

Lec.12 COMMUNITY FORESTRY- SOCIAL FORESTRY CONCEPTS-SOCIAL FORESTRY IN TAMIL NADU-TAP

Community forestry is defined as the practice of forestry on community lands with the participation of people or community

Evolution of Social forestry concepts

Widespread loss of tree vegetation in the developing world in the past few decades led to the emergence of social forestry. It was a response to meet the growing scarcity of biomass and to preserve the environment. Several countries in the developing world launched this type of programme to meet the demands of an expanding population for fuel, fodder and timber.

Social forestry was new approach to solve the problem of fuel scarcity with the participation of rural people who would plant, tend and maintain trees by themselves. The species planted would be of their choice. People's Republic of China was one of the first countries to embark on a major community reforestation programme. A massive nationwide campaign was launched during 1950s as a means of replenishing the country's stock of trees depleted by the previous decades of war and overexploitation. The Republic of Korea was another country where a nationwide tree growing was taken up. In 1962, Korea took the reforestation programme on a communal basis and as a major national priority.

By early seventies, the problem of deforestation and environmental degradation were expressed at International Conference at Stockholm during 1972 bringing in to sharp focus the changes required in policies towards environment and the crisis of tree depletion.

The World Congress (1978) added the dimension of forestry for the people and by the people. Food and Agricultural Organization also brought the programme of forestry for local community development.

Although it was recognized at most forums that local community forestry was the only solution to the problem of tree depletion but support , both financial and technical was negligible. It was only in the early eighties that several International organizations and agencies agreed to aid rapid tree development programme.

Social forestry was first recognized as an important component of forestry development and meeting the rural need in the Interim Report of the National Commission on Agriculture on social forestry during 1972. The commission stressed on the socioeconomic importance of social forestry for rural community as well as in the management of forest resources. It was felt that by taking up the programme of raising trees , grasses and fodder in the farmers own lands, village commons, wastelands and degraded forests close to habitations, it would be possible to meet the requirements of fuel wood, fodder, small timber for rural housing and agricultural implements etc.

In our country the concept of social forestry is not new. It is found in the preachings of Buddha about 2500 years ago. Lord Buddha preached that every good Buddhist should plant one tree and look after it over five years so that it grows to a full tree and in this way he should plant about 5 trees in his life time .

The Great Emperor Ashoka is credited to have got planted shady trees and fruit trees long the roadsides for the benefit of travellers. During early period of British rule , need for industrial expansion and communication required timber from the forests. Attempts made by the British were simply to reserve and demarcate forests for their industrial needs. No significance was attached to important role of trees to the local population.

In the monumental Report on Improvement of Indian Agriculture (1893) Voelcker observed that forests had not been preserved. His observation on keeping aside village forests for the local people was probably the first observation of importance of forests to people's economy.

Afforestation in the post independence period can be divided in to three phases. In the first phase '**Van Mahotsav**' was started in fifties which failed to attract attention largely due to ignorance at all levels. In the second phase, farm forestry was started in some states in the 1970's. The third phase was the period when social forestry programme actually took off in eighties with massive programmes and ambitious targets.

Social forestry-definition

The word Social forestry was coined by Westoby and used in the Ninth Commonwealth Forestry Congress in 1968. According to Prasad (1985) "Forestry outside the conventional

forests which primarily aims at providing continuous flow of goods and services for the benefit of people. This definition implies that the production of forest goods for the needs of the local people is Social forestry. Thus, social forestry aims at growing forests of the choice of the local population.

Shah (1985) stated that Conceptually Social forestry deals with poor people to produce goods such as fuel, fodder etc. to meet the needs of the local community particularly underprivileged section.

Objectives of Social forestry

The objectives of Social forestry adopted by the Commission (1976) were based on the economic needs of the community aimed at improving the conditions of living.

The main objectives are

- i) Fuel wood supply to the rural area and replacement of cowdung
- ii) Small timber supply
- iii) Fodder supply
- iv) Protection of agricultural fields against wind and recreational needs

Components of Social forestry

The scope or components of social forestry defined by the Commission includes **Farm forestry, Extension forestry, reforestation in degraded forests and Recreation forestry.**

1. Farm Forestry

Farm forestry is the name given to programmes which promote commercial tree growing by farmers on their own land

Farm forestry was defined by NCA (1976) as the practice of forestry in all its aspects in and the around the farms or village lands integrated with other farm operations.

