



W. P.: 364

# Working Paper

IIM  
WP-364

**PEOPLES' PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL  
FORESTRY—SOME PROPOSITIONS**

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WP364



WP  
1981  
(364)

W P No. 364

June 1981

The main objective of the working paper series of the IIMA is to help faculty members to test out their research findings at the pre-publication stage.

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT  
AHMEDABAD-380015  
INDIA

PEOPLES' PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL FORESTRY -  
SOME PROPOSITIONS

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Critics of social forestry, from within and outside the forest department, have started questioning whether social forestry is primarily a programme of the government to raise trees outside the government forest areas. Added to this is the insistence of national policy makers and international lending and funding institutions on strengthening the vital component of peoples' participation in social forestry. This paper intends to present a set of workable propositions to directly or indirectly enlist such participation and is mainly addressed to administrators and senior decision-makers concerned with social forestry with a view to invite their critical reactions on the feasibility of these propositions. The propositions are divided into different groups on the basis of a conceptual framework detailed below.

Conceptual Framework

Participation of the people in national or economic development is not a new idea and many a developing country, soon after attaining independence, initiated programmes requiring such participation. The 50's and the 60's have seen such efforts reflected in the Panchayati Raj and Community Development Programmes in India. However, such participation was, by and large, characterized by participation either in the political processes, or through membership in various

types of cooperative ventures, or by the people making increased use of infrastructural or public service facilities. The impact of social movements like Bhoodan and Shramdan was region-specific and shortlived.

Participation is a desirable and highly valued goal, but even at this stage we do not possess sufficient knowledge and expertise to develop suitable norms and procedures to operationalise it on a large scale and on a sustained basis. Certain questions still remain unanswered such as: What should be the level and quality of people's participation? How does one go about mobilizing human resources? Which agencies are suited for such tasks: government, private, cooperative or voluntary? How does this concept of people's participation differ from 'people's involvement', 'mobilization of people', and 'people's support'? Do these terms indicate qualitative differences or are they synonymous? Even defining 'participation' as 'people' pose problems. Nevertheless, definitions are insisted upon because they help build strategies. Strategy, thus, becomes an operational definition of the concept—the translation of an idea into a workable programme.

A major criticism against the method of enlisting people in development programmes is that it is anything but self-management. The approach has generally been "I manage, you participate". Then the labour working in a factory can be cited as an example of workers' participation in management! The most important - and relevant - questions by the people who are expected to participate

are: "Participation for whose benefit and under whose management?"  
 "What reward will be given to me, when and in what form?" "Who is  
 benefitting from my participation?"

Similar questions are most likely to be raised regarding the social forestry programme, which is thought to be managed, financed and controlled by the department with the aim of securing people's participation. Even if we set aside the question of immediate gains to individuals, which by any standard is the motivating factor for participation, what opportunities does the concept of social forestry offer for people to participate? One way to answer this question would be to look at the major operating tasks in social forestry, and see at what stage can people participate in it. The operating tasks are i) land preparation and/or digging pits; ii) fencing work; iii) watering; iv) weeding; v) protection; vi) exploitation; and vii) nursery work. A careful scrutiny of these tasks would reveal that these operations present a limited scope for participation on a sustained basis as they mainly involve labour component.

Now let us take another set of major functions like i) allowing department to raise plantations on panchayat land; ii) planning and deciding on what to raise; iii) managing the plantations; and iv) distributing the produce after exploitation. These functions which involve decision-making and supervision do not provide much scope for peoples' participation, because they are carried out by the representatives of people or by the government officials.

One is then tempted to ask as to what kind of participation do we expect from people. For, no social forestry programme, be it road side plantations or community forestry, would be successful without peoples' cooperation. The question, therefore, is what kind of cooperation does it need? The answer is best illustrated by a couple of examples.

The chief problem of forestry, social or otherwise, is protection; protection from man, animals, fire and natural adversaries. Various administrative, legal, and technical measures have been taken from time to time, but it is a known fact that felling of trees continues. Nobody cuts trees without any purpose. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that protection of trees is a necessity. Protection from man requires education; from that of animals requires money as fencing alternatives are expensive; and for fire protection we require both education and money. Some ways can be devised by which individuals or groups of individuals could help educate the masses or contribute donations or do both to tackle the problem.

