

Social Forestry: A study in Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

The last few decades have seen population growth, which has put pressure on the environment and natural resources. Social forestry involves working with the public to maintain and conserve forests while reforesting waste and deforested areas in order to support environmental, social, and rural development. Through forestry-related activities and a comprehensive approach, social forestry seeks to completely transform society. Social forestry is a method to meet the needs for revenue, fuel, food, and fodder as well as to safeguard agriculture from harmful climatic change and to improve the environment. Community forests are another name for social forestry.

The nation's social forestry programme is among the biggest and most creative studies of participatory forestry, as well as the largest intervention strategy to raise the productivity and usage of communal land. The purpose of the current article is to clarify the definition and key elements of social forestry, the central idea of social forest policy, as well as to identify the many forms and advantages of social forestry and their application in Andhrapradesh.

Introduction

Forests are the biggest self-generating ecosystems, and they are an invaluable natural resource since they are renewable, may be productive, and serve a variety of purposes. The ecosystem, the flora and wildlife, and humankind are all positively impacted by forests. Social forestry has emerged in India as a response to the widespread deforestation that has occurred there over the previous few decades. India has approximately one-fifth of the world's population, making it the second most populous country.

The State of the Forest Report from 2017 indicates that the total area covered by our nation's forests accounts for 21.54% of the total landmass. People living in rural areas of India rely heavily on job opportunities provided by the country's forests. Both in its rural and its urban settings, India is the world's leading user of fuel woods. The most important source of income comes from the forests. However, a growing population and increased industrialization have resulted in an inadequate supply of important items from forests, which has led to both overexploitation and deforestation, and these resources are running out very rapidly. As a direct result of these effects, the amount of soil erosion, fuel shortages, loss of flora and fauna, climate change, wasteland, and degree of damage all rose significantly.

Economic advancement can be supported by the utilisation and exploitation of natural resources, including social forestry (Lacuna-Richman, 2012) Involving people in the creation and execution of plans for forestry that are based on their needs is the main goal of social forestry. The goal of social forestry is to use science and creativity to produce trees and other vegetation on available land.

Social Forestry

Social forestry is the management and protection of forests and planting trees on bare, deforested ground with the goal of promoting rural, social, and environmental development. Social forestry can be defined as the management and development of bare land along with reforestation for the benefit of rural development and the environment. The National Commission on Agriculture coined the phrase "Social Forestry" in 1976. Since then, the Indian government has launched numerous initiatives to develop wastelands through various social forestry projects.

The importance of protecting village forests and the contribution these forests make to the local economy were noted for the first time in the 1893 Report on the Improvement of Indian Agriculture. By using the word "Social," the mechanical process of forest conservation is transformed into the idea of growing trees with social, economic, and psychological ties. This aids in promoting community involvement, which is Social Forestry's main focus.

Growing trees and/or other vegetation on land available for the purpose inside and outside traditional forest areas is a part of social forestry, as is managing the existing forest with close community involvement and more or less integrated with other operations to produce a balanced and complementary land use with the goal of providing a wide range of goods and services to individuals and society. Social forestry has been used to describe any programme that involves the planting of trees for a community or group in any setting, including agricultural forestry. It is a social forestry project since it aims to meet the needs of people living in rural areas.

Objectives of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate and discuss the following: what social forestry is, why it's important, what forms it may take, and how it might help improve the standard of living in rural areas.

Methodology

Secondary data used in the current work were gathered from official government reports (India: State of Forest Report from 2015–2017), scholarly journals, books, and the World Wide Web.

Major Objectives of Social Forestry

The following are the major objectives of social forestry

- To fulfil the needs of the rural population in terms of fuel, fodder, and small timber.
- To fulfil the needs for raw materials of rural home, cottage, and small forest-based industries.
- To create jobs for rural residents by cultivating plantations on vacant land
- To guard against wind and water erosion on the crops.
- Encouraging farmers to strengthen their community's and their own financial standing.
- Establishing tree crops to promote ecological and environmental purity and balance.
- Employment opportunities for unskilled employees are growing.
- To improve the ecology and ecosystem of the area, to make the barren land beautiful in its natural state, to best utilise it, and to establish a forest.
- Avoid utilising cow manure as a fuel source and find other uses for it instead.
- Instead of using it as fuel, cow excrement may be spread on fields and used as a fertiliser.
- Intention to clothe all of the wooded regions.

