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RURAL FORESTRY: POLICIES AND ISSUES A CASE STUDY OF MALDA.



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ABSTRACT :

Forest has a great importance on living world. Forest may be of two types, one is natural and other is manmade. Forest not only supplies the oxygen but also it is beauty in nature. It also provides us a lot of furniture wood fuel , fruits, honey, shade etc. Infact, forest has a great economic importance.

KEYWORDS: *Vanmahotsav, Rural Forestry, Beneficiary Effect, Chipko and Appliko movements, Distribution of Forest Land.*

INTRODUCTION

An increase population continues to erode the benefit of the development projects. The majority of population is depending on primary sector for meeting the needs of fuel, fodder and small timber. In agriculture the income of the wage earners is not only low but also irregular. The lands in the villages are fragmented. In the past, rural development was primarily correlated to only agricultural development and availability of forest resources served their local requirements regarding energy and money to supplement their income.



Actually forestry has become the art and science of creating, maintaining and appraising the forest resources with the object of producing goods and services on a sustained basis.

EVALUATION OF THE CONCEPT

The concept of rural development includes not merely agricultural development but rural transformation also, which means the development of all facets of human civilization has been recognized that agriculture and other land based activities with possible diversification of growth will

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not be able to provide employment to all rural workers at adequate levels of income. Thus, in the rural sectors to increase the cultivable area, to increase the total production, destruction of forest was a common practice not only in the rural sectors but also in the urban areas, in the industrial sectors; depletion of forest was a common practice. Still now, to meet the demand of the increasing wants of the growing population deforestation is going on disobeying the forest conservation Acts.

The depletion of the forest is due to its exhaustible use as fuel wood without consid-eration of its growth; its use for industrialization, towns, living habitat for exploding population, refugee settlement, commercial exploitation for housing, household goods, agriculture uses, constructions of roads, railways, airports, dams, mining; destruction by army and illegal feeling due to corrupt officials and politicians etc. Vanmahotsav, social forestry, reclamation of land, Chipko and Appliko movements, forest week etc. are nothing but apology of the mankind to the nature for the age long holocaust done by him on the fragile forest eco-systems. Therefore, forest is needed to conserve soil, water, air; to maintain the required level of Oxygen etc; to maintain nature's equilib-rium between living things.

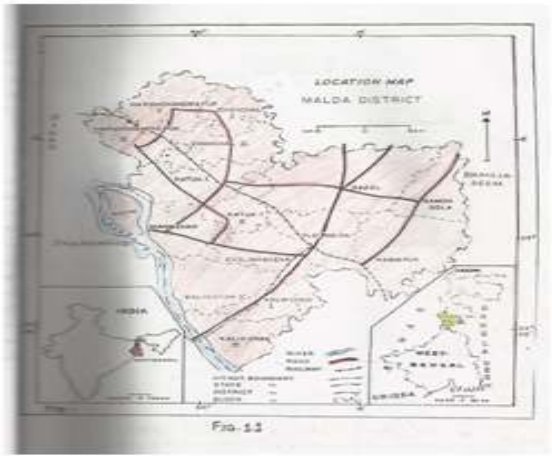


TABLE 2.9 AREAS UNDER ORCHARDS AND TREES (2006-07)

Category	No. of Blocks	Area in ha.	%	Name of the Blocks
1.50	1	311	4.07	Kaliachak - II
1.50 to 2.00	2	731	9.57	Chanchal II, Kaliachak - III
2.00	12	6598	86.36	Others 12 Blocks
Total	15	7640	100.0	

The trees ore found generally in mixed groups of Baryons, Guava, Jack-fruit, Berry etc. with mango and mulberry .But except mango and mul-berry all It is generally agreed that one unit of land is more economically productive in production of crops, than tree crops. This stress on agricultural use of land has failed to encourage farmers to develop lands for orchards. In most of the blocks or-chards occupy more than 2 percent of land of the blocks and in these blocks that 86.36 percent of the orchards the district are confined. Only in Kaliachak less than 1.5 % of lands are put to orchards and groves. Out of the total area of the district (68521 ha) 19.46 % area has not been available for cultivation. Between the year 2001 and 2011, there has been more or less negative change in the respective areas under both classes.In Seven blocks namely Harishchandrapur-I-II, Ratua-I ,Gazol Bamangola, Habibpur and

Manikchak about 45.81 % area has been put to non-agricultural uses and in Kaliachak- I&II only 15.14 % of land has not been available for cultivation. Under this category land being occupied by rivers, tanks, ponds, settlements with roads etc. are included. Waste lands, both culturable and uncultivable occupy 734 ha. Or 20 % of the district's total land area .Denuded forests, eroded land, sides of the river banks, streams and nalas are grouped under this category. In some blocks mainly in Gazol and Kaliachak-III area under this category is maximum-as 166 ha and 70 ha respectively. In Gazol, in some particular areas especially on the north-east portion there is stony .Waste with thin soil cover which cannot be used for cultivation. The uncultivable wasteland has very little possibility to be reclaimed under arable land-use category, but they can be reclaimed for some specific uses such as restricted grazing lands or village forests under supervision.