There are no effective social norms like the governmental rules and regulations against the felling of trees. It is so because people's participation in the growing of trees has gained official acceptance only very recently, and widespread protection norms would most likely follow only after widespread social response to social forestry. Thus, two important aspects of social forestry would be people raising trees and protecting them. The third and

equally important aspect, namely, people exploiting trees so grown for their own needs would become relevant only later. One may as well ~~stretch~~ here the aim of social forestry: to make social afforestation an occupation akin to agriculture. Now, even the suggestion that agriculture should be protected by people looks odd. That the creation of a climate conducive to tree protection will also have a positive effect in eliciting people's participation has almost been missed so far. The only measures taken on these lines have been the official press releases regarding social forestry; the centre's fairly widely publicized social forestry policy; statements from the Prime Minister, the Chief Ministers, other political leaders, and the intelligentsia. Another problem hindering the speedy expansion of social forestry is the inhibition of people to bring their own or community land under tree cultivation. The perceived fear is that the government may take over the lands after afforestation. This initial resistance could be overcome by the schemes designed to secure people's participation in social forestry. The salient features of such schemes should be to i) generate widespread awareness regarding social forestry and its objectives; ii) involve people in its planning, decision-making, and implementation; iii) provide built-in ownership provisions; iv) instil faith and confidence by involving enterprising individuals and organizations.

As indicated earlier these are only illustrations. One can think of many such problematic areas and identify the type of participatory support needed. The nature of participation would,

of course, differ from one kind of problem to another. Assuming that there is scope for people to associate with social forestry programmes in some capacity or manner, let us now come back to our definitional issue.

### Probable Types of Participation

For us participation means associating oneself, individually or as a member of a group, with a legitimized task, be it a programme, scheme, project, an activity, or a movement, with an appreciable degree of either adaptive, emotional, expressive, or instrumental involvement inclusive of positive and negative connotations. For example, criticising the implementation of the social forestry programmes, or stopping the foresters from cutting trees could also be considered as forms of participation.

The adaptive, emotional, expressive and instrumental involvement referred to above can be conceptualized as process participation, cognitive participation, interactive (communicative or persuasive) participation, and material participation, respectively.

Process participation would involve participating in processes which lead to better decision making.

Cognitive participation means identifying oneself with the concept, idea, or task but not necessarily participating in it physically. Old people, for example, may not be able to provide manual labour, but can encourage able-bodied persons to participate in afforestation.



Interactive participation connotes educating, motivating, organizing, guiding, and preparing people for a particular task. The activities of the preparatory and planning phase, and those related to leader-follower relationships may fall under this category.

Material participation would include individual contribution by way of time, money, labour or other resources necessary for achieving the stated goals and is not restricted to digging pits or planting saplings. A person giving his barren land for growing trees, or allowing use of his tubewell to water young plants, or visiting officials in connection with social forestry projects, or donating money, are examples of material participation.

These four types of participation refer to the planning, promotion, public education and implementation functions. The rest of the paper presents propositions in relation to these four categories of participation. It must be appreciated, however, that the separation of propositions in different categories is only for analytical purposes. In practice, these propositions may overlap conceptual boundaries.

## PROCESS PARTICIPATION

### Organizing Contests

Contests can be organized to involve people in the planning and implementation of social forestry projects. Information regarding the contests can be disseminated by highly motivational, bold, and colourful posters which could be stored at village panchayats. Though the target group of this campaign are villagers in general, the messages should be mainly directed to the village leaders. The contest would call for a village plan showing a maximum number of feasible spots for growing trees. The spots should be indicated by a cross on the map. The minimum spacing between two trees should be specified in bold letters in the poster so that counting of the spots becomes easier. The map, if possible, should also indicate whether the trees are proposed to be grown on government, private or community land. One can ask the panchayats to specify the species of trees they would prefer or recommend to be grown. This information can then be used for preparing plans for the nurseries.

The village showing maximum number of tree spots will be declared the winner. As reward, the forest department will plant the trees in the winner villages according to their proposed plan without any cost to the village. At least one village can be selected from each district for this scheme.

