCCF, AGMUT)

She is one of the few woman forest officers who started their careers in the remotest part of India, thereby truly supporting the cause of nation-building as was envisaged by setting up an All India Service . Having served in Mizoram , Andaman & Nicobar Islands and subsequently as Director in the State Plans division in Planning Commission of India, she contributed towards preparation of Annual plans of 4 states of India namely Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, and Haryana. During this period, she also dealt with sectoral allocation of annual plan funds at macro level for these states. Her contribution towards the formulation of guidelines on Watershed Development and implementation of Watershed Development Scheme in various states is also fondly remembered.



One of her work colleagues, Smt. Hanumant Desai, currently working as Round Forester in North Goa Forest Division at Ponda, Goa recalled this about Smt. Archana Singh: “During my service of 30 years in the Forest Department, I have worked under a number of IFS officers, but among all, one IFS officer under whom working was the best was Smt. Archana Singh who served as DCF, South Goa, in the year 1997. During her tenure in Margao, she was instrumental in creating a special mobile squad with the sole mandate of forest protection and prevention of illegal activities. I was a part of this mobile squad when we had taken several actions against the illegal activities under her guidance and directions. Smt. Singh would personally monitor and evaluate the cases’

progress. Her guidance to the subordinate staff regarding forest law enforcement was immense, thereby those cases were taken to conviction and punishment. Several staff have been enriched with her guidance in their professional duty and I, too, am lucky to have benefited from working under her guidance “.



Smt. Hymavathi Varman, 1986 (Retired PCCF, Madhya Pradesh)

Smt. Hymavathi Varman narrates an incident when she was posted as North Sagar DFO, Territorial (her first territorial charge) from August 1998 to September 1998. After 5 days of her joining, she got a phone call from one of her SDO and range officers that tendu patta truck of local mafia in that area was caught by them as it was plying without a valid Transit Pass or TP. She instructed them to take some samples from the truck and see if the leaves were fresh and book a case against the mafia don.

While the latter was proved that the seized truck was indeed part of the illegal collection of the tendu patta mafia, what she faced over several weeks were several rounds of personal attack, professional pressure, intimidation and threats ultimately leading to her transfer. Later, an assembly question was raised and the government was forced to confiscate the truck and the mafia leader -turned politician did not get a ticket to fight elections for the next two cycles





This whole case taught Smt. Varman how bureaucracy, press, political parties, judiciary, and also forest department work. She had to undergo a lot of stress because she was fighting the case all alone (other than the support of her own family) but she came out stronger than ever before. Throughout her service, Smt. Varman never bent under any pressure at any level and continues to do so, be it fighting and winning through the dreaded wrath of cancer or by raising her children, especially her daughter who has made the country proud with her sporting skills in the international arena.



Deep Shikha Sharma



Deep Shikha Sharma

Smt Jayshree Ardey Chauhan, 1986 (Retired PCCF, AGMUT)

Smt Jayshree A. Chauhan is well respected in the Delhi environment sectors as the officer who revived the interest in urban forestry sector. Under her initiative mass plantation drive in 2018 in collaboration with 20 Greening Agencies, Resident Welfare Associations, NGOs and the citizens of Delhi was conducted. The event became a huge success and more than five lakh saplings of indigenous tree species were planted throughout Delhi and has been continued ever since.

Remembering her chequered career of over 3 decades she recalls that she was the first lady forest officer to serve in North East India. As an officer trainee she travelled extensively in Arunachal Pradesh, curbed illicit fellings and carried out plantations in completely barren areas. She also pioneered in drafting and preparing the cabinet note for the National Bamboo Mission during her tenure with the Ministry of Agriculture.



Smt. Vijay Lakshmi Tiwari, 1986 (Retired PCCF, Himachal Pradesh)

“In 1988 three ladies joined the Himachal Pradesh Cadre and I opted for my posting to the most remote tribal area, Pangri forest Division of Himachal Pradesh as I was aware that one must be posted in any one of the tribal/difficult areas at least once throughout the career. Further, I volunteered for the challenging assignment at the beginning of my career and the enriching experience has greatly influenced my thinking and approach towards problems.... During that time there was no road connectivity and means of communication to this remote tribal valley. The temperatures plummeted to minus 20 degrees C in winters accompanied by 10 feet of snow. The entire valley was traversed on foot. One had to walk at least 52 km from the nearest road head to reach the headquarters at Killar and on the way cross the Sach Pass (14,500 feet above mean sea level..... It is heartening to know that even after two and a half decades the people of Pangri still remember my contribution to the region “.

She truly embodies Mens sana in corpore sano (a healthy mind in a healthy body) and after a glorious career of over three decades in the mountainous state of Himachal Pradesh where she took up significant works especially related to monitoring and evaluation, she has kept herself busy with her exercise routine and active participation in the discussion groups for green queens.



Smt. Kamala Shobhana Rao, 1987 (Retired PCCF, Kerala)

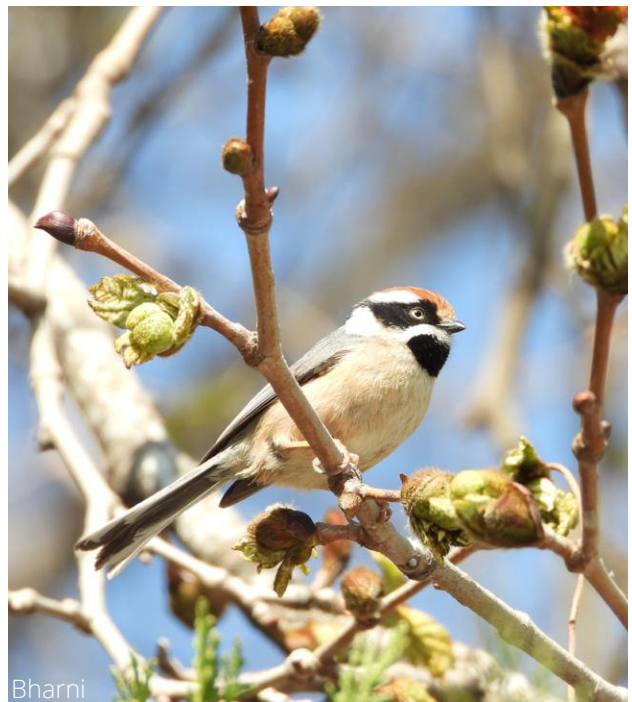
“This is a great service with a lot of challenges, but we can always overcome these challenges with sincere efforts.”

Smt. Kamala Shobhana Rao had an opportunity to work with the Andhra Pradesh State Government on interstate reputation during the early days of her service. One of her most memorable tenure during the early days was as DFO Guntur, where with coordinated support, they could evict an illegal prawn cultivation area from the forest land. There was a lot of public and political pressure but when they realised the sincerity of the officers, the action was appreciated. She subsequently also worked with DRDA and District SC Corporation where she could do a lot of service directly for the poor and unemployed youth. This work experience gave her immense satisfaction in her service.

The Central Government exposure of working in MoEF&CC regional office, Bengaluru, led to other challenges of tackling land diversion related to mining, electricity, hydroelectricity power, NHAI, irrigation, wind energy power etc. With the support of CEC, she could facilitate the formulation of Kerala Wood Based Industrial Rules and start the first such industry in 2012. A tenure subsequently as Commissioner in Visakhapatnam Special Economic Zone further gave her the opportunity to promote industrial growth through exports and imports. Her motto in life has been to always timely action in implementing the Govt. of India schemes and the benefits to industry will show the excellent results.

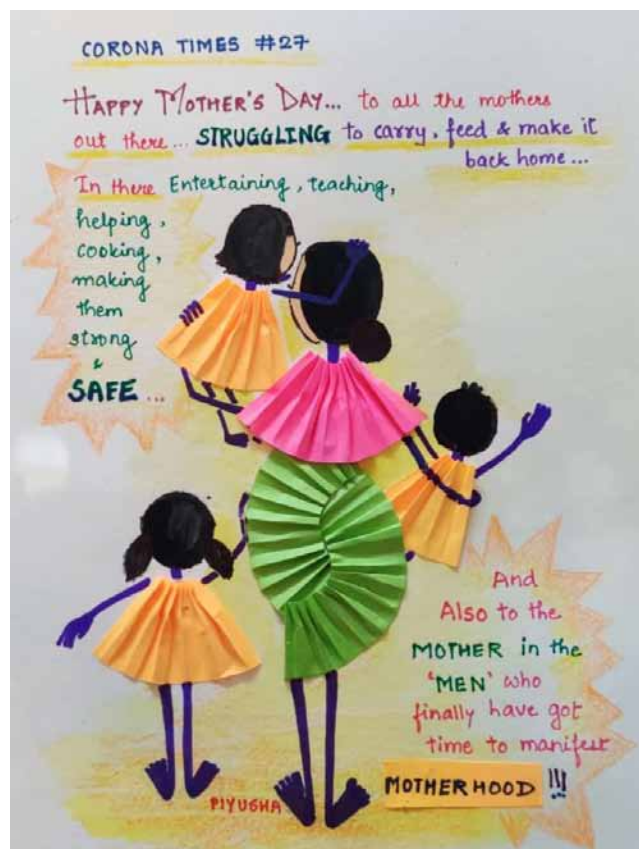
After Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Haryana where woman forest officers retired as Head of Forest Force, the women fraternity is currently fortunate to have three more states – Telengana, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan – with women as top bosses! In many ways, the glass ceiling of a male bastion of Indian forest service has indeed been broken.



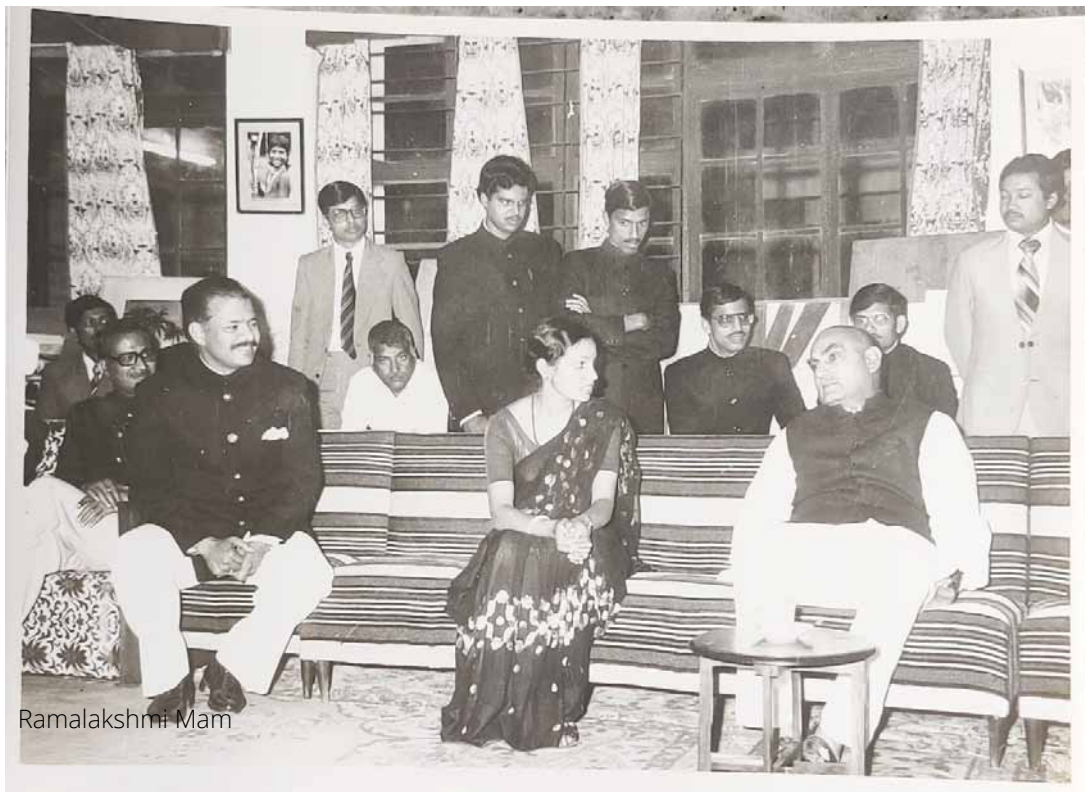


N. Kala, 1987 batch AGMUT joined the Andaman Forest Department in 1989 and served in various capacities. Her first posting was as DFO, South Andaman in which she was responsible for timber extraction under the Andaman Canopy Lifting system and its supply to various wood-based industries and Railways, besides managing a large labour force. From 1996 to 2001 she served the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education, at the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding, Coimbatore as Joint Director (Extension) taking the research results from lab to land under the Forestry Research, Education and Extension Project (FREEP) funded by the World Bank. Many of the clonal trials, progeny trials and agroforestry experiments were laid in the field under her able supervision. On repatriation to Andaman and Nicobar Islands again, she held the charges of DCF (Silviculture) and later DCF (Wildlife) and during her tenure the infrastructure of these divisions were greatly enhanced. Later as Conservator of Forests (HQ) she chaired the Recruitment Committee, and also was in-charge of Social Forestry, Working Plans and Silviculture. She retired as Chief Conservator of Forests (Territorial) from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in 2016.

A. Gautami , 1988 Madhya Pradesh (APCCF Retd) has been described by her colleagues and juniors as a hardworking, fearless and outspoken officer . She served in various postings including Territorial, working plan and R&E divisions. It is under her supervision that the working plan of Narsinghpur division was made.



OUT OF THE TREASURE TROVE OF MEMORIES ...



Ramalakshmi Mam



Iqbal Sultana aka Meera Agarwal



1980 batch



Veena Sekhri and Iqbal Sultana aka Meera Agarwal

The Pioneer Queens



The queens of
1986 batch -
THEN



The queens of
1986 batch -
NOW



Passing on the
baton - The
grand senior
queens with the
younger queens

Chapter Two

Forest Conservation



2.0 History of Scientific Forestry in India

The history of modern Indian forestry was a process by which the natural forests were gradually brought under scientific management for revenue generation. From 1865 to 1894, forest reserves were established to secure material for imperial needs.

The first Forest Policy adopted by the British Colonial Government in 1894 aimed at a custodial and timber-oriented management which largely supported the idea of maximum revenue collection.

With the independence of India in 1947, a great upheaval in forestry organization occurred. The princely states were managed variably, giving more concessions to the local populations which led to deforestation in these areas. The new Forest Policy of 1952 recognized the protective functions of the forest and aimed at maintaining one-third of India's land area under forest. Certain activities were banned and grazing restricted. The next 50 years saw development and change in people's thinking regarding the forest. A constructive attitude was brought about through a number of five-year plans. In 1976, the governance of the forest came under the concurrent list. 'Development without destruction' and 'forests for survival' were the themes of the next two five-year plans, aiming at increasing wildlife reserves and linking forest development with the tribal economy.

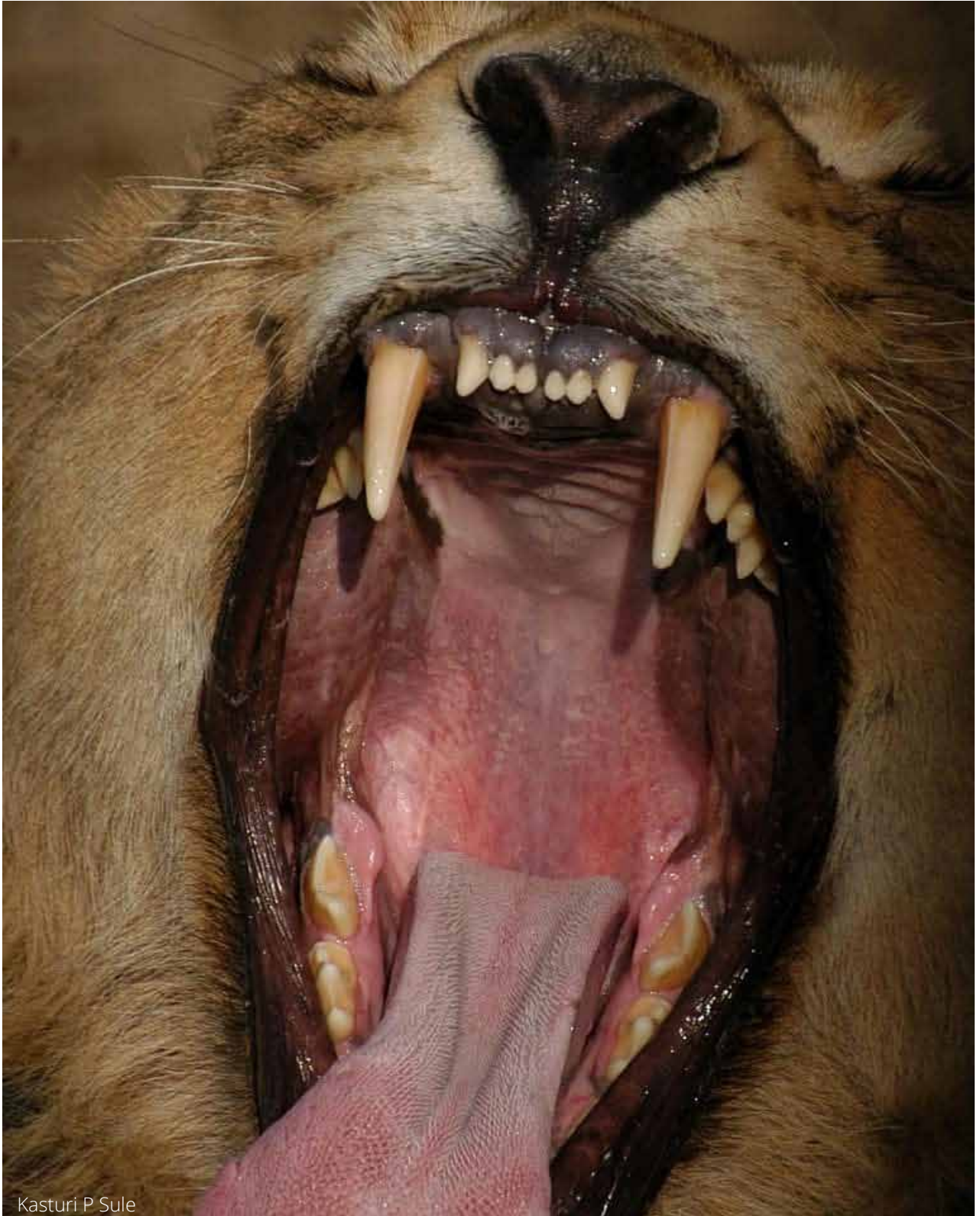


The National Forest Policy of India, formulated in the year 1952, aimed at maintaining 33% of the country's geographical area under forest or tree cover against the world's average of 26.6% at that time thereby reinstating the approach towards progressively greening the country. The enactment of the Forest (Conservation) Act in 1980 and in 1985, the subject of Forestry and Wildlife was shifted from the Ministry of Agriculture to a new Ministry of Environment and Forests to ensure a more focused attention to emerging forestry issues. The national forest policy of 1988 and the formal adoption of community-based forest management (JFM) in 1990, laid down broad guidelines for an institutional arrangement involving the local people to jointly protect and manage the forest resources in return for benefits from it.

The village committees in association with the FD managed specific forest blocks. It has brought a positive effect in forest protection and management. Similarly, under the Environmental (Protection) Act 1986, an EIA notification making Environmental Clearance (EC) became mandatory for expansion or modernization of any activity or for setting up new projects thereby ensuring sustainable development. In 1996, through a landmark judgement by the Apex Court, all matters related to diversion of forests, irrespective of ownership, came within the purview of the government and for any land use change from forests category, prior concurrence of the central government was made mandatory. The stipulated mandatory provision of compensatory afforestation and payment of net present value also made the diversion process more stringent. The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, that seeks to recognize and vest the forest rights and occupation in forest land in forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers has brought a phenomenal change in the way forests are being currently managed.

Thus, the scientific management of forests which had the foundation during pre-independence times has evolved along with the development of the nation in various phases suitably backed by legal enactments. The role of territorial managers has therefore become more and more important in this current phase of democratization of forest management.





Kasturi P Sule

2.1 Challenges of the Forestry Sector

The 21st century is the century of 'Sustainable Development'. Sustainable Forest Management poses new challenges to the foresters. Territorial Managers now have to deal with a multitude of local challenges with a global perspective.

Some of the neo-forest challenges are discussed below.

Increasing India's forest cover and meeting the objectives of sustainable development

Forest Survey of India (FSI) has been carrying out assessment of forest resources in the country since its inception in 1981. Initially, FSI assessed forest resources in different parts of the country through ground inventory and interpretations of aerial photographs which have now been gradually replaced with high resolution satellite imagers sourced from Indian satellites thereby increasing the accuracy of such assessments. The first assessment report of FSI as published in 1987 recorded a forest cover area of 19.49% of the total geographical area in the country. In 1991, the forest cover trend saw a steep fall from 6,40,819 sq. kms. to 6,39,364 sq. km. This trend continued for the next four years. The forest cover was yet again lowered to 6,38,879 sq. km. in 1995. There was a decrease of -0.05% during the year of 1991 to 2001. Whereas in 2001, the forest cover trends saw a bloom of 2.35% as compared to the forest cover trends from 2005 to 2011. The forest cover was 6,92,027 sq. km. in 2011, and by 2013, it increased to 6,97,898 sq. km.

There was an increase of 0.18% in the total geographical area of forest as compared to that of the year 2011. In 2015, the forest cover area increased to 3,775 sq. kms. as compared to its growth in 2013. The percentage of growth in the forest cover area to the total geographical area increased by 0.11% as compared to that of the year 2013. The total forest cover in the country as per the 2017 assessment is 7,08,273 sq. km.



Rakhi Nanda

The recent assessment of 2019 states that the forest cover has increased to 7,12,249 sq. km., which is 21.67% of the geographical area with 3,976 sq. km. area newly added under various classes of the forest. From the trends it is evident that despite having 2% of the world's geographic area, supporting 17% of the world's human population and 17% of the world's livestock population, India continues to add on to its forest cover. While this must be appreciated well because this is achieved by a 'developing country' of growing economy with all the efforts to alleviate poverty, time has now come to support more intensive management and economic gains from the afforested areas.

India Needs Wood

Although India has more than one-fifth of its land under forest cover, Indian forests contribute only 6.4% of the demand for wood. At present, logging operations in natural forests have been minimized due to environmental concerns. Most of the wood demand is met by trees outside forests and by import. With increasing need for wood and promotion of 'Wood is Good' there is an increasing need to devise working plans for sustainable harvesting taking into account local terrain and climate-change induced changes.



Population Pressure and Forest Degradation

Globally, population growth is invariably identified as a fundamental driver of land-use change, including deforestation and forest degradation [<https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/deforestation-and-forest-degradation>]. Intense grazing is another major cause of forest and land degradation. In India, an estimated 78% of the forests are exposed to grazing and about 270 million cattle graze in them although the carrying capacity of these forests is estimated at just 30 million cattle [Dixit, A. K., Singh, M. K., Roy, A. K., Reddy, B. S., & Singh, N. (2015)].

Trends and contribution of grazing resources to livestock in different states of India. Range Management and Agroforestry, 36(2), 204-21]. Thus, livestock grazing and population pressure are a key reason for ongoing forest degradation and the preponderance of open forests.

Combating encroachment, timber smugglers and sand mafia

The most pressing challenge faced by the forestry sector in India is encroachment. Nearly 2%, of India's total forest area is occupied by encroachers. Encroachment removal is considered the most important job of a Territorial DFO as much as the issues of illegal tree felling to dealing with organized mafia for removal of minor minerals (Sand). Such encroachment or excessive anthropogenic activities inside pristine forests leads to forest fragmentation and degradation. Indirectly it leads to increased human-wildlife conflict and loss of biodiversity.



Climate Change Impact

The adverse impact of climate change is becoming more and more visible in the global forests [Singh, P., Singh, R. P., & Srivastava, V. (Eds.). (2020). Contemporary Environmental Issues and Challenges in Era of Climate Change. Springer]. The consequences of climate change on the monsoon pattern and natural calamities, and its impact on crop production, receding glaciers, biodiversity, land degradation, desertification and soil erosion has become evident in our forests. Carbon sequestration and storage due to retaining a healthy forest is being considered as a viable and acceptable climate-change mitigation strategy.

The existing forests and areas outside forests need to be managed optimally for maintaining optimum size of carbon sinks. This would require more international understanding so that it is accepted for global funding. Although research has been started by the government in this sector, it requires considerable time to address the issue in a holistic manner.

Changing Political and Institutional Environment

By the enactment of Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, forest governance has witnessed once again a paradigm shift in terms of being people- inclusive and decentralized. At one hand it has generated much concern for the conservation of forests as inviolate areas away from anthropogenic influence, in several areas it has also helped in reinstating the genuine livelihood rights of the tribal communities residing in such residing areas. It also assigns responsibilities of forest conservation and assistance to local communities. The challenge before a Territorial Manager is to address this dichotomy especially during the transition years and come up with some novel and innovative approaches of shared governance model.





Series #10
Chandrapur



Tawny coster

Don't judge them by their lazy flight. They secrete nauseating chemical if threatened. Ya, appearances can be damn deceptive!

2.2 The Reigning Queens

Dr Savita, 1985 (PCCF& HoFF, Himachal Pradesh)

A natural born leader, she has many firsts to her credit. Prior to becoming the first women head of forest force in Himachal Pradesh, She was also the first woman Director of Forest Research Institute in its history of 114 years. A PhD in 'Governance Issues in Forest Management' from FRI (Deemed) University, one of the most remarkable feats in her career is renovation of the silviculture museum – FRI's unique feature. This museum has a modernised gallery that enables visitors to understand the evolution and historic events of forestry in India. Dr. Savita says, "The institute takes its educational role very seriously and hopes the students and other visitors of FRI will be better informed about the role of forests in saving the environment and be inspired to plant more trees."



Renovation and MODernization of Silviculture Museum Gallery after 88 years of its creation

Forest officer with many firsts to her credit

PRATIBHA CHAUDHAN

Times Now Correspondent

SHIMLA, SEPTEMBER 3 With several firsts to her credit in her 35-year illustrious career, Dr Savita Sharma has become the first-ever woman Indian Forest Services (IFS) officer to head the Forest Department in Himachal.

"It could be a coincidence but I have many firsts in my career as I was the first woman IFS officer, who joined the West Bengal cadre in 1987 and, later again, first woman officer to join the Himachal cadre after my marriage in 1988," says Dr Savita. She has succeeded her husband Ajay Kumar, who retired as the head of the Forest Department (HoF). While her husband belongs to Kangra, she hails from Delhi. Punjab might have got



'MAY BE COINCIDENCE'

It could be a coincidence but I have many firsts in my career as I was the first woman IFS officer, who joined the West Bengal cadre in 1987 and, later again, the first woman officer to join the Himachal cadre after my marriage in 1988. Dr Savita Sharma, 40

its first woman Chief Secretary now but Himachal has had four woman Chief Secretaries. Rajendra Bhattacharya, Rajwant Sandhu, Asha Swarup and Harinder Hira.

It is also for the first time that the two seniormost IFS officers are women. While Dr Savita is from the 1985 batch, Archana Sharma of the 1986 batch is the Principal Chief Conservator Forest (Wildlife) and also the Chief Wildlife Warden, Divisional Forest Officer (Headquarters) Preeti is from the 2013 batch.

Having done her schooling and most college education from Delhi, she has held several important positions at the Centre and Dehradun, where some premiere forest institutes are located. She became the first woman Principal of

the Central Academy for State Forest Services, Dehradun. Later, she had the honour of being the first woman Deputy Director General and later Director General of the Forest Research Institute (FRI), Dehradun. She happened to be its first woman Director General in the FRI's 117-year-old history.

"I have been privileged to be a woman officer, having best of both worlds," she says, while dismissing having ever faced gender discrimination. She says having headed the Wildlife wing for more than a year, she has taken pride in ensuring the release of the endangered chir pheasants and western tragopan, whose breeding and conservation has been undertaken at Sarabhan and Chail.



