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SOCIAL FORESTRY AND ITS POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN TELANGANA – A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

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Abstract

Social forestry has been conceived as the science and art of growing trees and /or other vegetation on a land available for the purpose in and outside traditional forest area and managing the existing forest with intimate involvement of the people and more or less integrated with other operations resulting in balanced and complementary land use with a view to provide a wide range of goods and services to the individuals as well as the society. Social forestry has been identified with any programme of tree planting for any organization on any land including farm forestry. It is a programme of social forestry to the extent it meets the needs of the rural people. The term ‘social forestry’ was coined by Jack Westoby during his inaugural address at the Ninth Commonwealth Forestry Conference held in New Delhi to include forestry activities that aim at producing flow of protection and recreating benefits for the community. This concept of Westoby implies that the goal of social forestry should be determined by the amount of investment which the community should make to secure these benefits. In other words the involvement and participation of the community in forestry related activities are essential components of social forestry. Social forestry apart from being a programme of planting trees has a wider connotation. “It is bundle of activities which generate flow of benefits, direct and indirect, to the community by utilizing either unutilized or ill-utilized land. It is not just special technology, rather a process of socio economic change with continuous participation of local community at all levels of programme implementation. Thus initiation of social forestry requires effective tackling of all the interrelated social, economic and political problems prevailing in the rural society”. This research paper is to be discussed about the **Social Forestry and Its Policy Implementation in Telangana – A Sociological Study**.

Keywords: Social Forestry, Deforestation, Forest Policies, People Conscious- Ness, Community Forest Management

Statement of the Problem

Social forestry has been perceived as a concept, a programme and a mission which aims at ensuring/providing ecological economic and social security to the people particularly to the rural masses more so to the tribal and those downtrodden who live below the poverty line, particularly by involving the beneficiaries right from the planning stage to the harvesting stage but not only as wage earners. It envisages use of community lands, individual holdings and other public lands, denuded/degraded lands for producing what the dependent communities need and for environmental purposes. It aims at mixed production of wood, fiber, fodder, grasses, fruits and other raw materials for self consumption and cottage industry and if surplus for sale. Here Government control is minimal though financial and technical support is assured. The profits that accrue after meeting the local demands are to be shared between Government and people.

Concept of Social Forestry

The discussion on social forestry has led to the coining of a plethora of terms to conceptualize it. Some view that basically social forestry is not different from the traditional forestry. Scientists, agronomists, and even environmentalists have not come to a consensus for the exact definition of social forestry. K.M. Tiwari has tried to explain the term social forestry when he says “what is being practiced as social forestry is not in any way different from the conventional forestry being practiced well over a century”. He has further mentioned “The terms used for various programmes of extending tree cover to non forestry areas used rather loosely at present are social forestry, community forestry, farm forestry, urban forestry, recreation forestry, environmental forestry, Vanamahotsava, arboriculture, tree farming forest farming, small



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scale forestry, village wood lots, bio aesthetic plantations, energy plantations, three dimensional forestry tree crops and livestock forestry for 4F(fuel, forage, fodder, fertilizer) agro forestry etc. Very few of these terms have been precisely defined. Community forestry has been defined as any situation which intimately involves local people in a forestry activity. Agro forestry has been defined as a sustainable land management system which increases the yield of the land combines the crops (including the tree crops) and forest plants and/or animals simultaneously or sequentially on the same unit of land and applied management practices that are compatible with the cultural practices of the local population.

Community Forestry is considered as a generic term and other terms are components there of. It is necessary to appreciate that society is a broader term than community and/therefore social Forestry is to be treated as a generic term with community forestry as best a synonym. Other terms are to -be treated as different species of social forestry which encompasses all types of plantations on land mainly outside the traditional forest areas but may also include the degraded reserve forests which can be managed to meet the day to day requirements of people.