The launching time of the campaign depends on the type of appeals one wants to use. For example, summer months would be ideal to motivate them. Depending on the administrative convenience the time

schedule should be worked out. An illustrative procedure would as follows

Planning the campaign, obtaining necessary administrative approvals etc.	Twelve months before plantation begins
Preparation and distributing posters to village panchayats	Nine months before plantation begins
Contest begins	Eight months before plantation begins
Last date for receiving the entries	Six months before plantation begins
Processing the entries	Five months before plantation begins
Declaring results of the contest	Three months before plantation begins
Preparing plans for winner villages	Two months before plantation begins
Digging pits, soil preparation etc.	One month before plantation begins
Plantation begins	Month _____

The major components of direct costs would be i) the fees of an advertising agency, if hired; ii) the cost of printing posters; and iii) the postage. The number of villages to be selected per division, district or any other smaller unit like taluka, block, or range, can be decided in advance. A small panel of judges are to be identified in those units for scrutinising the entries. Involvement of local leaders and prominent citizens in the panel may be beneficial and they may be invited to distribute prizes. While it is impossible that the contest may not fetch any entries even in that case, a large number of villages and villagers will be exposed to the scheme of social forestry.

The notable points of these contests are that they aim to i) get village plans prepared, without any additional costs on survey, and ii) simultaneously ensure people's participation in social forestry. The contest will also help identify villages where response to and participation in social forestry is likely to be more. It will give sufficient lead to the forest officers to locate entry points which would require minimum efforts to persuade the villagers. Furthermore, the first lot of villages selected for social forestry would be where maximum number of trees can be grown. The plantations in the winner villages will have built-in value for protection as the people will be proud of their rewards. At least, there will be a lot of social pressure against felling or damaging the plantations.

Contests go a step further than the promotion and persuasion model for managing social forestry. In the latter model broad objectives and targets are made more realistic by going from top to bottom: both in organizational hierarchy and the one existing outside the organization, that of the democratic political structure from district down to the village. In contests the social forestry department goes to the villages with the plain idea of afforestation. The involvement of people is not sought step by step like in the promotion and persuasion model, but directly. In contests people participate in planning more than they do in the promotion and persuasion model.

Peoples' plans in themselves offer extremely valuable feedback on their needs; therefore, likely to make implementation of social forestry need oriented. Sure, peoples plans must fit into the broad objectives and financial outlays. But the outlays would be spent more rationally if the contests are taken seriously.

#### Summer camp social forestry

Thirteen or 14 year old students of the Bharat Vidyalaya at Buldana in Maharashtra once decided to construct their own school and hostel buildings with their teachers' guidance. Not only did they finish the work in record time, but also did a near professional job. The then headmaster of the school realized that these students could do similar work in villages which had schools but not the buildings. Subsequently, the school-building construction programme was launched and successfully implemented. The students worked out a checklist of resources and raw materials required which were furnished by the village school authorities and the children, on a prefixed day, started construction work. All this was done in summer vacation.

This pattern can be adopted for social forestry work. The department can identify in each of their division a small number of dedicated teachers experienced in organizing students. The selected villages can be asked to prepare a blueprint showing places where pits could be dug. This programme can be tied up well with the winner villages of social forestry contests elaborated earlier. The fencing, pit digging, and plantation work

will have to be done simultaneously to prevent students from making two trips. If monsoon gets delayed the local students can take up the follow up work. The department would pay the bus fare to participating students, provide tents for their stay, and supply equipments to do the work while the village community would provide the food. Morning prayers and evening entertainment programmes could also be arranged in which students and local people could participate. The fact that outside students should spend their summer vacation for the village, will make the villagers, particularly the village youth show more concern for the plantations. Later, the maintenance of the plantations such as watering, weeding etc., can be taken up by the students of the host school.

#### Worship Plantations

Indian villages have a temple, mosque, or a church. Natural surrounding has always been preferred by people for their places of worship. Trees, water, mountains and selected birds or animals have always formed an integral part of such surroundings. Today, many a premises can be afforested under the social forestry schemes.

There are religious trusts like Tirumala-Tirupati Davasthanam, Nathdwara Trust etc., which, with their rich resources can be persuaded to fund the "Worship Plantations" in small villages. Once such funds are available the local sadhus or religious leaders can be entrusted to mobilize the support of devotees. The department can use its own funds for this work, but that does not concur with the idea of people's participation. Many states have a Davasthanam

or Charities or Endowment Commissioners with temples and trusts contributing the funds. These departments can be approached for funds, publicity, and for identifying suitable areas for social forestry work. Protection of approach roads to worship places located on small hillocks can also be covered with trees under this scheme.

Majority of the places of worship will have some access to water throughout the year. Since some of these places are also manned by preachers, no additional effort will be needed to maintain the plantations. In fact, to water the young saplings is in itself considered a holy act.