Smt. Shobha R., 1986 (PCCF& HoFF, Telangana)

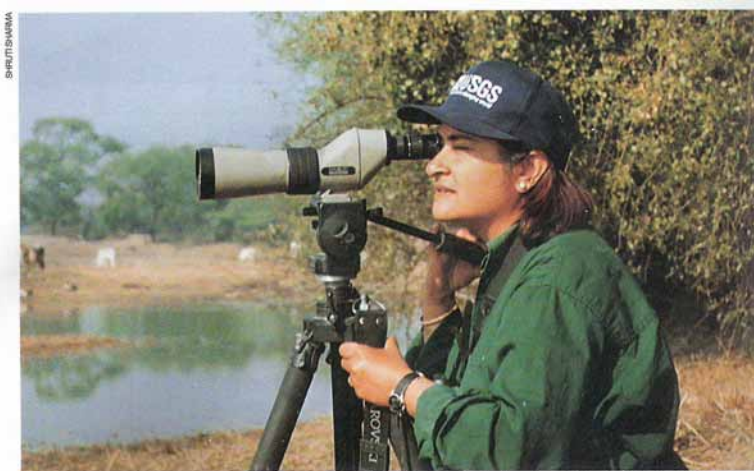


The major tussle between forest and other departments finds its roots in the form of forest clearances. The Forest Department has been painted in a negative light because of the pendency in the clearances for development projects. R. Sobha (Batch: 1986, Cadre: Telangana), has been instrumental in changing the face of the department as FCA nodal officer. The first lady officer to hold the post of Head of the Forest Force in the Telangana state, R. Sobha has set a benchmark by bringing changes to the conventional working style of the Department in whichever capacity she has worked. She has contributed immensely to the development of the infant state of Telangana by obtaining final clearances in a systematic manner in the shortest possible span of time for several infrastructure projects, including irrigation projects, drinking water projects of Mission Bhagheeratha and laying of new roads for connectivity to remote areas. Telangana Government has recognised efficiency of the officer and has awarded her with State Excellence Award.

Smt. Sobha never compromised when it came to ecological needs. The proposal of conducting a uranium survey and exploration in 83 sq. km. area of the Amrabad Tiger Reserve by the Department of Atomic Energy has been given in principle approval by Central Government agencies. Still, based on the field reports of DFOs concerned, she has strongly rejected the proposal since it can cause large feelings and disturbance to wildlife. Her work on forest clearances is a 'classic case study' of balancing environment and development.

Dr Shruti Sharma, 1986 (PCCF& HoFF, Rajasthan)

Wildlife management in India is synonymous with the initiatives shown by Ms. Shruti Sharma, and her significant work in Keoladeo National Park, to revive and enhance the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of this UNESCO designated World Heritage Site. The National park is an artificial man-made ecosystem that required intensive management from ensuring a continuous water supply into its lakes and removal of weeds such as *Paspalum* to maximise the stopover of the thousands of transcontinental migratory birds. During her chequered career spanning over 3 decades she has also served as a faculty at the forest academy and also with the Forest Research Institute where she conducted research on medicinal plants. She has received several national and state level awards in recognition of her works and has also featured in the documentary 'Pride of India' made by Ministry of External Affairs.



Shruti Sharma, the first woman to be appointed as the Director of a national park (Keoladeo) in India.



2.3 Territorial Management

With the increasing changes in legal, institutional and political setup in the forest management, the managers of these vast resources have to be strong and innovative to balance both development and ecology needs. The various achievements attained in the field of forestry have been made possible because of the committed army of Indian Forest Service officers which includes a brigade of brave, hardworking, dedicated lady forest officers a.k.a 'Green Queens'. Of the total 1490 forest divisions in the country [<http://egreenwatch.nic.in/Masters/Public/DivisionsViewList.aspx?idq=18>], nearly forty percent divisions are territorial with several having overlapping mandate of managing forest land. It is precisely this reason that territorial postings are still considered as the most prestigious and challenging with several states posting only IFS officers as mandated under cadre posts. The erstwhile male bastion of fighting with encroachers and timber mafia has long been demolished with several young women IFS officers making a mark as territorial DFOs. From nursery management to encroachment removal, women IFS have improved various aspects of forestry with innovative-customised solutions to the local issues.

The various aspects of forestry that Territorial Managers deal with are:

- ✓ Nursery Management
- ✓ Working Plan Operations
- ✓ Plantation Works
- ✓ Fire management
- ✓ JFMC
- ✓ Minor Forest Produce Management
- ✓ Encroachment Removal
- ✓ Forest Protection
Prevention of Smuggling activities
- ✓ Sensitizing Local People
towards forest-livelihood balance





" Because Their lives are entwined with the forests "

2.3.1 Nursery Management

Good management of nurseries is fundamental to producing good quality seedlings and good quality seedlings are the foundation of any planting programme. Maintaining a good quality nursery is an important job for all Territorial Managers as the success of plantation drive is directly proportional to the quality of saplings. In 2018, when **Meenakshi C.** (Batch: 2009, Cadre: Kerala) was made the Conservator of Forests in Kerala's Central Region, her aim was to eliminate the age-old use of polythene bags to raise seedlings, and increase the awareness among youngsters about the positive effects of greenery in urban areas. Consequently, from January 2019 onwards, Meenakshi and her team started experimenting with various sustainable materials such as bamboo shoots, coconut shells, and gunny bags to grow the saplings and finally ended with coir containers. These cone-shaped coir containers have perfect water retention capacity, and the material is just right – neither too dense nor too thin – thus allowing the roots to grow unhindered. Coir is also high in 'lignin,' a cellulose-like material responsible for its durability. Apart from this, the containers can be planted along with the sapling, making it a completely zero-waste product and process.

Meenakshi, along with her team, has safely managed to distribute 40 lakh saplings, raised in coir containers, through the week of Van Mahotsav, 2019. The containers which have successfully tested during the summer, are now being tested for durability for heavy rains. If the test is a success, these coir-containers – the eco-friendly innovation – will revolutionize the nursery management by reducing tons of plastic waste.



Kerala IFS Uses Coir To Prevent 90 Lakh Plastic Bags From Reaching Landfills!
Kerala: In order to eliminate the age-old use of polythene bags to raise seedlings, this Kerala's IFS Officer has introduced coir containers.
thebetterindia.com

Revival of indigenous species is the area of interest for **Jayashree Naiding** (Batch: 2013, Cadre: Assam). She has exclusively designed and standardized successful nursery protocols for indigenous species. A daughter-of-the-soil, as the first women IFS officer from the Karbi tribe, she has shown exemplary courage and determination to take up the cause of improving the quality of native forests. Her efforts to conserve the rich biodiversity in her forest division of upper Assam were lauded and globally acknowledged at the Annual Balipara Foundation Awards-2016.



2.3.2 Plantation Works

From time immemorial, the Forest Department is known for its plantation activities. With most of the states adopting massive afforestation programmes, the plantation activities have become a major part of the workshare of the Territorial Managers.

When it comes to plantation activities, the concept of 'land bank creation' by **Vasvi Tyagi** (Batch: 2004, Cadre: Haryana) needs a special mention. While she was working as DCF, Panipat, she motivated panchayats to provide land to the Forest department for plantations as Haryana is a forest-deficit state. This is a nearly impossible task as a state which is heavily dependent on agriculture, panchayats usually lease land for agricultural activities for their income. After her untiring efforts, she got the first of its kind project approved tender by the FDA in the state solely for panchayats and covered 358 acres of land in 2009-10.



Plantation in degraded lands require special care as they are prone to failure. **Shalini Raina** (Batch: 2001, Cadre: Chhattisgarh) and **Satovisha Samajder** (Batch: 2010, Cadre: Chhattisgarh) have proved an excellent combination of a CCF-DFO duo to successfully converted completely fallow degraded revenue land to a lush green forest. In a 50 ha land, where previously plantations had failed twice, plantation was done under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 2009 and around 1.2 lakhs plants were planted having survival rate of 85%-90%. Plantations are now handed over to panchayats who have taken the responsibility of the protection of the area. The area now shows rise in their water table too.



Another effort worth mentioning here is the plantations taken up by **Rinku Kumari** (Batch: 2013, Cadre: Odisha) in poor soil with aluminium-ore deposits which make survival of plantations a big struggle. She ensures that plantations are well planned and located with great care. Ms. Kumari joined the cadre in 2015 and landed in Sambalpur district. The district is known for its illegal mining and poaching of wild animals. On the eve of Women's Day, with the help of only one female forest guard, Ms. Pranati Mishra, she caught hold of six ten-wheeled dumpers and two JCBs involved in mining activities inside forest areas and could nab the accused on the spot and later on handed over for judicial custody. Apart from this one incidence, many more cases were booked under her guidance, which considerably reduced the pressure of mining from the area. After that, Ms. Kumari was posted as the first lady officer in one of the most difficult districts of Odisha, Dhenkanal district. Presence of one wildlife sanctuary, one small zoo, 62 RF areas and 200+ elephants roaming in urban areas, with a threat of electrocution, train hit, road accidents, poaching has made her task very challenging in the very beginning. This district is one of the highest human-wildlife conflict prone areas in the country. Creation of new enclosures and improvement of existing enclosures at zoo and creation of interpretation centre to increase inflow of tourists, initiation of one project related to habitat improvement for elephants to reduce human-wildlife conflict were some of the initiatives taken by her.



In collaboration with the district hospital, many free medical checkups for staff and the local population were taken up. Payment towards retirement benefits, life insurance and inclusion of health benefits to daily wage labourers through service providers were ensured and enforced, resulting in better coordination from staff. In a tenure of one-and-a-half years, these were the initiatives undertaken by Ms. Kumari.

"First they will ask you, 'Why are you doing this?' Then they will ask you, 'How did you do it?' So, don't be afraid of being a beginner. Even if you fail, you can guide."

-Rinku Kumari (Batch: 2013, Cadre: Odisha)

The East Godavari district is a cyclone-prone area and precious lives and millions of rupees worth properties are destroyed by nature's fury every year. **Dr Nandini Salaria** (Batch: 2013, Cadre: Andhra Pradesh) has provided an ecosystem-based solution by undertaking Mangrove and other species plantation. A total of 100 ha mangrove plantation and 180 ha shelterbelt plantations have been done in only two planting seasons, to protect the coastal areas as a mitigation measure



against the vagaries of climate change. Restoring mangrove ecosystem through a special technique called 'fishbone method' has been taken on a large scale which involves making channels in the form of fishbone and allowing mangrove seedlings coming along with tidal waters to establish. It is highly technical and successful. All work is done by the forest department through involvement of the local fisher community, which provided large-scale employment, empowering the local population. These man-made plantations have now turned into rich biodiversity hotspots and are abode for a variety of fishes, otters, snakes, molluscs, fishing cats, jackals among other wildlife.

Series #31
Valley of Flowers



Azure Sapphire

Male butterflies engage in mud puddling to absorb minerals. But some take it from even from rocks.
Stop at nothing!

Series #33
Doon Valley



Rustic

Found in all types of forests.
Life is better in the forests!

2.3.3 Urban Forest Management

In urban areas, territorial postings come with their own challenges. Since land is a valuable asset here, encroachment is a major challenge. Also, developmental projects demand reduction of the green cover which is already at its bare minimum. The awareness level of urban masses are high, hence projects suiting the needs of city-dwellers have to be uniquely designed and implemented. The officers who had these urban territorial postings had joined hands with various stakeholders to implement the common goal of greening the cities along with improving biodiversity.

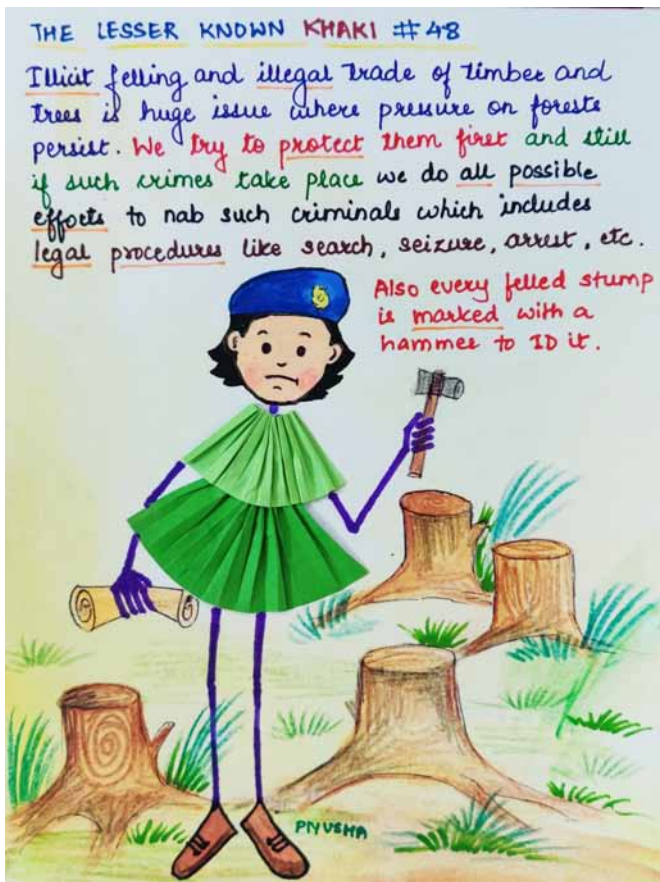


Dipika Bajpai,

Dipika Bajpai (Batch: 2010, Cadre: Karnataka), DCF, Bengaluru Urban Division, clearly understood this dynamic and worked actively towards sensitizing the masses about the significance of protection of forests. She has initiated public participation in mass planting programmes and created a sense of ownership with the existing forests. She successfully recovered 149 acres and 13 guntas of forest-land that were encroached upon. This is a significant achievement, as recovering even a single hectare of land from urban areas is a Himalayan task given the pressure on the land.

While posted in Gurugram division, **Vasvi Tyagi** (Batch: 2004, Cadre: Haryana, mentioned in ‘Plantation Work’ section as well) looked forward to rope in business houses in conservation work of the forest department. She took an initiative to involve the civil society and engaged the NGO, I am Gurgaon, to develop Chakkarpur-Wazirabad bund into a 5.2-km linear strip forest which could be used by locals as a jogging-and-recreational area. Being in the middle of the city and running parallel to Chakkarpur Drain, this area was full of filth and was being used as a garbage dump by the locals. With Ms. Tyagi’s initiative, the bund was surveyed and delineated. ‘American Express’, a corporation, was roped in to fund the project. The initiative was started in 2015, and today, the 5.2-km long stretch has been rejuvenated and rehabilitated with trees and shrubs. There is a cycling and a jogging track on which the locals now enjoy their daily rides and runs/walks. The linear patch of forest which once was a dumping ground is now a beautiful green corridor in the midst of the city.

2.3.4 Forest Protection



One of the most important jobs of a territorial forest officer is forest protection. The very existence of the department depends on how the forests are well protected. It has various facets like encroachment removal, boundary pillar construction patrolling, prevention of illegal cutting and transit etc.

Prevention of Illegal Felling

Forests are synonymous with trees. Illegal cutting of trees disturbs the entire ecosystem and makes the forest prone to encroachment and ultimately loss of our precious forests. Keeping this in mind, our officers have taken multifold efforts to prevent illegal felling.

In the era when lady officers were thought to be fit only for social forestry and subordinates preferred to turn their backs rather than salute a lady, **Sunita Singh** (Batch: 1987, Cadre: Maharashtra) took charge of West Nashik division as DCF. The area is well-known for illicit cutting and conflicts with tribals. After careful study of the entire terrain, she identified possible points of extraction and made camping sites and patrolling plans specially for monsoons. A second line of staff was also readied as a back-up. With no mobile network and the highly inaccessible camps, a vehicle moved every day from the Gujarat side to collect status reports from key points. The drill was repeated each monsoon season. All this effort ensured zero transit of illegal timber through rivers during her tenure. Ms. Singh's zero tolerance for under-reporting combined with frequent beat inspections also put a stop on under-reporting of illicit cutting. She analysed the annual pattern of cutting and building of new houses by tribals which helped in raids and seizing timber. She had to adopt innovative methods and surprise elements as tribals generally grouped together and would not allow seized material to be moved. This activism led to many conflicts but it did not deter the officer from taking up strong actions. Her efforts were recognised and she was awarded the State Gold Medal for best forest management for the year 1999-2000. More importantly, she could change the stereotyped perception of lady officers.

Lakhimpur Kheri North Division, UP, being one of the most densely-populated areas of the state, protection was the most important activity for the Forest Department. When **Dr Shobhita Agarwal** (Batch: 2011, Cadre: Gujarat) got the opportunity to work in this beautiful Terai landscape, she put a full stop to the forest offences by taking many proactive steps. During the tenure, she has booked the largest number of forest offences, strengthened the staff by providing basic amenities and boosting their morale, and has done awareness campaigns. She has also started up an ‘informer-based patrolling protocol’ for the area using local shopkeepers, local people at tactically important places. This had a very positive impact on not only illegal cutting but also gave a safe haven to the tigers as the area was considered to be having the highest tiger density.



One more officer who has set forest protection as her priority right from the very start of her career is **Satovisha Samajder** (Batch: 2010, Cadre: Chhattisgarh). The longest festival in the world, Bastar Dussehra in Chhattisgarh, as per tradition, requires huge amounts of timber to erect a machan (hut). When Satovisha was serving as forest officer in the region during the festival in 2014, she received a letter from the tehsildar of Jagdalpur, a city in the tribal district of Bastar, demanding over 1000 sal trees to construct a temporary hut for the festival. Since these trees take 30 years to grow, she decided to offer them an alternative with eucalyptus trees, which takes lesser time to grow, are good for agroforestry and provide income to farmers. Meetings were taken with tribal heads making them understand how for a one day fancy of king and queen, the forest which belongs to them is getting destroyed. After some initial retaliation and political opposition, the matter got sorted out and the hut was constructed with eucalyptus trees. However, still uncertain about the outcome, she decided to patrol the forests of Machkot, a heavily Naxal-affected area, for 11 nights to ensure no illegal tree felling could take place.

Satovisha also ensured that the money from the sold trees went to regenerating the areas destroyed by deforestation. This decision was formed after inputs from many local communities in the area, understanding their plight and coming up with a reasonable alternative. With this, a 100-year tradition of cutting sal trees was broken and the forests were saved. As Janjgir DFO, Satovisha has also removed 300+ hectare of forest encroachment from Reserve Forest. She made a big team of forest staff and female police. It was the biggest team and for the first time, bulldozers were used by the Forest Department.



Controlling of Illegal Mining

Forests, home to indigenous plants and wildlife, are also resource-rich. Most of the mines are located in and around forest areas. Throughout the history of conservation, the Forest Department has to check the illegal mines inside the forest.

As DCF, **Madhu Sharma's** (Batch: 1986, Cadre: Karnataka), major contribution is towards the implementation of 'Forest Laws' in Reserve Forest (RF) and wildlife areas. As per the laws of the land, she closed the iron mining in Kudremukh National Park though it was a profit-making project of the Government of India. For her work in forestry, she was chosen as the first recipient of 'Young Forestry Exchange Scheme' Award in 1999, out of all the Commonwealth countries.



Passion for nature and wildlife led IIT-ian **Neha Verma** (Batch: 2005, Cadre: Uttarakhand) and her husband (Amit Verma) to quit their high-paying jobs in the United States, after six years of work-stint in the IT industry, and return to India to join the Indian Forest Service. The passion was reflected in her commitment to the job. When working as DFO, Ramnagar Forest Division, she strictly controlled rampant illegal mining. She also executed magisterial powers to order eviction of encroachments carried out by 12 high-profile resorts in the forest area at the periphery of the Corbett Tiger Reserve. She received appreciation by Hon'ble Chief Justice of Uttarakhand High Court in judgements for bold and just stand taken on encroachment eviction.

Encroachment Removal



Sonal Vrishni, (Batch : 2011 , Cadre : Karnataka) working as DCF, Haveri, from 2016-18 undertook encroachment eviction drive in disturbed area of Hirekerur range where around 1500 ha were encroached since 20 years. The drive saw a remand of 80 persons and the arrest of 30 miscreants who were trying to encroach the Reserve Forest area in Kamalapur RF, Tadakanhalli RF, where already plantations were raised in 2008. The politically driven locals were attempting to cut and burn the plantations for want of land under FRA, which was thwarted by her team in concerted effort with district administration and police. As many as 20 forest offence cases were booked in two years and chargesheets were submitted to court for further criminal proceedings. This proved to be the deterrent for the public and no further encroachment attempts were reported.



Sunita Singh , 1987 Maharashtra recalls that in an era where lady officers were thought to be fit only for desk jobs or subordinates preferred to turn their backs rather than salute a lady, strange twist of events landed her as DCF of West Nashik territorial forest division. This Division was known for illicit cutting and conflicts with locals and tribals. Because of steep slope and inaccessible terrain and ranges bordering Gujarat, there were several vulnerable points for illegal felling and hoarding of the teak and khair trees.

She took up to systematic patrolling and identified the possible points of extraction, made camping sites and patrolling plans specially for monsoons. The zero tolerance for non-reporting combined with frequent beat inspections significantly brought down the number of illegal cases. As a young officer it felt good to be lauded with a Star Gold Medal for best forest management in the year 1999–2000. But more important to her was that she could make a dent in the stereotyped perception of women amongst seniors and subordinates.

In July 2019, **Jayoti Banerjee**, 2003 Maharashtra faced an unfortunate situation while on additional charge as Field Director Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Mumbai. It had rained heavily and she went to the site on 'humanitarian grounds' to check on the report of extreme water-logging and flooding. The encroacher huts had also been badly damaged. At the spur of the moment, while assessing the situation, the people turned aggressive and almost attacked her and the team by pelting stones etc. She and her team had a narrow escape, but she felt as if she had stared death in the face. Jayoti strongly feels that the lynch-fest season against forest officials in the line of duty must be stopped at all costs and the department should be suitably armed to do the same.



Khyati Mathur, 2005 Rajasthan recalls that 2009 to 2011, during her first tenure as a DFO in Bharatpur territorial division in the State of Rajasthan, where she dealt with the problem of illegal stone mining conducted by organized gangs of local communities living in the vicinity of forest land in the district. The problem was multipronged, and was also aggravated by the way the forest area had been selected for notification. The forest land of Bandh Baretha Wildlife sanctuary was an erstwhile revenue land used extensively for stone mining and at the behest of some local people, it was included in the declaration of the sanctuary. This led to general increase in the trend of illegal mining of the Bharatpur pink sandstone which predominantly exists in the forest area till date. Thus, during this entire period, I spent a lot of my time and along with my team of forest staff, tackled the mining issue with minimal or no support from all quarters. So much so that my staff was marauded, our squads were pelted, and attempted to burn alive. Some of them survived serious injuries. Nevertheless, with persistent effort, the illegal mining in the area was brought under control.

When it comes to encroachment removal, a name not to be missed is **Basu Kannojia** (Batch: 2010, Cadre: Madhya Pradesh). This encroachment eviction specialist is known for her fearlessness. Ever since she took charge in 2014, Basu Kannojia has been fighting against forest mafia for unlicensed sale of trees, illegal settlers on forest lands, miners and wildlife-related crimes. She has also taken local politicians and government officials head-on by sending notices against the construction of houses in the forest area of Umaria district, MP, to the Collector and Superintendent. Over the years, she has successfully freed more than 6,000 hectares of encroached land in Madhya Pradesh. She has been in the epicentre of threats, and controversies. But that has not stopped the officer from discharging her duties with uprightness.



For encroachment removal, Basu adopts a step-by-step procedure. She starts with studying the locals and identifying schemes that could provide alternative livelihood or rehabilitation. Patrol or inspection is the next step which also makes for a subtle warning. Often, to ensure the quality check, she makes surprise inspections.

A discussion is held with the locals and legal route is taken only if there is resistance. In case of legal action, Preliminary Offence Report (POR), equivalent to an FIR, is filed against the concerned people, which is usually enough to get the work done. Post eviction, the Forest Department covers the land through plantation. The process lasts anywhere between 30 days and four months. Over the years, she has successfully freed over 6,000 hectares of encroached land in MP, and it is immensely commendable given that encroachment removal is the toughest of all the protection tasks.

Boundary Demarcation is a proactive step to prevent encroachments from happening. A topper of her batch, **Lavanya Bhukya** (Batch: 2017, Cadre: Telangana), FDO Bellampally, has since the beginning of her career started to focus on large scale boundary demarcation in risk-prone RF areas, thereby reducing the risk of forest-lands being encroached.





Sonali Ghosh



Vijaya Ratne

2.3.5 For the People, by the People, of the People

The Forest Department reaches to the remotest of the villages and works for the welfare of the most backward communities of forest-dwellers and tribals. When women lead the territorial posts, this social angle is better dealt with. With the trend during the 1980s to increase the area under forest and tree cover through plantation on non-forest areas, the role of rural women became of utmost concern in order to achieve this objective. Sensitization therefore plays a major role in forest protection. It ensures that the message of conservation reaches the grassroot levels and goes beyond the Forest Department level.



Kasturi P Sule

Thenmozhi V. (Batch: 2015, Cadre: Sikkim), while serving in her former cadre of Assam in Charduar range of Sonitpur West division of Assam, found illegal cutting of sal trees as a major protection challenge. The shift system in the patrolling schedule was also revived under the guidance of her senior, yet another daring woman forest officer **Davinder Suman**, DFO (Batch: 2012, Cadre: Assam-Meghalaya). Three teams were formed, each comprising 4-5 staff, with at least 1 AFPF (Assam Forest Protection Force) battalion staff with weapon and GPS handset will go for patrolling every eight hours. Thus protection was ensured on a 24x7 basis. While booking offences, many were claiming that they were unaware of the legal punishment for unauthorised entry into RFs. So she thought of sensitizing the neighbouring community about the necessity of protecting and conserving the forest and wildlife and the punishment for violating the law of the land. This is done through bilingual oral announcements made in Assamese and English by mounting loudspeakers in department vehicles, covering every habitation in the vicinity of RFs. This has brought tremendous impact as witnessed by the drastic fall in the number of persons collecting firewood through head-loads and cycle-loads from next day onwards, ensuring forest protection.



Davinder Suman and Thenmozhi V.



2.3.6 Specialized service -specialized works

All Territorial Managers are mandated to carry out forestry activities according to the working plan. This includes felling, assisted natural regeneration work, soil and moisture conservation works etc. Sustainable harvest of forests not only generates income to the forest but also helps forest grow as efficient 'carbon sinks'. **Mamta Sanjeev Dubey** (Batch: 1986, Cadre: Uttar Pradesh), while serving in Uttar Pradesh Forest Corporation, had introduced mechanical felling to save time and cost, and this resulted in increased profits for the region under her control.



Working plan document is the basic tool that guides the management of forests in any territorial Forest Division. In order to address the paradigm shift in forest management a holistic approach has to be adopted and to achieve the same.

The revised National Working Plan Code was conceived in the form of a project, 'Revision of National Working Plan Code 2004', that was assigned to the Forest Research Institute (FRI), Dehradun. **Neena Khandekar** (Batch: 1995, Cadre: Maharashtra) along with Dr. SP. Singh, another IFS officer and her predecessor of the Head of the Resource, Survey Management (RSM) Division of FRI, developed the draft National Working Plan Code. In keeping with the objectives of the project, the National Working Plan Code addressed issues like climate change, carbon sequestration and has incorporated the criteria and indicators (C&I) for sustainable management of forests. It has provisions that allow for the shifting of forest resource management objectives to biodiversity. In another major shift from the previous code, the National Working Plan Code provides for grid-based systematic sampling using Geographic Information System (GIS).



It is the first step to monitor and assess forest resources and provide new qualitative and quantitative information at forest division level which could be integrated and up scaled to state and national level in a standardised framework. It recognises the rights of forest people under Forest Rights Act, 2006 and focuses on management of NTFPs including medicinal and aromatic plants in recognition of their economic and livelihood significance. Forest certification finds a place in the revised Working Plan Code.

Dr .Surabhi Rai (Batch: 2005, Cadre: AGMUT) as DFO Bomdila, realised the need to conserve the endangered medicinal plants. She worked on ex-situ conservation of medicinal plants through establishment of taxus nurseries, medicinal plants garden based on the Tibetan medicine system. This has been done as per the UNDP guidelines and with the partnership with the local monastery initiated the notification of a Medicinal Plants Conservation Reserve in community-owned land, after prolonged negotiations with an earlier reluctant local community who even banned entry of the earlier DFO in the village. It took months of confidence-building and consistent efforts of this untiring officer. Ms. Rai has also trained local youth for botanisation at the State Forest Research Institute, Itanagar, going beyond the mandate.



Surabhi Rai



Amrita Dutta

Amrita Dutta, DFO (Batch: 2010, Cadre: West Bengal), appalled by the menstrual health of women in forest-fringe villages of poverty-stricken Purulia, stepped beyond the forestry mandate for a targeted menstrual hygiene drive. Over a year, as a part of the project in collaboration with a local social enterprise, more than 11,500 sanitary napkins and 2,000 innerwear sets have been distributed to over 2,200 women in nine villages in the Hura Range, Kangsabati North Division, Purulia. Awareness camps are conducted on each distribution day during which women are informed about the appropriate dietary practices that are crucial during menstruation for eliminating debilitating health factors associated with menstruation, such as anemia, lethargy and low nutrition. Additionally, for ensuring holistic wellbeing, medical camps are conducted in cooperation with a local hospital. The drive has resulted in numerous direct health benefits and social benefits.

