

Man Made Forests

Endowed with rich and vast mineral resources, extremely fertile soil, plentiful water resources, splendidly variegated flora and fauna wealth etc., it is rather ironical, that this green country of ours lacks adequate forest resources to meet even our own growing demands of forest products. The F.A.O. statistics shows that the Indian forest resources work out at 0.12 hectare per head as against 4.9 hectares for South America and 1.1 hectares for the World. Evidently our present resources are highly insufficient as compared even to the world figure which is nine times bigger. Admittedly the rapid and abnormal growth in the population of the country accounts for the said imbalance. Whatever be the cause, the position obtaining at present is alarming if not precarious, further intensified by the poor yield of our forests, being 0.53 m³ per hectare as compared to the world average of 2.1 m³ per hectare.

It is, therefore, absolutely imperative that quick and comprehensive steps must be taken to ward off the coming paper famine in the country for want of fibrous raw materials which are likely to run short in the near future. The seriousness of the situation can be gauged from the fact that against the present production of 8 lac tonnes of paper & board in the country, the demand by 1977 is estimated to rise to about 16 lac tonnes.

Quickness in the measures to be adopted is of paramount importance as forest do not grow in days or months. Hence is the need to launch our massive programme without the slightest delay.

We have to take resort to what is called, 'Man Made Forests'. Of course, we are aware that the Governments of the various states of the country have done a lot towards this direction, but we would request for the realisation that, in consideration of the gigantic problems facing the Nation, the efforts so far made tall far short of the requirements. Hence all available resources for the development of the forests are to be mobilised without any delay.

All the paper mills of the country are eager to extend their hands of cooperation to the Government in this national task of reconstruction, for they are the greatest sufferers on account of the prevailing shortage of suitable fibrous raw materials. They should, however, be given full opportunity and all facilities to invest in and develop the forests so that best and optimum utility may be extracted out of these without the slightest damage caused by unscientific working. Forest land or waste land on long leases should be made available to the Paper Industry so that they may get the incentive to develop these lands for ultimate good, directly to themselves and indirectly to the country. It is clear that unless the wasteland or forest land is not given to the Paper Mills for a longer period how can they take interest to convert these waste lands or semi forest lands to 'Man Made Forests'?

'Man Made Forests' is a new concept developed in the western countries and, in many cases, translated into reality. By careful conservation & afforestation in the usual way forests can be saved and improved but under the concept of Man-Made Forests, novel and highly scientific methods of plant breeding, planning, felling and transportation etc. have been put in practice resulting in tremendous good to the silvicultural operations.

Presently one of the greatest drawbacks in the silvicultural operations in the country is the difficult access to most of the forest area which necessitates slow and abnormally costly felling and transportation. Secondly the fire hazard is quite common to most of our forest land, reducing the already inadequate forest resources of the country. Then the growth of mixed variety of trees of different fibres in the orthodox type of forests does not help to produce satisfactory pulp. Further in the present State of forests, application of fertilizers is a difficult and costly process leading to wastage.

Man-Made Forests, therefore, have distinct advantages over the orthodox forests. While planting suitable trees enough of space for movement of various types of transports is left which makes forest operations much cheaper and quicker, without damaging growing trees. Selected varieties of quick growing disease resistant trees are planted with proper interval of time to give maximum utility of the forest resources. As there is no chance of any dry or dead tree lying unnoticed in this type of forests the fire

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hazard is greatly diminished if not totally eliminated. Irrigational facilities and the use of fertilizers is greatly enhanced in this type of forests, therefore very greatly benefitting the growth of the trees, which find the genial soil quite suitable for their root growth and healthy Crown development. Such trees are able to resist the havoc of storms much better than the orthodox ones. Researches have shown that a particular variety of a tree is quite suitable for a particular kind of land only when it is planted with another specie of tree. This can be achieved only with the application of all scientific developments in the silvicultural operations of the country. Moreover, plant genetic researches have given us the methods to rear up plants which are disease free and of uniform size.

Further these man made forests

may be described as huge gardens and would therefore afford wonderful recreational pleasures and wealth resorts to the people. National parks and game sanctuaries can be more easily carved out in these forests.

Looking to the gravity of the position we would request the authorities concerned to start dialogue with the Paper and Pulp Mills who are definitely ready to extend their hands of cooperation for developing Man-Made forests as quickly as possible provided they are given only the most reasonable terms and conditions. They would be glad to start silvicultural operations in right earnest with the best scientific methods available.

Forests or wasteland in the vicinity of the Mills should be given on 99 years' lease to them so that they may not have worries for the future and may try to develop the area leased to

them. It will then be the responsibility of the Mills' forest Department to make a thorough investigation of the climate and soil of the wasteland for it is quite likely that a suitable tree for the purpose of pulping may not grow in the land leased to the Mill. Therefore it will be up to the scientists of the Mills to experiment and find out the useful tree which will grow in that particular land.

The total land area of the country is roughly 327 million hectares of which the maximum of cultivable land present or potential may not exceed fifty per cent. Hence of the vast wasteland available even 10 per cent will be sufficient to sustain the demand of the present number of Mills of the country. The authorities should make the beginning and see if the Mills do stand up to their expectations.