

CHAPTER VI

SOCIAL FORESTRY IN INDIA

The concept of social forestry was introduced by the National Commission on Agriculture of India in 1976. It was in vogue in different form and with a different content for a long time. In the past, farm forestry was adopted as a means of creating raw wood resources and replacement of wood harvests in farm lands, community lands, etc. Farm forestry is defined as the "practice of forestry in all its aspects on farms or village lands generally integrated with other farm operations". In other words, when forestry has linkages with farm operations, it is termed as farm forestry. In actual practice, however, it would be better to refer to it as extension forestry, with farm forestry as its integral part. The afforestation of farm land refers to extension of forestry includes the activities of raising trees on farm lands, village waste lands and community forestry areas on lands along the sides of roads, canal banks and railway lines. But development has not been uniform in all States. Even where it was, the practice did not stem entirely from the concept of providing from forests or tree lands a flow of physical benefits and social values.

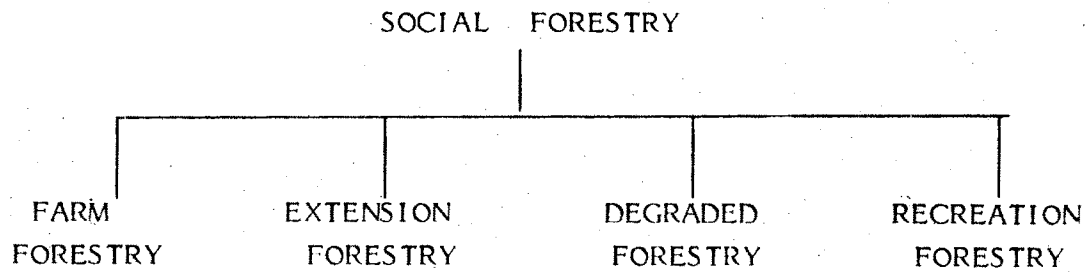
NATIONAL COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE

In the context of the slow and uneven growth of forestry in India, the National Commission on Agriculture (1976) stressed the need for social forestry as a means of developing the economy. Forests in India are mostly owned by States (95 percent), a small portion is under

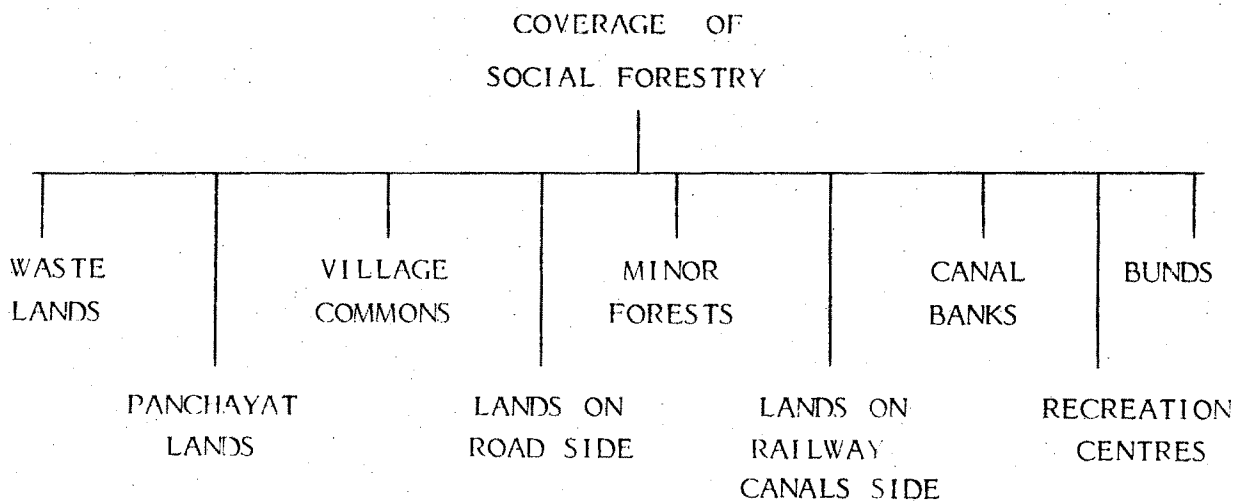
the ownership of corporate bodies and private individuals. On the basis of legal status, forests are classified into (a) reserved (53 percent), (b) protected (30 percent), and (c) unclassed (17 percent) forests. There is concentration of forests in a few States like Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, and a few Union Territories. Northern India is particularly deficient in forests. Therefore, the commission focussed attention on the socio-economic importance of social forestry in rural community and the management of forest resources. It had realised that by taking up the programme of raising of trees, grasses, and fodder on the farmer's own land, village commons, waste lands and degraded forests close to habitations, it would be possible to meet the requirements of fuelwood, fodder and small timber for rural housing and agricultural implements, thorns for fencing, etc.