The concept of social forestry should include activities involved in making available tree based produce in the form of firewood leaf fodder, small timber, fruits edible flower and a variety of other materials like bark, gum, resin etc for rural cottage industries within easy reach of people in such way that people feel that they have actively participated in getting it. The emphasis should be on people and hence social forestry may be called forestry of the people, by the people and for the people.

Major Characteristic Features of the Social Forestry

Following are the major characteristic Features of social forestry

1. Involvement of the beneficiaries' right from the planning stage.
2. Satisfaction of the beneficiary based on the consumption goods
3. Finance is contributed through Panchayat as it draws Government subsidies and voluntary contributions etc.

Genesis of Social Forestry

The concept of social forestry is traced to the period of Lord Buddha i.e. about 2500 years ago. Lord Buddha gave the message that every good Buddhist should plant one tree and look after it for five years so that it grows to full tree and in this way he should plant trees in his life time. Later Emperor Ashoka is credited to have planted shade trees and fruit bearing trees along the roads in his territory.

Sir D. Brandis the first Inspector General of Forests visualized the role of village forests as early as 1873. He made suggestions to form Village forests' as 'Fuel and Fodder Reserves' to be managed by the people themselves. The efforts to establish them however did not succeed. In the Indian Forest Act of 1878 a chapter was inserted to provide for the right of the Government to constitute "Village Forests"

over any land and reserved forests. This provision however could not become operative due to the impossibility of determining and separating the rights of the community from private rights of Zamindars. In 1886 an attempt was made to amend the land revenue laws in Punjab to read as follows.

"If the majority of land owners desire or the local Government considers it expedient that part of the common waste lands of an estate be managed for production of timber, fuel or fodder, the local Government may proclaim that any part not exceeding one fifth shall be so managed".

Post Independence Scenario

The Indian Forest Policy of 1894 and the second of 1952 had placed great emphasis on creating new village forests. But little was achieved. National Commission on Agriculture¹⁰ in 1976 recommended that the wide spread



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adoption of the practice of social forestry aimed at growing and meeting the future fuel wood, fodder and small timber needs of rural communities. The commission stressed the socio economic importance of social forestry in the rural community as well as in the management of forest resources. It was mentioned that by taking up the programme of raising, of trees, grasses and fodder in the farmers own lands village common wastelands and degraded forests close to habitations, it would be possible to meet the requirement of fuel wood, fodder small timber for rural housing and agricultural implements thorns for fencing etc. It was also stated that at the same time these programmes would remove a serious impediment in the practice of production forestry.

National Commission on Agriculture suggested specific guidelines for the implementation of various models under social forestry. The states while implementing social forestry programme selected one or two of these models for emphasis depending upon various location specific characteristics like land availability, their productivity, pressure of agriculture and the demand of the local people etc. Out of these models, farm forestry, community forestry and strip plantations are taken up inside or close proximity to rural habitats Among the remaining two models rehabilitation of degraded forests is really an attempt of reforesting forest lands mostly by forest departments and the recreation forestry was yet to be taken seriously for implementation. Consequently social forestry programme implementation in the country has been attempted mainly through the first three models.

Social Forestry in Telangana

The Telangana Government has launched a massive peoples movement involving General Public and Farmers in big way to increase trees to protect environment and to be provide gainful employment. The main components of the social forestry are the distribution of seedlings, raising of Plantation, Community lands instructions and road side avenues. The Government has launched a massive people's movement involving general public and farmers in a big way to increase tree cover outside reserve Forests to improve and protect the Environment and to provide gainful employment. The main components of Social Forestry are the distribution of seedlings, raising of Plantations in community lands, Institutions, and Roadside Avenues.

The main species raised for free distribution and planting in public lands are Neem, Pongamia, Ficus species like Raavi & Marri, Gangaraavi, Usiri (Amla), Seethaphal, Badam, Mango, Teak, Casuraina, Eucalyptus, and others. Forestry operations have been converged with MGNREGS in Reserved Forest areas and outside the Forest.

Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority(CAMPA) Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) is constituted by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, GOI, to promote afforestation and regeneration activities as a way of compensating forest land diverted for non-forest uses. The CAMPA is being implemented from 2009 onwards in the State and the expenditure incurred for Telangana from 2009-2010 to 2013-2014 is Rs. 233.125 crores. The expenditure incurred during the year 2014-2015 (up to Dec 2014) is Rs. 45.11 crores as against the annual outlay of Rs. 101.95 crores.

Wildlife Bio-Diversity Conservation in Telangana State

The state of Telangana is endowed with rich Flora, Fauna and Eco-Systems. The state has 2939 plant species, 365 bird species, 103 mammal species and 28 reptile species in addition to a large number of Invertebrate species. With the objective of preserving the biodiversity, the Government has declared 12 Protected Areas which includes 9 Wildlife Sanctuaries and 3 National Parks covering an area of 5692.48 Sq. Kms which is 19.73% of the forest area of Telangana State. The network of Protected Areas includes important wetlands like Manjeera Wildlife Sanctuary and Siwaram Wildlife Sanctuary which are home for the endangered Marsh Crocodile also called Mugger.



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Forest Production

As a substantial portion of the rural population in the State depends on agriculture sector for their livelihood, it is imperative that we make farming viable and remunerative for those who depend on it. There are two daunting challenges that the sector faces: (i) unstable growth in agriculture sector, due to historical neglect of agriculture in the past and (ii) severe drought conditions in the State adversely affecting the agriculture sector. Any policy targeting to end poverty and inclusive growth has to pay more attention towards agriculture sector since population dependent on this sector is vulnerable to both internal and external shocks. There exist several untapped potentials in the agriculture sector. The major potentials for the agriculture sector in Telangana are: i) Around 40 percent of its total geographical area of the State is under agriculture and soils of Telangana are suitable for cultivating a wide range of crops including food grains, oil seeds, pulses, fruit crops, etc. There is a scope for diversifying cropping pattern towards high-value crops. ii) Telangana has a robust network of research institutions consisting of agricultural universities and institutions, which could play a major role in developing technological solutions to bridge the productivity gap in major crops. The presence of national and international institutions engaged in agricultural research such as International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and a number of other ICAR institutes is an added advantage. iii) The climatic condition of the state is appropriate for the growth of seed industry in the state.

The State has already made a dent in seed production in the country as lion's share of seeds requirement in the country is supplied by the State. As discussed in previous sections, Government of Telangana recognized the importance of improving the conditions of agriculture for uplifting the living standards of its people in general and farmers in particular. Structural problems associated with agriculture are being addressed through different schemes/ programmes. Apart from implementing normal state plan schemes funded exclusively from the State funds, Telangana Government is making use of almost all the Centrally Sponsored Schemes in the Sector. Some of the Centrally Sponsored Schemes are suitably linked to State Schemes for more coordinated efforts. Whereas Government has prepared an action plan for the mitigating adverse impact of droughts such as the provision of input subsidy and sector-specific action plan for agricultural crops, horticulture, animal husbandry and fisheries, are also under implementation.

Summing up

A considerable area of surplus land available in Telangana the Land Ceilings Act has been distributed to members of weaker sections to provide them with a means of livelihood. But such lands are in many cases agriculturally marginal and they require heavy investment to make it productive. In many cases such lands are kept vacant such lands can be brought under social forestry. However definite policies have to be formulated to bring such lands under social forestry. Successful implementation of social forestry requires a sound organization with an inbuilt system of adequate extension methodology. The present traditional forest organization is not likely to serve the purpose as it is primarily meant for protecting and policing the forest. In the Telangana State Social forestry can be effectively implemented only with close contact and persuasion of the local people. The personnel involved in social forestry must have adequate training in community dealing. Some actions are initiated in this direction at the state and central Government level However certain crucial aspects like training of social forestry personnel and the mode of institutional intervention in the implementation process are yet to receive attention.

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