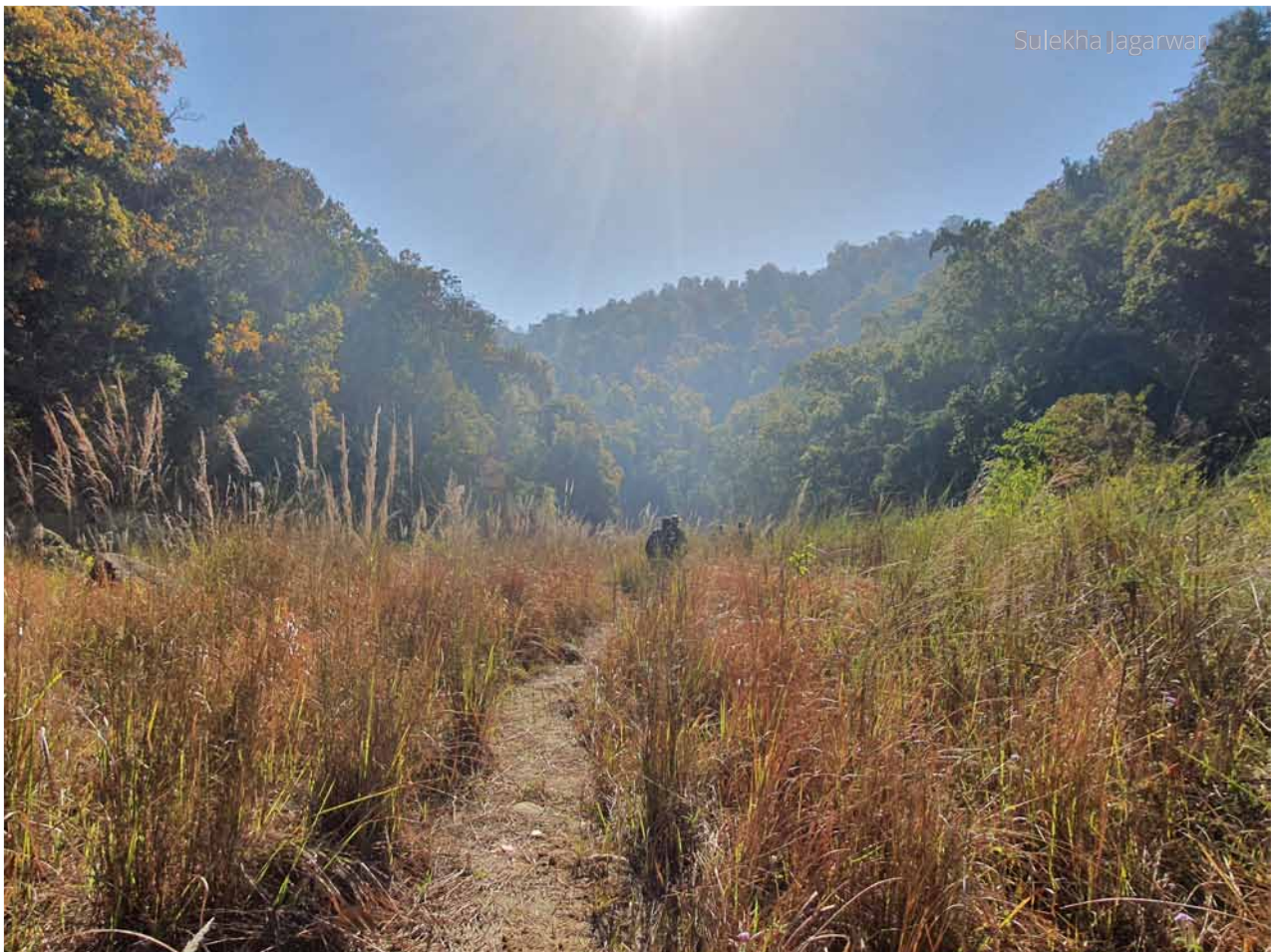
Similarly, Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) are an effective means to involve people in forest conservation. Our officers have made effective use of these committees and have also raised them to new heights. As DFO, Hamirpur, **L. C. Bandana** (Batch: 2012, Cadre: Himachal Pradesh) has implemented 'Samudayik Van Samvardhan Yojana' with the help of JFMC. It comprises a five-year microplan for treatment of 89 ha forest in Hamirpur, comprising plantation of species of local communities' choice, lantana eradication, soil moisture conservation etc.



Madhumitha S., (Batch: 2018, Cadre: Maharashtra) was recently on her Range Attachment at Islapur, Nanded Division, Maharashtra. She recalls that accepting a lady officer as their boss was not difficult for the range staff. They all have felt it is a new change as they have never worked with a 'lady' IFS officer before, and during her initial days, she used to hear remarks such as "First time a lady officer is posted here" a lot. They usually start their conversations with 'Suprabhat Madam and end with 'Jai Hind, sir'! But, Madhumitha has never felt any sort of 'non-acceptance' among the department staff. Surprisingly, even in the remotest villages of this tribal taluka, she has been given warm welcome and people of both gender used to discuss their problems with her without any hesitation. As far as the lady Forest Guards are concerned, they are yet to be accepted as peers. On various occasions, Madhumitha felt the stark difference. Informally the division is, 'Guards' and 'lady Guards'. About the lady Guards, two kinds of narratives exist and both are extremes. One is that, 'She is a lady Guard, how can we ask her to do this? If any problem arises, then how will she manage, we better send a gentlemen Guard to deal with' and ignore them altogether. Another is, 'She gets equal pay and so she has done the same work' and being insensitive about providing basic facilities such as a private space and creche facilities for young mothers who have just returned from maternity leave, though the latter narrative is very less prevalent.



Madhumitha tried to reduce the extremities of both the narratives by taking up few small initiatives. After the very first introductory meeting, she arranged for a separate toilet in the guest house, which used to be a pressing problem faced by lady guards. This was a kind of icebreaking step, and later on, they felt free to discuss any issues with her. Whenever a meeting of range staff was conducted, she insisted that lady Guards should speak up and they should be the first to share the ideas. She made sure in all the Joint Forest Management (JFM) meetings, female Guards coordinated with the Village Sarpanch and helped conduct the meetings. Eventually, the best of the ideas came from those who were hesitant to speak.



Other initiatives taken were ‘All Women Night-Patrolling Team’ and ‘All women Independence Day celebrations’ including parade command, pledge, speech, flag-hoisting that boosted the confidence level of the lady officers of the range.

“I have two important learnings during my training. One, taking the gentlemen officers along towards the path of gender equality is very important. They should not feel that these changes are not against them but for a better team. Second, if opportunities are given, lady officers do the allocated job extremely well”.

Madhumitha S., (Batch: 2018, Cadre: Maharashtra)

Kasturi P Sule , (Batch: 2019, Cadre: Assam-Meghlaya) is one of the youngest fledglings to get wings. She completed her OJT in the notorious Lekhapani forest range of Digboi Division where she was the only woman in the entire division !

“ Just 10-15 days after I took charge I saw a few women standing outside my office and trying to peep inside from the window. After a minutes I asked my staff to call them inside. They came inside quite scared. I asked them if they had any problem or any work . One of them hesitantly replied “Baideo (Assamese word for Madam), we heard that a young girl had come as a range officer. We had just come to see if what we heard was true. We had never thought that a woman and that too this young would sit on this chair ever. We are very happy to see this sight and we all women of this village are very proud to have you here.” This reply just left me stunned and I realised what it meant to ‘break the glass ceiling’ recalls Kasturi when asked about her experience of being the first woman in charge of that range.

During her range training she was strongly supported and welcomed by women from different villages which she mentioned was her prime motivation to go beyond her comfort zone.



She mentions of being exposed to a variety of challenges in forest protection such as the presence of extremism, disputed borders, timber mafias, illegal coal miners and patrolling in the thick rainforests. “Walking for hours in waist deep waters full of leeches and other insects , long treks in the steep hills of Patkai , eating with staff deep inside forests and the rich biodiversity of the rainforests have shaped my perspectives and grown me immensely in the past four months. Forest protection and conservation demands a lot - both physically and mentally - from sleepless nights running behind timber and coal vehicles to positively engaging with the society to garner their support in the cause saving our forests. ” opines Kasturi.

“ I strongly believe that -

Trees grow us faster than we can grow them , so we need to go that extra mile to protect them”

- Kasturi



Kasturi Sule

Kajol Patil, an officer of the 2019 batch, belongs to the Karnataka cadre. She is known for her honesty and accountability through her work related to fire line creations. She is also recalled by her staff at the way she has handled man-animal conflict issues in and around the national park, which is considered one of the toughest issues to be handled. She recalls how the love she received from her staff was unparalleled which also tells us about her gentle and compassionate personality



Monica Kishore Pasupuleti, inducted to the service in 2019 batch and belonging to the Assam cadre, has freshly tasted the experience of field during her on-job training. She was posted in one of the hotspots of Human- Elephant conflict zone- the Borgang range of the Sonitpur East Division, where she slogged in as much hours from dusk to dawn, as usually done during the day owing to nature of the problem at hand. She had full support of her staff due to the empathetic response and solutions to their day to day problems since day 1, which are often overlooked. The fact that she still receives calls from her Range officer to the people on ground, a month after completing her OJT showcases the imprint she had left in her brief stay in the land which was unknown to her a year back.

Kavya Chaturvedi, an officer of the 2020 batch, was posted in Virnoli range of Halyal Division. She is known for her unique perspective towards things which led her to explore and also learn several important things during her range training. In spite of trouble in the local language, she tried to bridge the communication gap between her staff and her which is an important quality of any officer



Vipasha Parul, belonging to the West Bengal cadre. Her modesty is what made her staff look up to her during her OJT. Her timely response where she not only rescued Bulbuls which were illicitly captured and transported but also caught the offenders is an example of the kind of the officer she is



Nisha Kumari, an officer of 2020 batch, belongs to the Andhra Pradesh cadre. She has worked in one of the most sensitive regions of the country for her OJT, Vontimitta range in Kadapa division. She has showed exemplary courage in dealing with cases relating to red sanders smuggling. This was due to her passion towards her job, which helped her keep her staff motivated to work relentlessly towards protection of the forests through her 3-month stint at Vontimitta.



The Queen legacy



1987 Batch



1992 and 1993 Batch

Chapter Three

Women in the Wild

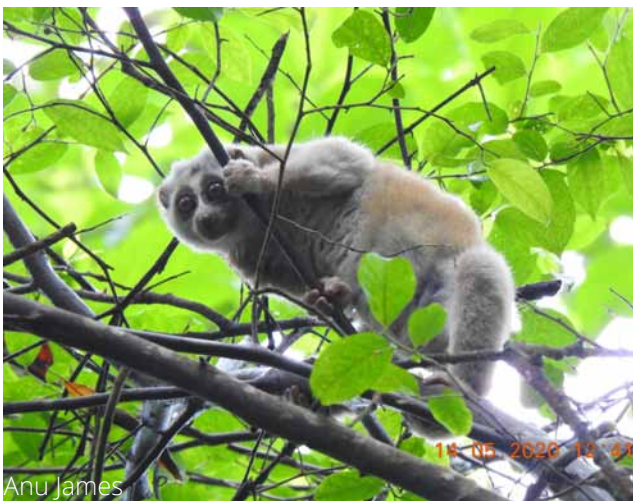


3.0 Keeping their tryst with Gaia-Creation, Protection and Nurture

Conservation of wildlife is an important segment in managing forests and maintaining ecological stability and diversity. India being one of the 17 megadiverse countries in the world boasts to have 7% of the world's biodiversity on just 2.5% of land. With respect to faunal diversity, India has around 7.46% of the world's diversity. This clearly indicates how immense and intense India's role is in conserving this biodiversity.

India has historical evidence of having different practices of wildlife conservation. Maintenance of 'game reserves' which allowed only a limited amount of hunting was a common practice by the medieval kings of India. Many of the present day Protected Areas in India are made out of such game reserves. The indigenous tribes in India have been living with the wildlife from ancient times. The well-known among them are tribes like the Bishnois of Rajasthan who have wildlife conservation as an integral part of their lifestyle. Wildlife like elephants, langurs, tigers, turtles and fish are mentioned in Indian mythologies – linked to revered Gods and celebrated through folklore.

The modern era saw a drastic decline in the wildlife conservation awareness and thereby the diversity and quantity. Taking over forests for profit by the British, the incessant game hunting and rapid population growth that led to habitat destruction put tremendous pressure on biodiversity. From even large charismatic carnivores like the tiger to small creatures like the birds especially vultures and aquatic organisms, all saw a drastic drop in numbers. Even after the independence, it was only in the 1970s that the dwindling amount of wildlife in India became the focus area.



The Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 was a watershed moment in this regard. Since then, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has been actively involved in the conservation and management of the rich wildlife of India through many dimensions. Multitude of efforts were started – declaring Protected Areas, enforcing penalties on culling of animals and strict vigilance against trafficking, supporting research, creating independent organisations in this field, promoting species-specific conservation programmes and so on. The strategies have evolved with experience and adoption of technology such as the transition from species-specific protection to landscape management approach. The use of different technologies and expertise such as population viability analysis, ecosystem approach, sampling techniques, use of radio collars, camera trapping, drones, etc have enhanced data collection, accuracy and analytical ability, thereby helping in more sound management techniques.

1. The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (WLPA), covers the important aspects related to sound management of wildlife, including:

A. In-situ conservation through creation of Protected Areas (Tiger Reserves, National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Tiger Reserves, Conservation and Community Reserves)

Protected Areas act as robust habitat for in-situ protection and reintroduction programmes of wildlife. These areas ensure a disturbance-free habitat giving highest possible protection to wildlife. These areas are not only important for particular targeted species but they also thrive as complex natural ecosystems with minimal anthropogenic interference, thereby maintaining the natural ecological balance in the area. The Protected Areas in India are home to some of the rarest and endangered species of mammals, birds, insects, reptiles, aquatic organisms, plants and microorganisms. The prominent examples could be the Hemis National Park sheltering the endangered snow leopard; the Desert National Park meticulously working to save the few remaining individuals of the great Indian bustard; the Eagle's Nest Sanctuary is home to the very shy and critically endangered white-winged wood duck and is known for new records of birds like the Bugun liocichla and reptiles; the Marine National Parks protect the dugong, sea turtles; while the Eravikulam National Park is the abode of the critically endangered Nilgiri tahr.



A variety of species have dedicated Protected Areas notified for their protection – the Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary for the Golden Langurs, the Wild Ass Sanctuary in the Rann of Kutch, Dachigam National Park for Hangul, Keibul Lamjao National Park for Sangai and so on. Some other Protected Areas are not species-specific but aim at protecting the entire habitat which may be home to a rich diversity of plants and animals. Namdapha National Park, Manas National Park, Govind National Park, Galathea National Park and Bhitarkanika National Park are such examples. Many of these are also the pristine rare ecosystems which are otherwise vulnerable to destruction with anthropogenic influence.



The Sholas of the Western Ghats, the corals along the coasts, the deltas of Sundarbans or the Bugyals of the Himalayas are such examples. Protected Areas are also often where the sources of important rivers in India are located. The Gangotri National Park which has the source of the Ganga, the Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary has the source of Kaveri, the Achanakmar Wildlife Sanctuary protects the sources of many rivers including the Narmada portray how crucial these protected habitats are not only for wildlife but for water security in India as well.

The Protected Areas under the conservation reserve and community reserve give a good opportunity to the locals and civil society organisations to contribute towards wildlife protection. The tribal states of Nagaland and Meghalaya have shown great enthusiasm in creation of such community reserves for suo motu protection of their natural wealth.

The Tiger Reserve approach as initiated in the year 1973 under the aegis of Project Tiger was also a concept that emanated from a species-based conservation approach where the protection of the apex species entailed the protection of all the other species in the food chain. With the declaration of the 51st Tiger Reserve in the country, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has grown from strength to strength to provide an overarching supervisory/coordination role, for the better implementation of Project Tiger in the context of tiger conservation in the country. Similarly, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau is a statutory multi-disciplinary body established by the Government of India under the Ministry of Environment and Forests, to combat organized wildlife crime in the country. The Bureau has its headquarter in New Delhi and five regional offices at Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai and Jabalpur. It is mandated to gather intelligence, coordinate with other agencies to prevent crime related to wildlife in different areas such as trade, culling, smuggling of animal products, etc.

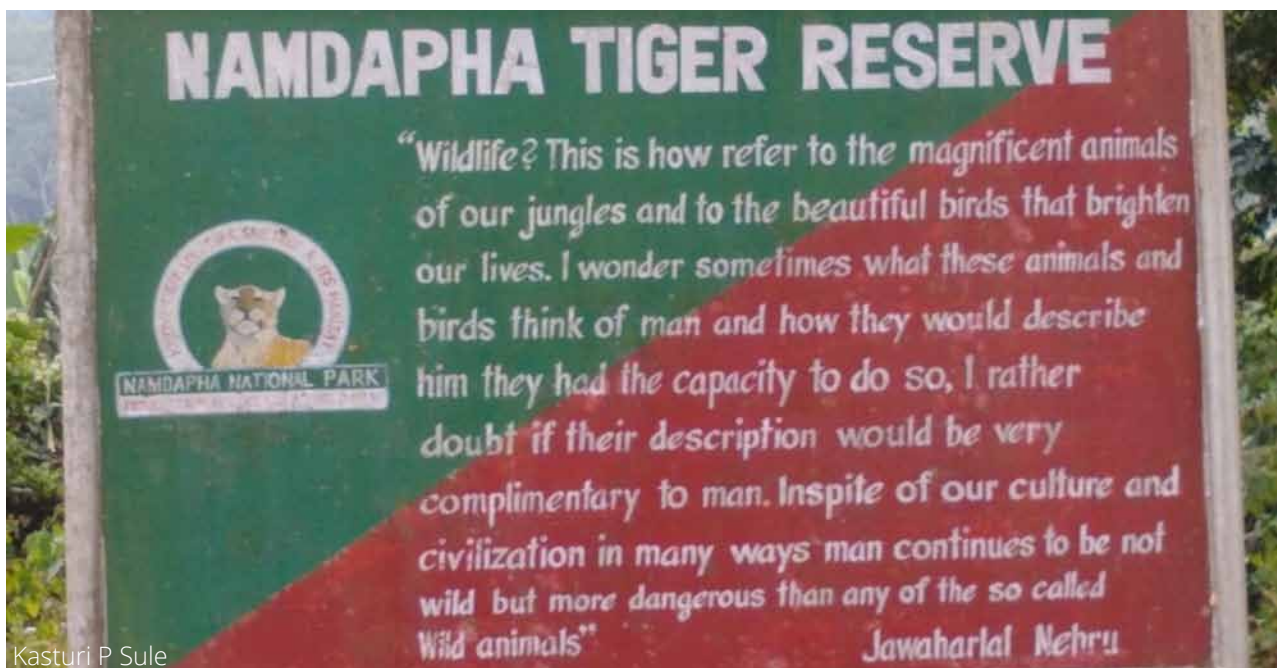


Lavanya Bhukya



Nabanita Ganguly

Protected Areas are hence also emerging as eco-tourism centres, thereby attracting a lot of domestic and international tourists. This triggers a cascade of employment opportunities as vehicle operators, naturalist-guides, hotels and resorts for accommodation, and allied recreational options which actively involve the local communities in the conservation effort and drives them away from forest dependency. This addresses the major problem of human-wildlife conflict when locals ventured into forests for their dependencies. Thus the Protected Areas are serving a variety of purposes.



B. Ex-situ conservation and Establishment and Management of Zoos

Zoos are not only exhibition areas for people to view captive wildlife, but are crucial steps in captive breeding, conservation of rare species, spreading awareness and affection towards wildlife among people – especially the youth and taking the tourism pressure off from the Protected Areas. Zoos in India include all the facilities like zoos, mini zoos, safari parks, animal theme parks, aviaries, butterfly centres, reptile centres where wildlife is kept in captivity.

Thus, for proper maintenance of zoos, WLPA provides statutory provisions for constitution of Central Zoo Authority (CZA), a nodal agency for overseeing the functioning of Zoos and other ex-situ facilities in the country. CZA gives guidelines to all the zoos and conservation centres in India regarding the standards of animal upkeep, housing, food and hygiene. As on today there are 152 recognized zoos in India.

2. The Biological Diversity Act (BDA), 2002

This Act has been created for responsible and sustainable utilization of all kinds of biological resources with a wide interpretation of the term biological resources. This has brought the entire fauna kingdom under it and protects it from exploitative usage. It also deals with equitable sharing of profits obtained from utilization biological resources protecting traditional knowledge of the local communities. This has proven as a support to wildlife protection by protecting even the species that may not be covered under the WPA from exploitation.

It established institutions at three levels:

- The National Biodiversity Authority
- The State Biodiversity Authority
- Biological Management Committees (at local levels)

This has paved a golden opportunity for detailed documentation of the biological diversity of India.



Zuthunglo Patton

The National Wildlife Action Plan 2017-31

The National Wildlife Action Plan (NWAP) gives a long-term perspective and strategy to the different wildlife management initiatives in India. It delivers the intent and targets of wildlife management along with the implementation strategies. The plan has been prepared after extensive deliberations with wildlife managers, communities, and officers of all the regions of India to present a holistic and consensus-based report.



Nabanita Ganguly



Lavanya Bhukya

This plan maintains a landscape approach to wildlife management which is a recent strategy being adopted calling for a lot of intra-departmental and multi-level coordination. The plan clearly focusses on recovery of threatened species and targeting their habitat conservation. It also brings forth the state of natural heritage in India and the need of their conservation. Lastly, the plan builds up on the foundation network governance and a bottom-up approach by making the contribution of community an important element in ecological conservation.

Wildlife management in India today has to deal with varied aspects, including:

- Maintenance of Protected Areas (National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries)
- Maintenance of Zoos and other ex-situ conservation areas
- Dealing with human-animal interface, especially outside Protected Areas
- Species-specific projects (eg: Project Tiger, Project Hangul)
- Habitat enhancement in existing potential wildlife areas
- Wildlife crime control
- Census, documentation, research and study

In all these areas, the ‘green brigade’ of the country – the officers of the Indian Forest Service occupy important positions. The leadership provided by the IFS officers not only helps sustain but also enhance the rich wild wealth of India.

The challenging tasks while performing these duties are varied:

- When a leopard enters a village and steals away cattle, it is not only crucial to understand and tackle the leopard behaviour but equally necessary is to control the mob, understand the popular perception about wildlife and create tolerance among the people, and pacify the people’s anxieties.
- When an intelligence information confirms about poacher activity at midnight, it is essential to jump out of the bed, not only to protect the wildlife but also nab the notorious.
- When a little tiger or lion cub is orphaned or brought in for captive breeding, taking care of the little one not only needs scientific expertise but also a lot of compassion and dedication.



Sameeta Raora

THE LESSER KNOWN KHAKI #43

Ringing birds, radio collaring the tigers or tagging wild animals using various scientific methods plays important role in studying, understanding and knowing more about them!

The methods involved are least possible injurious & involve a great deal of skill!



specially soft captures, release and then TRACKING them again!



PIYUSHA

These are a few glimpses of the untold and undefined challenges that the IFS and their ‘green armies’ face in their daily routine of wildlife conservation. Owing to these challenges, there is a general notion in the society to take a paternalistic approach towards women forest officers and give them ‘softer’ postings in the so called ‘headquarter’ positions. With their steely grit and determination the green queens have proved everyone otherwise.



3.1 The Beginning of the Era

“They trek, they toil, experiencing and inspecting, seeing and showing, going and going...”

The ‘green queens’, lady members of The Indian Forest Service (IFS) preside in most important positions including the Field Directors in different National Parks, sanctuaries and various protected areas of the country. They are known for their discipline, technical expertise of wildlife, close connect with the nature and people, and are efficient managers of the wild life areas.

With the trend during the 1980s to increase the area under forest and tree cover through plantation on non- forest areas, the role of women became of utmost concern to achieve this objective. Many states started projects with external aid under various nomenclatures like Social Forestry, Community Forestry, Rehabilitation of Common Lands etc. Wildlife also came to forefront with the launch of Project Tiger, Project Elephant and other such Centrally sponsored schemes.

Dr Ranjana Gupta Johri, 1986 Batch, served as PCCF & Chief Wildlife Warden (CWLW), Assam with some straight talk on reducing human-elephant conflict in the state. **Smt. Archana Sharma** 1986 batch is serving as the CWLW in Himachal Pradesh now with the added focus on strengths of this Himalayan state. Under her guidance the first Snow Leopard population estimation for the state has been completed. Himachal Pradesh was also one of the fastest states to control the avian flu epidemic in 2021 thereby ensuring least mortality in migratory birds that visit the state.

Shruti Sharma, 1987 Batch Rajasthan has been a frontrunner having made a visible impact in the India's wildlife scene as a women forest officer early on. A gold medalist in the wildlife diploma training at Wildlife Institute of India in the early 1990s, she passionately worked towards better habitat management of Keoladeo National Park that helped restore this man-made Protected Area.

Prakriti Srivastava, 1990 Batch, Kerala Cadre, served in the crucial post of DIG Wildlife to take some important policy level decisions for the National Board of Wildlife. She was until recently also the Country Director of Wildlife Conservation Society-India. She has been with the Indian Forest Service for the past 27 years while serving on the Kerala Cadre as well as various capacities in the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.





Shruti Sharma



Prakriti Srivastava

During this time Ms. Srivastava was renowned both for her unflinching support of wildlife and forest conservation and for her ability, often at a great personal cost, to catalyze a wide variety of tangible and profound conservation successes. Ms. Srivastava, along with her very committed team and with support from Forest Department and the Government, has many achievements including catalysing innumerable tough law enforcement actions against illegal encroachers, wildlife traffickers, timber smugglers and illicit timber factories in some of Kerala's most important landscapes for wildlife; working with key government colleagues to create four new national parks and to improve the protection status of many other forests; initiating in collaboration with local communities a highly successful Olive Ridley Turtle Conservation Program; framing the Government of India's highly pro-conservation policies for CITES, CMS and other wildlife conservation policies for the country including those for the National Board of Wildlife.

3.1.1 Protected Area Management

M Geethanjali, 2001 Batch Punjab along with **Kalpana K**, 2014 Punjab took efforts to revive Abohar Wildlife Sanctuary, home to a small population of Black buck and other wild animals. Although the sanctuary was spread across 18650 ha the land ownership rested with private land in 13 villages. Earlier there was only minimum intervention by the department as the local bishnoi community was tolerant towards the wild animals in their vicinity. Quite recently, due to the loss of tibbas (community grazing land) to agriculture, the sanctuary faced new challenges of illegal fencing and retaliatory killing. Geethanjali and her team took up massive awareness campaigns and in the sanctuary and the 4 community reserves and convinced the people to remove the cortina (cobra wire) from their fields which were causing serious injury the birds and animals. Such sustained efforts also led to state wide ban of cobra fencing eventually.



Dr Malathi Priya M, 2008 Karnataka has served in the Malai Mahadeshwara Wildlife Sanctuary (MM Hills WLS), one of the youngest PA s in the state. The forest blocks of M.M. Hills Wildlife Sanctuary remain one of the toughest terrain which served as hideout for the infamous Sandalwood smuggler and elephant poacher Veerappan and where the great forest Martyr, Late P. Srinivas IFS served and was brutally assassinated. Since the division shares border with Tamilnadu, it faces constant threats of poaching, timber smuggling and illegal cattle grazing.

Months before taking charge of this forest division, there was an incident of elephant poaching followed by exchange of gun shots and burning of inter-state forest check post by people from across the border. Considering these serious threats and challenges, she has mainly focused to eliminate those threats by strengthening Forest protection system through effective security plan. She has established and created 23 new beats and also strengthened the Anti-Poaching Camps on all sensitive places including border areas. Forest road connectivity, restoring wireless network , regular foot and night patrolling and fixing infra-red cameras at remote locations and CCTV at border locations to detect any intrusion of poachers have been some of the initiatives.

Soma Das, 2002 Batch Chattisgarh was posted in Udanti Wildlife Sanctuary where surveys revealed that only 7 wild buffaloes remained with only 1 single female. She took initiatives for habitat restoration and proposed a recovery plan, It is heartening to note that the seeds sown finally bore fruit with the translocation of two wild buffaloes from Manas National Park Assam to Udanti in April 2020. This has been one of the longest such translocation in the country to revive the waning population of Chhattisgarh's State animal. Soma also helped revive two lesser known zoos viz, Kanan Pindari Zoological Garden in Bilaspur and subsequently Surulia Mini zoo under Kangsabati Forest Division in West Bengal.



