

Saving Our Shrinking Forest



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EDITORIAL

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The forest is a peculiar organism of unlimited kindness and benevolence that makes no demands for its sustenance but extends protection to all beings offering shade even to the axe man who fells it Lord Buddha.

After independence, the Indian foreign policy was framed in 1952 wherein it was categorically enunciated that India would have 33% of the geographical area under the forests. But ironically, as per survey of Indian's latest report (2015), we continue to have 21% of forests despite population explosion, increased biotic pressure accruing from grazing, encroachments and diversification of forest land for multi-disciplinary purposes. As such, there have been a marginal increase of 1% forest cover. The overall situation is that the total green covers now stands for 697888 sq mm (21.23%) of the geographical area and upto 5871 sq mm (0.92%) from 92,027 sq km as had earlier been existing in the year 2011. As such, there has seen a marginal increase of just 31sq km in very dense forest, whereas moderately dense forest went down to 1991 sq km and the open forest accounted for 7831 sq mm.

As per Anmol Kumar, the Director General of Forest Survey of India, the carbon stocks of the country have increased by 4.07% whereas the regeneration capacity is around 48% of the total recorded forest area. It has further been reported that West Bengal and Odisha are in the top slot having forest cover followed by Kerala, Uttarkhand, Bihar and Tamil Nadu. The North-Eastern region accounts for one fourth of the green cover showing thereby a periodic decrease which of course is a matter of utmost concern.

The survey report reveals further that 257 Sq.km of eastern states of the country have mostly been effected arguably owing to shifting cultivation practices . Nagaland with 274 Sqkm is in the forefront followed by Tripura (111 Sqkm), Manipura (100 Sqkm), Arunachal Pradesh (89 Sqkm) and Misoram (63 Sq Km) and amongst other states, Andhra Pradesh has lost the forest cover to the extent of 273 SqKm, Madhya Pradesh (178 Sq Kms), Karnataka (62 SqKms) and Chhatisgarh (53 Sq Kms) of the geographical areas. The Jammu and Kashmir state having a forest cover of 20,230 Hectare (recorded) out of 22, 539 Hectare (Actual). This shows the recorded percentages of the area having per capita forest cover around (0.1796 Hac) ending year 2011 which is dismally jeering.

In view of the seriousness and sensibility accruing from the overall declining forest cover, the scenario is unambiguously dismaying.

And in the same vein, the situation worldwide is also alarming. The scientists, environmentalists and the policy planners around the world are awfully worried about as per the presently prevailing scenario. In a situation like this and if it continues to be the same, there is impending apprehensions of further environmental degradation, tantamounts to cataclysm. A clear cut death Knell signal for all the nations of the world. At this crucial juncture, it is utmost warran for rapid planning and action able strategies to be put in place well before the holocaustic scenario overshadows this planet and its diversified bio diversity.

Over the years, lot of summits and the conferences have deliberated upon right from stock holm on human development in 1972 followed by earth summit in Rio de Janerio (Brazil) and then earth summit in Johannesburg but in the ultimate analysis, all have proved to be unyielding. In the ongoing process of such summits, conventions, year 1995 unfolded another convention held in Berlin (COPI), wherein it became apparent that Rio was not enough and even in its after math the results were quite unyielding. This was sequenced by a protocol on climate change convention adopted in 1997, known as Kyoto-protocol. The targeted moto was emphatically aimed at to bring down global CHG emission by 5.2% during the period 2008-2012 and its commitment expired ending 2015. And now recently, a land mark framework agreement on climatic change was enunciated in Paris (2015) to keep and ensure global temperature slow down and this remarkable

agreement followed as a sequel to united nations intergovernmental panel on climatic changes (IPCC) in association with world organisation (WHO) and UN Environment Programme (UNEP) scientific, technical and socio-economic information concerning to climate areas changes, its potential effects and opinions for adaptation and migration. This framework was laid down on the occasion of world earth day (22nd April, 2016) where apart from US and China around 120 countries across the global participated. And this agreement was more relevant and of vital importance as a follow up for enforcement of draft treaty' adapted by around 195 countries present at United Nations climatic change conference. It is, therefore, expected that this world conference shall provide the required push in reducing global emissions, to extent of 55% by the most populating 55 countries. Consequently, therefore, the signing of this agreement on climatic change, particularly when the most powerful countries viz US and China are in the lead is beyond doubt going to have a far reaching impact. This will rather change the glooming picture of the environment at large and shall provide impetus to the most magnanimous wordings of Margret Mead which go as such, " never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizen can change the world, indeed it is the only that ever has."

It is therefore, prudent to throw light on some of the very vital issues of the day and ensure their world wide implementation on larger scale.

- Averting deforestation. Our existing forest cover is frazzling rapidly with the revolving wheel of time and its further declination shall have to be averted by all the nations across the globe.
- Invigorating extensive/intensive afforestations. This shall have to be ensured on gigantic scales as the losses we have already done are not so easily retrievable. And in doing so, we shall have to start from hills/ mountainous tops as these have doubtlessly become more sensitive and fragile and are subject to denudation and huge land mass movements in the shape of landslides, floods fury on an unprecedented scale. So unless our tops are safe , the low lying areas shall always be in peril. While celebrating earth day in 2015, it was pledged to plant 7.8 billion saplings world wide to account for every single person living on earth in a lead upto 50th anniversary of earth day in 2020. Where on the same earth such pledge has so


far been initiated ? This invites special attention of the world leaders.

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