

Greening of the earth-necessity and role of pulp & paper industry

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The concept of "Global Framework of Environmental Compact" is fast catching up. With the growing environmental crisis, the world is converging into conclusion that the planet Earth is one and entails global management of the world's resources. International trade, aid and debt are, therefore, getting green linked. Poverty, health, population pressures, huge resource gap, debt burden, reverse flow of resources, adverse terms of trade are inter-related to global environmental protection. North-South resource flow and restructuring of global economic relations are assuming relevance. In this context, it is becoming necessary to draw up global environmental plans.

Like Forests, the land and atmosphere are now increasingly assuming importance as the major natural resources of the earth. They are no longer cheap access resources for industrial consumption. There is emphasis for their management as common property resources, defining the upper limits and patterns of utilisation; to be environmentally sound. The structure of global production and trade must be conducive to more rational and equitable management of earth's resources. Patterns can not be imposed from above and have to gradually evolve and be consciously nurtured.

Since tree planting is expensive in rich countries, in recognition of the global framework of the environment, a Carbon dioxide emitting company in U.S.A is now planting trees in Guatemala. The Dutch have recently budgeted \$ 500 million to plant 2,50,000 ha. of trees in Bolivia, Peru and Colombia as sinks to absorb carbon dioxide emission from two Coal fired Power Plants now being built in Holland.

The GATT recognises that countries with large forest areas are currently providing carbon absorption

services free of cost and that to contain global warming, advance countries who pollute the environment most, must financially compensate the forested countries for their carbon absorption services.

Environmental degradation and social injustice contribute to each other. Therefore, the ultimate aim of Forest use should be the welfare of the people and any activity in forestry which loses sight of this, must be castigated.

The basic aim of national development in India is economic growth in consonance with societal justice and cultural harmony. The Forest resource base should, therefore, serve the cause of conservation by need satisfaction of its dependants. Proper use of resources is impossible without alleviation of poverty. Poverty must be tackled before planning for environment. Tribals constitute about 40% of Orissa's population. Their habitations are in clusters amidst the Forests. They, therefore, form human face of the environment, in Orissa.

The National Forest Policy 1988 provides that Natural Forests will not be made available to Industries and that only governmental agencies can be involved in the afforestation of forest land. Use of Forest lands for Plantations by Industries is unacceptable.

The global environmental need is to green vast stretches of land lying almost barren and degraded. In India the Government Owned Forest Land need be afforested by Governmental agencies to eliminate adverse societal & legal effects on the forests. The

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vast areas of waste lands and degraded forests in India are not entirely barren and unused lands. The rural communities and tribals are the intense users of Waste lands and degraded lands. Any move for use of these lands by Industries will adversely affect the social fabric of the rural sector.

Rural communities and tribals depend heavily on the degraded forest lands to meet their daily needs of fuel, fodder, food, water and building materials etc. These lands are crucial for their economic survival. Use of these lands by Paper Mills will disturb the cause of "Sustainable afforestation", as the local Forest dependants will have no alternative than to forcefully use these lands to meet their needs. Allowing Paper Mills to take control of these lands in the name of afforestation can lead to privatisation of forest land in the long term.

In the face of ongoing liberalisation process of Indian Economy following the global trend, the marketing forces must determine the business direction & price. Grant of subsidy to any industry or business is out of place in this context. Allocation of Govt. land to Paper Industry for Plantations will amount to grant of subsidy. In such a case, many other industries using biomass as raw material will also be entitled for grant of governmental land for raising raw material crops. What is necessary is that all afforestation programmes on government degraded land and waste lands should be taken up by the government agencies for alleviation of pressure of population on the forests. It may not be, therefore possible to allocate government land to the Industries for growing their raw materials.

The Orissa Forest Development Corporation (OFDC) Ltd., in drawing up its long range Strategic Management plan, has identified the following Corporate Mission, among others.

"Prioritise identification and execution of such viable commercial forestry activities, value adding ventures, Timber imports, Recycling wastes and Trade/Manufacture of "Substitute to Forest Resources" as would satisfy the needs of target groups of beneficiaries, in the order of their degree of alleviating pressure of population on the forests. Special stress is to be on

transforming wastes into reusable raw materials by the process of "Recycling". Operational theme of OFDC will be "FOREST CONSERVATION BY A Process OF NEED SATISFACTION".

Some of the Strategic Interventions prescribed in OFDC's Strategic Management Plan for Bamboo business and Plantations Development in Orissa are mentioned below :—

A) Bamboo Business :

(I) Trends in Bamboo Production and consumption by Paper Industry are as under :—

(a) Annual Production of Bamboo in India is 3 2 million per annum. Production of Bamboo from Nationalised Bamboo business of OFDC is 2 25 Lakhs tonnes per annum.