Dr. Vinita Vyas, the 2013 batch, Maharashtra Cadre officer, was appointed as the first Deputy Director of the then newly created Sahyadri Tiger Reserve. Interestingly, she is also the first lady officer posted as DD in any Tiger Reserve of Maharashtra. Being a new Tiger Reserve, she had to start from scratch. Within a very short span, she undertook works on many fronts, habitat restoration and improvement, constructing a new office complex, restoration of protection huts for front line staff, harmonising and streamlining work with local village communities, creating alternative employment opportunities for them to reduce their dependence on the forests, motivating, training and capacity building of both office and field staff. Motivating and keeping the morale high of the frontline staff is an essential task and responsibility of a successful leader. She accompanied her staff on day-night foot-patrolling inside the reserve which have not only helped in lifting their morale but have also resulted in considerable reduction of illegal and unauthorised activities. As part of involving the community, she started extension activities like the celebration of Wildlife Week, International Day of Forests, International Women's Day etc.



Vinita Vyas



Silpa V. Kumar

Silpa V. Kumar 2011, Kerala, is a post graduate in Forestry. A daughter-of-the-soil she was the first lady officer to hold the prestigious position of Wildlife Warden, Silent Valley National Park., Kerala between 2014 and 2017. Having travelled in the country widely and well-read, she gave a considerable impetus to the multi-dimensional management of the National Park with particular focus on nature awareness , research , monitoring and human ecology.

T. Beula Ezhil Mathi 2012 Batch , Maharashtra recalls the incident when on 14 January 2019, after giving a petition at DCF office, Akot, people of eight voluntarily-relocated villages between 2011 and 2015, around 500-600 in number, entered through the RF area (West Melghat territorial division) and reached the core area of the tiger reserve on 15th morning. The demand which the villagers mainly placed was five acres of land which was not part of option 1 package of rehabilitation. The Forest Department, especially DCF and her staff, tried to convince the public to not enter the core area of the reserve and commit any offence on many occasions, but villagers did not pay heed and started burning the reserve area, clearing the land for houses and cultivation, fishing etc. District administration of Amravati district also had conversation with the villagers but this attempt also failed to convince the villagers to move out of the Protected Area. Subsequent days also saw some failed attempts to negotiate with the squatters but to no avail. The villagers who were largely instigated by certain nefarious people became violent, started pelting stones at the government staff. They attacked the forest and police staff with axes, stones, sticks, sling shots and injured 46 forest staff and 11 police staff. The attacking crowd was dispersed by the usage of tear gas. On the way, the villagers again set fire and damaged government property and caused huge loss and damage to nature. She states that such incidents reveal the vulnerable situations in which the forest frontline works and the need to strengthen their numbers and equip them with the specific training and equipment for crowd control and mob management.



Piyusha P Jagtap , 2014 DCF East Melghat Tiger Reserve took upon a systematic plan for removal of encroachments in the buffer region of the Tiger Reserve. Drone surveillance was taken up and the encroachers were removed with least resistance. Trenches were dug up in the blank areas and Chilar (thorny species) were planted in the mounds specially created to take up afforestation. Bamboo rhizomes are also being planned to be planted subsequently to boost the natural succession. so far more than 5 ha of land has been treated for meadow development so that the finger communities may also be able to collect fodder as per permitted activities in the buffer. A multi-faceted personality, an avid trekker and her affable nature and her many talents of writing and craft making has made her a popular 'boss' with her subordinates especially women who are motivated to walk with her in the field.



Anjana Suchita Tirkey , 2010 Madhya Pradesh is a silent worker with the distinction of serving consecutively in two of the most well known Tiger Reserves in the country. It was during her stint in Panna Tiger Reserve that the tiger translocation process was designed and executed with the scientific precision that led to a global conservation success story. A diploma trainee from the wildlife institute of India, she is currently serving as Deputy Director in Kanha Tiger Reserve where several initiatives related to conservation education and outreach especially among children have been undertaken .

Vijaya Ratre 2011 Batch Chattisgarh is a forester's daughter herself and was convinced about joining Forest Service after completing her Civil Engineering degree. Now as Deputy Director, Achanakmar Tiger Reserve her passion for the jungle is fulfilled by work, birding & photography. On routine days you will find her tracking elephants with her staff or checking the highest points in the forest for the functioning of wireless towers.



3.1.2. Wildlife Crime Control

Women have the ability to be strict at the right place. **Mita Banerjee**, the 1990 Batch, Tamil Nadu Cadre officer, was posted as the Wildlife Warden in Chennai. While managing four Protected Areas and one zoo under her, she was able to book a variety of wildlife offences. Thereafter she became the 1st woman to be posted as the Regional Deputy Director in the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (Western Region). When there were questions upon the appointment of a “woman” at such a “sensitive” post, her work gave a befitting answer, surpassing all previous records of the number of cases booked, including cases of red sanders smuggling, sea shells, star tortoises, snake and crocodile skins, Saussoria lappa and several other medicinal plants/their products both at international borders (implementing CITES & EXIM Policy) as well as inside (Wildlife Protection Act). She also conducted simultaneous raids at the places (two States and a Union territory) leading to seizure of around Rs. 1 crore.



Definitely, anyone hereafter assuming that ‘a woman should better stay away from crime and courts’ should now reconsider their prejudice even more seriously, because now they know that if Mita Banerjee does step into it, then the criminals stand no chance.

Anita Patil, the 2010 batch officer of Maharashtra Cadre, recalls that to book a wildlife crime case against a fake Sarpamitra in Nashik was a tough one. Apart from that, she has seized 21 nails of leopards and lions in only two hours' short time tip and successfully completed it. It can be proudly shared that she was felicitated by the ex-President, Smt. Pratibha Patil for overall best performance as 1st Maharashtra lady serving the Maharashtra forest Department. Another story is from the Sariska Tiger Reserve (STR). STR faced a local tiger extinction in 2005, which was reportedly due to rampant poaching in the area.

Dr Monali Sen, the 2011 Rajasthan Cadre officer, during her tenure as Deputy Director managed to arrest two poachers absconding since 2005, who were the main accused in the above issue.



A similar example comes from the testing waters of Kaziranga National Park, which is the largest abode of the one-horned rhino and also sensitive for rhino poaching. But **K. M. Abharna**, a 2013 batch officer (earlier of the Assam-Meghalaya Cadre) and now the Maharashtra Cadre, as incharge Central Range of Kaziranga National Park, ensured zero poaching of greater one-horned rhinos at Central Range. She also neutralized the illegal fishing network and implemented a plastic ban, making the Central Range free of plastics in 2016-17.



S. Senbagapriya, an officer of the 2013 batch, Tamil Nadu Cadre, was posted at the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve and Mukurthi National Park. She reports that in her tenure of two years, there was zero poaching recorded and no rounds fired. The area known for the critically endangered Nilgiri tahr reported a 27% increase in their population in those two years. She is the proud recipient of the PATA WWF Bagh Mitra Award for the year 2018 for individual category. She also undertook the training of elephants (kunkis) under a unique MOU in Kerala. Ms. Senbagapriya is known for her compassion and empathy towards the local tribes and is always proactive to solve their issues after voluntary relocation. As for her, she believes that 80% field work and 20% office work is the key to her work success.



Anu P. James, topper of 2015 batch, Assam-Meghalaya Cadre, has an experience of postings in the wildlife divisions of Garo and Khasi hills. Meghalaya, being a unique state with many community reserves, she is engaged in wildlife rescue and crime control within the community reserves with the support and collaboration of the locals themselves.

Ruchi Singh, 2017 Bihar is the lone crusader in the state. The only women IFS officer, she has in her first tenure, earned the laurels of the forest department by foiling attempts to poach blackbuck in the Patna city. The awareness drives and stricter vigilance have led to greater trust and cooperation with the forest department.



Vidhyasagari, 2014, DCF(M&E) Punjab Cadre, currently mandates monitoring and evaluating the survival and quality of plantations carried out by all the territorial forest divisions of the state. Additionally, she holds the charge of GM(HQ) of the Punjab State Forest Development Corporation. In the previous tenure as Divisional Forest Officer of Ropar Wildlife Division, she had conducted massive raids and wildlife seizure of snakes and animal parts in three sites in succession with a tip off given by the WCCB. She had organised training of the entire wildlife staff of the state on wildlife census and sensitization on flora-and-fauna diversity and conservation in Siswan Community Reserve by Wildlife Institute of India.

T. Uma 2009 Batch Kerala had a tough task at hand when she was deputed as part of the central team to investigate the unfortunate incident of a retaliatory killing of a pregnant elephant in May 2020 in Kerala. She was serving as the regional deputy director (southern region) of Wildlife Crime Control Bureau at that time. The high-profile case saw several arrests and it is the strong will of this quiet but determined officer that brought criminals to justice.



Vidhyasagari



T. Uma

3.1.3. In Zoos and Ex-situ Conservation

Ex-situ conservation through zoos is an extremely important part of biodiversity conservation. The important works include creation and management of enclosures, monitoring and maintaining the physical and mental health of the animals, recreation and people management etc. Women with their natural disposition as effective communicators have exceptionally made their mark as zoo managers. As on today there are more than 152 recognized zoos in the country with an annual visitation estimated pegged at 800 million worldwide. Sonali Ghosh, DIG Central Zoo Authority recalls that *‘women officers have been exceptional in their understanding of the people-wildlife interface. They are articulate and sensitive towards visitor needs and have ensured that the newly emerging sectors of urban wildlife management gain momentum under their able leadership and guidance’*.



Mamta Sanjeev Dubey 1986 Batch, Uttar Pradesh served as the first woman director of an Indian zoo (as Zoo Director, Kanpur Zoo) in the early 1990s and significantly worked towards improving the zoo infrastructure.



CH Padma

Mita Banerjee, 1990 Batch Tamil Nadu Cadre was responsible for starting the 1st Open Enclosure for Butterflies in India in the Guindy Children's Park Zoo that has now been successfully carried on by **C.H.Padma**, 2008 batch. With the success of butterfly enclosures, the officers have ensured to create similar enclosures for spiders, scorpions etc, all of which were innovative concepts and turned out to be hugely successful.

Sameeta Rajora 1992 Batch Madhya Pradesh as Director, Van Vihar National Park and Zoo has been the most popular face for zoos in India. A daredevil 'bike-rider', she transformed the face of this unique location which is indeed the heart of India. Her legacy of people connect was ably carried forward by **Kamalika Mohanta**, 1997 who took up several initiatives towards conservation interpretation and education.

Aradhana Sahu 2003 Gujarat has been a busy bee. From meeting the record breaking timelines to complete the 'Arogya Van- a herbal medicinal plants garden' and 'Kevadiya zoo with the largest geodesic dome aviary in the country' and other works in the vicinity of the Statue of Unity at Kevadiya. Aradhan, has been the face of the Gujarat Forest department to welcome and guide none other than the Honble President and Prime Minister of India to the site. Her cool demeanor and efficiency have ensured that forest department gets a prominent name and fame in the higher echelons of power in the state administration.



Kamalika Mohanta



Aradhana Sahu



Eva Sharma

Eva Sharma 1989 Batch and **Renu Singh** 1997, Batch of Uttar Pradesh cadre have been the popular directors of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah Zoological Garden or Lucknow Zoo. This historic zoo in the middle of a bustling city attains the second highest footfall, next to Taj Mahal in the State of Uttar Pradesh. Once again the detail for visitor amenities especially women and

children has been the primary reason for the zoo emerging as a popular weekend destination.

Sanjeeta Gupta 1997 Chhattisgarh and **M. Mercy Bella** , 2007 as consecutive Directors of Nandanvan Jungle Safari Naya Raipur ensured that the Honble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi visited and inaugurated the zoo. The safari with its white tigers is a big tourist attraction in the newly carved out state.



Sanjeeta Gupta



Renu Singh



M Mercy Bella



Vanashri Vipin Singh

Vanashri Vipin Singh 1998 Batch Karnataka has been a popular Executive Director of Bannerghata Biological Park. An ace shooter and a national champion, she has transformed the zoo with her innovative approaches in nature interpretation. Being a zoo that also acts as a rescue centre, there is immense pressure to take up wild animal rescue operations in urban localities of the city and its peripheral areas. Her zoo also provides a life time care facility for several of the circus rescued lions and tigers and the sloth bears rehabilitated from their illegal trade as dancing bears.



Swetha Boddu

Dr Tejaswini Arvind Patil 2002 Batch Uttarakhand was instrumental in reforming the GB Pant High altitude zoo at Nainital. She has literally faced the firefighting initiatives as evident in a field posting, be it planning to mitigate the pine-forest accidental fires or the macaque and leopard conflict that marauds this hilly town. Once again, her people-connect has been the primary reason for inclusion of the zoo in the State tourism circuit.

Kshitija N, 2005 Batch Curator National Zoological Park, Hyderabad is a silent worker under whose leadership the zoo has attained self-sustainability and least carbon footprints. Creayion of fodder farms, vermicomposting, ban on single-use-plastics and the use of solar energy and battery-operated vehicles have all contributed to the success and popularity of this modern zoo as a popular weekend trip destination. It is to the credit of the forest department that Hyderabad zoo became the pioneer in successfully breeding the Indian spotted chevrotain (mouse deer) and then releasing them in the wild in Protected areas to augment their population.



Dr Tejaswini Arvind Patil

Kshitija, N

Yesoda Bai 2010 Batch Andhra Pradesh made history when she got the railways department to agree to transport her Lions and zebras from other zoos in the Country. This type of transportation causes least exertion to the animals and is therefore best suited for animal exchanges. Her legacy has been carried forward by **Dr Nandani Salaria** 2013 Batch who has now initiated conservation breeding for several species as part of the ex-situ management.



Yesoda Bai



Dr Nandani Salaria

Sudha S. 2013 batch, Tamil Nadu has been awarded the MoEFCC-CZA Prani Mitra award in 2020 for her outstanding works as Deputy Director Arignar Anna Zoological Park (Vandalur Zoo). A multi-faceted engineer-turned forester she has several innovations to her credit. her mobile app Treepedia provides useful information on plants around us. Her consistent efforts to conserve and reinforce Otteri lake within the zoo premises has resulted in an increase in the visitation of migratory birds to the site. During the pandemic time, she and her team came up with innovative approaches to connect to people especially children through virtual means.



Deepa K. S., an officer of the 2010 batch, Kerala Cadre, is posted as the Special Officer for establishing Thrissur Zoological Park at Puthur, Thrissur. She mentions a wide variety of tasks and challenges that go into the making of a zoo – establishing site office; getting clearances from MoEF, CZA, SEIAA; sanctioning and receiving continuous funds; coordinating with consultants, executing agencies, contractors, district administration and most of the other government departments for project implementation; evicting encroachments; addressing local agitations etc.



KAsturi Sule

However, a continued follow-up of actions and stakeholder's consultation is essential for speedy results. She also mentions that a woman officers' ability of multi-tasking and high emotional intelligence helps her carve her own path in testing times. Among the other younger aspirants, there are inspiring officers who have to the best of their ability worked hard to transform the facilities for captive animals and efforts must be lauded for **Vaanathi MM**, 2012 Batch for Kalaburgi zoo, Anshu Yadav 2013 Batch West Bengal for Adina Deer Park , **Amrita Dutta** 2012 West Bengal for their sustained efforts for Surulia mini zoo, **Akanksha Mahajan** 2003 Batch Rajasthan for Machia Biological Park and **Sudeep Kaur** 2010 Batch for Pushkar Biological Park.



3.1.4 In Human-Wildlife Interface

Another important domain in wildlife management is human-wildlife conflict management. Tigers, leopards and elephants have often been involved in untoward incidents like human death and cattle death. Wild boar, macaques, nilgai have been involved in crop-raiding activities. On the other hand, animals become victims due to close proximity to linear infrastructure, due to incidents such as train accidents, road accidents etc. The challenges involved here are not just rescue of the animal itself and its care or release into the wild, but people management as well.



Mob management when an animal enters a village or town, compensation for any loss to farms or cattle or human life are integral issues which require transformational leadership. There needs to be both a firm control, a calm mind and compassion, empathy towards the people. This blend is powerfully reflected by the women brigade in the IFS. They have exhibited such solutions and breakthroughs that the conflict is now turning into a co-operative interface. A good example is **Meenakshi Joshi** is a 2000 Batch officer of Uttarakhand Cadre.



The Dehradun-Rishikesh highway is particularly vulnerable to elephant-human conflict with an anti-elephant taste lingering on the tongues of the locals. During 2011 and 2012, there were many incidents of human deaths and thus apathy even against the forest personnel. After assessing the problem, she immediately conducted awareness workshops of local villagers, town dwellers and regular commuters about some “Dos and Dents”. Vehicle movement

was coordinated. Elephant-proof trenches, solar fences were put up near residential areas and quick disbursement of compensation in case of losses was ensured. These technical initiatives along with effective communication with stakeholders helped defuse the anti-elephant sentiment and reduce conflict incidences. This shows that along with technical responses, it is needed to build trust in the local communities, take stakeholders into confidence and onboard the conservation game.

Neena Grewal 1993
Uttarakhand has been a daring Field Director of the newly created Rajaji Tiger Reserve. When it came to the issue of van-gujjar relocation from the Chilla range of the reserve it took to the acumen and communication skills of her and the team to convince a peaceful relocation. The site is thriving with tigers today.



It is clear and stressed yet again that community involvement is the key to effective mitigation of human-wildlife conflict. Green Queens, in this regard, are gently persuasive, influential, empathetic, and with conviction give a visionary leadership in this domain. K. M. Abharna, as an ACF, contributed to a community-based extensive study and detailed report on monkey menace by involving the local community to mitigate human-monkey conflict in as many as 40 villages of the Dergaon Range, Golaghat Forest Division in 2015. In Maharashtra, a team led by her rescued an orphaned female tiger cub (T1C2) with the scientific advice rendered by scientists from WII, Dehradun, and the elephant squad of Madhya Pradesh. An innovative step she took was to create an extension team of lady forest guards. The all-woman team conducted awareness and extension work exclusively at 18 villages of tiger-affected areas at Maregaon and Pandharkawada Range in Pandharkawada Division of Maharashtra. This became a successful model to bridge the gap between the Forest Department and villagers. This step also proved to be of great help to motivate the women frontline staff who often feel burdened by the tough working conditions in addition to the patriarchal mindset of their male

counterparts. Her work helped reduce the conflict by 80% despite a rise in the tiger population of the area.



A good mechanism to reduce the conflict and smoothen the interface is to reduce the community dependence on forests and minimise their need to enter forests. This can be effectively done by giving alternative livelihood options to them. **Lhinghoikim Touthang** of the 2012 batch, Nagaland Cadre, initiated litchi and coffee plantation at pangti village, Wokha, Nagaland, as a means for livelihood improvement with the objective to wean the locals away from hunting, especially the important migratory bird Amur falcon.



Arti Chaudhary of the 2002 batch, AGMUT Cadre, and then **Vanjullavalli Sridhar** of 2012 batch have both worked in the pristine but remote areas of Andaman and Nicobar Islands which has a severe crocodile management issue. As DFOs they have contributed towards drafting of the 'Human-Crocodile Conflict Mitigation Plan' in wake of increased human-animal conflicts in the islands.

Rongsenlemla Imchen 2008 from Nagaland recall that the mandate of her division has been primarily taking a people centric approach due to the unique land holding system in Nagaland as 88 % of the land belongs to the community/ private individuals. Similarly, and Zuthunglo Patton 2010 as a DFO in Wokha Division had to gradually build the trust of the local community to strike a delicate balance between conservation and understanding the people's perception towards it. With support of a multitude of stakeholders and a shared governance model, community conservation has gained impetus in Nagaland and with strong local institution in the village level, the conservation effort have been reinforced in many villages. Her division organizes awareness programs, seminars, plantation drives and other conservation activities in the villages in collaboration with the Village councils, JFMC's, women groups, SHG's, Youths, Churches and other line departments to maintain sustainability of the conservation effort. Zuthunglo was one of the first officers in the department to take part in the Amur Falcon conservation success story thereby placing the small Pangti village on the global conservation success story map



In Extreme Environments

The wild tigresses of the IFS have also been extremely resilient. They serve in harsh conditions, tough terrains and extreme climates.

Dr. Sonali Ghosh, 2000 Batch, Assam-Meghalaya is the first woman officer with a master's degree in wildlife science to join the service. A WWF-PATA Bagh Mitra awardee and a topper of her batch; she recalls in her co-edited book 'Wild treasures-reflections on Natural heritage sites in India' that one of the happiest moments for her was to be posted in Kaziranga and then in Manas National Park and simply walk in the forest.



It is another matter that after her first posting in Kaziranga and being chased up by a greater one-horned rhino that she desperately wanted to return to learning some basic childhood skills such as climbing up a tree! It is her love for reading, writing, photography, training and networking with conservation peer groups that helped her remain self motivated during the formative years. During her tenure at Manas Tiger Reserve, she took up the work of documenting and conducting field surveys for lesser known taxa such as golden langaur, Bengal florican, Pgymy Hog and Hispid Hare. She feels that science based management, interventions are key towards managing a healthy ecosystem and this primary task of forest officers must not be forgotten. Her unforgettable memories are from working in a forest

landscape ridden with insurgency and almost a near death experience in a terrorist attack. In many parts of India specially in North East India, forest areas are remote location with the poorest of people, least of civil amenities and connectivity. In this case, she feels that top-down Governance model does not work all the time and one must gradually win the trust and support of local communities before exercising harsh penalties or regulatory measures towards their traditional or modern methods of resource utilisation. A firm believer in capacity building and training, a gentle nudge towards behaviour change in both the people's perception towards forests and that of the department would go a long way towards a win-win situation.

Monalisa Das, 2003 Batch, Sikkim Cadre officer is a fitness freak and one of the toughest women in the business. The story of Monalisa winning the 100-metre sprint challenge against her male batchmates in IGNFA is part of the sports ground folklore. This iron woman has done some of the toughest treks in the Sikkim landscape like Zemu Glacier, Muguthang Valley and Khangchendzonga Base Camp. Her legacy has been suitably carried forward by Sonam Chiden Bhutia, 2009 Sikkim who is the present Park Director of Khangchendzonga National Park and has taken significant initiatives as set up local community-based ecotourism in the state.



Tripti Sah, 2008, West Bengal during her tenure as DFO, 24 Parganas (South) Division, under Sundarbans Biosphere Reserve, had the unique experience of working in the mangrove ecosystem. She dealt with issues such as protection of mangroves and its associated wildlife from biotic pressures, raising of mangrove plantations, human-wildlife conflict, tiger estimation exercise etc. Since in Sundarbans small creeks separate the forests from human settlements incidences of straying of tigers and estuarine crocodiles are reported every year. Incidences of tiger straying into a human-dominated landscape and



how to deal with it without any casualties either to humans or to tiger and without any untoward incidents was also an experience gained while working here. All such incidents were dealt successfully with the active cooperation of her staff and the local community. Use of nylon-net fencing to keep the tigers and wild animals away from the settlements and working with communities to compensate and not resort to retaliatory killings has been the primary task of her team.

She continues this stint of working with communities in her next tenure under the Integrated Coastal Zone Project in the coastal districts of West Bengal. Under this project, works on livelihood enhancement, disaster reduction, capacity building, environment and pollution management, preparation of ICZM plan have been undertaken in the state.



Shivani Dogra



Lavanya Bhukya

Neethu Lakshmi M. of 2010 batch, Uttarakhand Cadre was posted in the Kedarnath Wildlife Division in which is the Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary, known for the endangered and elusive musk deer. The region has a lot of altitudinal variation and poor road connectivity. Monitoring of field work involves a lot of trekking, living in harsh weather and bearing with the lack of network connectivity. The other challenge in the region is the tourist and trekker footfall leading to degradation of wildlife browsing grounds due to tents pitching and mule traffic. Crushing down the notion that women are physically less fit than men, she would trek these areas frequently for patrolling. She also managed to regenerate the wildlife grounds by regulating tourists. As a means to overcome the topographic constraints, she trained her staff with GPS and other technology.

Several young officers **Jyoti Kotal**, 2018 Odisha has worked in some of Odisha's remotest parts and **Chestha Singh**, 2016 AGMUT DFO Kamlang Tiger Reserve have proven that no place is remote or tough for women to work in. By documenting, and taking to social media they have brought such remote yet beautiful locations to the forefront thereby creating a bigger fan following besides inspiring the youth of the country.





Cheshta Singh



Cheshta Singh



Cheshta Singh

In Wildlife research and promoting eco-tourism and heritage conservation

The tourism sector is very wide and a sunrise domain of wildlife management in India. It offers sustainable revenue for Protected Areas, alternative employment opportunities to the locals, community participation in conservation, awareness and appreciation about wildlife and biodiversity in the society, but needs to be carefully regulated and monitored. While ecotourism has opened up the wildlife to people, the crowding of hotels, vehicular disturbance inside Protected Areas and responsible tourism needs a careful check. But it certainly offers a new entrepreneurial domain and opportunities for the forest department in the wildlife sector. Promotion of tourism and showcasing the wild wonders to attract tourists, digital and physical publicity using documentaries, videos and involving celebrities, politicians and other well-known personalities, eco-friendly accommodation options, travel and logistic arrangements, handicraft and tribal items as souvenirs and gifts, allied recreational options and so on are many of the new things that the department has to deal with.



Sonali Ghosh

Jyotsna Sitling, 1987 Batch, Uttarakhand .Ms. Sitling's community conservation initiative ultimately gave Valley of Flowers National Park a World Heritage Site status in 2005, evolved a workable 'Public Private Partnership' model to handle solid waste management problems in difficult areas and developed responsible mountaineering guidelines of Uttarakhand – 2004, first time in any state in India.



Neha Verma, the 2005 batch, Uttarakhand Cadre officer, started her study in macaques right from her OJT days. She had the task to locate the unreported macaques in the remote areas of Gori Valley in Pithoragarh district, and study, collect faecal and blood samples and photograph them to establish their taxonomic position. Her studies helped to classify the macaques in this landscape as an 'Ecologically Significant Unit'



Aditi Sharma. 2006 Uttar Pradesh and her team have worked exceptionally to promote lesser known PA s such as the Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary near Meerut. This site attracts a large number of migratory birds in the winter and being in the vicinity of two megacities, Delhi and Meerut, there was a strong potential to create leisure activities but with a message of conservation. The campaign ‘My Ganga, My Dolphin’ has also seen a positive response for the Ganges River Dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*) locally known as “Susu” or “Soons” in the State. Known as the ‘Tiger of the Ganges’ , the gangetic dolphin has the same position in a river ecosystem as a tiger in a forest, its presence indicating a sign of a healthy river ecosystem. It is one of the most charismatic mega-fauna found in the densely populated areas, the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghana and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems of India, Nepal and Bangladesh. The recent population estimates are about 3500 individuals in its distribution range of which more than 80% lies within Indian territory. The mammal prefers to stay in deep waters in and around the confluence of two or more rivers, sharing its habitat with crocodiles, freshwater turtles and wetland birds many of which are fish eaters and are potential competitors for their prey base. The presence of 41 dolphins along the 188 km river stretch of Ganges, from Bijnor to Narora Barrage has been encouraging and efforts are underway to engaged with 18 riparian villages and over 600 local community members to conserve this endangered species.



Koj Rinya, 2006 Batch AGMUT is the first woman IFS officer from the Apatani tribe and in Arunachal Pradesh. Rinya is an icon for young women in her State. As a local Apatani tribal woman herself Rinya's empathy for the traditional values & knowledge of traditional systems were put to good use for securing the conservation goals of Tale valley Wildlife sanctuary that has been springing up some recent records and surprises in terms of its unique biodiversity in recent years. Her work with the local community to secure the site has been lauded at the state level and she has been instrumental in documenting the processes that would be useful for the nomination of Apatani cultural landscape as a UNESCO world heritage site.



Neenu Somaraj



Neenu Somaraj, 2010 Batch Maharashtra manages the Malvan Marine Sanctuary, Sindhudurg and Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary and is also Joint Director, Mangrove Foundation. She and her teams works on the conservation of mangrove ecosystem & marine biodiversity by mangrove based livelihood projects like aquaculture, crab culture, marine ornamental fish hatchery, mangrove based Ecotourism etc that ensures community participation in the conservation process.

Ajeeta Longjam, 2010 batch Manipur Cadre, recalls a memorable experience of briefing and interacting with Her Royal Highness – the Princess of Thailand, about the unique ecosystem of the only floating National Park in the World – Keibul Lamjao National Park – during her maiden visit to Manipur in 2018. Such interactions are sure to boost tourism and instill confidence in the world about India's commitment to women empowerment.