#### COGNITIVE PARTICIPATION

There are various ways by which cognitive participation by different agencies and organizations in social forestry can be elicited by suitable government interventions. The participating bodies would be the public at large, belonging to different age, sex, and income groups. But the influencing agents would be the selected and organized groups whose participation would be promotional in nature. Their promotional efforts should be treated as their contribution to the expansion of social forestry. It must be realized that government agency or machinery alone cannot promote social forestry, nor can it create a tree-protection norm throughout India. However, the government can influence those agencies which can create an awareness about social forestry. Some of these agencies/groups which can be persuaded to contribute their creativity, manual labour, space, and time to this end are indicated below.

i) General Managers of all Zones of the Railways:

The forest department and railways have a long history of collaboration. In fact, the railways have been depending on forest produce for their requirements, and to help the forest department plant and protect trees would be a welcome opportunity for the railways. It should not be administratively, technically infeasible or financially difficult for them to participate in this educational endeavour. The general managers of the railways can be requested to donate posters and a half or full page of their time tables propagating protection of trees with messages preferably of their choice. Furthermore, they could be requested to instal 2 to 3 stalls on each railway platform, particularly in smaller stations, for social forestry messages highlighting the need to protect trees.

ii) Matchbox Manufacturers:

Matchbox is another industry which has a symbiotic association with the forest department. The effectiveness of the matchbox as a medium for promotion has not been scientifically determined, yet its large circulation among the rural population makes it an effective publicity medium. The matchbox manufacturers can be persuaded to promote social forestry by advertising on the back labels on a certain number of the matchboxes manufactured.

iii) Paper Manufacturers:

Being the heavy users of forest raw material, the paper manufacturers would be willing to promote social forestry. However, they do not possess any medium of their own which can be pressed



into service, but they can get messages and blocks prepared which can be supplied to the exercise book manufacturers. The messages could relate to how trees get damaged and what an average citizen should and should not do on the road, at his house, on his farm, and at similar other places by studying the day-to-day examples of human behaviour vis-a-vis trees. They can also adopt villages to prepare prototypes of integrated planning for social forestry.

iv) Exercise Book Manufacturers:

Exercise books reach a large number of children of all ages throughout India and could act as an effective medium for messages reproduced on their covers. The messages should be a combination of visuals and copy stressing the protection of trees and the role of children in it. Senior forestry officials could persuade the exercise book manufacturers of their respective states to allocate the cover space for this purpose. As indicated earlier, the message blocks can be supplied to these manufacturers.

v) Theatre Owners:

In India, cinema has reached a large and diverse population belonging to almost all the classes. Cinema slides have exposure value to create awareness; and repetitive messages have a reminder value which can help create an appropriate normative climate. This medium also provides scope for using colours to create right impact. To make these messages effective an expert help may be necessary. Contribution of the theatre owners would be their exhibition time. It is not difficult to obtain the list of the important cinema

houses in the state and seek their cooperation through letters, personal contacts, and generalized appeals.

vi) Advertising Agencies:

Advertising agencies, being the centres of creativity today can be used to change people's manner of looking at trees. In spite of their varied activities one requires a special approach to get the voluntary participation of the advertising agencies.

There are two sure ways of eliciting advertisers' participation in social forestry. First, to appoint, at the instance of very senior political leaders, a Task Force comprising reputed advertising agencies. This Task Force is meant to prepare prototype messages for different media, occasions, and public groups. A large amount of resources would be required to get these prototypes translated into slides and printing blocks to be made and issued to agencies listed above. If our goal is to give momentum to social forestry through people's participation, then, these resources also should come by way of participation. The possibilities of obtaining these resources through donations are presented later. Similarly, each state government should appoint a Task Force of its regional advertisers.

Second, to develop contacts with the national association of advertisers, and assign them the responsibility of organizing such participation with the help of its members. The association should adopt the promotion of the social forestry concept, and help the field level forestry agencies to educate people to protect trees.

