Chapter 6
Findings and Suggestions

6.1. Introduction

The study has been focusing on the Western Ghats area because of its biodiversity and dense population. Though the concept of ‘environmental governance’ has been designed and discussed globally, the real test of its efficacy is made at the bottom level of the society where government comes closer to the people.

The way people approach various issues related to environment, the role of political parties as an agent of people in a democracy, the implementation of laws to protect environment, the knowledge of people regarding some of the terms like ESA which gained popularity as a tool for interest aggregation, and the need for environmental protection are the major areas of investigation.

6.2. General findings of the Study

- People have expressed their desire for protecting the natural diversity of the Western Ghats.
- Global debates on Ozone depletion and problems related to it have little significance for the people living in the Western Ghats region of the Idukki District.
- Though the land is rich in vegetation and rivers, people are too much concerned with the shortage of drinking water in the near future.
- The population in the Western Ghats doesn’t think that mono crops like Eucalyptus are a threat to the environment.
• Activities like Rock Quarrying, sand mining, filling paddy fields, etc. have been failed to fetch popular attention in a right manner. People are more concerned about deforestation than these problems.

• People accepted the fact that climate change affects their lifestyle. Use of electronic equipment’s to reduce heat even in the monsoon season is rampant in certain areas of the Western Ghats.

• The warning against global warming and its effect on island nations in particular have 50:50 acceptance as well as rejection level. 234 people agreed with the fact that it badly affects the island nations while 227 people disagree with this as they think that it is something fictitious.

• Giving space for debate, the majority of the people has acknowledged the statement that real development is not urbanization only. But their conviction regarding development varies from person to person. An equal number of people say that they have no comments in this regard.

• The terms ESA (Ecologically Sensitive Area) and EFL (Ecologically Fragile Land) produced a mixed response among the respondents. The majority of the respondents doesn’t know its difference and very often mistakes ESA for EFL and vice versa. It creates confusion and problems among the land owners whenever they are asked to accept various projects for the protection.

• Gender has no role in giving proper orientation to environmental problems.

• Respondents belonging to an age group of 26- 44 and above are more concerned about the various environmental problems pertaining to the people living in the Western Ghats.
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• Education plays a less significant role in spreading awareness regarding environmental concerns. It is evident that people have little knowledge regarding global warming and ozone depletion.

• Conservation of the environment, for the people who are living in the high terrain regions of the Western Ghats is a matter of grave concern as it may affect their daily life. There is a close, but significant relationship between the incomes of people with respect to awareness regarding environmental problems.

• The people whose occupation is agriculture is more concerned with the conservation related problems of the Western Ghats.

• People reject the role of political parties in the disseminating of knowledge regarding environmental problems. They miserably failed in creating proper orientation with regard to the environmental problems.

• Factors like age, income and career show a clear influence in creating awareness among people with regard to environmental problems. When we analyse the knowledge level of these groups, it can be said that they are more oriented towards the problems related to deforestation than those related to global warming and ozone depletion.

• Political parties and the educational system have failed miserably in creating better awareness on various environmental issue pertains to humanity at large and the Western Ghats in particular.

• Being the ‘hottest hot spot’ of biodiversity, the Western Ghats region has become a matter of concern for environmentalists and experts in the respective fields. No political party has taken responsibility in making people aware of its importance. Unless people are oriented in
the right direction of conservation, it is impossible to launch or implement projects or laws for the conservation of nature.

- Success of good democracy depends on active/positive political participation in all levels of social life. Democracy should be a smooth and tension free affair. But it is found that people have developed much tension in making options relating to role of political parties in environmental governance.

- People who are living in the ‘Ecologically Sensitive Areas’ have said that they have no faith in the political parties. They have failed in performing their role as an agency of the people in a democracy.

- People think that restrictions on mining and quarrying are against the people and should be prevented.

- All age groups felt that any move in the direction of imposition of restrictions for the sake of conservation of the natural environment is against their interest.

- Political parties have an opportunistic role rather than representing the larger interest of the society in which they are acting as agencies of political mobilization.