DEFINITION OF SOCIAL FORESTRY

Social forestry covers farm forestry, extension forestry, reforestation of degraded forests and recreation forestry. It also covers waste lands, panchayat lands, village commons and lands on the sides of roads, canal banks and railway lines, which may be brought under forest plantations, shelter belts and mixed forestry, on which fruit trees and fuelwood trees may be grown. Social forests also include "minor forests" as well as such lands as are dedicated to recreation forestry. The word "social forestry" was for the first time used by the forest scientist Westoby, at the ninth Commonwealth Forestry Congress held in 1968 in Delhi. He defined that "Social forestry is a forestry which aims at producing flow of protection and recreational benefits for community".



FORMS OF SOCIAL FORESTRY



Social forestry is not only a Government policy, but it is only a people's movement. Social Forestry is forestry by people, of the people and for the people. As against conventional forestry, in social forestry, importance is on the social aspects, than on actual forestry. The thrust is laid on moulding of the opinion of the people towards creation of forest resources, by the people, on non-forest lands and on private lands, to meet their day-to-day needs of fuel, fodder, small timber, green manure, etc.

In brief, it may be stated that social forestry is not to supplant the conventional farming but to supplement it with fuel, fruit and fodder farming.

FARM FORESTRY

The basic component of operations is the organisation of a substantial programme of planting of the trees on the bunds and boundaries of fields of the farmers, which is to be taken up by farmers themselves. The basic object of "Vanamahotsava" accepted in the planned development of forestry was to encourage farmers to participate in this programme and regenerate forests for their own benefit. The Government has exempted the value of trees standing on agriculture land from wealth tax. Even in advanced countries like the U.K. and U.S.A., special incentives are given to farmers in the form of exemption to woodlands from estate duty, wealth-tax, etc., to encourage them to take to tree planting.

EXTENSIVE FORESTRY

Extension forestry programme in our country covers the following dimensions :

- (i) Mixed forestry on wastelands, panchayat lands, village commons;
- (ii) Raising of shelter belts in arid regions; and

- (iii) Raising of plantations of direct quick growing species on lands and on the sides of roads, canal banks and railway lines.

The NCA has suggested the following important steps in regard to mixed forestry and shelter belts :

- (i) Any programme of mixed forestry in village wastelands and panchayat lands should be such as is acceptable to the village population.
- (ii) The programme should be undertaken only in those areas where the incidence of wastelands is sufficiently high, so that a part of them can always be kept apart for the satisfaction of the rights of villagers;
- (iii) The programme should take into consideration the need for a quick yield of such products as are the villagers' immediate concern. Fodder and grass should form an important component of mixed forestry;
- (iv) Income from mixed forestry should be divided equally between the panchayats and State Government.
- (v) Co-ordinated efforts by the Agriculture and Forest Departments of State Governments should be made for planning and creation of shelter belts.
- (vi) Research should be carried out on a priority basis by the concerned institutions to determine the regions where shelter belts should be planted, their effect on hydrology and crop yield, and their composition and management; and

- (vii) There should be an element of subsidy to be shared between the Central and State Governments that has to be built into shelter belts programme during the first round of 15 to 20 years.

Mixed forestry and shelter belts programmes should be implemented by villagers under the supervision of village panchayats and in close co-operation with the State Governments Forest Departments. The effects of mixed forestry on the lives of the rural community are far reaching and is in their own interest that work on this programme should be in stages.

In the prevailing conditions of increasing demand of forest produce and shrinking forest areas, the strips of land on the sides of roads, canal distributaries and railway tracks assume very great importance and should be planted with trees. Planting of such trees as the neem and other oilseeds trees would increase the revenue. This programme should be treated as a commercial investment to be met by the Railways and Public Works and Irrigation Departments in close collaboration with the forest authorities.

AGRO-FORESTRY

Apart from the Government schemes, there are number of non-Governmental agencies working on social forestry schemes. A few agencies which have done a remarkable service in this direction are

Anand Niketan Ashram, Gujarat; Baba Amte Ashram, Vidarbha; Ahilya Rangnekar Ashram, Raigad district; Patwardhan Ashram, Sindhudurg district and a number of others.

Over the past few years, many social forestry schemes have been evolved. Some of these, have been popularised in different States, some have just been tried in one or two States. The following list tries to cover the most of the Social Forestry Schemes, which can be considered for implementation. Linear plantation along road sides, railway lines and canals, plantation on field berms and bunds. Plantation in catchment areas of rivers development of wastelands by (a) entrusting the wasteland to the forest department, (b) distributing wasteland to landless people in weaker sections and applying one acre technology, (c) gully plugging activities, conversion of degraded agricultural land into forests and zone developments activities by water conservation and management of scarce resources, afforestation of forest land where shifting cultivation is practised and inferior millets are grown with very poor economic returns, afforestation on land declared surplus as per the Land Ceiling Act, village forest / wood lots / tree banks; own-your-own forest/agreement and plantation on user lands.