A few selected advertising agencies could be individually approached to solicit contributions.

vii) Calendar Manufacturers:

Calendar manufacturing is not a very organized activity, but there are well established firms which produce standardized calendar material. Calendars have a personal appeal. They have a year long exposure too. Calendars are normally fixed in such a way that visitors to the family can also look at them. The themes of these calendar pictures range from the most modern space transport designs to the depiction of deities. The calendar manufacturers can be encouraged to select themes emphasizing the importance of trees for the visuals on their calendars.

viii) Publishers of Comics:

These days there has been a phenomenal response from children to the comic booklets. Realizing their educational value, parents too, encourage their children to read comics, particularly those dealing with Indian history and mythology. The readership of these comics is much more than their circulation indicates, as they pass many hands and are read a number of times. Important comic publishers like Amar Chitra Katha, Indrajal comics can be persuaded to donate one page to inculcate in children the value of protecting trees and their role in doing so.

ix) Passenger and Goods Trains Publicity:

Unlike fast and superfast trains passenger and goods trains stop at more stations, most of which are in rural areas. The exposure to advertisements on these trains would, therefore, be far more than on fast and superfast trains.

Rail-side plantations may not be the hard-core social forestry activity, but all the same they popularise social forestry. Also, railway authorities in many states are working with the forest departments to raise rail-side plantations. In states where such mutual understanding on the need to raise trees exist it may be easier to persuade the railways to spare the outer compartment space of the trains operating in their jurisdiction.

The publicity compartments should preferably be the middle ones, and at least one compartment per train be allotted for this purpose. The message should be in regional languages. The format should be large, letters big, bold and colourful. Visuals should also be colourful and attention-catching with the symbol of social forestry, prominently placed.

One way to operationalise this idea is to build strong links between social forestry-publicity-officers and the Public Relations Units of the railways.

### INTERACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Persuasion efforts for organizations with social service orientations are lesser than for other organizations. Based on the persuasion-efforts yardstick the forest department could prepare a priority list of its target audience. Here, one may think of giving priority to the bodies formed for protecting environment. Obviously, these bodies are likely to be more receptive and responsive to social forestry messages. Persons who could be easily organized and other mass media organizations amenable to interactive participation for social forestry publicity are listed in this section.

#### Voluntary Organizations

Voluntary social service organizations are operating in rural and urban areas. Corresponding links between the forest department and these organizations should be identified and established. Besides taking up rural or urban patches for afforestation and maintenance, these organizations could be persuaded to organize small discussion groups, talks and seminars on forestry, social forestry, environment etc., in the respective institutions of the members. Even if these agencies take the credit for doing these activities it should not be considered negative because our goal is publicity for social forestry; from whichever quarter it comes it should be welcomed, as long as it does not conflict with our aim.

While organizing seminars two liaison targets must be kept in mind: the advertising agencies for designing posters and publicity material; and, the editors of local newspapers and radio and television producers. The editors are requested to publish relevant articles and news reports before and after the seminar, and also to include the seminar details in the engagement columns. The radio and television producers should be asked to cover the seminar proceedings. If this group would help, then social forestry would receive wider publicity.

#### Sports Organizations and Physical Training (PT) Schools

Sports organizations and PT schools may not be sufficiently aware of the importance of raising and protecting trees. Most of them operate on a fairly large space, the periphery of which could be used for planting trees. Physical training is a part of all school curriculum. One may begin with PT teachers and motivate them to promote social forestry consciousness amongst their students.

Tournaments too form important attention-catching events such as cricket tests, or football matches when the sports authorities rent out space for publicising commercial products. This could be broadened to include social forestry publicity also. If not donated the forest department may even buy this space. One may also keep track of the inter-and intra-schools, colleges, universities tournaments for publicising social forestry on similar lines.

### National Service Scheme (NSS)

The NSS volunteers, as part of their activities camp in interior areas for months together and do social work related to adult education, slum-clearance and other rural development activities. The forest department should utilize their services for social afforestation work like digging of pits, watering, fencing etc. Links, however, must be first established at the higher levels of forest department and NSS hierarchy. The range officers at these places could provide space for camping and generally help the volunteers.

### Publicity through Periodicals:

One way of claiming space in periodicals is to keep a constant track on the movements of prominent personalities. As soon as they visit areas where deforestation and related problems exist, they may be asked to react to these problems. Their reactions will naturally get published in local periodicals.

Career magazines sponsoring essay competitions could be encouraged to invite essays on social forestry topics. The social forestry units could then arrange to translate the prize winning essays in regional languages, and get them published in popular newspapers and journals. Besides the rewards from the magazine, the social forestry units should also offer incentives to such youth. In fact, the names of all the entrants should be noted down, and their cooperation sought later. This concept could be modified and applied to rural areas too. There one can think of arranging competition talks. This way one identifies the

interested youth around whom tree-protection groups could be formed. Certain science magazines as also journals such as 'Seminar' carry cover stories on specific themes, generally relating to a national problem. Such magazines should be asked to take the cause of social forestry.