- More than half of the respondents registered their lack of faith in political parties in the protection and conservation of environment.

- People distinguished the ‘political’ from the ‘environment’ and considered environment as a distinct area where political parties have little role. Both ecology and politics, for the people who are living in the high ranges, need to be seen as different domains.
• Legislation for making environmental governance more effective is seen with suspicion as they are going to implement something anti-human.

• People as well as political parties did not agree with the term ‘exploitation’ for the utilization of natural resources for the wellbeing of the society for its development.

• There is a gap between the need of the people and the restrictions imposed by the government on the use of natural resources. Overarching emphasis on regulations on the use of natural resources like sand, granite, timber, etc., produces a negative response from the people in accepting the environmental laws.

• An apparent alienation of people can be seen when the government is trying to implement any form of regulation in support of environmental governance. People are forced to think that environment is a distant area where they needn’t to have any rational role. If they heed the environmental causes, they will be forced to sacrifice their privileges.

• The study found a population who think that environmental agenda as a matter of pessimistic intrusion on their peaceful life.

• With regard to the knowledge level of people on various reports published for the conservation of the Western Ghats, they have little knowledge about the content of the reports. It is an irony that people raise protest against reports without understanding the recommendations in them.

• As people have lost confidence in political parties which are expected to be secular and more socialised, other agencies with vested interest occupy the cultural landscape of the Western Ghats.
• Unless the iron-fist of bureaucracy is controlled by committed political parties, environmental governance will become a distant dream.

• Many LSGDs (Local Self-Government Departments) have asserted their commitment in making their respective areas plastic free. But the survey shows that people are least concerned with the problems created by plastic in the environment.

• People are ignorant of various land laws like Kerala Conservation of Paddy Land and Wetland Act 2008 and the punishment thereof.

6.2.1. Awareness Level of people with respect to the problems pertaining to environment

1. People are quite sensitive to local environmental problems rather than to global problems. 49.23% of the respondents consider the scarcity of water as the most important environmental problem.

2. 8.76% and 8.61% of the respondents regard global warming and ozone depletion as serious issues.

3. People in the Western Ghats are more sensitive to deforestation and related issues.

4. People think that rock quarrying and sand mining are not so important as Ozone depletion, scarcity of water and deforestation.

5. People are least bothered about cultivation of mono crops and only 15% of the respondents expressed their concern on the filling of paddy fields for construction purpose.

6. People are not aware of the technical difference between Ecologically Fragile Land and Ecologically Sensitive Areas.
7. As people are not aware of global warming, nearly half of the research population disagrees with the statement that Global warming is harmful to the Planet.

8. People are of the opinion that development supported with construction is the real development strategy.

9. Political socialization process is not taking place in orienting people with regard to the need for a Green Politics as a new political culture.

10. People are aware of various environmental problems. But it is not the result of any sort of orientation given by the political parties or the government departments concerned.

6.2.2. Tension in accepting Political Parties and Environmental Laws

1. People are getting confused in accepting or rejecting available options with respect to environmental protection.

2. People have rejected political parties as their agents with regard to the environmental protection laws.

3. Most of the respondents are thinks that political parties have an opportunistic agenda in the protection of the Western Ghats.

4. 62% of the respondents declare that they have no faith in political parties in the context of their efforts for the protection of environment.

5. People find a contradiction in between the political agenda and the need for the natural environment.

6. People expressed their tension/apprehensions while saying that the control over the rock and sand mining is against their interest.

7. When 61% of the respondents are against restrictions on rock and sand mining, 33% want to see the laws, for the conservation and protection of the Western Ghats, to be implemented.
8. Ours, being a democratic country, growing tension at the acceptance level of democratic agencies like political parties and the legal system is a matter of apprehension.

9. That the civic consciousness of people is at the rim of legitimacy that should be understood by the agencies of democracy.

10. The tension level among people leads to a negative approach towards political parties which is not good for a successful participatory democracy.

