



FOREST MANAGEMENT IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The subdiscipline of forestry known as forest management deals with general legal, administrative, commercial, and social problems. Inland and nearshore fisheries, wood products, plant genetic resources, aesthetics, recreation, urban values, water, wildlife, and other forest resource values are all included in this management. The purpose of management may be either utilization, conservation, or a mix of the two. Among the techniques are clearing trees, replacing different species, building and maintaining roads and routes through forests, and preventing fires. Being a natural system, the forest offers a range of products and services. Forests provide water, temperate climates, and habitat for a variety of fauna and pollinators, all of which are essential for the production of food sustainably. Both human activity and the natural environment -including climate, geography, soil, etc; have an impact on how well this system functions. Forest management includes human activities in a forest. To accomplish the goals are seem desirable, this management is frequently elaborated and planned in industrialized countries. The management practiced in industrialized civilizations typically involves extensive planning to achieve the desired outcomes. The primary goal of managing certain forests has been and continues to be the production of traditional forest products. For example, firewood, fibre used to make paper, and lumber, with little regard for related goods and services. On the other hand, as environmental consciousness has grown, forest management for a variety of purposes is spreading.

Keywords: Management, conservation, industrialized, civilizations, conventional.

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Introduction

India, known for its rich biodiversity and vast forest cover, has a long history of forest management practices. Management of forests in India has evolved over centuries with the primary focus shifting from exploitation to conservation and sustainable development. This article explores the journey of forest management in India from the 1500s to the present day, highlighting key milestones, challenges faced, and the current approaches to ensure the preservation and sustainable utilization of forest resources. Indian forest policies historically have distanced people from the woods, escalating the rate of deforestation. After independence, restrictions on access to forests and forest products increased control over forest areas while also helping to increase agricultural productivity and meet industrial demand for raw resources. Protecting people from accessing the woods made life harder for weaker social groups. The state took up management of the forest resources, but it lacked the resources necessary to successfully manage and protect the woods from traditional users. Before governmental interference, the woods were maintained as common resources because of their critical importance to individuals, families, and the ability of the community to survive economically. Institutional norms that were essential to preserving forest resources for local use collapsed as a result of the failure to acknowledge community management over forests. The state gradually gained control of property rights, undermining indigenous members' ability to exploit and harvest forest resources. The National Forest Policy enacted in 1988 presents the participation of rural communities adjacent to the forest in the preservation and administration of forest resources. The translation of the policy was given shape by the Ministry of Environment Forest, which was released in June 1990.

Post-Independence Conservation Efforts

In India, after it gained independence, policies changed. With the adoption of the new forest policy in 1988, all sustainable management techniques were included. The preservation of balance in our environment is crucial for the sustainability of our planet. We need to restore the natural equilibrium, maintain the water and soil, and safeguard genetic resources to ensure that our ecosystem remains healthy and thriving. One of the ways to achieve this is through people's participation movement aimed at relieving the pressure on the current forces that provide for people's needs and protecting our forests and tree cover. By raising production to satisfy regional demands, we can ensure that the needs of the people are met while still preserving our environment. It's important to remember that financial gains should not take precedence over the achievement of these main objectives. Therefore, the forest department has established tight

cooperation for the preservation and sustainable management of forests. They have also started a process of improvement of the operational level of forest management and local policy insurance to ensure that our forests are managed in a way that is both sustainable and beneficial for our planet.

To ensure that, the forest department developed a close association for production and sustainable forest management, this started a reform process at the operational level of forest management and local policy.

The main objective of the initiative was to involve local communities and non-profit organizations in the restoration of degraded forest land. To achieve this, the program set out some important guidelines that needed to be followed:

- The local communities should not be granted any right of ownership over the forest land.
- The extent of the benefit that the local communities can receive should be determined by the state government's authorized requirements.
- The program's chosen area must be free from any claims made by anyone who is a beneficiary of the scheme.
- The chosen location must be operated in line with the state government-approved operational plan, which was developed with beneficiary input.
- The program should ensure that there is no more grazing practice in the local forest committee-protected area and grant permission to cut and transport grass for free to encourage stall feeding.
- Agriculture should not be encouraged on forest terrain.
- No cutting should be allowed before the trees are ready to be harvested.
- Trees protected by the village forest committee may be harvested by the forest department, but only in the manner specified in the working schemes.
- The forest department should regularly monitor the job and those beneficiaries who are unable to carry out their given tasks satisfactorily may have their benefits withheld without further payment.

By following these guidelines, the program aimed to reduce the negative impact of human activity on forest land, while also promoting the active involvement of local communities and non-profit organizations in the restoration process.

It is important to note that the setup of Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMC) has some flaws that need to be addressed. Trees protected by the village forest committee may be

harvested by the forest department, but only in the manner specified in the working schemes. The objectives of decentralizing the process and establishing JFMC were noble, but there is no clear definition for minor forest produce (MFP) from the state legislature or the federal government. Furthermore, the ideas for the establishment and administration of JFMC by the Central governments, State governments, and UT governments do not align completely with the principles of the constitution. The 1992 Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act and the Panchayat (Extension to the Schedule Areas) Act have granted village panchayats ownership rights over marginal forest output. However, according to the JFM resolution, only 20% of the revenue generated would go to the joint forest management committees, while the Forest Department would receive the remaining 80%. This division of benefits among the parties is not equitable, as the committees tasked with protecting and guarding the forest would receive only twenty percent of the proceeds.

