

## FOREST AND FORESTRY - A VIEW POINT

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Tremendous acceleration in the pace of development all over the world along with the population explosion is threatening the very existence of man and forests. Excessive interference of man's activity and consequent changes in natural processes is of fundamental importance. In order to maintain forests properly and in perpetual productivity, the updating of the methodologies for their management is necessary. People's participation teamed with meaningful and adequate support of the policy-makers is also of equal importance. The paper will identify and analyse number of measures that are necessary to arrest widespread forest destruction.

**Keywords :** Forest; Management; Economic development.

### Introduction

The evolution of all living things has involved several stages of development. This is naturally implied that varying demands on the environment, and the food chain involved has undergone gradual but easily recognisable changes. Man's potential and his intellectual advancement made him far superior in every field of activity to his ancestors. The social evolution coupled with the change from a nomadic habit to permanent settlements involved the development of infrastructures such as housing and common facilities like paths and roads cleared of rank vegetation. The industrially advanced countries stepped up the consumption of all natural products resulting in the reckless exploitation of resources to raise the standard of living.

### Why is Forestry important?

The land as such is considered as the fixed asset and anything that grows on it, as the interest. It does not need any

emphasis to highlight the importance of the role that forests play in the entire ecosystem of this planet.

- (A) Forestry is a sector of prime importance in social and economic development of the country. As a high priority renewable resource base having direct and indirect functional influence on soil, water and climate, it deserves utmost importance for environmental conservation. Also it has immense potential to improve the standards of living of the poor people through employment generation. Despite the crucial role of the forests, the forests have degraded to an alarming extent because of over use and misuse over the years.
- (B) Preferential exploitation of commercially important species against less valuable species in mixed forests cause imbalance in the entire ecosystem. This has adversely affected the hard-woods like oaks, maple, walnut, sal, teak, mahagony etc. Countries under the influence

and/or control of developed western countries, a wholesale exploitation of valuable forests has been affected purely on economic considerations without any consideration of ecology. This has had disastrous effects not only on the exploited countries, but has had deleterious impact on the climate of almost the entire tropical and subtropical regions of the world. Selective felling of more valuable species without any regard to their adequate regeneration has caused havoc specially in the tropical countries. This process has been compounded many fold since the wood became a raw material for chemical industry, as pulp, paper, tar, resin and many other distillation products.

In more recent times the entire biomass has become the raw material for industries. The removal and utilisation of the total forest bio-mass possess a different problem as its production in general is a long term affair. Modern technological sophistication has tended to reduce the utilisation of man-power for the production of goods and this has degraded the entire ecology of the planet. Extensive use of plastics and other nonbiodegradable materials is having great problems of keeping the environment clean.

Besides reducing the casual factors of pollution the only other source to sustain life on this planet is to protect the vegetal cover by launching intensive drives in this direction. Vegetation is considered as chemical factory for

regeneration of the oxygen which sustains all life. It also utilizes the carbon-dioxide for its growth and subsequent elaboration into carbohydrates and other products. In this process the entire forest ecosystem plays a most vital part and therefore, its maintenance and proper management become imperative. Besides this function, forests also play the most important vital role in regulating the water regime and have a direct impact on the climate of the region.

It has been estimated that in the mountains and hilly regions, the forest cover must be more than 60% and in the plains at least 33% of the total land area. Further, the location and distribution of the forest areas should not be in the inverse pattern of the concentration of human population. These should be well-distributed over the entire terrain so that the benefits of the forest ecosystem and the produce are within easy reach of the people. The latter is often ignored even by the planners and they do so only at the peril of the natural forests that still exist and also those which they are trying to raise. Besides the importance in industry, wood and its products still continue to provide people of the less developed countries with the main source of energy for cooking, heating etc. Even in the advanced countries it forms an important raw material for several vital industries.

In forestry, development does not certainly mean destruction, but only maintenance of maximum productivity consistent with safe guarding all the vital parameters forming the very life-

support-system on this planet. This message of forestry has to be widely understood and properly appreciated by the public and the policy makers as well.

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