K. M. Abharna attempted to regularise tourism pressure at Kaziranga National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a world-famous tourist destination, by implementing a time-card system. As a pilot project, she also computerised the ticketing system at the Central Range which was first-of-its-kind in the Park.

Dr Abhilasha Singh, 2016 Uttarakhand is the only MBBS doctor to join the service and during her tenure at the Great Himalayan National Park world heritage site in Himachal Pradesh that the site was one of the best performer in the Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) of Protected Areas in the country.



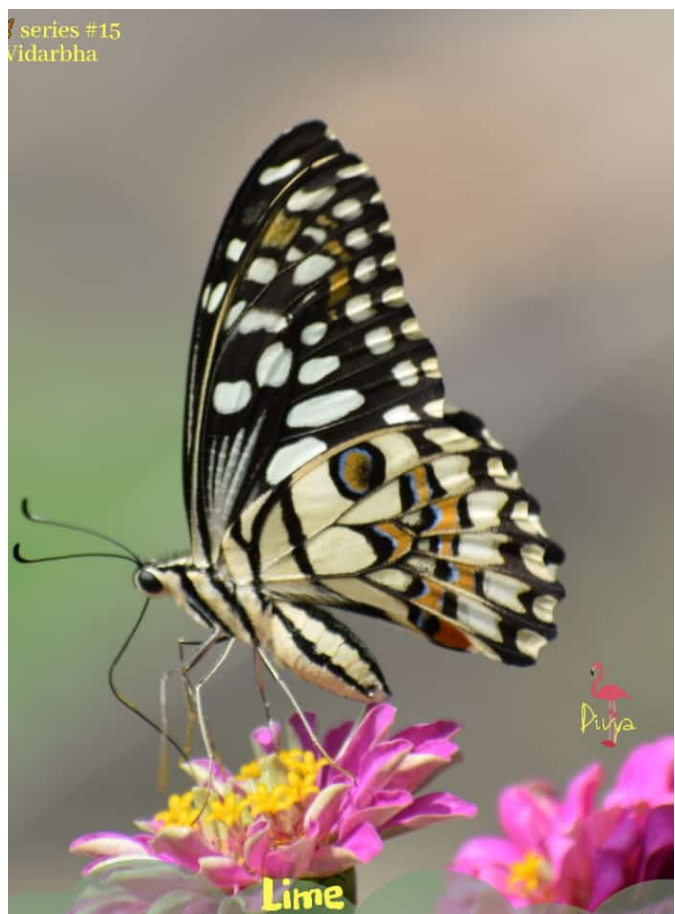
Ajeeta Longjam



Dr Abhilasha Singh

Terakchi K Marak , 2013 and **Anu P. James**, 2015 Batch Assam-Meghalaya cadre made an impact early on in a tribal dominated stated. Terakchi, a daughter-of-the-soil took the issue of illegal timber felling head on and ensured that she is treated as a non-nonsense officer who would not bend rules for the Kin. Anu, an ‘outsider’ by contrast earned the confidence of the tribal community in the adjoining wildlife area ensuring that the locals themselves come forward to support the initiatives of the forest department to propose a natural world heritage site status for the Garo Hills Conservation Areas.

Divya Bharathi, 2016 Batch Maharashtra has been able to systematically study, photograph and document the butterflies found in Uttarakhand and Vidharbha region of Maharashtra. Her works have been an appreciated by generalists, specialists alike. She along with Piyusha Jagtap and under the Alternate Livelihood Generation Programme, has also started a Computer Training Centre at Vatsapur, to train tribal youth, thereby reducing the dependency on Forests in the fringe of Melghat Tiger Reserve.



GQS OF THE NEW MILLENNIA ..



2001 Gqs



2008 Gqs

Chapter Four

Cross-sectoral linkages & Community engagement



4.0 Evolution

The history of forestry in India can be traced back to 1855, when Lord Dalhousie, the then Governor-General of India, proclaimed a Forestry Policy. In order to implement the policy, the Indian Forest Service was created with the primary objective of conservation and protection of the existing forests.

However, forestry activities since independence fall into three distinct phases:

- The initial Van Mahotsava movement, an annual festival of trees, was inaugurated in 1950 by K. M. Munshi, with the objective that it would create tree consciousness among the people. It was supposed to represent the means of putting the idea of 'tree lands' into practice through the cooperation between the Forest Department and the public, the farmer working more or less as a catalyst besides giving technical guidance.
- The second phase was when farm forestry was promoted in some of the states in the 1970s.
- The third phase has been the large-scale social forestry activities started during the 1980s with massive aid programmes. The Fuelwood Study Committee of the Planning Commission (1982) recommended that the local areas available under different categories may be allotted for Social Forestry Programmes.



Social Forestry pertains to management and protection of forests and afforestation on barren lands with the purpose of helping in the environmental, social and rural development. The term 'social forestry' is used interchangeably with 'farm and community forestry' and 'forestry for local community development'.



In India, the term social forestry first came to prominence in the year 1976 under the report of the National Commission of Agriculture in India, which recommended that each state re-organise its Forest Department into two separate wings – one to supervise traditional production forestry and wildlife activities, and the other to develop community forests. It proposed incremental rural employment be generated by production and Social Forestry and encouraged activities in order to lighten the burden on traditional forestry. The need for social forestry was felt as India is a developing country with a dominant rural population that still depends largely on fuelwood for their cooking. The 1988 Forest Policy for the first time recognised ecological balance and environmental stability as a primary concern for planners. It encouraged agroforestry and farm-forestry for increasing biomass production and tree cover area.

Development of vegetation through Social Forestry Programmes have been given due importance in all the Five-Year Plans of India to accelerate forestry and impart awareness among rural people.

Considering the need for the improvement of the global environment and reducing the environmental problems, especially in the developing and underdeveloped countries, some of the International Development Institutions have been extending financial aid.

Social Forestry After 2000

After 2000, the government has been formally encouraging rural participation in the management of natural resources under Social Forestry. Various schemes include:

- Plan activities like Integrated Watershed Development Projects, Western Ghat Development Programme, Drought Prone Area Programme, Employment Guarantee Scheme etc.
- Non-plan activities such as Van Mahotsav (First Week of July is celebrated for protecting forests) and development of central nursery etc.

This way, Social Forestry has been a much talked about concept for decades now as India is one of the few countries which have officially taken it up and channelized a lot of resources as a part of its plan programme. It is also a sector that has now attained a larger interpretation and mandate with the primary aim of making a people's connect.



4.1 Bridging the cross-sectoral linkages

Forest service officers are naturally inclined and confident to implement welfare programs of the Central government as they bring in with them the experience of living and working in some of the under developed regions in the country. It is not of much surprise then that some of the central government ministries such as Rural Development, Commerce, Agriculture, tribal affairs and our own Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change have regularly selected women IFS officers to implement the flagship programs of the government. Some of the officer who are currently serving on central deputation and have earned a good reputation for the service include **Namita Priyadarshi** 1989 Batch Rajasthan, **A. Neeraja** 1990 Batch Uttar Pradesh, **Bharati** 1992 Batch Sikkim, **Bindu Sharma** 1994 Batch Madhya Pradesh, **Anita Karn** 1997 Batch, Gujarat, **Sunita Singh** 1987 Batch Maharashtra, **V.L. Roi Kullai** 1998 Batch Manipur-Tripura, **Banumathi G.**, 2009 Batch Tripura, **Ajeeta Longjam**, 2012 Batch Manipur and **Suveena Thakur**, 2019 Batch Himachal Pradesh .



Dr. Alka Bhargava, 1987 Batch Assam-Meghalaya is currently serving as Additional Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare, Government of India. Dr Alka Bhargav recalls her stint as a young DFO posted in Assam. Having been in the thick of things since the commencement of Joint Forest Management in Assam in the early 1990s, the imperative of dovetailing livelihoods and conservation has been of prime importance in her mind and working. This intent invited rebuttal many a time that 'livelihoods is not within the mandate of the Forest Department' and 'JFM can never take roots'. However, this also required foresters to step beyond their 'territory' and work with other departments – it being a two-way process, and was a tall order in the early days of her career. Her job profile during deputation and outside the Forest Department gave her a wider perspective of matters and with the acquaintances inculcated, the nurturing of the skill development programme within the Assam Project on Forest and Biodiversity Conservation (APFBC) has been a chapter in her career which she will fondly remember for the impact it has had and will have in the lives of the locals, especially the women it has touched. Dr. Bhargav was fortunate to have been charged with the component in APFBC for inter alia developing livelihood alternatives, promoting capacity building and training, marketing and labeling products, and developing carbon finance. The traditional skills of the communities were further refined and additional skill development programmes conducted together with entrepreneurship so as to add the element of sustainability too.



Dr. Bhargav has been fortunate to have continued with assignments which kept her close to communities. In her present assignment, she has handled various issues like the flagship scheme of e-National Agriculture Market in its infancy and which envisages to enhance transparency and competitiveness for better remuneration to the farmers, micro-irrigation all of which touched farmers welfare. Her present assignment as Mission Director, National Bamboo Mission, has brought her closer to home territory – her forest fraternity, and the endeavour to address the complete value chain is of personal interest to her since it once again brings my passion for community development to the fore.

“With the ‘curtains down’ not far off, I go down my memory lane and draw from it to take the liberty of thrusting some of my unfulfilled dreams onto my younger colleagues. You should carve a niche area for yourself in the Department since that will make you stand taller not only within your own circle of colleagues but outside the domains of forests, too. I would really encourage you to come on central deputation at some point(s) of your career since it brings a sea change in your persona and gives you a much larger perspective of issues, from which your parent cadre and you yourself would benefit tremendously, too. Even if a wee bit inclined to academics, which I’m sure most of the young bright Green Queens would be, take study leave early in your career, with a good scholarship and plunge back into being a student – it is so invigorating and satisfying. One thing which we foresters don’t pay attention to is we are shy of going public about our work, achievements and also hardships. So continue reading, writing and publishing “ – Dr. Alka Bhargav, 1987



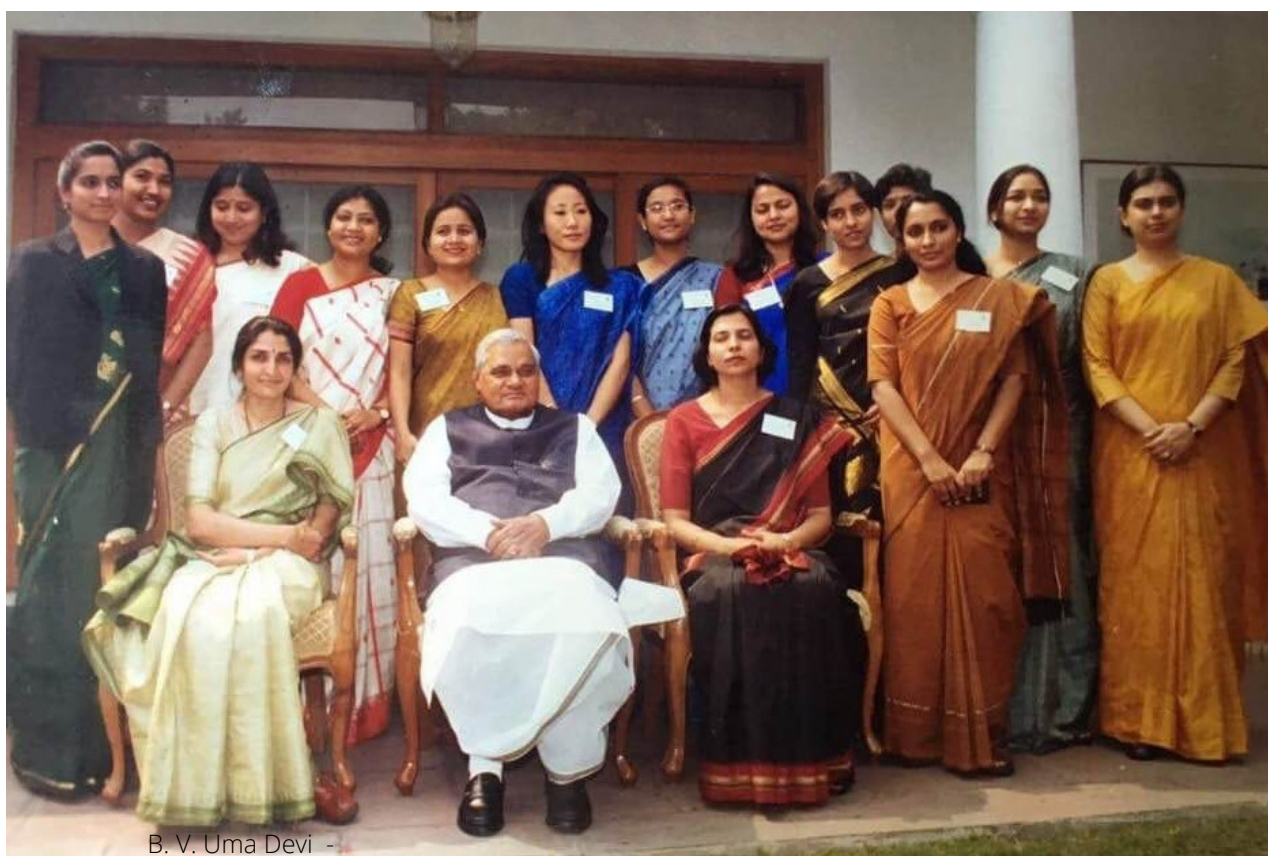
Kajol Patil

No other woman can take the place of **Jyotsna Sitling**, 1987 Batch, Uttarakhand, for breaking that glass ceiling early on. A tribal from North Bengal, she adapted instantaneously to the remote locations in her cadre state of Uttarakhand. As a practitioner, has aligned a fine balance in her approach to narrow down the gap between the state policies and local initiatives to find sustainable solutions to many intriguing developments versus conservation issues with development with conservation initiatives. Her unfailing works on eco-restoration started in ecologically fragile Doon Valley in 1997 where under her motivation, the local community of 82 revenue villages reclaimed 358 strategic erosion prone locations (about 212 ha area) near their villages from 1997-2001 through 'Shramdaan' by planting 2.58 lakh endemic plants voluntarily contributed by the villagers without any government fund. While serving as Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, she is proactively working for making skill market and policy framework conditions work to mitigate regional imbalances and also in promoting youth entrepreneurship capacity focusing on informal and semiformal economy. Ms. Sitling is the recipient of the prestigious Indira Gandhi Paryavaran Puraskar 2004 and Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration 2006 for her outstanding contribution to the public service of the country.

“Work for constructing a meaningful legacy for humankind in your wonderful career as an IFS officer.”

- Jyotsna Sitling, 1987, Uttarakhand,
Joint Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship





After the bifurcation of the State of Madhya Pradesh in 2000, **B.V. Uma Devi**, 1987 Batch, Chhattisgarh was allotted the Chhattisgarh Cadre. Prior to bifurcation, she has worked in Madhya Pradesh in various positions as Divisional forest officer Social forestry in districts of Dhar, Ratlam and as Deputy Conservator of Forests Development, Bhopal, and Joint Director, World Bank Forestry Project Bhopal. She was also posted as Chairman, Chhattisgarh Professional Examination Board, an autonomous body of the technical education department of the Government of Chhattisgarh, which has a mandate of conducting professional and recruitment examinations in the State. As Chairperson, Ms Uma tried to build systems in place to bring transparency and efficiency in the organisation. Her most memorable tenure was as Deputy Director, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, a premier institute for training Indian Administrative Service officers besides providing foundation courses to all the UPSC selected Group A services. During her tenure, she tried to expose officer trainees of various services to forest and environmental issues through case studies, presentations and lectures by eminent forest officers and environmentalists. She organised workshops on ecotourism, participatory development program focusing on attitude and behavioural change.

Since then, she has served as Director in the Ministry of Textiles and as Resident Commissioner, Government of Chhattisgarh. She is currently serving as Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change where she looks after the key subject area of Convention on Biological Diversity and its implementation in India.

“Dear Green Queens, please be proud to be in one of the best services in the country. Keep your head high and contribute your best to the service. Try to specialize in some area related to the service, which will keep you motivated all through. Also, dedicate time to your family and your hobbies.”

- B.V. Uma Devi, 1987, Chattisgarh

Dr. Suvarna Chandrappagari, 1991, Telenagana worked in various capacities in the Forest and Rural Development Departments with focus on community-based natural resource management and equity issues. As Director, Andhra Pradesh Forest Academy she established CEFNARM (Centre for Education on Forestry and Natural Resource Management), did extensive action research on gender in forestry and built collaborations with national and international organisations for human resource development through training and capacity building in the Forest Department. During her tenure as Special Commissioner, watersheds with Rural Development Department, the Integrated Watershed Management Programme was implemented very effectively. Subsequently as Member Secretary, Telangana State Biodiversity Board (TSBDB), in January 2015 she had to start everything from scratch to establish the Board after the bifurcation of the Andhra Pradesh state .



For her efforts TSBDB won the UNDP India National Biodiversity Award for 2016 for the access benefit sharing case study that was facilitated by the Board, and presented in COP 13 Biological Diversity Convention, Cancun, Mexico. Since May 2020 She is working as the Chief Executive in the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), the first woman to do so in the country. Here she has been instrumental in launching the state flagship programme, 'Integrated Fisheries Development Scheme' that has benefited the fishermen communities on a large scale. On noticing the efforts put in by her in bringing the fisheries sector into well-deserved limelight, the state government of Telangana honoured her with 'State Award for Excellence' during the Independence Day celebrations held on August 15th, 2018. She is continuing her efforts in taking forward the fisheries sector in Telangana.

“You have chosen a wonderful career. Work with enthusiasm for the laurels to fall in your lap. Keep refreshing your knowledge and exposure to the latest happenings in the sector chosen by you and make efforts to specialise in it.”

- Dr. Suvarna Chandrappagari, 1991, Telenagana

Dr Jayanthi Murali, 1992 Batch Tamil Nadu holds a Ph.D. (Interdisciplinary) in Agriculture-Econometrics from the University of Madras and has collaborated with national and international organizations on various projects over the past two decades. As Member Secretary, State level Environment Impact Assessment Authority she has been incorporating climate change adaptation

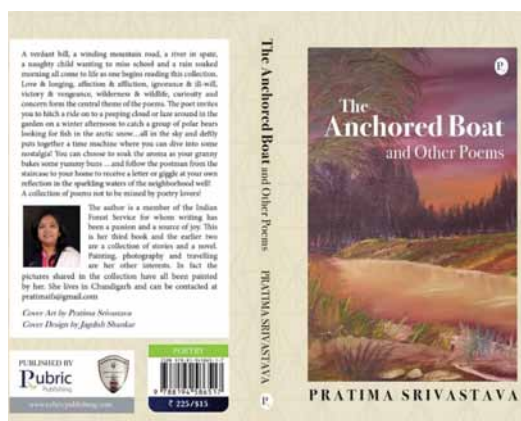
plans into local planning processes and has showcased the efforts of restoration of coastal habitats, artificial reef deployment, sea grass rehabilitation, coral rehabilitation, improving local livelihoods at several international platforms.





Neha Verma

Pratima Srivastava 1999 Batch Punjab is an acclaimed author and a poet. She recalls that working in an agricultural state not having traditional forests and forestry has its own challenges. These challenges arise because majority of the people have never looked up to forests as a part of their lives...and hence they need to be sensitized to the concept of jal....jungle....zameen. So, when we enforce forest laws, we must also engage with people to devote a little time to think why forests are important. Her challenge lies in driving home the linkages between forests, wildlife, soil, air and water as we get the procedural formalities of deposition of NPV, CA etc. completed from the user agencies. She looks forward to a day when people would start understanding the logic behind these formalities and be willing to play a small role in our effort to protect our earth and not be coercive participants in the efforts of the forest department.



Roop Avtar Kaur 2000 Batch Jammu & Kashmir is presently working as Director in the Ministry of Rural Development handling Policy and Planning. She looks after two flagship schemes of the Ministry viz Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Rurban Mission (SPMRM). Under SAGY, Adarsh Grams are being developed whereas SPMRM envisages planned development of 300 clusters (8-10 Gram Panchayats) with urban amenities while also maintaining their rural character.



Indhu Vijayan, 2010, AGMUT has quietly & steadfastly been greening the capital, ensuring plantation survival in the harsh edaphic & climatic conditions of Delhi. She feels that the challenges faced by a Forest Service Officer is a little different from the other segments of AGMUT Cadre. Here, it is a fact that the Department is still in an incipient stage and has not developed much in terms of infrastructure and recruitment of staff at various levels. Since it is the capital city and there is influx of people from neighboring states in large numbers, threat of encroachment of forest areas is the biggest challenge and the DCFs have to be very careful in exercising the powers as a Tree Officer as it attracts praise or criticism from various corners. As forest officer, in those cases where recommending trees for felling is inevitable, what we can do is to strictly implement the ten times compensatory plantation which is mandatory. As the Forest Department does not have land bank for carrying out plantations, we insist that the user agency hand over land to us. Most of such land handed over to us is located in Yamuna Flood Plains which comes under North Forest Division and hence our major activities are carrying out these plantations and later developing them into city forests.



4.2 Technology enablers



Shomita Biswas, 1988, Maharashtra is currently serving as Joint Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers welfare. During her tenure as Chief Executive Officer of the National Medicinal Plants Board, a wing under the Ministry of AYUSH, GOI, where she along with Padampriya Balakrishnan 2001 Madhya Pradesh took major initiatives to conserve and promote medicinal plants across the country.

One of their most outstanding initiatives was the introduction of virtual dedicated platform for marketing of medicinal plants through introduction of E-charak (Channel for Herbs, Aromatic Raw Material and Knowledge) during a time, when the sector was grappling with the problem of marketing and trade of medicinal plants based raw material produced by farmers. Cultivation of medicinal plants was promoted by NMPB in a big way to reduce pressure on the wild, which has also helped conservation of medicinal plants in the forest indirectly.

Saswati Mishra, 1997 Batch, Karnataka Cadre worked in various capacities in territorial, wildlife and head office of the Karnataka Forest Department. She has also served in e-Governance and Environment Departments of the Government of Karnataka. One of the major contributions of the officer has been the establishment of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Centre in Karnataka Forest Department. This has brought about a process of automation in the core functioning of various wings of the Department, enhance transparency and efficiency by adapting MIS, GIS and RS technology and bringing about process re-engineering . In order to streamline mining activities, Saswati, along with her team, conceptualized, designed and implemented Forest Produce Tracking System (FPTS), an online system to track movement of mineral resources from the mining heads to the point of consumption. This system immensely helped in monitoring the transportation of mineral resources and regulating illegal movement.



The officer along with her team also developed and implemented e-Timber, a web-based software for timber accounting, management of depot sales and monitoring of timber movement. A very important project to create a cadastral-level geospatial database of all notified forests of Karnataka was initiated by her during her tenure. As Director, Environment Management Policy Research Institute (EMPRI), Saswati officer has played a crucial role in the establishment of GIS Lab, Water Quality Testing Lab and Centre for Climate Change.

“There is an urgent need to make judicious use of technology in conservation of forests and wildlife. IFS officers need to constantly upgrade their knowledge, skill and innovate to live upto the challenges faced today. There is a need to be more positive and sensitive towards the problems faced by people and transparent in our administration to win their confidence and cooperation in conservation efforts.”

- Saswati Mishra, 1997, Karnataka

Dr Anupama, 2000 West Bengal took up similar initiatives in West Bengal during her tenure with the Working Plan Divisions and also introduced drone-surveillance technology and GIS mapping for boundary demarcation and delineation.

Priyanka Varghese, 2003, Telangana has been the star-bearer of the flagship programme 'Telanganaku Haritha Haaram' (THH) now in its 5th year since inception. The main objective of this project has been to increase the green cover from 24% to 33% in the state. Rejuvenating degraded forests, ensuring more effective protection of forests against smuggling, encroachment, taking up massive plantation activities outside Forest areas including multi-row road-side avenues, river and canal bank, barren hill, tank bunds and foreshore areas, institutional premises, religious places, housing colonies, community abandoned lands, farm lands etc have been the key highlights. Priyanka and her team have used innovative schemes such as Miyawaki Plantation techniques in urban forest areas, engaging with philanthropists for CSR and other such out of box ideas that have helped build a reconnect of urban centers to nature.



Shailaja Deval, 2004 Batch, Rajasthan in her tenure as DCF Udaipur carried out bamboo harvesting in Udaipur circle as per the approved Working Plan, did auctions of wood in 11 districts of jurisdiction under Udaipur in two consecutive years until 2014 thereby collecting the highest ever revenue from the division. Presently she is Member Secretary Rajasthan State Pollution control board.



Shivani Dogra 2007 Batch Telangana has been the face of the department while sensitizing the forest fringe village of the newly carved out Kawal Tiger Reserve. As DCF Mancherial forest division she is extra alert on wild animal rescue especially tigers that may accidentally stray into habitations. A strict vigil and a quick response team has reduced number of human -wildlife conflicts in the region.

Neenu Somaraj, 2010 Batch Maharashtra works as DCF Mangrove cell, Mumbai & Joint Director, Mangrove Foundation. Her extensive work on the conservation of Mangrove ecosystem & Marine Biodiversity and promotion of livelihood projects like aquaculture, crab culture, marine ornamental fish hatchery, mangrove-based Ecotourism etc. ensures community participation in the conservation process. She also manages Malvan Marine Sanctuary, Sindhudurg and Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary, Mumbai.



Kalpana



Kalpana

Deepa K S 2010 Batch Kerala as DCF research has ensured quality seed supply for plantations, streamlined measurements of research plots besides finalization of several research studies. She has also handled encroachment removals & boundary consolidation, established healthy ecotourism practices in Kothamangalam a tough high range division; taken up forestry research & currently is developing a Zoological park and biological conservation centre at Puthur.

Kavita Singh 2012 batch Rajasthan played a vital role in Avian botulism management in Nov 19 when she was posted as DCF Jaipur. Efficient multi-dept cooperation & clear protocols led to timely control of the disease which caused mass death of migratory birds in Sambhar Salt Lake.



4.3 The people connect

Madhu Sharma, 1986, APCCF, and Secretary, Karnataka State Human Rights Commission, trained as Resource Person on ‘Gender in Forestry’ under the Gender Planning Training Project. Her major contribution is in the implementation of ‘Forest Laws’ in RFs and Wildlife areas. As per the laws of the land, she played a vital role in closing the iron mining in Kudremukh National Park that was becoming detrimental to the health of the ecosystem. For her work in forestry, she was chosen as the first recipient of the ‘Young Forestry Exchange Scheme Award’ in 1999, out of all Commonwealth countries.

“It is a great opportunity to be in the lap of ‘Mother Nature’. Serve her while earning your livelihood! Foresters are blessed!”

– **Madhu Sharma**, 1986, APCCF, and Secretary, Karnataka State Human Rights Commission

Mamta Sanjeev Dubey, 1986, Uttar Pradesh mobilized the Haridwar ashrams for tree plantation drive and raising awareness about forest conservation. She also helped formulate detailed mechanisms for benefit sharing according to UP JFM Rules. Presently, she is working as Chief Vigilance Officer, IRCON International Ltd.

“We are the custodians of most wonderful gift of Mother Nature: the dense forests, fascinating animals and vibrant ecosystems. Let’s devise ways so that human development can take place in harmony with nature.” – **Mamta Sanjeev**

Dubey, 1986, Uttar Pradesh





Series #50
Chandrapur



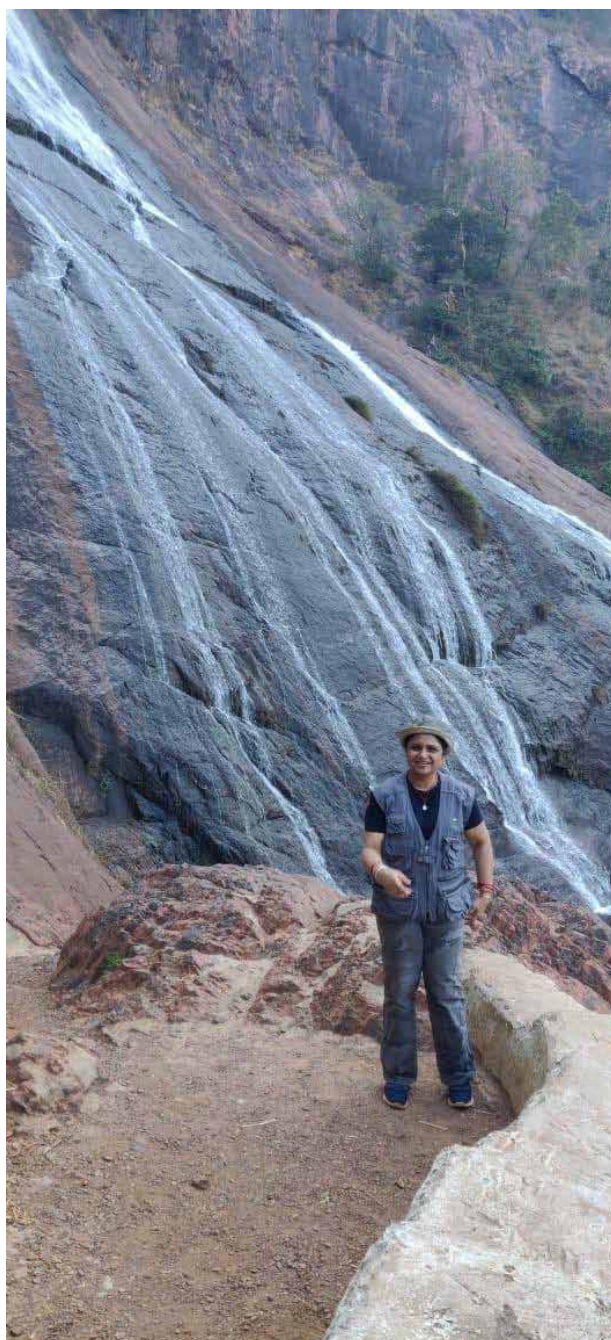
Multiple species puddle together in mud to
absorb nutrients.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY!