Kaliachak-I is the block where grazing lands occupy 0.18 %of its area. In this block 4.60 % of the district's total grazing land is confined. Within rest of the blocks-old Malda, Bamangola, Ratua-II and Chanchal-II comprises .03 to, 18 % of the respective block's area. The total percentage of grazing land available in the blocks is not sufficient to provide food to feed the large livestock population. According to the livestock census 2001 there are 630675 cattle and 83201 buffaloes, which depend mostly upon pastures, supplemented by fodder and stalk of grains - like Millet, Maize, Paddy and wheat straw. The grazing lands have to support, in. addition about 743671 + 80627 goats and sheep for which grazing is only source of food. As a result of large animal population most of the area used for grazing are heavily over grazed and causes destruction of natural; vegetation and causes soil erosion. In the remaining 10 blocks this per-centage is even lower and problem is severe. Beside, this grazing area are scattered all over the villages in various sizes and their proper management is not possible. The large animal Population of blocks also grazes ' in forest lands and other uncultivated lands wherever pastures are avail-able. It is possible that through proper land utilization this grazing area should be made much more productive than they at present to prevent natural los

TABLE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF FOREST LAND IN MALDA DISTRICT (2006-07)

Category	No. of Blocks	Area in ha.	% Of Total Grazing Land	Name of the Blocks
0.60	1	109	7.96	Harishchandrapur -II,
0.06 to 1.20	3	961	70.15	Gazol, Harishchandrapur-I and Old Malda.
>1.20	1	300	21.89	Bamangola

According to the figures of agricultural statistics the total area under forest in the district is 1370 ha (0.38 %). Only in 5 blocks of the district forest areas are located. Even in these blocks, areas under forest are very limited because most of the land has been taken up for agricultural prac-tice. In last ten years the district has seen no change in this category. In Gazol maximum hectarage of land under forest (482 ha) is only 1, 95 % of total area of the block. But Bamangola comprises 300 ha.of lands under forest which is 1.47 % of its area. Harishchandrapur-II has 7.96 % of the forest area of the district.

GOVERNMENT ACTION AND POLICY MAKING

Within last 50 years different policy makers throughout the world have initiated dif-ferent policies for a forestation and it is their hope that within coming 50 years the atmosphere and the

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environment will be again in balanced condition. Of all the environmental problems facing the country the problem of deforestation has received the maximum public attention. Ironically, no set of government policies in the field of environment has attracted greater public criticism than the policies for afforestation. 'Rural forestry' and 'social forestry' have thus been launched by several states to ensure the balanced condition in future.

Ambitions for social forestry programmes have already been launched by several state governments, most of which have been financed by foreign aid agencies like the World Bank, US Agency for International Development, Canadian International Development Agency and the Swedish International Development Authority. Forest departments in most states have set up separate social forestry wings.

RURAL FORESTRY PROGRAMME IN INDIA

Forestry environment in India is composed of all physical, social and cultural factors and conditions, which influence the existence and development of forest. They are on one hand recognized as valuable, natural and renewable resource. On the other hand, they have been persistently abused for various reasons. The country has one of the best and comprehensive National Forest Policy in the world. Forests are included in the concurrent list of the constitution. But the states manage the forest for all purposes and the central government has mostly an advisory role. Forests, till last few years, did not also receive their due importance in the successive development plans since Independence. In communists ruled state of West Bengal, the best state according to World Bank, the creation of village wood lost by the forest department has fared well, achieving 109% of the target.

BENEFICIARY EFFECT

The survival of a considerable percentage of the tribals of District Malda also dependent on Minor Forest Products (MFP). They collect Mahua flowers, Saal seeds, Tendu for the Bidi industry are common practice within the villagers. Still bamboo has its importance in different sectors of constructional workers. Malda District is a flat alluvial plain and there is no marked botanical division in the district. The vegetation of Malda District, is therefore, classified on the basis of the soil and its water content and other biotic factors. Total forest area of Malda is 1370 hectares comprising only meager proportion of the total land area.

Sl. No.	Land used categories (in hectare)	1980-81	1990-91	2000-2001
1.	Land not available for cultivation	68723	68521	—
2.	Non agricultural use	64266	63984	—
3.	Barren land	4457	4437	—
4.	Forest	1370	1370	1370

The above table reviews the fact that during last thirty years the area under forest remains same which exhibits that there is no scope at all to destroy the forest for the settlement of other purposes to support the demand of the growing population regarding settlement or others. So rural forestry is a need to balance the present ecology or the environment of the District.

CONCLUSION

At present through different planning, development of forest is guided by the policies adopted

by the nation to manage them. Country's first Forest Policy was enunciated in 1894. Indian Republic formulated her National Forest Policy in 1953. The National Commission on Agriculture (NCA) established in 1970 went into the forestry situation in the country and suggested a need for a new forest policy in their report of 1976. The constitution of the independent India placed the forests under the state list of Seventh Schedule in 1950. The states were vested with the administration of the forests. The constitution has recognized the importance of protection and improvements of forests. It is stipulated in Art. 48(A), that the state shall endeavor protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wild life of country. The Art. 51 A (g) lays down that "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, river: wild life and to have compassion for living creatures." Realizing the forests for the well being of the nation, the parliament by the 42nd Amendment in 1976, brought forests and wild life on the concurrent list in the Seventh Schedule. In 1978, Indian Forest Act was implemented. In 1980, the President of India promulgated the Forest (conservation) Ordinance, which put severe restrictions on de-reservation of forests. But in spite of these government policies and programmes, we cannot stop forest-degradation and depletion due to the livelihood of mankind. But regeneration of degraded forest lands are necessary to avoid ecological imbalances. It can be pointed that within coming fifty years, the depletion of forest on the whole will be sealed through afforestation programmes which are being followed throughout the world to check the environmental pollution. So, despite these achievements, present and projected doubts and criticism about the actual benefits we need a social consciousness and to say in Shri Chorus : "We need green to become green"

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