There are also agro-forestry schemes like a) the cotton scheme, b) bamboo, cane, date farms, neem, karanji, mulberry agave on rain-fed or dry areas, c) mango dryland horticulture; d) bor in drought prone areas or dry areas to support rural industries for making neera, gur, basket, furniture, fibre, oil and soap, combination of forestry, animal husbandry and bio-gas plants for the economic

upliftment of socially weaker sections, free distribution of saplings and encouragement of nurseries development in schools a tree for every child or per house and a forest for every village campaigns to grow trees in public places, buildings, schools, hospitals, etc., during all public functions. The 100 tree formula urging each farmer to own a minimum of 10 trees, afforestation on area mined for various ores like coal, iron, bauxite, etc., afforestation by industries using forest products as in paper industries, etc., extension-cum-social forestry on lands owned by socially weaker sections of the people.

The following are the broad objectives of agroforestry :

- * To use farm resources properly.
- * To maximise per unit production of food, fuel, fodder, livestock and other forest products. Besides, it should be raised with a view to optimise the productivity of natural, biological and physical resources, viz. land , labour, livestock, soil moisture, solar radiation, and the like.
- * Reduction of pressure on protective and productive forests to meet local demands for fuel wood, fodder, building material, industrial timbers, etc. So that the existing forests can fully be spared for their protective and productive roles.
- * To maintain / restore ecological balance.
- * To check soil erosion, conserve soil moisture and increase soil fertility.



Agro-forestry contributes significantly to the improvement and enrichment of the soil. Besides, the aggregate production of food, wood and fuel, animal husbandry products are always found to be higher than the yield of a single crop. Crop productivity is enhanced because of direct improvement of micro-climate which prevails in the crop farming system.

Agro-forestry provides a wind break that reduces the wind velocity and decreases evapo-transpiration which, directly and indirectly helps moisture conservation. Wind breaks and shelter belts as parts of the agro-forestry programme protect the crop against hot cold winds. Agro-forestry opens new avenues for providing employment opportunities (direct and indirect) in agriculture, animal husbandry and silviculture.

REFORESTATION IN DEGRADED FORESTS

Agro-silviculture is an adaptation of forest plantation technique. The adoption of this practice in a reforestation programme will provide employment to many a landless labourer and increase forest production.

RECREATION FORESTRY

Recreation forestry contributes both to social development and education in environmental matters. Better landscape effects are achieved by easing out the edge of copses and adding a few ornamental species

in a more frequented or frequently viewed site. With planting of such trees as the pipul and semul, the landscape brightens up. These trees are not only ornamental but attract birds and add colour and life to the environment. In urban areas, parks and gardens are a city's lungs, but they lend colour and life and bring recreation to urban people. Since the maintenance of parks and gardens is expensive, larger areas may be planted with suitable trees and shrubs to provide a forest atmosphere. Such forest parts are very popular and contribute to the general uplift of the health of the urban population. The development of wild life should be as much for recreational forestry as for its scientific importance.

OBJECTIVES OF SOCIAL FORESTRY

National Commission on Agriculture recommended the following objectives of social forestry programme :

- i) To meet the needs for fuelwood, small timber, bamboo, fodder and other minor forest produce on sustained basis.
- ii) To release cowdung as manure for increasing agricultural production.
- iii) To provide gainful employment opportunities to the rural population.
- iv) To develop cottage industries in rural areas.
- v) To utilize the available land to the best advantage according to its production capacity.

- vi) To provide efficient soil and water conservation.
- vii) To improve aesthetic value of the area and to meet the recreational needs of the population.
- viii) As a part of integrated rural development programme it aims to bring out all round development of rural areas.

ROLE OF FOREIGN AID AGENCIES

An important step taken during 1979-80 and the Sixth Plan period was the formulation and implementation of social forestry schemes through foreign aid agencies like the World Bank, SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency), USAID (United States Agency for International Development), CIDA (Canadian International Development Authority). Uttar Pradesh and Gujrat first formulated schemes for obtaining loans from the World Bank. These schemes were for total sums of Rs. 40 and Rs. 65.4 crores and became operative from 1979 and 1980 respectively.

