

# RESOURCE UTILIZATION PATTERN WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO OAK FORESTS OF PIR PANJAL HIMALAYAN REGION OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

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## ABSTRACT

Forests are one of the most important natural resources which are central to human survival and prosperity. They have been and continue to be utilized in many different ways for their invaluable services and products. Tribal populations in the Pir Panjal Himalayas exhibit a tremendous dependence on and a complex relationship with the forests they neighbor. They have evolved traditional ways of using various forms of vegetation for fulfilling their requirements ranging from food, fodder, fiber and fuel-wood to medicine and timber. On an average 30-35% of the total income of the people inhabiting hilly tracts comes from natural resources largely including forests. There are obligatory dependants who reside inside the forests and derive their entire subsistence primarily from them; optional dependants who practice agricultural or other occupations but use forests for various household purposes; and commercial dependants who engage in commercial activities involving logging, collection of forest produce, etc. Commercial extraction of forests though helps some families to earn their livelihood, has doubled the pressures on already stressed forests. Fodder for livestock is the most frequent usage of forest resources followed by timber and fuel wood collection. Use as medicine, food, industrial raw material, commercial sale of products (wood and non-wood forest products) is found to be less common in majority of the villages studied. Most of the dependence in the region under study is found to be within safer limits but requires more detailed investigations to devise and implement the forest management/conservation strategies.

**Keywords:** forest, forest-dependence, environmental resources, ethno-biology, sustainability