Shailender Kaur, 2000 Punjab is serving as Director Horticulture, Punjab and has encouraged several new innovative approaches towards boosting fruit and vegetable production through the Centre of Excellence for Vegetable at Kartarpur.



Padma Mahanti, 2001 Kerala served as Deputy Director, Periyar Tiger Reserve during which time she played an important role in developing innovative approaches towards eco-tourism by keeping local community in the forefront. An author and poet, her compilation of poems, *Mist and Musings*, tells of her experiences of working in the forest. Periyar has six indigenous tribes, Mannans, Paliyans, Uralis, Malapandarams, Malayarians and Ulladans. Efforts like organising the Mannan and Paliyan fishermen into eco-development committees and regulation of fishing activities inside the park were taken up. They were trained in research, wildlife health monitoring; protection of park and in hospitality sector. It was unique because all eco-tourism programmes were protection-oriented and each one was need based. Her efforts were to explore linking of local economy like pepper cultivation in the tribal hamlets directly with the global market by weaning out middlemen.



It is for this reason that many women officers have used social customs over policing. **Smitha Pankaj** 2006 Batch, Jharkhand realized it and popularized the custom of tying “Raksha Bandhan” on Sal trees. Empathy and respect for local customs helped her work effectively in the remotest areas of Jharkhand. At the same time, she supported alternate livelihood opportunities for women in forest fringe areas thereby reducing dependence on forests.



The experience of prior public dealing also helped **Kavitha T.J.** 2000 Batch, Rajasthan during the first phase of the covid-lockdown in 2020. Posted as Resident Commissioner, Rajasthan at Delhi, she was entrusted with the very important task to procure food and civil supplies and also distribute them to the needy. She recalls that ensuring a smooth service delivery system kept them always on tenterhooks but it was a very satisfying stint in the end.



Her prior experience with botany and forestry had been an asset for A. **Sonibala Devi**, 2002 Telanagana to serve as Special Secretary & CEO, Telangana State Medicinal Plants Board (TSMPB). Her team has been catering to services in the field of Medical and Health Related Matters including AYUSH for all districts in the Telangana State.

Kiran Bisen, 2009 Batch, Madhya Pradesh is a firm believer in people's participation in Conservation. She is of the view that ownership of efforts & ideas can only save the commons and has implemented the philosophy be it in river rejuvenation or creating green spaces. She has tried out Miyawaki plantation techniques to create green lungs for Ujjain and has been extensively engaging with youth and children to spread the message of environment conservation.



She states that “Forest Department has always emphasized the paramount significance of ecosystems as income provider- and potential source of livelihood but often fail to account for the important link between environment and the livelihoods of the rural poor. Our every action must remind us of the benefit that can be provided to the poorest sections on the society”.



Dimpi Bora 2012 Batch, Assam-Meghalaya, in her first posting with the Nagaon Social forestry Division, renovated an ecotourism park with the support of the women members of the local Joint Forest Management Committee. She also got the rural women trained at the IEE(Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship) on hospitality management so that they could also run the canteen premises on their own. She also ensured that basic facilities such as clean toilets, resting sheds are provided to all workers in her nursery plantations. She feels that fulfilling some of the basic needs of the frontline staff like provisioning for cooking utensil, beds and mosquito nets, and pucca toilets gives a positive incentive for them to work with greater energy in remote locations.



C Meenakshi 2009 Batch, Kerala has used innovative approaches such as coir bags to prevent 90 lakh plastic bags from reaching landfills! after trying out several other alternatives such as bamboo shoots, coconut shells, and gunny bags to grow the saplings, she found that coir was the best success. Even teakwood trees which have a dominant root system grew well in the coir containers that are shaped like cones and are weightless. They also have perfect water retention capacity, and the material is just right, thereby allowing full space for the roots to grow. Coir is also high in 'lignin,' a cellulose-like material responsible for its durability. Apart from this, the containers can be planted along with the sapling, making it a completely zero-waste product and process.

Amrita Dutta 2010 West Bengal got posted in poverty stricken Purulia district where in forest fringe villages, women are literally the last men standing. She was appalled by the menstrual health of these women and stepped beyond the forestry mandate for a targeted menstrual hygiene drive. 1600 women in 9 villages were covered in the drive consisting of regular awareness camps, medical camps and support through supply of sanitary napkins and their safe disposal.

CORONA TIMES #12

THE WILD FIRE FIGHTERS...



R. Keerthi, 2012 Batch Kerala recalls her first posting as trainee at Parambikulam Tiger Reserve where she was exposed mainly to ecotourism and tribal welfare activities. She continued her learnings to Chalakudy, Thrissur district where she secured the first organic certification for her self-help group (Vanashree).

She also brought in intervention with the help of Vana Sakrakshan Samities to remove plastic waste along the Athirapally route– a tourism spot, introducing interventions like storage sheds for honey collected by tribals, a vehicle to take kids to school, PSC coaching classes for tribals, planting interventions in schools, public places and tribal colonies under the Green India Mission, creating water storage structures in forest areas for animals and development of infrastructure in the central nursery among others.



Nikitha Boga 2017 Telangana joined the strong all women brigade of women forest officers who have made a name in the state for their sincerity and dedication. With increasing women frontline staff, Telangana Forest Department is Providing basic facilities like rest room/ comfort room in remote areas across the state Young officers such as Nikitha ensure implementation on the ground thereby enabling working environment for women frontline staff.



GQs - Next Gen



2011



2012



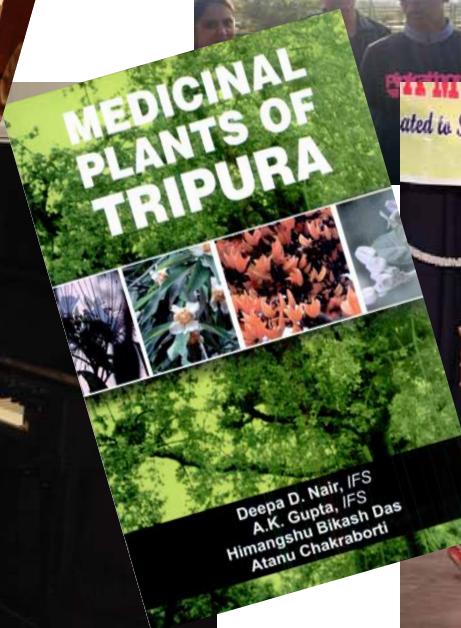
2013



2016

Chapter Five

Shaping a Green Queen & Her Many Traits



If there is any professional training that would give us rich learning experience, practical exposure to innovations and initiatives of various states of India, field exercises in the lap nature's picturesque locations, trekking in snowcapped mountains and heaven of flowers, adventure activities right from paragliding, scuba diving to horse riding, interacting with the most eminent honourable dignitaries right from President of India and Vice President of India to Governors and Chief Ministers of various states – and the list goes on – it is none other than the Indian Forest Service.

It is one of the most comprehensive professional training ever for any All-India Service. This wonderful journey starts when we enter the Forest Academy. The senior generations would remember it as IFC (Indian Forest College) and the new entrants post 1987, as IGNFA (Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy). The academy borrows its grandeur from the sprawling campus of Forest Research Institute – an architecture marvel of India and an icon in itself as a center of science and learning. The beauty of the campus with scenic view of the Himalayas makes this training even more memorable in the entire service period.

“Golden period of service in a heavenly campus. Lots of pleasant memories. Our batch had 11 lady officers and the Academy (then IFC) people were also surprised. Being a student in the garb of an officer in an ultimate kind of campus was like living in a dream. Forestry was a new subject for me, and very interesting to say the least,” recalls **Madhu Sharma**, 1986 batch of Karnataka Cadre.



Neha Verma

5.1 Building a strong foundation

The main aim of the IFS professional training course is to prepare the younger generations to deal with the problems like climate change, protecting biodiversity, enforcing laws and addressing ecological security of the nation for future generations. It also focusses on capacity building of the IFS probationers by imparting technical knowledge and skill required in forestry sector, enhancing management skills and also developing intra and inter-personality development skills as they will help in delivering the public services in an effective manner as part job mandate.



The typical day at the academy starts with Physical Training. The academy gives emphasis on physical fitness as foresters are often required to tour extensively inside the forest where means of transport is generally not available. It has one of the finest playgrounds than any other academy and is well-equipped with indoor facilities like gymnasium and badminton court along with outdoor facilities for sports like volleyball, basketball etc. The games period is the most-awaited period of the day that helps us in cementing our ties and building true sportsmanship.

Dr Gopa Pandey, 1982, Madhya Pradesh Cadre IFS officer says,

“We were four women officers during training in IFC in a batch of 115. We were allotted the first row in the class and it was a challenge to remain composed in the class with presence of mind. There was no difference between women and men in training drawn on the PT or playground. In morning jogging and PT, the three women officers made the first file and I had to move to the last due to my height. It wasn’t an issue as I was used to the back seat. I never felt treated in any different way as compared to my male colleagues and after about eight years, a boss of mine pointed out during a tour to forests that how I felt being addressed as ‘Sir’ by my staff. In fact, everyone, senior or junior, treated me as an officer on par with others both in IFC and state. There were no concessions for tours or meetings and actually, it never occurred to me either “.



All GQs would agree that the most exhilarating part of the training is learning in the lap of nature. The introductory tour, mensuration, working plan exercise, wildlife technique tour etc. played key roles in understanding the basics of forestry and helped in grooming us as budding foresters in picturesque locations. The exclusive and most-awaited part of the training is practical exposure to practices of various state forest departments.

The academy provides its own way of 'Bharat Darshan' that comprises west, central, east, south and hill tours. This helps OTs familiarize with diverse landscapes along with varied forest types, flora and fauna. Also gives them ideas about different forest management practices, forest-people interaction in addition to the opportunity of exploring the rich cultural heritage of our nation. In recent batches, the OTs are also exposed to overseas forestry practices in Spain, Italy, Russia, Estonia and Finland to impart international outlook to the probationers in the management of forest and natural resource management.



One of the most adventurous modules of IFS professional training is trekking. Right from the friendly trekking trips during the FC (Foundation Course) at LBSNAA (Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration) at Mussoorie, to the more thematic forest treks to Chakrata hills for the forest mensuration exercise, and from botanists' paradise Valley of Flowers to the slippery expedition to Top Slip and Karian Shola patches, trekking in diverse landscapes makes us one with nature besides teaching the basics of team work, endurance and physical fitness. The modules organized outside the academy, like swimming, horse riding, equitation, driving etc in IMA, Dehradun, gives the OTs (Officer Trainees) an opportunity for self-development and to excel in life-saving skills. Learning to hold a mortar launcher, swimming and horse riding, a first in a lifetime for many is the most amazing experiences during training period.



The most cherished moment for any civil servant is to get an opportunity to visit the temple of democracy, the Indian Parliament. The three pillars of our Constitution need to understand each other for smooth functioning of the country. In order to serve this purpose, OTs are exposed to the functioning of the legislature. This provides an excellent opportunity to know the nitty-gritties of the functioning of the parliament.

Academy not only makes training a memorable part in any IFS officer's service journey but also gives opportunity to those officers who are passionate about teaching and mentoring, and provides a platform for shaping the future generations by serving as faculty/course directors on deputation basis to the academy.

"Times have changed and values transformed since 1982. The ICT and telecom revolution have made the world a global village. We need to infuse fresh energy from knowledge, skill and attitude of this generation in forestry. With old shoots, new experiments to raise the productivity to meet the demands of teeming millions is our responsibility. People are expecting visible results from us. Wake up and keep thinking, innovating and translating ideas into action. Where is the comparison as you are the powerhouse of young culture. Shake up the challenge and show the world what you can do for humanity."

Gopa Pandey, 1992, Madhya Pradesh Cadre



Sreelakshmi Chikkilam,

Sangeeta Dubey, 1991 Batch, West Bengal came on central deputation as faculty at CASFOS, Dehradun after completing a successful stint in North Bengal. A diploma holder in wildlife, she gained experience in setting up eco-tourism projects and took up teaching these new topics to the officer trainees.

“If we truly believe in the cause we are working for, then we will strive, despite any obstacles, to achieve our goal. If you receive a sense of fulfillment from the work you do, then that is the best incentive you can get.”

Sangeeta Dubey, 1991 Batch, West Bengal Cadre



GQs of 2018 Batch

Meeta Biswal 1988 Batch, Odisha was a faculty at the academy when there were comparatively smaller batches and hence the women bonded as if to an older sister or a mentor. Other than teaching sessions and accompanying on the tours the women faculty would also lend a ear to any grievance or any personal issues be it inter-personal relationships with fellow male colleagues or the family pressures of marriage or settling down. It was a welcome step for academy to have women faculty and even more so when they would help in supporting a young officer truly become a gentle(wo)man.

Anu Nagar, 1995 Batch, Himachal Pradesh Cadre recalls that, learning is a continuous process, a long tour in the academy not only as a probationer but also as an accompanying faculty. It offered her rich learning experience during her tenure in IGNFA. Engaging probationers in the classroom and updating ourselves with the latest information is one of the main challenges for any faculty in the academy, she recollects. One of the most popular faculty duo, she subsequently moved to Delhi where she joined as Joint Secretary of the Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Co-Chair of the Technical Appraisal Committee of the Health Technology Assessment in India (HTAI).

It was a proud moment when she and her team was awarded (for designing the RT PCR App) with Digital Innovation Award under the category 'Innovation in Pandemics' by the Hon'ble President on 30th Dec 2020.



Kasturi P Sule & Kajol Patil



Padma Mahanti

Bharati, 1992 Sikkim also was a faculty member at the Academy and it was during her time that cataloging and systematic data documentation of all the officer trainees were undertaken. Use of geospatial technology especially for forest fire mapping and for DRR strategies were introduced and the OTs familiarized. Her innovative trait continued even while serving as Inspector General of Forests at the Ministry where she took several initiatives to secure forest protection and management at the National level. During her short stint as IGF in-charge of IFS division, systemic changes were brought in for enhanced transparency and efficiency in cadre management.



Bharati



Meera Iyer

Meera Iyer, 2000 batch Maharashtra has been one of the longest serving Principal of Central Academy for State Forest Service (CASFOS). CASFOS has the mandate to train newly recruited State Forest Service (SFS) officers from various states and conduct in-service trainings for serving SFS officers. During her tenure she brought in fresh changes to the curriculum by exposing the trainees to the latest in forestry and wildlife management. She also focused on all-round development and sustainability thereby significantly reducing the carbon footprint from running such courses. Along with **Dr Surabhi Rai**, 2005 AGMUT and **Sarita Kumari**, 2005 Himachal Pradesh, she formed a formidable force and set an all time high in standards of imparting quality education and training. Sarita Kumari continued her mentoring streak even during the pandemic time when the academy was able to quickly adapt itself to online teaching modes and evaluation techniques.



Sarita Kumari



Surabhi Rai

Nidhi Srivastava, 2001 Batch, Punjab Cadre, has been the course director for the 2018-20 IFS batch. “It’s always needed to be a person of high morale to set an example to the probationers to follow and take cue from the faculty about how to become an efficient officer in their career“, says Nidhi when asked about her experience as course director. She also taught the Biodiversity Conservation subject to probationers. “One needs to be updated with the latest facts and figures as probationers these days are smart and well-informed about every topic in advance,” she recollects about her teaching experience in the academy. “The personal bonding with probationers, the coveted responsibility of course director gives sense of pride and satisfaction and its memorable journey so far in the academy”

“There is no substitute for hard work, sincerity and honesty. It always pays in the long run. Work with a broad mind and clean intentions to get satisfaction along with success.”

- Nidhi Srivastava, 2001 Batch, Punjab Cadre



Nidhi Srivastava



Dr Surabhi Rai, 2005 Batch, AGMUT has worked in diverse ecosystems ranging from tropical wet evergreen forests to temperate alpine forests. A doctorate degree holder in Post-Harvest Technology from Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), she began her career in Goa with her prime duties being regulation of private tree felling, private sawmills and mining leases. In Arunachal Pradesh, she had the opportunity of working in Deomali forest division famous for its North Bank Tropical Wet Evergreen forests with the highly endemic *Shorea assamica*. Subsequently she served in biodiversity rich Bomdilla, where she worked on ex situ conservation of medicinal plants through establishment of *Taxus baccata* nurseries, medicinal plants garden based on the Tibetan medicine system in partnership with the local Monastery and initiated the notification of a Medicinal plants Conservation Reserve in community owned land. She also advocated, raising awareness, conducting demonstrations on alternate fuel sources and distributing pine bio-briquetting machines to VFMCs in the area in a bid to decrease the fuel wood pressure. More than her scientific temperament, Dr Surabhi would be remembered as one of the most popular faculty members of not just one but two State Forest Service training academies viz., the Eastern Forest Rangers College (EFRC), Kurseong, and the Central Academy for State Forest Officers, (CASFOS) Dehradun. She worked on the expansion of the training stakeholder base by introducing several new short term training courses. Her popularity is evident from the fact that she would have trainees and the forest service peer group fan-following in every state! This affable selfless trait has continued in her subsequent postings as Deputy Secretary (Rural Connectivity) in the Ministry of Rural Development and now with the parent department at Delhi.

Pradeepa, 2005 batch Maharashtra is the first women faculty at CASFOS, Coimbatore. It was a happy moment for the faculty and trainees of CASFOS who can see the mentor in her to represent their concerns and to whom they could reach out to in the times of need. “It’s a wonderful opportunity to come to an academy where we get to interact with probationers by keeping ourselves up-to-date with information. It also makes us feel young at heart which gives motivation to work with more enthusiasm. The long study tours where we have opportunity to decide places based on learning objective, help us to rejuvenate ourselves in addition to learning new things which is a continuous process,” says Pradeepa.

“Don’t hesitate, come with a fresh mind to the service. The future is in our hands.”

Pradeepa, 2005 Batch, Maharashtra



GQs in Sports Meet

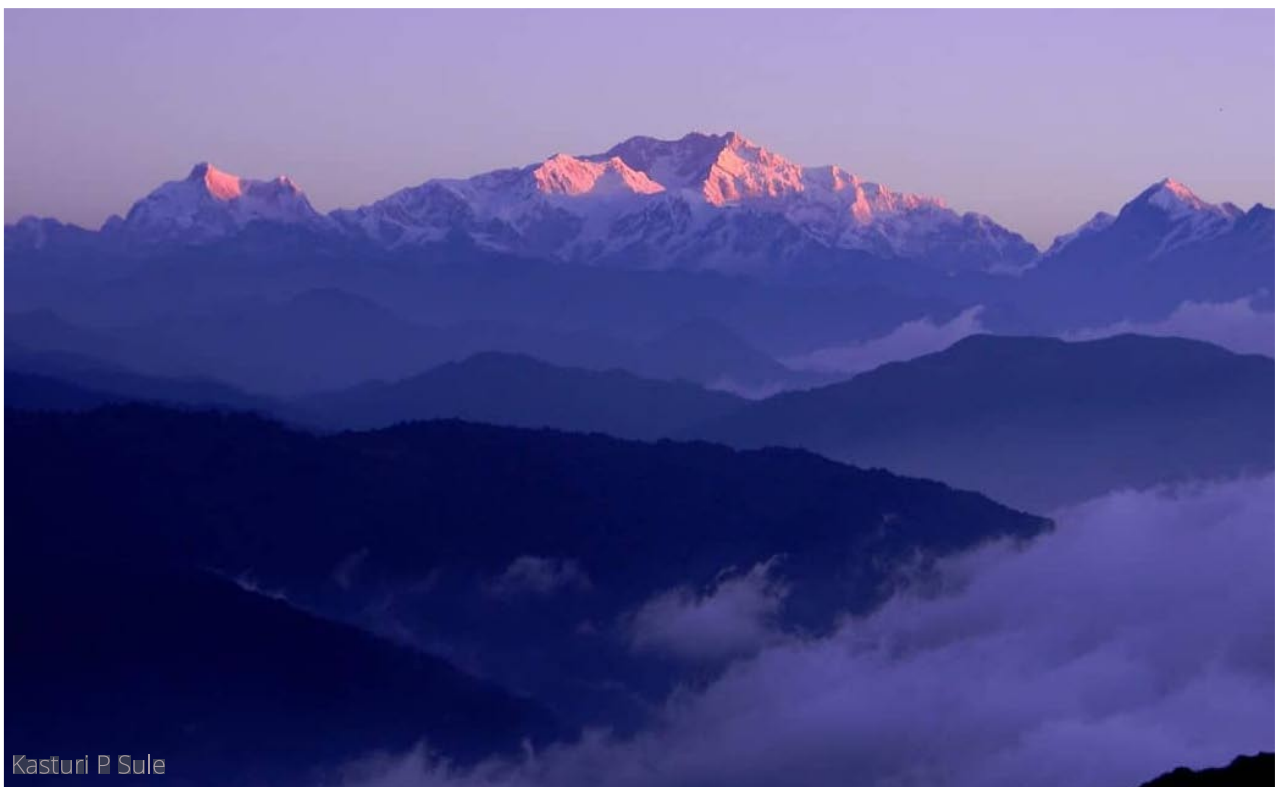
Deep J. Contractor, Batch 2011, Karnataka faced several hurdles after successful eviction of encroachments from more than 650 acres forest-land from Chikkaballapura Division under Bengaluru Circle. Undeterred, she continued to work in her new assignment and saw an opportunity in Karnataka State Forest Academy (KSFA) where since her joining in 2017, there is no looking back. Under the able guidance of a senior **A. Radhadevi** Batch 1992, Karnataka, Deep got an opportunity to prove her mettle and establish



KSFA as a training academy par excellence. More than 7 batches of trainees from Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Telangana have now passed out of KSFA. After the successful completion of the tenure the baton has been passed on to yet another competent women officer Sonal Vrishni, 2011 Karnataka.

“Be fearless. When in doubt, remember what my favourite author, Ayn Rand says – ‘The question isn’t who is going to let me; it’s who is going to stop me!’”

- Deep J. Contractor 2011 Batch, Karnataka



Kasturi P Sule

Deepika Choudhury 2011, Assam-Meghalaya joined the Assam state when traditionally the much-coveted territorial posting was not given to women officer in the state. The stereotype was broken when she was posted in one of the most volatile districts of Golaghat which had inter-state border conflicts besides the challenges of protection and encroachment that plagued such disputed areas. She and subsequently another young IFS officer Davinder Suman, 2012 along with the support of superiors in the service and activists, fought tooth and nail the construction of a high rise wall in the path of an elephant corridor. The case was also finally won in the apex court. It is because of this integrity streak that Deepika was posted as Director Assam Forest School. Since then she has been the longest serving officer to have transformed the face of the institution and also for making capacity building an integral part of the forest management.



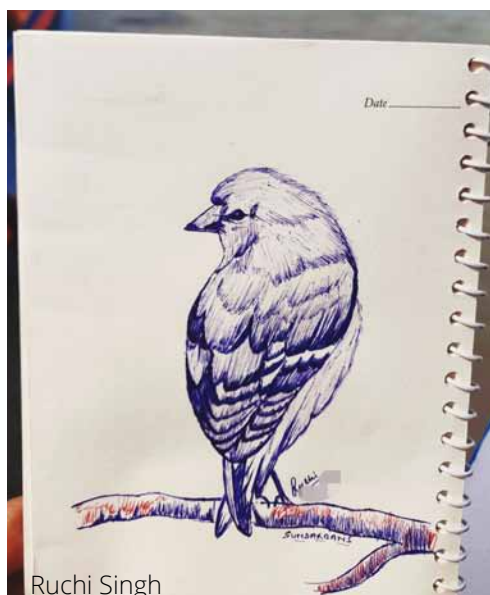
5.23 Bridging the science-policy interface

The Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE), an autonomous body of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, provides the nation with best the possible services in the field of forestry research and climate change. It is mandated to generate, preserve, disseminate, and advance knowledge, technologies and solutions for addressing issues related to forests and promote linkages arising out of interactions between people, forests and environment on a sustained basis through research, education and extension. The Council at present has 14

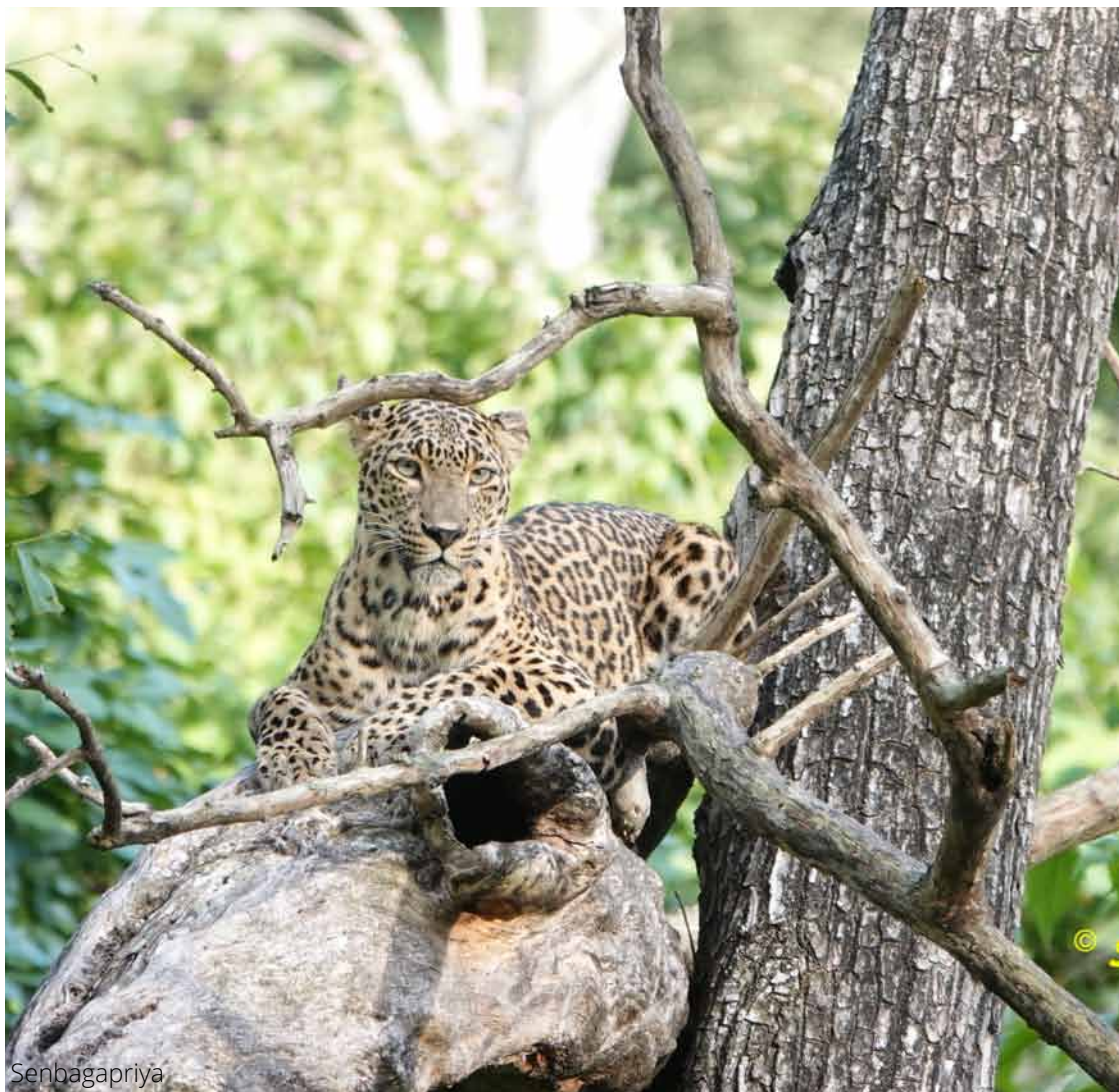
research establishments including nine institutes and five centers which are repositories of knowledge and techniques in various branches of field forestry. ICFRE has developed a strong base for forestry research in the country and has achieved significant networking with a number of national and international organizations for greater outreach and cooperation. Several women IFS' officers have successfully donned the mantle of scientists under ICFRE and have thereby helped in bridging the science -policy interface.