The SIDA scheme for Tamil Nadu became operative in 1981 and USAID schemes for Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra in 1981 and 1982 respectively. Andhra Pradesh by CIDA and Karnataka by World Bank and ODA (Overseas Development Authority of U.K.). State Governments have come to believe that this is one area where foreign aid can be secured without strings. Foreign agencies provide aid upto 50 to 70 percent of the estimated expenditure. Once the project is sanctioned, State Governments are committed to find the initial funds. Also, it is

easier under foreign aided projects to arrange for training of personnel at various international institutions and participation in seminars, workshops, etc. Social Forestry is by now an international movement and several foreign agencies are at work in various developing countries.

However, it is a matter for serious consideration whether in the long run the nation should be dependent on such aid for a programme which so intimately connected with the basic needs of the people and which calls for no foreign expertise or equipment. Fortunately, forest plantations develop a self-generating economy after some years. This should gradually reduce the dependence on foreign aid.

SOCIAL FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT DURING THE PLANNING ERA

The objective of the Fifth Plan (1974-79) was to take up a dynamic programme of production forestry and man-made creation of large scale man-made forests with the help of institutional financing. Another important objective was to develop farm forestry and to improve degraded forests so as to increase the fuel and timber supply in rural areas. A network of State Forest Corporations was created for the establishment and management of man-made forests and forest based industries as recommended by the National Commission on Agriculture. The main objective of the Sixth Plan (1980-85) was conservation of existing forests and launching of country wide afforestation, social forestry and farm forestry programmes. The major area of thrust was on the promotion of people's forestry movement.

The Social Forestry Scheme received greater attention of the Government, particularly in fuelwood deficit districts. This scheme was later extended to 157 districts in the country during 1982-83. This scheme envisaged the raising of 2,60,000 hectares of fuelwood plantation and supply of about 580 million seedlings at zero cost to the public and to the school children under the "A Tree for Every Child Programme". Some headway has been made in the afforestation programmes from 1982-83 onwards, particularly in the social forestry programme. The fact that the afforestation was included in the new 20 point programme clearly indicates the importance given to the forest resources in the country.

FOREST POLICY OF MAHARASHTRA

According to the Indian Constitution forests are included in the Concurrent List since 1980. It is understood that States are to follow the rules and regulations enacted by the Central Government. In addition to that States with their variations in climatic conditions pass special Acts regarding the development of forests.

Government of Maharashtra has enacted Special Acts which are concerned with the forests. These are discussed below.

Tree Felling (Regulation) Act of Maharashtra, 1964

According to this Act, except urban area the permission is to be obtained for the felling of trees which have been banned by the

Government. The trees which require permission are tectonagandis, terminalia chebula, bassia latifolia, tamraindus indica, mangifera indica, artocarpus integrifolia, acacia, santalum album, pterocarpus marsupium, adina cardifolia, ougenia ougenoides, hard wickia binata and syzygium.

Maharashtra Adivasi's Trees Marketing (Regulation) Act, 1969

Adivasis are economically weak and ignorant and there is every opportunity that they are being exploited by selling their trees at low prices to the contractors. This Act was passed in order to end this exploitation. According to this Act, the Adivasis should take the permission of revenue officers before they sell their trees.

Maharashtra's Minor Forest Produce (Trade Control) Act, 1969

According to this Act, the Government of Maharashtra is empowered to nationalise the trade of any minor forest produce. Now this Act is applicable to Diospyros melanoxylon (Tendu) and Bauhinia racemosa trees. Minor forest products of these trees are collected and marketed by the Forest Department of Maharashtra.

Maharashtra's (Urban Area) Tree Protection Act, 1975

This Act is applicable to all the municipal or urban areas in the State. The provision is made to appoint a "Tree Authority" in every municipal area. The main function of the Tree Authority is to regulate

the tree felling and at the same time the planting is encouraged. The Tree Authority can collect the "tree cess", for plantation programme in urban area.

Maharashtra's Private Forest (Acquisition) Act, 1975

The forest area is very limited in Maharashtra. Private forests are not protected and developed by the Government of Maharashtra. After the acquisition they are converted into reserved forests. But the Forest Act of 1975 is amended in 1978. Accordingly, the Act provides for the land owner to maintain twelve hectares of forest land. The Act of 1978 excludes those farmers having less than 12 hectares of the land.

Maharashtra's Adivasi Economic Conditions (Improving) Act 1976

According to this Act, provisions are to be made to provide loans to the Adivasi and control their marketing activities of minor forest produce so that they will get remunerative prices.

Maharashtra's Fruit Plantation Programme Through Employment Guarantee Programme

The Govt. of Maharashtra has recently taken a bold step of Fruit Plantation Programme linking with Employment Guarantee Programme for the year 1990-91. The main objective of this

programme is to provide employment opportunities to rural youth and to increase the productivity of dry land farming. The estimated budget for this programme is Rs 100 crores during the Eighth Five Year Plan and the target for the Fruit Plantation Programme is 1.20 lakh hectares.