PREFACE

Natural resources occupy the most important position in the economy of a developing nation. Effective utilisation of natural resources of a country play a pivotal role in the development of industries, creation of employment opportunities and improvement of living standard of the population. Forest resources are most important natural resources which have assumed a significant position in the process of economic growth of India. In India, forests have occupied 74.8 million hectares area which is 22.7 per cent of the total geographical area of the country. India is richest in the world in its floral and faunal resources. But these are rapidly declining owing to over exploitation largely through pressure of exploding population, continuing poverty and unforeseen growth. There is an immediate need to extend the requisite priority for conservation and to adopt a strategy to ensure better management, so that they may yield the greatest sustainable benefits to the present and future generation.

The importance of forests lies in increasing their productivity, linkage their development with various forest based industries and to protect and develop them as a support to the rural economy. Thus, unless drastic corrective measures are taken, the forests of the country will not be able to make considerable contribution in sustaining the life support system of the country's environment and improving the standard of living.
of the population. Forests have protective as well as productive functions. They not only supply timber, fuel, fodder and variety of other products but also have a moderating influence, against floods and soil erosion and help in maintaining soil fertility. In view of India's tropical climate, periodic monsoons, low forest productivity and predominantly agricultural economy, it has been urged that at least one-third of the total geographical area should be under forests.

In order to achieve the regional and balanced development of the economy, the forests have to play a significant role. It hardly needs a mention that in spite of planned efforts the various regions of the country are still backward and this has caused a vast disparity in economic life of the people. The Government of India have attempted to remove regional imbalance and efforts are still being made to bring about all round development. In this context, an intensive survey of a particular region is of great importance in order to examine the existing problems and the availability of resources for development, particularly the forest resources and their role in the development of that region. For this purpose, Balaghat district of the state of Madhya Pradesh was selected, which has rich forest resources.

Balaghat district which occupies the 22nd position in size but 19th in population in the state deserves its importance from its vast resources in forests. The district has 4055.32 sq. kms. of dense forest which is 43.87 per cent of the total
geographical area of the district. The forest area of the
district is considerably large than several districts of the
state. Forestry sector holds the key to the prosperity and
future economic development of the district. The district is
contributing more than seven per cent towards the total forest
revenue of the State. The district is also exporting large
quantities of timber, firewood, bamboo, tendu leaves, myrobalan
(Harra), Sal seeds etc. But forestry sector vital to the
district has not achieved its true potentiality either in
productivity or in employment generation on account of poor
investment so far. If the forests of the district are adequately
exploited and utilised, they can play an effective role in
developing the economy of the district.

The study is based on secondary data and informations
collected from the various government departments of the State
and district level and number of Corporations and agencies
engaged in the conservation and development of forests in
Balaghat district. Personal interviews and discussions with
the conservator of forests, D.F.Os, Rangers, General Manager
District Industries Centre, contractors, truck owners and
industrialists were made with a view to get first-hand
information about the day to day management and actual working
of the forest department and industries. Statistical information
collected for this study has been properly tabulated and critical
and comprehensive analysis has been made in order to draw certain
conclusions. A realistic assessment of the role of forest in
the district's economy is made and the main problems relating to this have been discussed. A set of suggestions has been also put-forth which can be profitably used by the Government and the policy-makers in formulating the future plans and strategies.

Date: 26.6.1986

A.K. Jain
( Ashok Kumar Jain )