#### Letters to the Editors

Certain cities have 'letters to the editors' bodies, even where they do not exist, such groups could be promoted. The forest department could build a rapport with these groups and see to it that they enlighten the newspaper readers about social forestry through the 'letters to the editors' columns.

#### Regional Language Periodicals:

Regional language periodicals enjoy high credibility in their respective regions and can be persuaded to regularly donate a part of their front page to promote social forestry objectives. It would be easier to persuade those newspapers which receive government advertisements. The periodicals can generate their own messages. Their participation can be ensured by an appeal from the state level leaders. If message blocks are prepared and given to them, the publication of those messages would be further guaranteed.

#### Involving Retired Forest Personnel

Forest personnel generally work in isolation from the public eye, mainly because of the nature of their job. Though considered authoritarian and working with a paramilitary zeal, there are some traits specially attributed to them. People regard them as nature-



lovers, having exciting experiences of wild life, and capable of independent living in the most interior areas. They are generally thought to be effective group-talkers and story-tellers. As far as its organizational image goes the forest department is considered to be one of the few organizations in India which is stable, disciplined and possessing high work ethic.

Based on the positive picture people have of them, the forest department could promote smaller, region-based, retired forest-personnel-association, and involve them in serving the cause of social forestry. These associations could be formed more rationally after preparing a region or area-based lists of retired forest personnel from the district down to villages.

Being good talkers, with lot of experience and expertise, they will be effective for talks and interviews in rural radio and television programmes. They can also be asked to deliver talks or teach on the importance of trees for health and environment to school children, thus, motivating them to raise and protect trees. They should also offer their advice to the villagers in preparing social forestry-village-plans for contests.

The idea of involving retired forest personnel is sound also because it will be a continuation of their life-long association with the cause of forestry. The sense of achievement may act as the reward, particularly amongst the dedicated lot.

### Charity Begins At Home

Forest departments have fairly spacious offices, and a number of guest and rest houses in cities, districts, talukas and villages. Then, there are those retired forest personnel who stay in own houses. It is suggested that at least the space of one wall particularly of the department offices, and forest rest and guest houses be kept for social forestry publicity. The panchayats and other village institutions taking to social forestry should also be persuaded to donate one wall space of their buildings. The wall need not have to be the front wall always. Any of the other walls closer to the approach road and to the public eye would suffice. On the walls of the houses the visuals may be decorative, ~~plasthetic~~, and less loud.

The government information agencies should be informed well in advance of the space available for preparing messages and painting visuals in which local artistes could also be involved. During the vacations drawing teachers and interested children can be involved in 'wall publicity'.

The widespread awareness about family planning exists because of its symbol. Forest department can also hire the best artistes to think of a symbol, which could be the first thing that can be put up in all publicity efforts.

Visuals and messages may centre around religious festivals related to trees, health and environment. There should always be just one effective slogan, highlighting only the theme or one aspect

of social forestry on a wall just as family planning is popularized in a big way through wall publicity. Wall publicity is cheap, more conspicuous, has better rural reach and can last longer than any other medium. During monsoons the walls could be painted using longer lasting colours.

Press Information Bureau, New Delhi

The state officers in charge of social forestry schemes could build links with the Press Information Bureau. The main function of the PIB is to communicate to the people 'government's policies, decisions and activities' through all types of media. The channels of communication resorted to are press releases, features, background articles and photographs. This material is published in 18 languages including English, through a network of 29 offices with teleprinter facilities. This source needs to be exploited more systematically by the forestry unit at Delhi. The latter could gather relevant data from the state forest departments regarding social forestry. In fact, the state officers in charge of social forestry should periodically brief the Delhi office about their varied experiences. Thus, a two-way pressure, one from the state, and the other from the centre, is built on the PIB to come up with photographs, features and background material on social forestry.

Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity (DAVP) Delhi

This agency of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting handles the print and visual publicity in all the regional languages. Its regional distribution centres are at Bombay, Madras and

Calcutta, with field exhibition centres in 24 towns and cities which include several metropolises and state capitals. The forestry cell at Delhi could ask for information from all the state forestry departments on their experiences in social forestry. Later, it can persuade the DAVP to publicise the same in suitable formats on hoardings, bus panels, cinema slides, posters, brochures, and film shots.