Neena Khandekar, 1995 Maharashtra, prior to her voluntary retirement from service was heading RSM Division of FRI where the National Working Plan code was being finalised and readying for implementation in the field. In keeping with the objectives of the project, the National Working Plan Code addressed issues like climate change, carbon sequestration and has incorporated the criteria and indicators (C&I) for sustainable management of forests. It also has provisions that allow for the shifting of forest resource management objectives to biodiversity which forms the crux of any forest management system. In another major shift from the previous code, the National Working Plan Code provides for grid based systematic sampling wherein the distribution of sampling plots within the surveyed population is homogeneous. For this it uses modern technology of GPS and GIS. It is the first step to monitor and assess forest resources and provide new qualitative and quantitative information at forest division level which could be integrated and up scaled to state and national level in a standardized framework. It recognizes the rights of forest people under Forest Rights Act, 2006 and focuses on management of NTFPs including medicinal and aromatic plants in recognition of their economic and livelihood significance. Forest certification finds a place in the revised Working Plan Code. Through team work, the National Working Plan Code finally got implemented in the country from 1st April, 2014.



Praneetha Paul, 2001 Batch, Chhattisgarh has served at the Institute of Wood Science and Technology, Bengaluru. She recalls that until 2000, sandalwood was largely confined to the forests of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, and plantations of these state governments. There was no cultivation on private agricultural land in the rest of the country. But in 2001, the Karnataka government came up with rules to encourage sandalwood cultivation in private farms. Praneetha has been instrumental in devising cultivation protocols for the crop. She also took part in research activities in developing protocols for uniform germination, disease control, tissue culture propagation and identified companion crops or hosts of sandalwood. She has played a vital role in encouraging farmers to take up sandalwood cultivation in their farms by making them aware of a complete set of instructions to fetch more revenue and requires less maintenance. They have also developed a MicroChip for the protection of mature sandalwood trees.



Arti Chaudhary, 2002 Batch AGMUT started her career from the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands in 2004. Her first exposure to disaster management came when, during her on the job training, she witnessed the earthquake that shook the Andaman and Nicobar Islands on 26/12/2004 at 06:36 hours with a magnitude of 9.0 (revised to 9.3) on the Richter Scale. It triggered Tsunami waves in which thousands of people lost their lives in the Nicobar group of islands and caused extensive damage to the government and private properties throughout Andaman and Nicobar Islands. By staying among the field staff, Arti



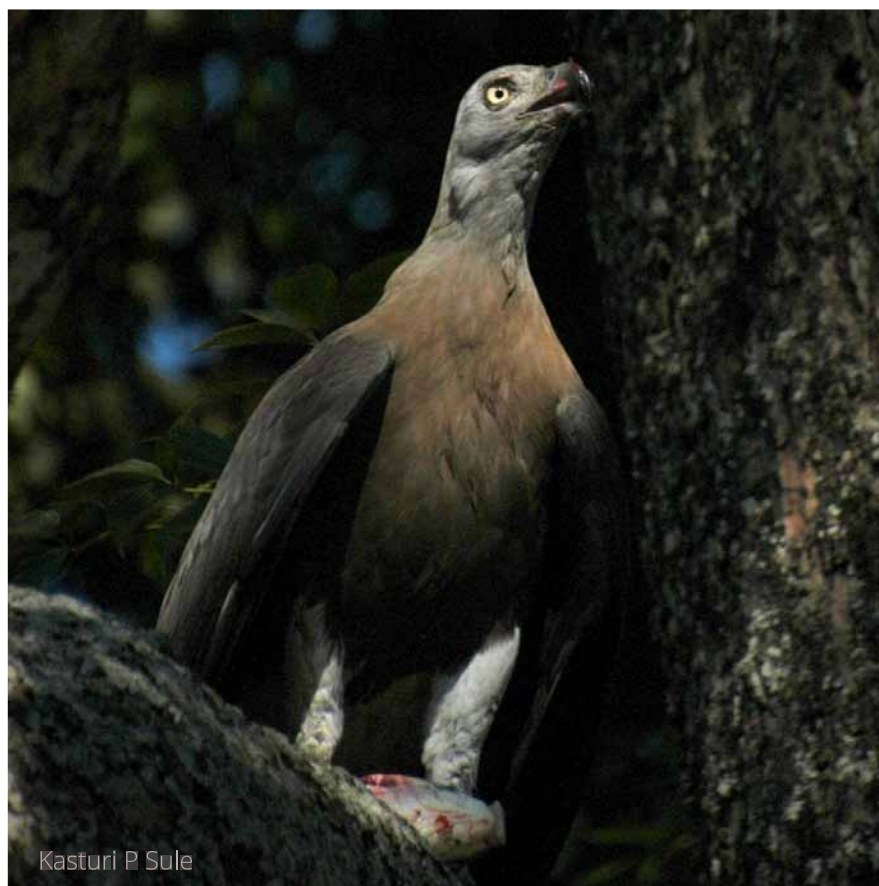
encouraged them to help each other in the hour of need when all means of communications and transport were cut off. She also motivated and extended counseling to their children who felt the threat to their very existence in the event of a repeat of such a disaster. More than 300 aftershocks of magnitude 5 and above were felt for months together thereafter. Much later, Arti came on central deputation and is currently serving as Head Silviculture & Forest Management at the Forest Research Institute, Dehradun. She is responsible for the scientific management and research needs of States of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Delhi. Arti is also the ex-officio Honorary Editor of The Indian Forester, the oldest journal on tropical forestry being brought out since July 1875.



Prachi Gangwar, 2003 Batch, Karnataka feels that forestry research is a neglected area though it helps in developing and evolving knowledge in all the related spheres of forestry. She feels fortunate to have been able to get the desired opportunity to contribute by means of basic and applied research. As DCF (Research), Haldwani, she worked on improving nursery techniques of some 'hard to root' local species. After several trials, nursery technique for germination of *Adina cordifolia* a fast growing and much in demand species was standardised. She also worked on the effect of forest hydrology on sal regeneration in Terai forest, clonal eucalyptus and poplar hybridisation. Large-scale bamboo banks were developed to access the ability and scope of certain species for livelihood generation in Uttarakhand. In her endeavour to contribute towards applied research in the forestry sector, Prachi is working extensively on analysing the effects and consequences of Forest Conservation Act (1980), in the perspective of development. Efforts are being made to analyse and workout the trade-offs between economic development and conservation needs.

“Woman is a creator, and the curator! Go for it! You are meant for it!”

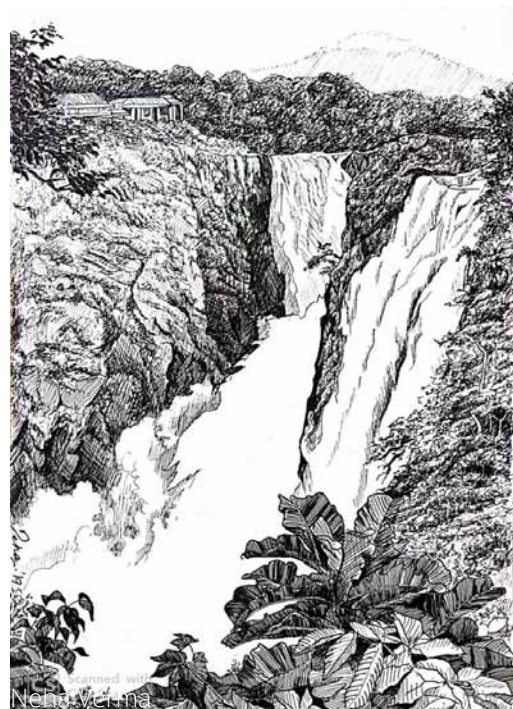
- Prachi Gangwar, 2003, Karnataka



Dr Monali Sen, 2011 Rajasthan joined the Wildlife Institute of India as the first women Registrar and has since then taken up several initiatives to streamline the procedures and administrative reforms. She has also been assigned the activities of the Policy Research Cell and the Category 2 Centre on World Natural Heritage Management and Training for Asia and Pacific Region that aims to build capacity, awareness-creation among the masses, youth in particular and works towards protection and conservation of 70 natural world heritage sites in this region. She aims to work towards the implementation of National Wildlife Action Plan 2017-31 thereby clearly making a case of bridging the science-policy interface.

“Dear Queens, sky is the limit for us. Identify your core value and stick to it no matter what happens. We are genetically specialised for multitasking and we are excelling in that. Do whatever you want to do, in whichever field you want to pursue. Only be honest to yourself and the rules of the service which have provided you this beautiful scope to fight on behalf of our mother nature. Love this service as you love yourself – hitherto till eternity – and no one can do better than you.”

Monali Sen, 2011 Rajasthan





Richa Misra, 2001 Batch, West Bengal heads the Extension Division at Forest Research Institute Dehradun and takes up forestry research activities with farmers, stakeholders and institutions engaged in forestry and agricultural research. The division works through six Van Vigyan Kendras (VVKs) and two demo villages to assist/help and access the user groups to technical know-how of appropriate technologies in States and UTs of its jurisdiction.

Nabanita Ganguly, 2013 Batch, AGMUT is currently serving as DCF Silviculture with , charges of Director (Science & Technology) and Member Secretary, Andaman and Nicobar Islands pollution control committee. She documented on behalf of the department , for the first time, the mass flowering of *Gigantochloa*



andamanica (an endemic bamboo species) from the entire Andaman group of Islands. She has also prepared an Annual Operation Calendar for the upkeep of orchids in the Islands, in a pamphlet form, targeted primarily towards the farmers and the staff of the Department alike.



Mita Banerjee, 1990 Batch, Tamil Nadu got a chance at setting up a post-harvest technology centre at Mettupalayam, replete with solar seasoning kiln, woodworking machinery, veneer peeling machine, match splint cutting machine and so on during her stint as the forest utilization officer. She could make it fully operational after learning the tricks of the trade so to speak for utilization of secondary timber species and then it grew in leaps and bounds. Seasoning techniques for plantation/secondary timber species to improve timber quality were improvised especially for species such as *Acacia auriculiformis*, *A.elata*, *A.mangium*, *A.suma*, *Albizia lebbeck*, *A.odoratissima*, *A.reccidiana*, *A.integrifolius*, *Chloroxylon swietenia*, *Eucalyptus alba*, *E.citriodora*, *E.globulus*, *E.grandis*, *E.tereticornis*, *Gmelina arborea*, *Khaya senegalensis*, *Mangifera indica*, *Melia dubia*, *Pinus patula*, *Tectona grandis*, preservative treatment for 17 species including bamboo, testing splints from 20 species (*A.amara*, *A.lebbeck*, *A.excelsa*, *A.indica*, *A.nilotica*, *Cassia fistula*, *Casuarina equisetifolia*, *Delonix regia*, *Holoptelea integrifolia*, *Pongamia pinnata*, *Samanea saman*, *Wrightia tinctoria*, etc.)



R. Padmawathe, 2005, Tamil Nadu has been working as DCF with the Regional office, Southern Zone, Bengaluru that has been recently merged as one of the 19 Integrated Regional Offices (IROs) of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. Her task has primarily been to take up procedures as per the FC Act and also support the Ministry in the execution of the same.

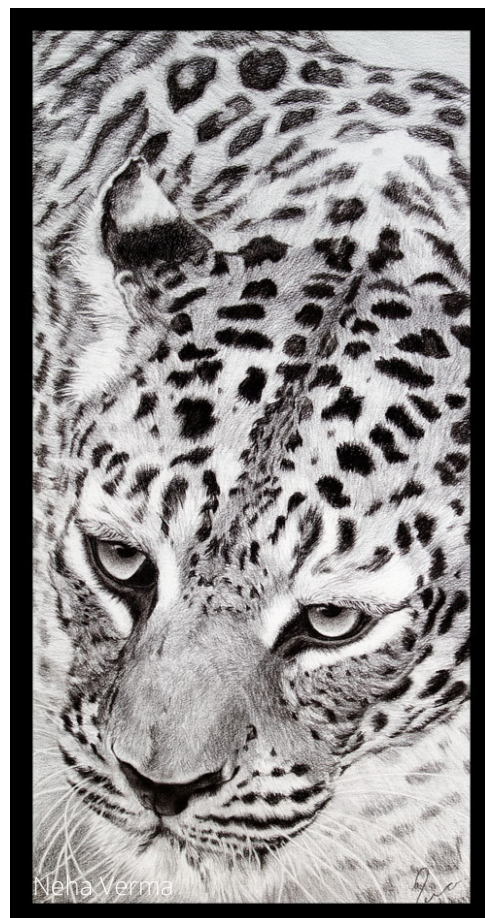
5.3 The Spirit of Jagdamba

Jagadamba, mother of the entire universe and amalgamation of all goddesses. Her spirit is the spirit our Green Queens emulate; there can be no better description of these gifted women who do exceptional things beyond their professional horizons.

The wild streak

Espousing Hellen Keller's quote, "*Life is either a daring adventure or nothing*", these foresters do their best to live life to the fullest. They require their dose of adrenaline, and get it too.

Sameeta Rajora's father trusted her with a Kawasaki Bajaj KB-100 in 1989, and ever since, biking has been one of her many passions. Most people would expect this petite woman to sit prettily on the pillion of the heavy bike she approaches, but **Vanjullavalli Sridhar** surprises all as she handles the bike with professional élan. This 2012 Batch, AGMUT Cadre officer is an ardent biker having covered most biking trails in Karnataka and Uttarakhand, and has even done the ultimate Indian biker's dream of riding in Leh.



The Naturalists-Artists

Walking long distances is a part of a forester's duty. However, the thrill of walking in the jungles is an absolute addiction for some of our gritty Green Queens. As forest officers, access to some of the most pristine and unexplored forests in India is of course an advantage. And trust these treks go beyond the physical challenge and are accompanied by botanisation, bird watching, wildlife sighting, photography, outdoor sketching and maybe inspirations for literary creations. **R. Padmawathe**, 2005 Batch, Tamil Nadu, never felt

comfortable in Chennai, her hometown. Stifled by the city, she followed her heart to pursue a degree in Forestry, Masters in Wildlife Biology and entered into the Indian Forest Service. An ardent naturalist, **Padmawathe** has trekked extensively in the forests of Arunachal Pradesh, the Himalayas and the Western Ghats pausing to observe epiphytes – her pet passion, trees, birds, beetles, snakes, frogs, rocks, lizards, stones etc and photograph them.



The service took **Neethu Lakshmi** from God's Own Country to the land of the Gods. This 2010 Batch, Uttarakhand cadre officer capitalized on her postings in the Uttarakhand hill districts trekking extensively and taking stunning photos of wild flora and fauna Uttarakhand. For her, trekking in the Himalayan landscape is also a spiritually purgatory experience. **Kalpana Kalandaiswamy**, 2014 Batch, Punjab, currently posted in the Harike Wetlands, makes the most of her trips into the forest-fringe villages photographing people and recreating the memories on her easel. **Neha Verma**, 2005 Batch, Uttarakhand Cadre, has been a wildlife enthusiast since her IIT, Kanpur days and expresses her love for wildlife through her art.



Divya Bharati



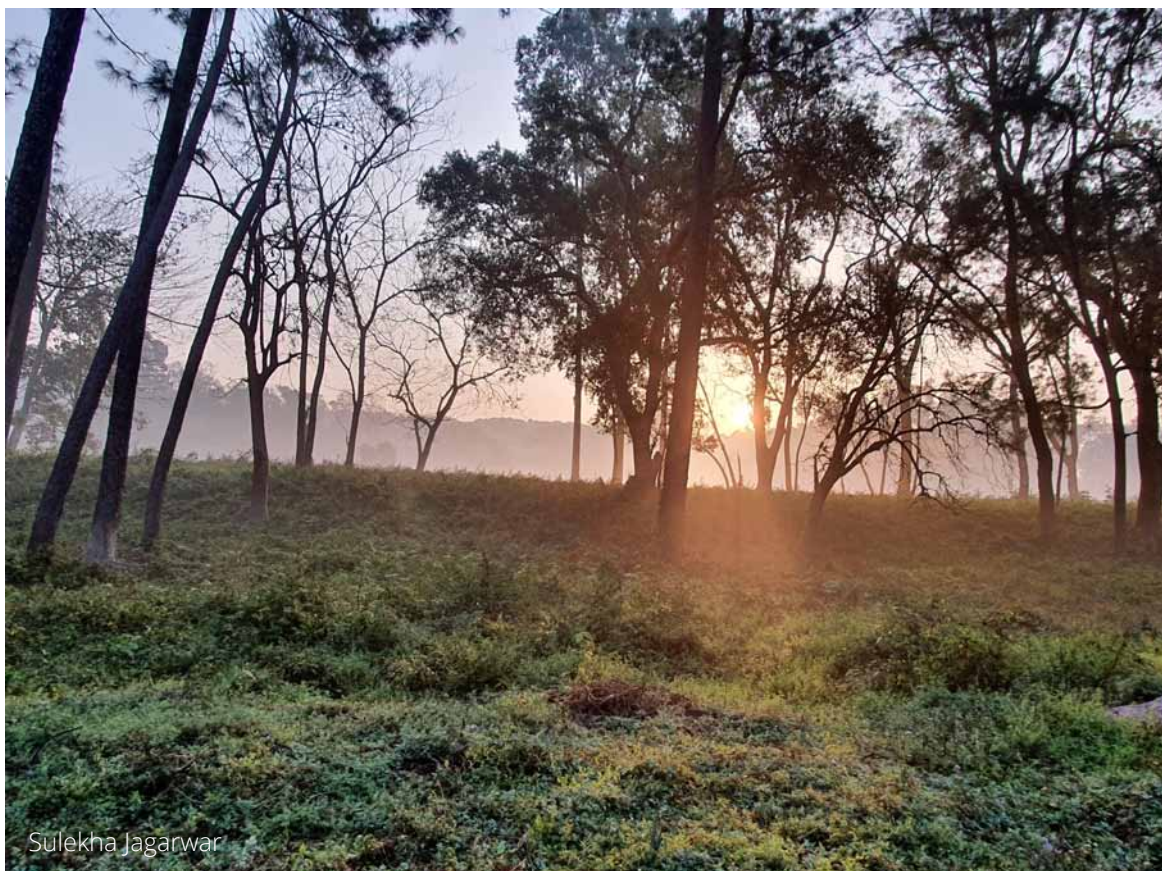
Divya Bharati

Sudha Ramen, 2012, Tamil Nadu Cadre, is a woman who dons many hats. When not developing apps, giving motivational talks or churning out artworks, Sudha tinkers in her kitchen to dish out mouthwatering French dishes. **Deepshikha Sharma**, 2010 Batch, AGMUT Cadre and **C. Meenakshi**, 2007 Batch, Kerala Cadre dabble in traditional paintings of their home state – Pahari-style paintings and Thanjavur-style paintings respectively. **Vijay Laxmi Tiwari**, 1987 Batch, Himachal Pradesh Cadre, embroiders exquisite birds with her nimble fingers.

Sreelakshmi Chikkilam, 2008 Batch, Maharashtra Cadre, has a rather practical approach to art. She paints the sarees she wears and most of the interpretation artwork in her division is done by her.

Of Calliope and Athenas

Very often, the fire to be creatively productive gets doused while striving to maintain work-life balance in an increasingly work-heavy environment. While many resign to a life of fettered dreams, there are those who manage to keep the creative juices and the words flowing out of their hearts. **Pratima Srivastava**, 1999 Batch, Punjab Cadre, is our wordsmith. This graceful and composed lady weaves magic with her words and crafts vividly narrated stories that touch the readers' soul. She is a published author with two fiction titles to her credit – The Unfortunate Kidnapping and The Driftwood. She is a familiar face in literary events at the national level.



Sulekha Jagarwar

Deepa D. Nair, 2001 Batch, Tripura Cadre, has the unique distinction of having made a mark in the field of film development in Kerala. But that's not all, this microbiologist turned forest officer is a prolific writer featuring in prestigious Malayalam publications. **Padma Mahanti**, 2001 Batch, Kerala Cadre, after her stint as Deputy Director, Periyar Tiger Reserve penned down a book titled, *Mist and Musings*, which narrates her experiences in Periyar in a unique blend of poetry and prose. **Sonali Ghosh**, 2000 Batch Assam-Meghalaya has authored several papers and two books including an Anthology titled 'Wild Treasures- reflections on world natural heritage in Asia'. Her ultimate goal in life is to take up popular writing especially on conservation and take it to the general public. **Piyusha Jagtap**, 2015 Batch, Maharashtra Cadre, while confined to bed once due to an unfortunate incident, spent her time watching birds from her window. This window-birding experience beautifully narrated by her was published in *Sanctuary Cub Magazine*. Her oil pastel sketches of the birds on old file covers add charm to the text. Piyusha is an eager chronicler, her writings on travels have been circulated within the fraternity and the 'Piyu-Bole' series that she took up during the covid lockdown time has been appreciated by all.



For most girls learning dance during their growing years, their interest and passion peters down with age and increasing responsibilities. These women officers have pursued their love for the performing arts even today, balancing their professional and personal obligations with their passion for dance. **Vanjullavalli Sridhar**, started training in the Pandanallur style of Bharatnatyam from the age of three. She has been a Grade B artist with Doordarshan since 2007 and after a brief gap due to motherhood, she has resumed giving public performances. **Poornima Pandian**, 2016 Batch, Odisha Cadre, had a penchant for classical dances since childhood and took up the opportunity to learn Odissi while posted in Koraput. A late bloomer, she has enthralled the audience with her performance at the forest sports meet held in Raipur. It is also hoped that classical danseuses **Deep Contractor**, **Neha Srivastava**, **Renjitha M. H.** and **Chestha Singh** resume and continue their passion for dance. Fitness is an occupational requirement for every forester, but these exceptional women have upped their fitness levels to excel in various games and sports.

Our green Atalantas

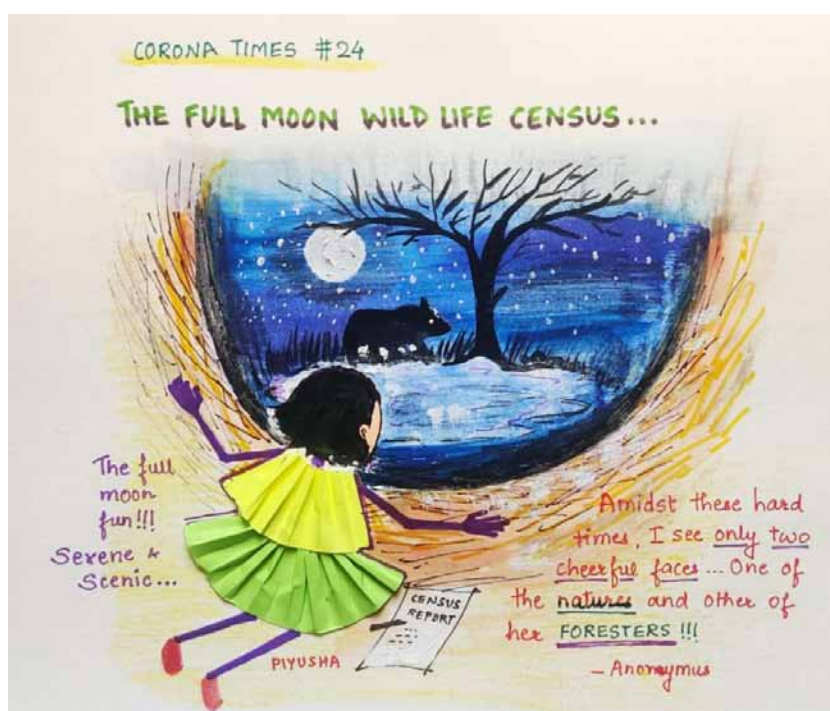
Meenakshi Joshi, 2000 Batch, Uttarakhand Cadre, leads the pack of our own Atlantas. A persistent and consistent runner, she has participated in more than a dozen professional marathons and is a familiar face in the Dehradun running community. **Shalini Raina**, 2001 Batch, Chhattisgarh Cadre, took to running for fitness considerations and gained a new passion – long-distance running – and there has been no looking back now. **Harini**, 2008 Batch, Rajasthan Cadre, is a compulsive runner. She has been travelling to different parts of the country just to run Marathons.





For **Satovisha Samajdhar**, 2010 Batch, Chhattisgarh Cadre, running is an emotional experience. She just runs. **Sakkira Begum**, 2015 Batch, Gujarat Cadre, possesses that quiet rage to achieve what she sets as her goal. Hailing from an orthodox family in rural Tamil Nadu, she beat the odds to earn her doctorate in Genetics from ICAR, New Delhi. An avid marathoner and a photographer, she has been able to prove that education can be the key to success of the girl child.

Malthipriya, 2008 Batch, Karnataka, has been a sprinter since her college days. She has been a regular participant in sports meets and has hauled quite a pile of medals over the years. **Kamalpreet**, 1997 Batch, AGMUT; **Geetanjali**, 2005 Batch, Tamil Nadu; **Mercy Bella**, 2007 Batch, Chhattisgarh Cadre are our budding marathoners. Encouraged by her father, **Vanashree Singh**, 1998 Batch, Karnataka Cadre, started shooting as a teenager, a forest officer himself. When one is determined, fate too conspires to help and through her postings she continued her interest and her practice of shooting and archery. She held the 58th rank in the Civilian Championship and 78th in the National Championships in 2017. Having missed selection for team India by a whisker, Vanashree continues to practice, pursuing her dream to represent the country someday.



The Shooting Stars

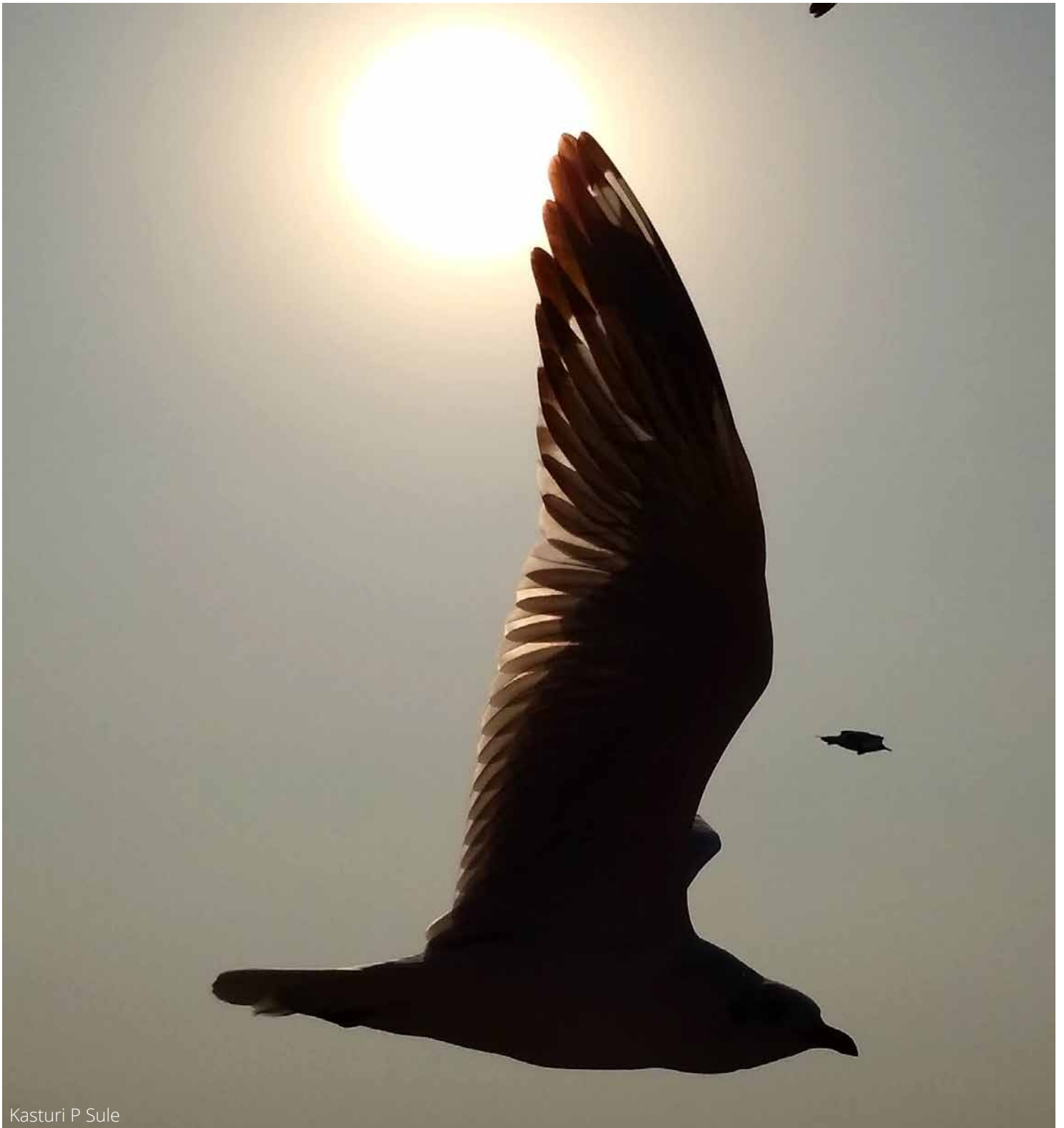
Neeta Hooda, 1985 Batch served originally in the Haryana Cadre. Later she resigned from the service to join as a senior carbon finance specialist for the World Bank's Climate change group. Her work focuses on technical policy and operational issues in natural resource development. Working with the forest carbon partnership facility, among her contributions are standard setting and supporting countries in their efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

Pratibha Singh 1994 batch served in Uttar Pradesh through postings as Dy. Project Director, Doon valley Integrated Watershed Management Project, and later as Director, Kanpur Zoological Park, Secretary of UP State Biodiversity Board among others. After serving for 27 years in the department she took voluntary retirement in 2017 and moved to USA. She is an active member of the Audubon Society and continues with her passion for bird watching and contributions to citizen science.

