CHAPTER SEVEN
SOCIAL FORESTRY

Forests are the natural heritage of mankind. Forestry has to utilize sustainability and enrich the resources for the present and future security of the survival of mankind. Forest in the past were spread over most of the areas of the country. With the growth of civilization, industrialization, abundant forest changed into forest scarcity area. The reasons are many and varied in nature to explain this depletion and degradation of forest, but the fact stands that our forests have degraded over the years. This necessiated the urge for conservation and more than hundred years ago, India started its forestry activity and forest organization.

Population growth in third world countries has developed several social and economic problems; the need for the food, fodder, energy and wood continues. Increasing population, rapid industrialization and many developmental activities have resulted in shrinkage of arable land for agriculture on one hand and deforestation on the other (Vimal, 1987).

Forestry got transferred from the minds of naturalist to the hands of foresters. Fuel wood scarcity brought forestry nearer to the non-forest dwelling population in the form of “Social forestry”.

Social forestry involves the people individually or collectively in forestry operations for the creation, management, maintenance, protection and utilization of forest for their mutual benefits.
Social forestry means “it is the practice of forestry on lands outside the conventional forest area for the benefit of rural and urban communities” (Singh, 1992) or in other words, “social forestry is the forestry of the people, for the people and by the people” (Negi, 1986). In nutshell ‘social forestry means the management and protection of forests, afforestation of barren lands, planting of trees on farms, public places, along roads, canals etc. for the creation of forests for benefit of rural people.

The aim of social forestry is to help to solve society’s own wood supply problems, meet their own needs and preserve the environment in which they live. The objectives of the social forestry programme include increases timber supply, fuel wood supply, fodder supply and raw material for cottage industry.

These are many objectives of social forestry but only some of them are listed as under:

- To increase the forest cover by bringing non forest area under plantation.
- To utilize fallow, barren, uncultivated, over exploited village common land.
- To check environmental degradation.
- To prevent soil erosion by conservation of soil and moisture.
- To meet the fuel wood, fodder and small timber demand of the rural people.
- To check unemployment by giving raw material for cottage industry.

As the forest cover is very less in Osmanabad and Latur districts, the social forestry department is trying best on its level in cooperation with local people. The
social forestry programmes started from 30 November, 1981 in this area (personal communication with District Social Forest Department).

Osmanabad and Latur have 1280 villages and 1003-Gram panchayats (personal communication: Collector Office, Osmanabad and Latur). Plantation by Social forestry is done in all villages on common wasteland called as “gayran”. For this purpose small scale timber, fuel and fodder plants are used. For plantation through social forestry, all types of plants, which are from new varieties, more resistant to drought, diseases, and pests are used.

In both districts of study the “District social forest department” planted many plants yearly. A brief report of plantation from lasts six years at Osmanabad district and Latur district are summarized in Table 12.

*Table 12: Area brought under social forestry programme and number of plants planted in Latur and Osmanabad districts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Area (ha)</th>
<th>Plants (Lakh)</th>
<th>Area (ha)</th>
<th>Plants (Lakh)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Osmanabad District</td>
<td>Latur District</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1994-95</td>
<td>607.85</td>
<td>12.15</td>
<td>503.00</td>
<td>10.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1995-96</td>
<td>1530.46</td>
<td>08.28</td>
<td>890.80</td>
<td>12.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>574.77</td>
<td>03.03</td>
<td>710.00</td>
<td>11.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>296.42</td>
<td>03.54</td>
<td>540.12</td>
<td>03.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>282.96</td>
<td>02.99</td>
<td>203.45</td>
<td>02.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>113.50</td>
<td>02.00</td>
<td>99.50</td>
<td>01.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source – District social forestry Department, Osmanabad and Latur.
Social Forestry has some branches, but important of them is of Agro-forestry. The department gives financial support as well as plants to the farmers for plantation, on his own land. Growing of forest and agriculture crops together on the same piece of land is called agro forestry, or it is the technique of intercropping agricultural crops with woody perennials (Hegde, 1987). It supplies fodder and fuel wood in rural areas without reducing food production. In these two districts the agro-forestry work is done under 1805.00 ha area, in 132 villages. These forests are owned, planned, cultivated and managed by the individual farmers.

Choice of species:

Ecological adaptation and economic benefits are two important factors governing the selection of species for social forestry. The species so selected should meet the basic needs of society for food, energy (fuel wood), fodder and shelter, on one hand; and maintain the ecological balance of that village on the other hand. It should also provide raw material for rural and cottage industry. The plants should be fast growing, high yielding, adaptive and should consist of fruits, timber, fodder and fuel. It may be trees, shrubs, climbers, grasses etc. Such plants are supplied to the farmers by the Social Forestry Department according to their use. Some of these plants are mentioned below:
1) Wood plants

_Acacia nilotica, A. longifolia, Ailanthus excelsa, Azadirachta indica, Butea monosperma, Cassia fistula, Dalbergia sissoo, Eucalyptus rudis, Tectona grandis etc._

2) Fodder plants

Leaf meals like _Acacia leucocephala, Leucaena leucocephala_ etc.

3) Food plants

Generally fruit plants like _Annona squamosa, Grewia subinaequalis, Carrisa, congesta, Phyllanthus emblica, Zizypus jujuba, Z. mauritiana_ etc.

4) Medicinal plants

Direct house hold used plants, such as _Phyllanthus emblica, Adhatoda vasica, Terminalia chebula_ etc.

5) Fuel plants

Many plants for fuel use are also planted; that are _Parkinsonia aculeata, Gliricidia, lotoides, Cordia gharaf, Cassine glauca, Grewia leavigata, Triumfetta rotundifolia_ etc.

Social forestry covers farm forestry, extension forestry, reforestation of degraded forests and recreation forestry. It also covers wastelands, panchayat
lands, village common lands and lands on the sides of roads, canal banks and railway lines, which may be brought under forest plantations, shelter belts, and mixed forestry, on which grass and leaf fodder, fruit trees and fuel wood trees may be grown. Social forests also include minor forests as well which such lands which are dedicated to recreation forestry.