In addition, the national resolution stipulates that at least thirty-three percent of the seats in the designated committees must be reserved for women. Unfortunately, there are states such as Rajasthan that do not adhere to this regulation. These issues need to be addressed to ensure fair and effective joint forest management and protection of the forests.

Community Participation and Joint Forest Management

Since forest-based initiatives to reduce poverty are frequently associated with other land uses, they ought to be included in plans for rural development. In contrast, intersectoral cooperation and coordination are necessary to fully realize the potential of both forests and non-forest trees to contribute to environmental sustainability. Effective land use and resource allocation decisions require intersectoral cooperation, notwithstanding its challenges and duration. This is especially true when there are trade-offs between national development goals. In India, woods are viewed as social and environmental resources under the National Forest Policy. To improve their prospects for a living and increase their income through value addition, the local group, comprising grassroots representative institutions, has taken the initiative to assign ownership of non-timber forest produce (NTFP). Presently, nearly 10,000 Joint Forest Committees oversee more than 17 million forests with the benefit of sharing. Furthermore, the Indian government is able to canvas for the settlement of communities that live in tenurial forests, primarily tribal forests, aid in lowering the poverty of the communities living in the forests. Realizing the value of incorporating local people in the preservation of forests, India developed the Joint Forest Management (JFM) concept in the late 1980s. By enabling them to actively participate in decision-making, resource protection, and the sustainable use of forests,

JFM sought to empower communities residing in or adjacent to forested areas. Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) are village-level organizations that local communities and the Forest Department formed under JFM. These committees were in charge of maintaining sustainable forest resource management, stopping illicit activity, and safeguarding forests. JFM proved to be an effective model, allowing communities to live sustainably off the forest while also protecting the forests and reaping economic rewards.

Recent Initiatives for Sustainable Forest Management

India has recently put into practice several initiatives to improve sustainable forest management. The Green India Mission was established by the government in 2014 to expand forest cover and enhance system services. This ambitious program aims to improve the forest, increase the number of chances for livelihoods based on the forest, and rehabilitate regions of degraded forests.

To expand tree cover, improve soil fertility, preserve water, and provide farmers with more money, the National Agroforestry Policy, which was implemented in 2014, is another important project. Systems that use agroforestry, such as *Silvas* pastoral and *Silvas* fisheries have grown in popularity because they help the environment and provide sustainable means of subsistence. The Forest Rights Act of 2006¹ also recognized the rights of communities that reside in forests, notably tribal communities, over traditional forestlands. The laws in this legislation aimed to correct historical injustices and ensure the participation of the local communities in the conservation and the movement.

Case Laws

The case *Banwasi Seva Asharam v. State of Uttar Pradesh*² is one of the first to deal with forest rights. On behalf of the locals calling for the state to reserve forest area, A public interest writ petition was filed under Article 32³ of the Constitution. For many years, the village's inhabitants have survived by relying on the products of the forest. The petitioners claimed that the state had dismissed their assertions that these individuals had a right to the forest and that actions were being initiated to evict many forest inhabitants. The Apex Court established a high-level committee to investigate the claims³ issue.

¹ The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.

² *Banwasi Sewa Ashram v. State of U.P.*, 19877 AIR 374.

³ INDIA CONST. art. 32.

The National Thermal Power Station would be built on the contested forest property, the administration informed the court in the meantime. The court ordered the eviction of the forest dwellers after awarding the land to NTPC. The court cited the argument that while power production is crucial, trees are also important national assets. The court ignored the main argument made by the forest dwellers in their claim, which was founded on their reliance on the forest life that is safeguarded by Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. The court ruled that all claims were waived in the state-designated restricted forest area on the property. The claims of the petitioner were dismissed due to procedural issues. the formal inquiry. It was noted that the tribal members were unaware of their legal rights, the written applications were not signed, and oral objections were ignored. By offering infrastructure and jobs, the NTPC asked for the tribe's rehabilitation.

Conclusion

India's forest management has drastically changed as a result of the Planning Commission's estimates that 21.3 million people may have been displaced by development projects in just 1953 to 1990. Of those, 8.54 million (or 40%) were members of Scheduled Tribes, making up only 8% of the total population. There are reports that only 2.1 million (or 25%) of them have undergone rehabilitation. All the others were left on their own. Before enacting eviction, a mechanism needs to be devised to give reparations. Cases establishing the project proponents' liability are vital. These folks will be wrongfully displaced once more if such a process is not in place. Any solution for stopping such encroachments must first ensure that tribal land is stopped, which is crucial. Any solution for addressing such encroachments must first ensure that tribal land alienation is stopped and that alienated land is returned to the tribes in question. In these situations, it should be a requirement first that the land be restored. About products used for livelihood, the natural rights of natural residents should be recognized

The Indian Forest Act 1927⁴ and the Forest Conservation Act 1980⁵ should be amended with the National Forest Policy 1988 and the Joint Forest Management resolution. Further, in light of the Forest Policy and the Joint Forest Management Resolution, the Indian Forest Act of 1927 and the Conservation Act of 1980 need to be modified. There will always be a disagreement on the rights and obligations as long as the Act and policy serve different purposes. It is believed that forests are a valuable resource for the country, and in the modern period, sustainable

⁴ Indian Forest Act, 1927.

⁵ The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

development is the buzzword. However, this does not imply that the tribal peoples will be denied their rights. It is common knowledge that the only way to accomplish sustainable development is for the government to work cooperatively with the indigenous population.