"I wish all the ladies in the Indian Forest Service the very best in their career. Do what you can to the best of your ability and be an empathetic leader to your team. Remember we are here to serve and serve with humility. Mentor and help the younger ladies joining you. Above all, never forget to be humble. Believe in your dreams, believe in yourself!"

Pratibha Singh, 1994 Uttar Pradesh





Kasturi P Sule

*Spread thy wings and be not afraid to fly ..
Fly high ... and Fly beyond*

The Next Gen GQs ...



2017



2018

GQs are grateful for the support and encouragement at the highest level



Receiving Award under Swachh Bharat Gramin Programme for Bikaner District on behalf of Govt. of Rajasthan from Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi on Civil Services Day, 21st April 2016.



Aradhana Sahu accompanying the Honble President of India on his site visit to Arogya Van, Kevadiya



Swetha B with Honble Vice President during call on at Parliament house .



Honble Minister Env Forest and Climate Change Shri Prakash Javadekar at Wokha village to greet the Amur Falcon conservation Champions. Zuthunglo Patton along with others from Nagaland FD greeting him there.

Chapter Six

Sisterhood Beyond Borders



Namgay and Tshering Zam

Across our border lies the glorious country of Bhutan that has a forest cover of more than 70.5% (as per National Forest Inventory Report, 2016). Conservation of nature is also one of the pillars of Bhutan's unique development philosophy of Gross National Happiness, in addition to being the critical dimension of Bhutan's vision 2020. The Department of Forest and Park Services (DoFPS) is one of the oldest Government Departments established under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests in 1952. During its inception period and until the early 1980s, DoFPS used to be manned by foresters from India on deputation in the absence of national capacities. Since then, capacities have been enhanced and it is now fully manned by nationals, and at present, it is the largest department with human resource strength of over 1600. It is headed by a Director who is supported by five Functional Divisions at the headquarter, one conservation research and training institute, 10 Protected Area offices and 14 Territorial Divisions. The Functional Divisions provide technical backstopping to the field divisions that constitute Territorial Divisions and Protected Areas. The women officers for Bhutan are being trained in IGNFA since 1991. Several of these women officers have previously worked in the field divisions and hence there is an added advantage of experience and skill which is shared during the cross-learning with other women officers of India.

Durga Devi Sharma, (1991 Batch Bhutan). She recalls that it is always challenging to be the pioneer in any field of profession. More so to be the First Lady Forest officer in Bhutan because of its very rugged terrain and lack of roads in the interior areas during the time she joined the service.

But once into the service, to be happy with the profession is the most important thing to begin with. Next on her list is to travel/trek and see as many forest areas as possible in all the ecosystems of one's Division/Country starting with the most difficult ones. This way officers surmount all the challenges, gain confidence and cannot be fooled easily by anyone, including the subordinates. And the rest is just very simple and easy, according to this first lady officer of Bhutan.



“Being in the forestry profession provides us with the wonderful opportunity to serve and save our mother nature the best we can. Therefore keep smiling, serving, and making a difference from wherever you are. I congratulate all the lady forest officers of Bhutan and India. God bless us all!”

Durga Devi Sharma, 1991 Batch



Sonam Peldon, 2002 Batch is the Deputy Chief Forestry Officer, Social Forestry and Extension Division, Thimphu. Significant work has been done in Bhutan to augment community-based NWFP in the country. According to her, NWFP enterprises have the potential to improve rural life, as 69% of the population live in rural areas. Community forests contribute to 2.8% of national level distribution of areas and 3% of the total forest area. There are 695 community forests established and handed over to community forest management groups which include about 28,890 rural households as members covering about 77,213 hectares of state reserve forestland. There are also 46 community forest management groups in parks and wildlife sanctuaries. Community forest management plans to ensure maximum people participation in sustainable resource management.

If enterprises are built based on NWFPs, it would generate income and also help address youth unemployment. In the earlier days, the role of NWFP as an economic activity in rural livelihood was not really recognised and low priority was given to its management. Forest and Nature Conservation Act 1995 gave legal recognition to community forestry programmes, and participation of local communities was given due importance. The technological and capacity building challenges are many, and it is hoped that well-trained and well-informed Green Queens such as Ms. Peldon are able to carry this forward.

Kezang Yangden, 2004 Batch is the Deputy Chief Forestry Officer, Forest Resources Management Division, Department of Forests and Park Services, Thimphu. Since 2009, she has been assigned with the responsibility of coordinating the national forest inventory of Bhutan. This second field-based assessment of forest resources was carried out in 2012–2015, and its reports on forest cover, growing stock, forest biomass and carbon amongst other information were published in 2016 and 2017. As the coordinator, she has been involved in developing sampling protocols, data collection manuals, development of allometric models for biomass, training of forestry field staff in forest inventory exercises, implementation of the field work, analysis of the data collected and publication of the results/reports. She is also a member of REDD/REDD+ technical working group on National Forest Monitoring system contributing to the development of REDD/REDD+ Strategy for Bhutan and is a focal officer for the Forest Reference Emission/Forest Reference Level (FREL/FRL) project supported by Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and implemented in collaboration with FAO.



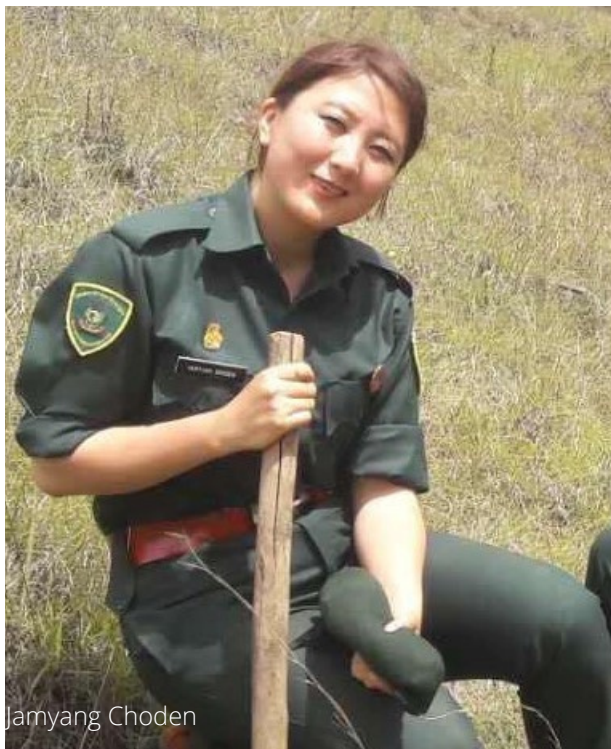


Kezang Dema



Kezang Dema

Jamyang Choden, 2013 Batch is a Forestry Officer, under the Forest Management Planning and Implementation Section, Forest Resource Management Division (FRMD), Department of Forest and Park Services (DoFPS). She asserts that she is fortunate to have gotten an opportunity to serve under two senior Chief Forestry Officers of the Department of Forest and Park Services (DoFPS) who have also done IFS training. She provides technical support for identification of new potential areas for establishment of Forest Management Units and working schemes and technical support for preparation, reviewing and processing approval of Local Forest Management Plan, Forest Management Unit plan, Working Scheme Plan and Operational Plan. Prior to this she was posted in the Mongar Forest Division where she issued forestry clearances for developmental activities and surface collection, conducting research, wild life protection and biodiversity conservation.



Sapna Sunar, 2017 Batch is a Forestry Officer, Territorial Forest Division, Trashigang. Prior to coming to forest academy, she had served in Wamrong Range under Trashigang District. As the first forest officer serving in this remote range, it gave her an ample opportunity to work with local people and to enhance their involvement in conservation and protection of forests. She has been able to work with community forests (forests managed by the people) and encourage sustainable utilization of natural resources.

Karma Choden, 2018 Batch is a Forestry Officer, Territorial Forest Division, Paro. She plans to continue her work studying the aquatic plant diversity and composition in high-altitude lakes (as she did in Hoko and Athang) of Bhutan. She is keen to work towards community forestry establishment in remote places of Bhutan.



All these exemplary women demonstrate that sky is the limit if one gets the opportunity and the training to take up the challenges of physical endurance, remoteness of site locations and being away from family setups that have traditionally been seen as the natural comfort zone of women. It reinstates a faith that forests and biodiversity conservation is indeed gender neutral.





The Queens in making ...



2019



2020



GQs of Batch 2019 & 2020 with the Director and faculty members of IGNFA



The Women Power of IGNFA

Epilogue

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world“.

-- Mahatma Gandhi

Every workplace is gendered. The Forest Service is no exception. Being gendered means: who you are – male or female – deciding where you work, what assignments you get, the kind of support or encouragement that you receive at your workplace. And when you utter the word 'gender', it evokes an irresistible temptation to draw a traditional comparison male vs. female, which tends to diverge into traditional lines of who is better than the other? But the futility of this comparison is proven beyond doubt. This is the time to ask new questions: What does it mean to be a lady forest officer? How are they venturing into new frontiers – taking forward the glorious legacy of the Indian Forest Service?

Answers to all these questions cannot be found without first understanding the context. Although Indian Forest Service has over 100 years of unbroken glorious legacy, entry of women officers into the service is fairly a recent phenomenon. But ever since their entry into the service about 40 years ago, the graph is continuously on the rise at all the levels starting from Forest Guard to Conservator of Forest and beyond.

All thanks to proactive efforts of the government, lady forest officers are contributing to all the levels. It is this rise in their numbers at higher echelons that has triggered a positive cascade at all levels, especially at the level of the Forest Guard, which in many ways is the face of the Forest Department at the grassroot level. It is this change which turned out to be a gamechanger in ensuring the 'gender balance' in the service. Some states are going beyond their traditional mandate and providing reservation at the level of the Forest Guard, which has shown a substantial rise in their number. This is a very positive development in many ways. First, more forest officers at the administrative levels instil a sense of confidence in the frontline staff. This is essential considering the paucity of basic infrastructure and challenging work conditions for women. Unfortunately, with the rise in the number of women entering the service; there were not many commensurate efforts regarding infrastructure development. As a result, we still see many ranges with no basic facilities for women – not even decent toilets. This is a clear indicator that work-culture and infrastructure is not mature enough for this transition.

But when a women forest officer is at the helm, a special attention is paid to these aspects of working conditions. For example, when R. Sobha took over the post of Head of the Forest Force, Telangana, she built toilet complexes and comfort rooms for women even in the remotest forest areas to ensure basic facilities for her frontline staff. Even a young trainee officer like Madhumitha first addressed the basic amenities that gave a certain dignity and therefore pride in the work assigned to the forest frontline.

Second, lady officers are better placed to understand and address the organic relation between rural India and forestry. They are better placed in terms of communication as far as rural women are considered. Women officers, therefore, are effective in communicating both ways: the perceptions of the government as well as people regarding the developmental projects.

With an increase in the use of technology and improved infrastructure, gender is no longer a deciding factor in new-age forestry management. Foresters are not imprisoned by the traditional image of a rough guy living a tough life in the jungle. More than 40 years into the service, lady officers are now in positions of both policymaking as well as implementation. Yet, less than 10% of the IFS officers are women. In many states, a woman officer getting posted in remote places is still a big news.

When a woman heads the office in a Forest Department, in a way the society expects her to be more perfect. Even a slightest mistake is blown out of proportion based on the stereotypes the society and the department has held for long. As for the forest service, one thing is clear: that it is not a 10 to 5 pm job; but rather a 24*7 on-call duty. Since most of the forest-related offenses happen at night, the call can come at literally anytime. This makes the work-life balance tough for any lady officer.

The challenges exist, but so do opportunities in this era of climate change and pandemics. The world is currently moving towards a common goal of sustainable development. The forest policies of the majority of the countries are integrated emphasizing common goal with differential responsibilities. 'One Health' approach, which recognizes that the health of people is closely connected to the health of animals and our shared environment, is becoming popular. With a global outlook, we need to design and implement policies for our local needs. This definitely needs inputs from people who actually depend on forests. Thus, for a Territorial Manager, the future lies in 'managing resources locally without losing sight of the global priorities. The strong yet flexible, brave yet compassionate, sincere yet rocking Green Queens in the legendary Indian Forest Service will continue to contribute to the management of our forests sustainably and professionally.

Life seems to have come full circle; the 2020 batch has joined the Academy. Bright eyed, brilliant and intelligent young women who have shattered many a glass ceiling to be where they are, all with the grit and determination to serve the nation and its forests to the best of their ability.

It is time to take new wings!



Kasturi P Sule

1980 - 2020 ... THE 40 YEAR LEGACY



...AND MANY MORE TO COME



Sonali Chohan

Acknowledgements

This compilation book was achieved by the active collaboration of many people. At the onset we remember former DGF& SS Shri Siddhanta Das, who had been very keen to have a gender workshop and get this book released. To attempt this book at such a grand scale, it required sustained efforts and sincere and heartfelt gratitude is for our Chief Advisor and patron Mrs R. Sobha and the senior women officers, Mrs CS Ramalakshmi, Dr Gopa Pandey, Mrs B V Uma Devi, Mrs Bharati, Ms Prakrity Srivastava and Dr Sonali Ghosh.

Sobha Ma'am encouraged and motivated with her infectious energy and positivity and it is her strength and patience that this work is seeing the light of day. This book would not have been made possible without the selfless hard work of a young team of IFS officers. Since this was entirely a crowdsourcing affair, it took more than 2 years to collate and compile the massive information received through formal and informal sources. The first team that pitched in included Dr Surabhi Rai, Prachi Gangwar, Jayoti Bannerjee, Nidhi Srivastava, Aryashree T, Neha Srivastava, Dr Shobhita Agarwal, Piyusha Jagtap and Kezang Yangden from Bhutan. The second phase of writing was completed with support from Kasturi Sule, Lavanya B., Madhumitha, Shwetha B and Kajol Patil. Sonali Ghosh anchored it together! being so rightfully placed in the middle; the millennium batch.

The Ministry is thanked for support and encouragement and the same goes out to IFS Association, especially Dr SP Yadav President IFS-CU who readily agreed to facilitate the release of the book. Director IGNFA Shri Bharat Jyoti is thanked for his support and encouragement. All women officers who contributed with photos, poetry and Artwork are thanked for their creativity that has helped add a soul to this life-book. Shri PK Sharma IFS (retd) contributed with the photos of the first batch of women officers which was a jackpot of sorts as no other information was available. Contribution from any women inadvertently left out is deeply regretted.

Finally, the officer trainees Kasturi, Kajol, Geetanjali and Balamurugan are thanked for the design layout and the team of young professionals- Aditi Rajan, Sourabha Rao, Gokul G K, Manish Machaiah and Sruthy Boopathy who helped with copy-editing and proofing are sincerely thanked for their backstopping.

Last but not the least, all views expressed in this book are personal and truly expressed from the heart!

Editorial Team

Location: All Across India

8th March 2021

ANNEXURE 1

Sl.no	Name	Year of allotment
AGMUT (ARUNACHAL-GOA-MIZORAM-UT's)		
1	Archana Singh	1986
2	Jayshree A. Chauhan	1986
3	N. Kala	1987
4	Kamal Preet	1997
5	Arti Chaudhary	2002
6	Dr Surabhi Rai	2005
7	Koj Rinya	2006
8	Anisha Kalkoor M	2009
9	Yasodha K	2009
10	Indhu Vijayan N	2010
11	Nabanita Ganguly	2010
12	Deep Shikha	2011
13	Vanjulavalli Sridhar	2012
14	Anamika Kadian	2013
15	N Viji	2013
16	Cheshta Singh	2016
17	Pusuluri Tejaswini	2018
ANDHRA PRADESH		
18	C.S. Rama Lakshmi	1980
19	M Revathi	1996
20	Dr Shanti Priya Pandey	1997
21	Dr Jyothi Thullimelli	2005
22	Yesoda Bai	2010
23	Dr Nandani Salaria	2013
24	Suman Beniwal	2018
25	Nisha Kumari	2019
ASSAM & MEGHALAYA		
26	Dr. Ranjana Gupta	1986
27	Dr. Alka Bhargava	1987
28	Dr. Sonali Ghosh	2000
29	Deepika Chaudhary	2011
30	Dimpi Bora	2012
31	Davinder Suman	2012
32	Terakchi K Marak	2013
33	Jayashree Naiding	2013
34	Anu P James	2015
35	Monica Kishore P	2019
36	Kasturi Sule	2019
BIHAR		
37	Ruchi Singh	2017
CHHATTISGARH		
38	B V Umadevi	1987
39	Shobha Subramanyam Nee Mishra	1987
40	Anita Nandi	1991
41	Sanjeeta Gupta	1997
42	Praneetha Paul	2001
43	Shalini Raina	2001
44	Soma Das	2002
45	M Mercy Bella	2007
46	Satovisha Samajdar	2010
47	Vijaya Ratre	2011
48	Stylo Mandavi	2011
49	Priyanka Pandey	2012
50	Prabhakar Khalko	2014
51	Divya Gautam	2020
52	Premlata Yadav	2020
53	Shama Faruque	2020
GUJARAT		
54	Meera Agarwal (Iqbal Mohammadi Sultana)	1980

Sl.no	Name	Year of allotment
55	Anita Karan	1997
56	Aradhana Sahu	2003
57	Raj Kumari Sandeep	2007
58	Dr Shobhita Agarwal	2011
59	Nisha Raj	2012
60	Dr Priyanka Gahlot	2013
61	Dr Sakkira Begum R	2013
HARYANA		
62	Dr Amarinder Kaur	1983
63	Dr Neeta Hooda	1985
64	Vasvi Tyagi	2004
65	Nivedita B	2008
66	Ranjeetha M H	2008
67	Hairat Jit Kaur	2012
68	Renu Bala	2013
HIMACHAL PRADESH		
69	Dr. Savita	1985
70	Archana Sharma	1986
71	Vijayalakshmi Tiwari	1986
72	Anu Nagar	1995
73	Upasana Patiyal	1998
74	Laetitia J Syiemiong	2002
75	Sarita Kumari	2005
76	Meera Sharma	2005
77	Basu Kaushal	2008
78	Preeti Bhandari	2012
79	Laishram Chandu Bandana	2012
80	Sangeeta Mahala	2017
JAMMU & KASHMIR		
81	Neelu Gera	1987
82	Roop Avtar Kaur	2000
83	Shally Ranjan	2001
84	Shaveta Jandial	2013
85	Neelima Shah	2013
86	Jyotsana	2013
JHARKHAND		
87	Diksha Kumari Prasad	1991
88	Shailja Singh	1991
89	Smitha Pankaj	2006
90	Mamta Priyadarshini	2010
91	Prerna Dixit	2013
KARNATAKA		
92	Madhu Sharma	1986
93	Ritu Kakkar	1986
94	Anitha S Arekal	1989
95	Meenakshi Negi	1989
96	Seema Garg	1990
97	A Radha Devi	1992
98	Smita Bijjur	1993
99	V Geethanjali	1996
100	Saswati Mishra	1997
101	Vanashri Vipin Singh	1998
102	Prachi Gangwar	2003
103	Dr Malthi Priya M	2008
104	Kamla K	2009
105	Dipika Bajpai	2010
106	Sonal Vrishni	2011
107	Contractor Deep Jagdip	2011
108	Vaanathi M M	2012
109	Kajol Ajit Patil	2019
110	Kavya Chaturvedi	2019
KERALA		
111	Kamala Shobhana Rao	1987

Sl.no	Name	Year of allotment
112	Prakriti Srivastava	1990
113	Padma Mahanti	2001
114	T Uma	2009
115	Dr C Meenakshi	2009
116	Deepa K S	2010
117	Silpa V Kumar	2011
118	R Keerthi	2012
MADHYA PRADESH		
119	Dr Gopa Pandey	1982
120	Hymavathi Varman	1986
121	A Gautami	1988
122	Dr Renu Singh	1990
123	Sanjukta Mudgal	1990
124	Kanchan Devi	1991
125	Dr Sameeta Rajora	1992
126	Bindu Sharma	1994
127	Archana Shukla	1995
128	Kamalika Mohanta	1997
129	Padmapriya Balakrishnan	2001
130	Rakhi Nanda	2007
131	Dr Kiran Bisen	2009
132	Basu Kannogia	2010
133	Anjana Suchita Tirkey	2010
134	Meena Kumari Mishra	2011
135	Sandhya	2011
136	Priyanshi Singh Rathore	2012
137	Preetha S M	2015
138	Neha Srivastava	2016
139	Rishibha Singh Netam	2018
MAHARASHTRA		
140	Sunita Singh	1987
141	Shomita Biswas	1988
142	Imtienla Ao	1992
143	Neena Khandekar	1995
144	Meera Iyer	2000
145	Jayoti Banerjee	2003
146	K Pradeepa	2005
147	Sreelakshmi Annabathula	2008
148	Neenu Somaraj	2010
149	Patil Anita Jayasing	2010
150	Ginni Singh	2012
151	T Beula Ezhil Mathi	2012
152	Vinita Vyas	2013
153	Abharna K M	2013
154	Piyusha Pramod Jagtap	2014
155	Divya Bharathi M	2016
156	Poonam Pate	2016
157	Arya Sree T	2017
158	Aditi Bhardwaj	2017
159	Madhumitha S	2018
160	Swetha Boddu	2018
MANIPUR		
161	Soreiphy Vashum	1996
162	V L Roui Kullai	1998
163	Gaithaolu Thaimai	2007
164	Maya N	2010
165	Debala Leiphrakpam	2011
166	Ajeeta Longjam	2012
167	Esther Laltannkim Serto	2014
NAGALAND		
168	Rongsenlemla Imchen	2008
169	Zuthunglo Patton	2010
170	Dr Sentitula	2011

Sl.no	Name	Year of allotment
171	Linghoikim Touthang	2012
172	Dr C Zupeni Tsanglai	2013
ODISHA		
173	Rebecca Nayar	1984
174	Dr Meeta Biswal	1988
175	Pusa Z Mekro	1988
176	Uma Nanduri	1993
177	Rinku Kumari	2013
178	Poornima P	2014
179	Jyoti Kotal	2018
PUNJAB		
180	Pratima Srivastava	1999
181	Shailender Kaur	2000
182	M Geethanjali	2001
183	Nidhi Srivastava	2001
184	Monika Devi Yadav	2013
185	Vidhyasagari R U	2014
186	Kalpana K	2014
RAJASTHAN		
187	Dr.Savita Anand	1981
188	Shruti Sharma	1987
189	Namita J Priyadarshee	1989
190	Shikha Mehra	1993
191	T J Kavitha	2000
192	Akanksha Mahajan	2003
193	Shailja Deval	2004
194	Khyati Mathur	2005
195	Harini V	2009
196	Sudeep Kaur	2010
197	Anita	2010
198	Sonal Jourihar	2011
199	Dr. Monali Sen	2011
200	Kavita Singh	2012
201	Savita Dahiya	2013
SIKKIM		
202	Bharati	1992
203	Monalisa Das	2003
204	Thenmozhi V	2015
205	Sonam Choden Bhutia	2009
TAMIL NADU		
206	Aruna Basu Sarcar	1983
207	Mita Banerjee	1990
208	P Rajeswari	1990
209	Dr Jayanthi M	1992
210	V Karunapriya	1996
211	R Padmawathe	2005
212	K Geethanjali	2005
213	Dr B C Archana Kalyani	2007
214	D Sujatha	2007
215	C H Padma	2008
216	Dr Kanchana R	2010
217	Vidhya C	2012
218	Sudha S	2013
219	Senbangapriya S	2013
220	Karthikeyani	2018
TELANGANA		
221	R. Sobha	1986
222	Dr C Suvarna	1991
223	Sunitha J M Bhagwat	1996
224	Akoijam Sonibala Devi	2002
225	Priyankaa Varghese	2003
226	S J Asha	2003
227	N Kshitija	2005

Sl.no	Name	Year of allotment
228	Shivani Dogra	2007
229	Arpana	2012
230	Bhukya Lavanya	2017
231	Boga Nikitha	2017
TRIPURA		
232	Deepa D Nair	2001
233	Banumathi G	2009
UTTAR PRADESH		
234	Mamta Sanjeev Dubey	1986
235	Eva Sharma	1989
236	A Neeraja	1990
237	Indu Sharma	1990
238	Anuradha Vemuri	1991
239	Pratibha Singh	1994
240	Renu Singh	1997
241	Aditi Sharma	2006
242	Shradda Yadav	2012
243	Vasavi Prakash	2013
244	Divya	2013
245	Diksha Bhandari	2013
246	Isha Tiwari	2013
UTTARAKHAND		
247	Veena Sekhri	1980
248	Anjana Dutt	1982
249	Dr. Rekha Pai	1983
250	Smt Ranjana Kala	1985
251	Jyotsna Sitling	1987
252	Neena Grewal	1993
253	Meenakshi Joshi	2000
254	Dr Tejaswini Arvind Patil	2002
255	Neha Verma	2005
256	Neethu Lakshmi M	2010
257	Kahkashan Naseem	2010
258	Kalyani	2012
259	Abhilasha Singh	2016
WEST BENGAL		
260	Dr Sangeeta Dubey	1991
261	Dr Kana Talukder	1992
262	Pratibha Raj	1995
263	Dr Anupama	2000
264	Sumita Ghatak	2000
265	Richa Misra	2001
266	Lipika Ray	2001
267	Sumana Battacharyya	2002
268	Tripti Sah	2008
269	Minakshi Prasad	2009
270	Uma Rani N	2012
271	Amrita Dutta	2012
272	Nisha Goswami	2013
273	Anshu Yadav	2013
274	Vipasha Parul	2019
2020 BATCH		
275	Amitha Kb	2020
276	Arushi Misra	2020
277	Arya Vs	2020
278	Bharani S	2020
279	S Deepika	2020
280	Gitanjali J	2020
281	Grishmi Chaand	2020
282	Krithiga S	2020
283	Pooja Nagle	2020
284	Sulekha Jagarwar	2020





A Promise to Keep

*Hey my dear mother Earth!
I see a part of you in my mother's hearth,
As she juggles her chores with a smile,
At home or as far as a mile,
Day after day,
Remember, there is no pay,
Like you her tolerance seems to be infinite,
And her devotion, an example to cite,
Her strength amazes me,
Power of her will is for all to see,
Her ever cheerful disposition,
Knocks down all opposition,
For the power of her love is too powerful
Conquering the shy and the boastful,
Truly inspired, I wish to boast a little,
I being her daughter should not play a second fiddle,
When it comes to giving you your due,
For I don't wish to rue,
It's time to take charge,
And be on the march,
I promise to protect you,
With all my might I will do,
Whatever it takes,
I will put all at stake,
To protect the forests and purify the rivers,
Shelter the trees and the silent creatures,
I wish to see you in all your glory,
When you will again be sublime and holy,
So please bless me with courage and wisdom,
As I set upon this journey deep into your kingdom,
A day shall come soon,
When we will be over the moon,
Rejoicing and celebrating together,
Our success, Oh my dear mother.*

(Pratima Srivastava, IFS, 1999 Punjab)