
❖ Forest conservation refers to a range of activities, tools and approaches to achieve forest health and biodiversity objectives, including in managed forests where harvesting occurs.

❖ These activities are set out in sustainable forest management plans and many are backed by law.

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- Conservation efforts may take the form of provincial guidelines that forest companies operating on the land must follow such as retain trees used by wildlife during harvesting, create a mix of tree species types and age, ensure that sections of forest remain connected to meet wildlife habitat needs.

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- When we talk of conserving native forests we really mean a deliberate rationing of the cut so that the use of a dwindling and non-renewable resource will be spread over a long rather than a relatively short period. This type of conservation, important though it is, has nothing to do with sustained yield and is not dynamic in concept.

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- Likewise the second meaning of conservation reflects a philosophy of preservation by locking up is also a static concept.

• Nevertheless, it is entirely valid in two contexts:

- In the maintenance, with as little human interference as is possible, of primitive or wilderness areas in some of the larger virgin indigenous State forests.
- In the reservation and maintenance again with the minimum of human interference, of forest sanctuaries or strict scientific reserves.

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- *The most important type of forest conservation, however, is the dynamic one; it consists of the deliberate and planned manipulation of forest in such a manner that the many and varied benefits which forests can confer on mankind are maintained unimpaired and are indeed enhanced.*

Initiatives Taken to Save the Forests

- Conservation of forest is a national problem so it must be tackled with perfect coordination between forest department and the other departments.
- People's participation in the conservation of forests is of vital importance. So we must get them involved in this national task. The cutting of trees in the forests must be stopped at all costs.

- Afforestation and special forest programmes should be launched and implemented. Celebrations of all functions, festivals should proceed with tree-plantation. Cutting of timber and other forests produce should be restricted.
- The Government proposes to implement the tree plantation programme extensively in the country.

- To increase forest and tree cover in the country, the Central Government has initiated several measures. Notable among them are launching of National Mission for a Green India and taking appropriate measures to put in place a proper institutional mechanism for expeditious utilization of amounts realised in lieu of forest land diverted for non-forest purpose.

The National Mission for a Green India aims at :

- ✓ Enhancing quality of forest cover and improving ecosystem services from 4.9 million hectares of predominantly forest lands, including 1.5 million hectares of moderately dense forest cover, 3 million hectares of open forest cover, 0.4 million hectares of degraded grass lands.

The National Mission for a Green India aims at :

- ✓ Eco-restoration/afforestation to increase forest cover and eco system services from 1.8 m ha forest/non forest lands, including scrub lands, shifting cultivation areas, abandoned mining areas, ravine lands, mangroves and sea-buckthorn areas.

✓ Enhancing tree cover in 0.2 million hectares urban and peri-urban areas (including institutional lands). Increasing forest cover and eco-system services from Agro-forestry and Social Forestry on 3 million hectares of non-forest lands.

The National Mission for a Green India aims at :

- **Agro-Forestry:** Agro forestry or agro-silviculture is a land use management system in which trees or shrubs are grown around or among crops or pastureland. It combines shrubs and trees in agricultural and forestry technologies to create more diverse, productive, profitable, healthy, ecologically sound, and sustainable land-use systems.

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- **Social Forestry:** Social forestry is defined as “Forestry outside the conventional forests which primarily aim at providing continuous flow of goods and services for the benefit of people. This definition implies that the production of forest goods for the needs of the local people is Social forestry. Thus, social forestry aims at growing forests of the choice of the local population.

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- **Van Mahotsav:** Van Mahotsav was launched in the year 1950 to create an enthusiasm in the popular mind for the preservation of forest and planting of trees, as "trees mean water, water means bread and bread is life". Van Mahotsav, a weeklong festival of tree planting is organised every year in the month of July usually between 1st July to 7th July all across India and lakh of trees are planted. The aim behind Van Mahotsav was to plant trees in order to provide fuel and

▪ **The Forest Conservation Act 1980:** this Act was enacted to help country's forests.

✓ It strictly restricts and regulates the de-reservation of forests or use of forests land for non-forest purposes without the prior approval of the Central government.

✓ The Act lays down the prerequisites for the diversion of forests land for non-forest purposes.

✓ Though in 1977, direct reference to forest protection and improvement was made in the Constitution through the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act when Article 48A was inserted into it, the scholars of forest policies and Acts in India would be aware that the framers of the Constitution were already committed to environmental protection and its

✓ There is also a mention in the Constitution about the fundamental duty of every citizen ‘to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures’. [Article 51A (G), 1990].

Forest Conservation Act 1980: An Introduction

- The Forest Conservation Act, 1980 is a Central Act of Parliament with a view to provide for the conservation of forest and for matters connected therewith or ancillary or incidental thereto. The act extends to the whole of India except the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Forest Conservation Act 1980: An Introduction

- Section 2 of the act makes a provision of a prior approval of the Central Government necessary before a State Government or any other authority issues direction for de-reservation of reserved forests (which have been reserved under the Indian Forest Act 1927), use of forest land for non – forest purpose, assigning forest land by way of lease or otherwise to any private person or to any authority, corporation, agency or any other organization not owned, managed or controlled by the government and clear felling of naturally grown trees

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- The term “forest land” mentioned in Section 2 of the Act refers to reserved forest, protected forest or any area recorded as forest in the government records. Lands which are notified under section-4 of the Indian Forest Act would also come within the purview of the Forest Conservation Act 1980.

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- The Supreme Court has also held that 'forest' as understood in the dictionary sense would also be included under 'forest land'. The term 'forest' shall not be applicable to the plantation raised on private land except notified private forest. Tree falling in such plantation would however be governed by state acts and rules. The term 'tree' will have the same meaning as defined in section 2 of the Indian Forest Act 1927.