(b) The pattern of Paper Industry Consumption of Bamboo in the national context is 51% of Bamboo and 2% wood out of the country's annual production. As against this, OFDC provides 95% of Bamboo harvested from the Forests, to the Paper Industries of the State.

(c) Consumption of Bamboo by Indian Paper Industries has reduced from 2 million tonnes to 1.6 million tonnes per annum between 1980 to 1990.

(II) Some interventions prescribed for Managing OFDC's Bamboo business are as under :—

(a) Land and Forests are key resource inputs for Tribals. They live in identifiable sters. Conservation of fragile tribal eco-systems is important. Bamboo plays positive role in socio-economic development of tribals and alleviation of pressures on forests. Bamboo clumps conserve soil/moisture and protect the area from drought. Identify the interactions and design locality specific commercial extension services.

(b) Bamboo forms an essential component of cottage and rural industries involving Tribals and rural communities. Bamboo is poor man's timber. Bamboo is a great poverty alleviator. Encourage the fast regenerating Bamboo as a means of rural/tribal need satisfaction and shift the pressures from forests.

(c) Bamboo has high calorific value of 4600 to 5400 Cal/Kg., which makes it an Energy Crop also. It can reduce pressures on forests for fuel, fodder and small timbers etc. Cut back the lateral and auxiliary branches of Bamboo culms & while meeting the needs for fuel, improve the quality of Bamboo crop.

(d) As a matter of "Policy" gradually make bamboo available as required for need satisfaction of Tribals and Rural people on commercial basis, and sell the balance to the State's Paper Industry following the National trend. As already mentioned, the national trend of Bamboo consumption by Paper Industry is 51% of the total bamboo production as against 95% in Orissa.

B) Plantation Development :

Some interventions prescribed for Managing OFDC's Plantation Development are as under :—

(a) OFDC is in the business of providing need satisfaction to serve the cause of conservation. Identify the pressures, design models to Plant, grow, cultivate, propagate, produce, raise plantations of appropriate kinds to alleviate them, including industrial, commercial, horticultural and environmental plantations.

(b) Balance long term short term goals of plantations. Identify short term actions to meet immediate needs, through OFDC'S operational support on ecologically and economically sound base that provides long term solutions.

(c) A balanced land use plan and classification is essential for identification and allocation of land to forestry uses. Establish ecological constraints on the State's economic development to ensure long run, sustained productivity. OFDC must establish plans for Forest Plantations maintaining optimum production of food, fuel, round wood, alongwith other Forestry values.

(d) Stress environmental and conservation values in Plantation Projects of OFDC. Basic necessities for long term survival are Water, Food with sustained natural resource base. Maintain balance between the three for favourable long term

effects. Make Plantations people oriented and alleviate immediate needs of local people to prevent failure.

(e) Enter into extension programmes. OFDC must implement balanced, integrated, commercial Forestry Programmes to meet people's needs and blend with other enterprises that meet people's other needs.

(f) Promote Plantation models preferably with minimal dependance on mono-culture. Small scale plantations interspersed with patches of natural vegetation is less stressful. Design quick growing buffer plantations of fodder and small timber trees around natural forests to alleviate pressures of population and cattle on the natural Forests,

Promote and support Agro-Forestry Research.

(g) Involve local institutions like schools, Forest Deptt. Officials, Political personalities, opinion leaders etc. in the begining where OFDC's plantations are planned. Without active and eager participation by local institutes, plantation projects are likely to fail.

The Paper Industry may adopt other alternatives for acquiring their raw materials. The industry may establish business link ups with the small and marginal farmers all over the country to assist them to grow trees and bamboo for meeting their raw material needs on their individual holdings by establishing extensive extension net works. The Industry must pay remunerative prices for such raw materials to the farmers. Ecology of the Country has a cost (real cost of land included). Therefore, both the consumer of paper, and the Paper Industry must pay the real price of paper which should include the ecological costs, to uphold social justice.

The Country is now importing pulp and timber worth Rs. 900 Crores annually. This is likely to exceed Rs. 2500 Crores by 1995. This is a big drain on Indian Economy. Paper Industry owes it to the Indian People to boost up farm Forestry across the Country. The onus is on the Industry. If this is achieved in years to come, the Indian Paper Industry will have played its role well towards greening the earth. This is what the "Global Frame Work of Environment Compact" is all about.