6.2.3. Agency Shift in the political landscape with regard to the environmental governance

1. Political parties are not performing their duty to orient people with regard to the global environmental problems.

2. Political parties couldn’t command the confidence of the people as an agency of political change.

3. Religious or community groups have more influence over people as agencies of people.

4. The system of election using secular electoral roll has now been treated as a virtual space for religious as well as community groups to exert much pressure on people who are living in hilly areas.

5. There are a number of political parties with various ideological backgrounds. But none of these political parties can influence people when a question of acceptance of a law of the conservation of the Western Ghats arises.

6. None of those political parties which are having a presence in the Western Ghats have a green agenda for the conservation of nature.
7. The youngsters, who have participated in the survey, said that they don’t trust at the present role of political parties as the agents of secular society.

8. Alienation of political parties from people is visible in the Western Ghats.

9. The reply collected using the Right to Information Act 2005 shows that most of the local self-governments of the Western Ghats do not have a green policy framework in the administration of village Panchayats.

10. Political parties are acting as agencies of political interests rather than as agencies for the society at large.

6.2.4. Impact of Environmental laws over the life of people

1. People are not ready to observe the regulations for the protection of the Western Ghats.

2. Positive response while enforcing a law for the protection of the earth and its environment cannot be expected.

3. Presence of tension at the acceptance level of both the political parties and the environmental laws proper have lasting impact over the life of people.

4. The concept of ‘natural capital’ has not yet understood the capitalist concept market that treat the land as a property to be sold or altered as they wish.

5. The Land conservancy Act of 1957 and the Conservation of Paddy and Wetland Act of 2008 are the two important land laws pertaining to the conservation efforts of the Western Ghats. People are not aware of the importance of the Acts.
6. A local monitoring committee was constituted in every Panchayat for the implementation of the Conservation of Paddy and Wetland Act 2008. Though, ignorance of law is not an excuse for punishment, the existence of such a monitoring mechanism is unknown to people and no action was taken against the violations in the villages where the survey was conducted.

7. A participatory approach for the protection of environment was designed through the constitution of the Biodiversity Management Committees at the village level. They are called as ‘kavalsangham’ (a group of officials to keep surveillance against anti-biodiversity activities). But the people of the area are not informed about its formation and functioning.

8. People think that conservation of natural environment will expand the forest area to the brim of their property and they are against it.

9. Lack of co-ordination among the Agriculture, Revenue, Forest and Local Self Government Departments make people fed up with instrumental impairments of the bureaucracy.

6.3. Recommendations

The politics of environmental governance is not confined to the legal structure of government. It needs coordinated efforts. The conventional state system with its constitutionalism is the right choice for a democratic society like India. The environmental issues challenge the internal sovereignty of the nation state system, as its pervasiveness becomes a threat to external sovereignty. Being a ‘borderless’ concept, the environment and its problems should be treated from the realistic point of view where anthropocentrism should be tamed through consensus.
The land laws, aiming at the conservation of the natural environment, should be implemented properly. Lack of vigilance from any of the personnel at the lower rank and file will result in its failure. The inherent *suo motu* character of conservation laws results from the vulnerability of the officer concerned. People should think that the conservation laws are very essential and should be observed for the sake of the sustainability of the earth and its resources.

Relentless efforts of all government agencies, including central, state and Panchayat institutions, are needed to conserve nature. Very poor awareness level regarding global environmental problems weakens efforts to reduce CFC and similar gas emissions. Unless people are aware of environmental problems, they are not ready to obey the laws. The researcher found that people are having a more affective orientation towards the local environmental problems and they have less cognitive orientation towards the major and life threatening environmental problems like depletion of Ozone and Global Warming.

**6.3.1. Recommendations to Local Bodies**

The Local bodies are at the core of conservation and protection of the Western Ghats. Declarations alone cannot help the state to protect the Western Ghats. A people friendly approach is needed there. Without the support of the local population, no law for the protection of environment can be implemented. The attitude of the state government to Panchayats is an important factor in this regard. At the implementation level the Department of Local Self- Government is facing so many impairments. The Revenue, Forest, Agriculture and Health Departments have their own administrative hierarchy. These are the line departments with the respective line officers at the apex. Co-ordination of these departments at the village level is a hurdle. The
Protection of the Western Ghats should be acknowledged as a necessity and, that too, without exercising the iron fist. Before punishing those who are violating the land laws, they should be given ample opportunity to get familiarized with different laws.

