



Forest Activities and Employment

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Abstract: *The majority of the poor live in rural areas and belong to the categories of land less labourers, marginal and small farmers, rural artisans including fishermen, scheduled tribes and other backward classes. The number of people living below the poverty line in rural areas is millions. The forest activities which generate employment comprises :*

- a. Production forestry including logging.
- b. Social forestry, and
- c. Minor forest produce collection.

Key Words: rural areas, categories, labourers, marginal, small farmers, rural artisans, scheduled tribes.

The production forestry provide major forest products. Major forest provide consists of timber and fuel wood. The best known and the chief product obtained from the forest is wood. This material provides a very wide range of qualities of commercial and industrial importance such as timber for building and other structures, defence, communication, sleepers for railway track, pit props and supports for mining raw material for forest based industries like pulp and paper, plywood and boards, rayon, matches, katha and Bidi etc. As a material of such purposes, timber has certain advantages. Thus production forestry means that the forestry which provide timber for industrial and commercial use.

The employment is generated in production forestry at different steps such as in planting, nursing, harvesting, grading, transporting and in marketing etc.

The National Commission on agriculture in its interim reports on 'Social Forestry' submitted in 1973, specified the following objectives of social forestry :

- I. Firewood supply to the rural areas and replacement of cow dung as fuel.
- II. Small timber supply.
- III. Fodder supply.
- IV. Protection of agricultural fields against WIND.
- V. Providing recreational facilities.

In this way the social forestry programme

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was started to meet the requirement of rural people of fuelwood, fodder and small timber supply. The components of social forestry are :

- a. Farm forestry
- b. Village wood lots,
- c. Strip plantations,
- d. Reforestation of degraded forests.

It is generally recognised that all the forest products, other than timber, are referred to as minor forest products, or M.F.P. as they are commonly called. These M.F.P., apart from being valuable, give employment to large number of people, particularly to the large section of population living in and around forest areas who get part time jobs in the collection of minor forest products. Thus the process of collection of M.F.P. from the forests helps in generating a considerable volume of employment potential of various categories both in and outside the forests. The minor forest products of the state can be categorized as; Medicinal plants, Aromatic resins, Spices and Candiments, Leather tanning materials, Edible materials, Oil seeds etc.

Several studies have indicated that the M.F.P. collection, processing and marketing can generate gainful employment for over 10 million persons per year. realising the importance of M.F.P. in tribal economy the Prime Minister advised the Chief Ministers of the state that "A special drive may be launched for purchase of MFP collected by the tribals through co-operations and state



organizations, so that they are adequately compensated".

Since time immemorial forests have been major source of food, wood and a variety of other products besides providing shelter and protection to large number of living including pre-historic as being the main land available for shifting cultivation under this system the utilization of the land was only for a period of few years till the productivity of the land sustained. In the process fresh areas were cleared the cycle continued.

Man's attitudes towards the forest has also been dynamic, while the prehistoric man was concerned with the food and regarded forests as a natural bounty. Today forests are considered as one of the important part of national economy. The increasing role of the forest in national can be summarized as below :

- a. forests provide a multipurpose uses of products such as timber, firewood, gums, rasins, leaves and fruits which are used by every human in some or the other way regarding wood it is well said that it is used from "Cradle to Coffin".
- b. forest provide a variety of raw materials for industrial use.
- c. forests provide environmental balance and an important source of recreation.
- d. forests provides direct and indirect employment for a variety of people in primary, secondary and tertiary sectors.

The biggest impact of forests is on the tribal economy. Tribals are emotionally, socially and economically attached with the forests. For them, forests are for the exclusive sources of employment. Besides being employed on a variety of forests works the collection and sale of minor forests produce is

one of the important source of their income. Forests are an important source of revenue for the government.

It is undoubtedly true that the forests are playing very important role in the economy of the country. These forests are not only producing valuable major forest products like timber and fuelwood, and numerous forest produces, but also generating employment opportunities for the village and tribal population. The government is also getting quite considerable amount as revenue from the forests. A large number of industries comprising large, medium and small, are getting raw material from these forests. In agricultural activities also forests have a close link and the farmer are largely dependent on forests. In this way the forests have occupied a place of prominence in the economy.

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