2. Extension Forestry

Extension forestry is the practice of forestry in areas devoid of tree growth and other vegetation situated in places away from the conventional forest areas with the object of increasing the area under tree growth .

It includes the following.

i) Mixed forestry

Mixed forestry is the practice of forestry for raising fodder grass with scattered fodder trees, fruit trees and fuel wood trees on suitable wastelands, panchayat lands and village commons

ii) Shelterbelts

Shelterbelt is defined as a belt of trees and or shrubs maintained for the purpose of shelter from wind, sun, snow drift, etc.

iii) Linear Strip plantations

These are the plantations of fast growing species on linear strips of land

3. Rehabilitation of Degraded forests

The degraded area under forests needs immediate attention for ecological restoration and for meeting the socio economic needs of the communities living in and around such areas.

4. Recreation Forestry

Recreation forestry is the practice of forestry with the object of raising flowering trees and shrubs mainly to serve as recreation forests for the urban and rural population. This type of forestry is also known as **Aesthetic forestry** which is defined as the practice of forestry with the object of developing or maintaining a forest of high scenic value.

Benefits of Social forestry

- i) Increase the supply of fuel wood and fodder
- ii) Generate rural employment
- iii) Maintain ecological balance
- iv) Appropriate use of wastelands
- v) Promote village and cottage industries
- vi) Induce environmental and tree consciousness among people
- vii) Relieve pressures from natural forests
- viii) Stabilize agricultural production

a) TAMIL NADU AFFORESTATION PROJECT (TAP-[FUNDED BY JAPAN BANK FOR INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION (JBIC)]

[Tamil Nadu Afforestation Project\(TAP\)](#) is being implemented in Tamil Nadu of 1000 interface village benefiting about 3 lakh rural population with a assistance of 500 crores.

JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT(JFM)

The Government of Tamil Nadu is committed to involve the local people in reforestation and protection of degraded forests and to share with them the sustainable benefits from these forests. This arrangement is known as “Joint Forest Management” and the involvement of the people is ensured through [Village Forest Councils](#). The unit of management under Joint Forest Management is a hamlet/group of hamlets/entire village, the abuttant degraded forest, community and private lands. In each of the identified Management unit, the people’s representative body called Village Forest Council (V.F.C) is formed which is fully involved in the planning and execution of works, protection, harvesting and benefit sharing in the management unit with focus on the degraded forests. The Forest Ranger concerned initiates the process of formation of Village Forest Council. The Village Forest Council meets atleast once in three months. Each Village Forest Council elects an “Executive Committee” in such a manner that one hamlet elects atleast two members, one of whom is a woman. Each Village Forest Council elects minimum of 5 (five) and maximum of 15(fifteen) members to the Executive Committee.

Benefit sharing

Sharing the sustainable benefits from the degraded forests, Government lands and Community lands lying within the management unit with the members of Village Forest Council are the most important component of Joint Forest Management. The guiding principle of this benefit sharing is equitable distribution and the Executive Committee decides the individual beneficiaries.

District/Divisional Forest officers conduct sample survey of the unit of management and decide about the quantity of firewood available for supply to poor households. Fodder and Green leaf manure is given free of cost to members of Village Forest Council except big farmers, subject to availability. Grazing is allowed free of cost depending on the carrying capacity except in regeneration areas, where grazing will be closed for 3 years.

All Non-wood Forest produces (Minor Forest Produce) for domestic consumption is given free of cost to the members of Village Forest Council subject to availability. Executive Committee sells any surplus quantity. District/Divisional Forest Officer decides sustainable Non-wood Forest Produce (N.W.F.P.) available. The Executive Committee as decided by District/ Divisional Forest officer sells any other sustainable yield from the Management unit. The Executive Committee distributes the sale proceeds so received equally among the members of Village Forest Council after remitting 25% to Village Forest Development Fund.

A joint account in the name of Village Forest Council is opened in local or nearest bank or post office with the President and Member Secretary as signatories. All the Village Forest Council Funds are kept in this account. The President and Member-Secretary are responsible and accountable to the Village Forest Committee for all financial transactions.