1. Biodiversity Management Committees should be constituted and they should function as per the guidelines given by the government.

2. The recommendations of the BMCs should have a mandatory nature.

3. Pro-conservation agriculture-cum-marketing strategy should be initiated for the conservation efforts at the Panchayat level.

4. The Panchayats in the Western Ghats should consider conservation as a matter of vital importance because it is the prerequisite of the livelihood of people.

5. The Panchayat Samiti should keep the conservation efforts under surveillance.

6. The local bodies should undertake conservation projects, with the help of the local population. It will also make them aware of global environmental problems.

7. The local bodies should conduct seminars, debates and an open forum on the need for the conservation of the Western Ghats.

8. Copies of the Biodiversity Register should be circulated through Grama Sabhas.

9. Projects for waste management should be implemented in every Panchayat.

10. ‘Use and reuse’ of plastic should be encouraged by starting recycling hubs in each Panchayat, if possible.
11. Water bodies like ponds in each Panchayat should be conserved by prohibiting transaction of the same and incentives should be given to property owners in this regard.

12. The ‘local monitoring mechanism’ suggested by the Paddy and Wetland conservation Act, should be scrutinized and audited by a higher level body headed by the district magistrate/collector.

13. People should be given incentives for promoting agriculture without using Chemical fertilizers.

14. A Green Channel should be provided for the marketing of agricultural products from the Western Ghats.

15. The local bodies should try to attain Geographical Indication for the agricultural and allied products from the Western Ghats.

16. The quality of products with the Geographical Indication should be ensured, so that people in the Western Ghats will get the due price for their produce in the market.

17. A patented design strategy should be adopted for the packing and selling of the hill produces.

18. The Local Bodies should launch a ‘Sustainability first’ campaign throughout the Western Ghats.

19. Social audit should be conducted on the implementation of laws for the conservation of paddy and wetlands in the area and the audited reports will be published to make people aware of problems pertaining to environmental governance.

20. Conservation through the conservation of agriculture should be the strategy for the Western Ghats and the Local Bodies will be the nucleus of such efforts.
6.3.2. **Recommendations to the State Government**

1. The State Town Planning Act should be amended to suit the Western Ghats region.

2. The state government should design a Line Department for the administration of the Western Ghats avoiding the problems of coordination among different departments.

3. The local bodies should be given authority to administer the areas without depending much on other departments like the Revenue and the Forest.

4. In order to support the people who are fully dependent upon agriculture, the government should open up a new green channel for logistic purpose.

5. The state government should seek financial assistance from the central government for promoting bio-farming.

6. The Department of Agriculture should provide ample facilities to monitor the agricultural practices in the Western Ghats.

7. A neo-liberal strategy should be adopted in order to protect the ‘Natural Capital’ with the support of people at large.

8. Stringent punishment should be given to the people who are violating land laws.

9. Hot line facilities or call centre facilities should be introduced to thwart the efforts against the conservation moves in the Western Ghats.

10. A land survey should be conducted using modern technology and people should be given ‘title deed’ ensuring fair agricultural practices in the region.
11. Illegal construction of bunds across streams should be brought under the surveillance of the state government with the help of the Local Self Governments.

12. The government should facilitate the marketing of hill produces with an apt Geographical Indication to the international market.

13. The Government should make the people aware the importance of the Western Ghats through a non-zero-sum game strategy i.e. the conservation of the Western Ghats should ultimately result in the wellbeing of the people there.

14. Laws pertaining to construction should be so designed as to suit the ecological aspects of the Western Ghats and should be monitored meticulously.

15. The Government should take steps to increase paddy cultivation in the Western Ghats, providing good support price and good marketing conditions.