The DAVP has a distribution set up of 8 lakh addresses with extensive use of direct mail for sending the publicity material. The state forest departments should, from time to time, send a gist of their operations to the New Delhi office.

#### Field Publicity Unit (FPU) Delhi

FPU is yet another unexploited source for popularising social forestry. Its main function is to mobilize people behind national schemes. With the centre offering enthusiastic support to the social forestry scheme, FPU should be tapped to prepare a national campaign on social forestry. One suggestion is to include in them the forest departments' efforts to overcome initial social forestry problems.

FPU primarily uses the spoken word, film, traditional and new entertainment forms. It has 221 publicity units in India under 17 regional offices.

Publications Division

Publications Division brings out two reference books, and 20 journals of varying periodicity. Its sales offices are in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and New Delhi. Its publications are sold through 3500 sales agents in India and abroad. State forest departments and the forestry cell at Delhi could claim advertising space in these publications. They could also think of utilizing the large network of sales agent points to put up outdoor publicity material.

Photo Division:

The state forest departments could relate its social forestry publicity functions with the functions of the Photo Division such as photographically documenting growth and social change in India. There are instances where social forestry activities lead to conspicuous changes in people's orientation. Successful social forestry operations could be photographed over time and preserved to create photographic library at the state and central level. These could be effectively used later while entering newer areas for implementing social forestry.

Documentary Films:

The Films Division of India, another unit of creativity, can be called upon to prepare 3-4 extremely persuasive documentaries woven around the theme of planting and protection of trees. These extension-cum-educational films can bring out aspects like

- 1) emphasize the need for trees to maintain the ecological balance,

conservation of soil and moisture, reducing the magnitude of natural calamities like floods and cyclones; ii) identify different types of trees, their characteristics, and how they satisfy our needs; iii) the enemies of trees and how they damage them; and iv) what is required to grow trees and what schemes the government has introduced in the field of social forestry. The combination of emotional and rational approaches can increase the effectiveness of these films. Large areas are being afforested in different states under social forestry projects which need protection. Therefore, these documentaries highlighting these aspects must not only have wide exposure but must also be exhibited frequently to maximize learning.

#### Postal Service

Post cards, stamps and inland letters form an extremely effective medium of reaching the people because of their universality and their reminder value. This medium has already been used in the past to promote family planning and saving schemes. A short, direct and action-oriented phrase on social forestry can be communicated through this medium. Since post offices have reached even interior areas, they can be requested to display posters on social forestry at prominent spots in their premises.

### MATERIAL PARTICIPATION

In Material Participation, as mentioned earlier, persons individually or in groups or both contribute by way of money, labour, time and space. The different ways to elicit material participation are indicated here.

#### Tree Protection Day

Like Flag Day and Children's Day, a Tree Protection Day can be introduced and popularized. On this day school children would go from door to door to collect donations. The amount thus collected can be used to strengthen tree protection measures. The boxes for collecting donations will have to be supplied to all the village schools so that the concept gains ground in rural areas, where people's participation to protect trees is urgently required.

The Tree Protection Day aims to: i) teach children the value of tree protection and their role in it; ii) instil confidence in adults to raise voice against the damage caused to trees; iii) popularize fencing methods which help protect trees from damage by animals; iv) earmark a part of the collected funds to pay for the fencing; and v) create in people an emotional commitment to care for and protect trees.

#### Own a Tree for your Child Scheme

Under this scheme a person can own a tree for his child by paying Rs.5 per tree at the time of plantation. On an average, it takes Rs.3 to plant a tree and protect it for a period of three years. After three years, the tree will be handed over to

the child as his property for protection and maintenance. Later he can sell the matured tree and keep the proceeds. A child can own a maximum of five trees. The amount charged per tree should be able to meet the extra expenditure involved in maintaining the official records. The concept of property rights is deeply rooted in our socio-economic fabric and trees regarded as one's property are more likely to be protected.

#### Women's Fuel Cooperatives:

Women's participation in social forestry being negligible at present, one can think of forming on selected and experimental basis women's fuel cooperatives in cohesive villages where the number of households does not exceed 100, and large areas of government or panchayat wasteland are available for growing fuel wood. While the plantation work would be carried out by the department, the women members can also help in the digging, fencing, and planting operations. A group of 7-8 women members could visit the site daily for an hour by rotation, during the plantation and related work. The plantations will be managed by the cooperative, and the produce equally shared by them. The involvement of the women in the village will automatically prevent the villagers from damaging the plantations. Cohesive and small villages are recommended because they would greatly facilitate the management of fuel cooperatives.