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Salient Features of Forest Conservation Act 1980

In 1980 the Forest conservation Act was enacted for providing protection to the forests and to regulate the diversion of forestlands for non-forestry purposes.

The major salient features of Forest Conservation Act, 1980 are following.

- ➡ Prior approval of the Central Government is essential for de-reservation of forest lands and for diversion of forest lands for non-forestry purposes.

➡ The State Government has been empowered under this Act to use the forests only for forestry purposes. If at all it wants to use it in any other way, it has to take prior approval of central Government.

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- ➡ It is a regulatory act and not prohibitory. The provision was made to conserve all types of forests, such as:
 - Reserved Forests which are under the direct supervision of the government and no public entry is allowed for collection of timber or grazing of cattle.

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- ➡ The Forest Conservation Act is an interface between conservation and development. Any illegal non-forest activity within a forest area can be stopped immediately under this Act. Some non-forest activity like construction works, pipelines for water supply, check posts, wireless communications etc were exempted.
 - ➡ It permits sensible and regulated use of forestland for non-forestry purposes.

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- ➡ During 1950-80, the rate of diversion of forestlands for non-forestry purposes was 1.5 lakh hectares per annum. After enactment of the Forest Conservation Act 1980, the rate came down to about 35 thousand hectares per annum.
 - ➡ The Act provides for the constitution of advisory committee to advise the Government with regard to the grant of approved by the Central Government (Section. 2) or any

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 - ➡ The Act provides for the constitution of advisory committee to advise the Government with regard to the grant of approved by the Central Government (Section. 2) or any other matter connected with conservation of forests which

➡ On violation of the provision of Section 2, the offender shall be punishable with imprisonment for a period extending to 15 days (Section. 3-A). Any government department or any authority deemed to be guilty of the offence shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.

➡ The amendment of 1988 shattered all the expectations of tribal communities and many voluntary agencies placed all the forest land under the jurisdiction of the forest department.

➡ For the purpose of section 2 of the Act, non-forest purpose means the breaking up or clearing of any forest land or portion thereof for:

- a) The cultivation of tea, coffee, spices, rubber, palms, oil-bearing plant, horticulture crops or medicinal plants.

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- a) The cultivation of tea, coffee, spices, rubber, palms, oil-bearing plant, horticulture crops or medicinal plants.

a) Any purpose other than reforestation, but does not include any work relating to ancillary conservation, development and management of forest and wildlife, namely, the establishment of check posts, fire-lines, wireless communication and construction of fencing, bridges and culverts, dams, waterholes, trench marks, boundary marks, pipelines or other like purposes.

Amendment in the Forest Conservation Act 1980

- The amendment which took place in 1988 emphasised upon that forest departments are not allowed to assign and forest land by way of lease or otherwise to any private person or non-government body for reforestation.

Amendment in the Forest Conservation Act 1980

- Then the Act of 1980 again got amended in 1988 and has following sections such as extent and commencement, restriction on the conservation of forests of use of forest land for non-forest purpose, constitution of advisory committee.

Amendment in the Forest Conservation Act 1980

- A sympathetic shift towards issue concerning tribals was observed when the 1988 forest policy incorporated the clauses to protect the forest dwellers' rights which ultimately resulted in the declaration by the Government of India of the September 18, 1990 guidelines to regularise encroachments and settling disputes on forests lands.

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- A ray of hope dawned on the lives of the tribals only when the then government at the Centre made a radical departure from what was known as an approach of ‘forest bureaucracy’ and enacted The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.

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- Thus, came into existence the Forests Rights Act (FRA) (as it is popularly known) and became a reality amid serious debates and resentment from the conservationists, environmentalists and other stakeholders including the Ministry of Environment and Forests. Through this Act, the forest-dependent communities gained eligibility to claim community rights and individual rights on the forestlands under their occupation for cultivation.

Drawbacks of the Forest Conservation Act 1980

- This act transfers the power from state to centre for the conversion of reserve forest land to non-forest areas.
- Tribals are forced to involve in criminal activities like smuggling, killing etc. when they are stopped from taking resources from forest resources. This law is more interested in protecting the forest ecosystem than the tribal people. Thus the power has been centralized at the top.

- The Act has failed to attract public support because it has infringed upon the human rights of the poor native people. They argue that the law is concerned in protecting the trees, birds and animals, but it is treating the poor people as marginal.

Drawbacks of the Forest Conservation Act 1980

- Very poor community participation in the Act remains one of the major drawbacks which affect proper execution of the Act. This law cannot be acknowledged the knowledge of tribal communities towards forests resources.

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- It is an established fact that tribals or indigenous people inhabited, cultivated, grazed their cattle and made a living out of forest resources freely without any restrictions until the advent of the colonial rule, because, by the start of the 19th century, vast tracts of forestland were already under the control of the British regime.

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- Thereafter it was all about hardships, exploitation and struggle for the tribals as they were declared illegal or encroachers in their own lands. The resentment and rebellion by tribals occurred across the country at different times; these were put down by the colonial authorities.

Conclusion

- In conclusion the forest should be looked upon as a source of revenue. Forests are renewable natural sources. These are national assets to be protected and enhanced for the well being of the people and Nation.

Conclusion

- Individuals as well as governments can do their part in protecting the forests of the world. Knowledge about the importance of forest needs to be spread so that people become aware of the danger to everyone and everything on the earth by deforestation.

• People's participation in the conservation of forests is of vital importance. So everyone should get involved in this national task. If we do not start and act now, it might get too late for the cause of conservation of forests.