16. Discussions are to be made for implementing the conservation strategy of ‘free-market environmentalism’ with the help of the Revenue and the Forest Department for the conservation of high profiled eco-spots surrounded by dense population.

17. The Wet Land Authorities, Revenue Authorities and the State Level Environment Impact Authority should be coordinated along with the District functionaries for better and effective implementation of various laws pertaining to the observance of land laws.

18. The Government should pass a law similar to that of The Kerala Conservation of Paddy land and Wetland Act, 2008 to protect the Hill tracts of the Western Ghats.
19. Local, district and state level monitoring systems should be initiated for the enforcement of land laws in the Western Ghats. The mechanism should send its report to a judicial authority who is appointed by the Green Tribunal.

20. A landscape management system of the Western Ghats should be designed and implemented.

6.3.3. Recommendations to the Political Parties

1. Political parties should act as real agencies of people in a democracy.

2. The elected representatives of the parties should approach social problems with regard to its merit rather than their political interest.

3. Each party should add an agenda to their manifesto that conservation of nature is primary concern and they should orient people for the conservation efforts.

4. Parties should think that election is only a small phase of political activity and even though people at large in the Western Ghats are suspicious of them, they have the potential to orient people in the conservation of the Western Ghats.

5. Political parties should act as a role model by ousting an incumbent who has membership in any of the affiliated unions, if he has supported any sort of violation of laws for the conservation of the Land laws.

6. Corruption in Public offices is often criticized, but corruption in political parties and its affiliated groups should be curtailed as a matter of social concern.
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7. The secular political parties are the backbone of democracy. They have to draw parallel lines between secularism and green concepts in order to create a more holistic ideology to support conservation efforts.

8. The Political parties should come out of the influence of interest or pressure groups to represent the larger interest of the society as expounded by Rousseau-the General Will.

9. Sustainable development efforts should have a political hue as each political party should carve out programmes suitable for it.

10. Political parties should support every effort for the conservation chalk-outing programmes suitable for local need.

6.3.4. Recommendations for policy formulation

1. The 29th item, ‘maintenance of community assets’ in the eleventh schedule should be replaced as ‘maintenance of the common good’.

2. To widen the scope of policy formation the Panchayati Raj Act will be amended so as to include the items like ‘forest and wildlife’, ‘biodiversity’ etc. in the Eleventh Schedule.

3. To widen the scope of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, Right to clean air, clean water etc. should be included within the ambit of the Fundamental Rights.

4. The Government should take steps to design a Rule of Law for Environment with the help of experts in the respective fields.

5. The developmental projects the Western Ghats should be eco-friendly.

6. The government should design a policy to help people to get an adequate supply of raw material extracted from areas of low ecological importance and it should be done under strict surveillance.
7. The land laws should be equipped to take back the leased lands from private parties which should be distributed among people who are trapped within the ecologically sensitive areas.

8. Proper rehabilitation measures should be there to support the population who is suffering from conservation related issues.

9. Carbon trade (cap and trade) will be made possible to accumulate funds to support people who are living in the Western Ghats.

10. The government should amend the Kerala Stamp (Fixation of Fair Value of Land) Rules, 1995 to incorporate slab norms to increase the fair value of land which is ecologically important.

6.3.5. Recommendations for further research

The researcher has identified problems that keep the environmental governance from being a reality. There is a conflict between constitutionalism and environmentalism. Constitutionalism depends on the prevalence of the rule of law. The basic principles of the rule of law are the basic rationale of the legitimacy of the government in power. An enlightened public and its opinion is the cardinal features of every successful democracy. In this context further research should be conducted to fill the research gap and evolve a ‘rule of law’ for all:- a code of conduct not only for the government, but for the people in relation to the conservation of the environment.

New researches should be initiated to evolve more realist answers for the conservation as well as utilization of resources with the support of people at large. Market is the chief motivating factor for all. No one can evade the reality of open market and the presence of an indulged global community. New efforts should be resolved to make use of neoliberal methods for the conservation of the environment.