Typed of Social Forestry:

- **Rural Forestry**
- **Urban Forestry**
- **Farm Forestry**

(1) **Rural Forestry** can be further divided into:

a) Community Forestry:

The government would be in charge of providing the seedlings and fertilisers for this sort of forestry, while the locals would be responsible for keeping the trees healthy and safe. All of the forestry work here is done on public land rather than private property.

b) Agroforestry:

In this type of forest management, trees, bushes, and bamboo are all grown together with the help of technology on the same plot of ground. By conserving natural resources and modifying microclimates, agroforestry contributes to the battle against the growing threat of climate change. The species used in this type of forestry generate more carbon in their subterranean biomass than the grass and cereal system combined. Potentially, this might aid in the goal of doubling farmers' income by 2022, which would create affluent and long-lasting rural communities for future generations.

(2) Urban Forestry

Urban forestry refers to the activity of cultivating and maintaining tree populations in and around cities with the purpose of promoting long-term economic and environmental viability. Trees, both alone and in clusters, will be cultivated. This encompasses the administration, planting, and care of a variety of trees on the outskirts of a city.

(3) Farm Forestry

Planting trees on fields has been advocated for as a means for farmers to provide for their families' basic necessities. When there is no financial incentive, alternative advantages might be provided even if fuel wood has been an essential resource generated from agricultural forestry.

Forest Area in AP

There were 23 districts in Andhra Pradesh (AP) until it was divided into Telangana and Andhra Pradesh in 2014. There are currently four districts in Rayalaseema and nine districts in coastal Andhra; the remaining ten districts make up the Telangana state. There are 84,580,777 people living in Residuary AP, and 27.39 lakh (5.53%) of them are tribal. The state's notified forest cover covers 36,914.77 sq. km., or 22.73 percent, of the overall land area. With a total size of 8,137.08 sq. km, the State is home to 16 protected areas, including three national parks, 13 wildlife sanctuaries, and one tiger reserve. Scrubs or open woods make up over two-thirds of the forests in AP.

Effect of Social Forest Policy in Andhra Pradesh:

Forest Cover in Andhrapradesh from 2015 To 2017

Details/Years	2015	2017	Change
Geographical area	1,60,204	162968	2,764
Very dense forest	375	1957	1,582
Mod. dense forest	13,093	14051	958
Open forest	10,956	12139	1,183
Total forest	24,424	28147	3,723
% of geographical area	15.25	17.27	2
Scrub	8,562	9560	998

Forest Cover within RFA	23099	24,449	1,350
Forest Cover Outside RFA	2,907	3,698	791

Source: ISFR reports 2015-17

As can be seen from the table above, social forestry programmes have resulted in a greater forest cover than in the past. While less productive shrubs and bushes were less numerous and dense, trees and other highly productive plants were more numerous and denser. Locals believe that the forest is becoming denser and is now home to more wild animals than in the past.

The methods used to manage forests have changed throughout time to take into account the shifting demands of the local population, the markets for forest products, and a variety of political interests. An alternate method of managing forests is social forestry. It is a strategy that strikes a balance between the requirements of the local population and various outside interests.

Social forestry encourages sustainable forest use and management among communities who live near and around forests. Communities are empowered by increasing awareness, expanding capacity, creating policies with locals, and respecting their rights and knowledge systems. grants communities' access to and benefits from forest resources in exchange for their involvement in sustainable forest management.

Additional studies have shown that the application of social forestry policies significantly improved forest condition, demonstrating that it is a tested strategy for reducing deforestation and forest degradation.

Conclusion

The human race has benefited much from the forest. Losses in forest products were caused by the growing population, industrialization, modernization, and reckless exploitation of the forest for commercial gain. Deforestation's negative repercussions included soil erosion, flooding, a shortage of wood fuel, the loss of priceless flora and animals, and climate change. Reforestation and social forestry initiatives must to be prioritised in order to stop these negative impacts. Social forestry will aid in energy crisis control, environmental transformation, and soil conservation. Reforestation and social forestry initiatives, it might be said, aim to alter both the environment and society. In addition to generating additional cash through the sale of the surplus goods, a well-run social forestry programme can satisfy the needs of the population. A successful Social Forestry programme can play a significant role in improving both the quality of village life and environmental sustainability.

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