



The
Lamun Tree
and other stories on the environment

Pamela Chatterjee



The Energy and Resources Institute

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*For Ramesh Srivastava
and other unsung heroes
who work with devotion, quietly,
to improve the lot of poor farmers.*

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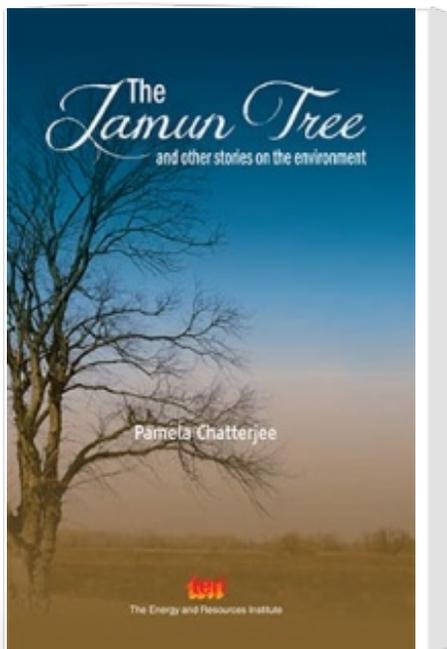


FOREWORD

Not often does one see a book of this kind, about rural development. It is not about development works or programmes decided by government or donor agencies for the “beneficiaries” who live in villages and generally have little room for modifying those works or programmes to suit local conditions. It is good to see that the patronizing term, “beneficiaries”, is not part of the author’s approach or mindset.

In the past, development professionals from the formal institutions of rural development and social sciences who went to work for rural communities tended to believe that they knew what was good for them. Generally their thinking was influenced by the government schemes – for example, social forestry – which assumed that what people needed, were fuel, small timber and fodder, irrespective of local conditions. It is refreshing to see that the author of this book kept her eyes and ears, and her mind, open to establish a rapport with local people in the rural areas. It helped her to understand what the farmers, the women, and other sections of the local communities saw as the problems they faced in improving their economic conditions and livelihood. It also helped her to understand that the local people, of all economic strata, were aware of the importance of enabling the children, including girls, to go to schools. But for

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