### Bus Stand Plantations

A number of villages and towns are covered by the state transport networks. The transport network, like the forests, is formed into divisions. The divisional/district forest officers should help the transport divisional managers prepare plans to plant trees at various bus stops, for despite the small shades provided at semi-urban and mofussil areas, the resting facilities at state transport bus stands or roadside stops in almost all parts of the country are far from satisfactory. The transport authorities may argue that the presence of trees on the bus stand premises are likely to obstruct the smooth movement of bus traffic, and also occupy the space required for bus parking. But planting of trees on the boundaries of the bus stand will not obstruct the traffic. Besides, quite a few bus stops have a large area on which a number of trees can be grown with advantage. Traffic on special occasions like Jatras requires more parking space, but then the fully grown trees will provide adequate shade for the extra passengers too.

Voluntary participation by the transport corporation in this regard may present difficulties as the corporations will have to get funds earmarked for this purpose and motivate the divisional staff to undertake the plantation. A state government could issue a directive to these corporations to initiate and implement the programme. A forest officer on special duty may be attached to the corporation to work out the blue prints and financial requirements. Wherever possible government should subsidize this expenditure.

Follow up and maintenance of these plantations, surrounded by men, machines and animals would be an uphill task for the divisional staff. Fencing arrangements will have to be extremely good for, it is very easy to damage saplings. Watering the plantations in the interior bus stops, where the need for shady trees is the greatest, is as critical as it is difficult. A person carrying water can go with the bus, water the plants en route, and come back by the same bus. With limited expenditure it should be possible to water the plants in this manner. The management of the plantation should be the responsibility of the corporations.

### Smrutivan

Smrutivan or plantations in memory of someone have been attempted on a small scale in the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat. Without restricting this concept to local leaders, it can be broadened to cover any family or organization which wishes to contribute something to grow trees in memory of its member. Though the earlier concept has some good features, it achieves very little by way of participation.

Quite a few businessmen and traders donate substantial amounts of money to hospitals, schools, dharamshalas, goshalas, sanatoriums, temples, student hostels in memory of the departed souls. Part of these donations can be tapped for social forestry under Smrutivan. Most of these businessmen or traders have roots in their villages. Under this scheme the plantations would be taken up in their own village or villages of their choice. Minimum contribution should be Rs.501 for 100 trees. There should not be any upper limit as

long as the donations are at the rate of Rs.5001 for one acre of plantation. The donations are also meant to cover the expenses on watch and ward for at least a year.

The scheme can also include a feature by which an additional amount of Rs.501 would facilitate a person to visit the plantations once a year on a specified or the anniversary date with his family members. Transport arrangements from the nearest railway station can be made by the department. It will also ensure that the plantations are well maintained. As far as the final produce is concerned, three-fourths of it will be handed over to the panchayat, and one-fourth will be distributed by the donor to the poor.

The scheme will have to be popularized by giving advertisements in regional papers particularly those read by business people. Local leaders can also motivate the traders to take to Smrutivan plantations.

In the state of Gujarat the forest department has introduced a scheme to provide modern crematoria, which save around 40 per cent of the fuel required for the last rites, to villages implementing social forestry projects on panchayat lands. In such cases donations can be diverted to construct modern crematoria so that the concept of self-help in social forestry gains strong ground.

#### Income Tax Concessions

The central government allows business houses to benefit from tax concessions by involving themselves in rural development activities. Efforts can be made to make provisions of 35 CC and

35 CC (A) of Income-tax Act applicable for social forestry work. already applicable, the drive will have to be intensified to bring a large number of business houses under the fold through persuasion. The forest department can help these houses identify the areas available for plantation. Plantation and protection will be the responsibility of the business houses while technical guidance will be provided by the forest department.

#### Honeymoon Plantations

A number of marriages take place in summer, which is also the time for preparing ground work for plantations. A scheme may be recommended, wherein a newly wed couple would spend 15 days in a forest rest house by contributing Rs.1500. Out of this Rs.1000 will be for raising and maintaining 100 trees, and Rs.500 towards rest house expenses. Transport from the nearest railway station or bus stand will be arranged by the department of forest. The lot of 100 trees will be named after the couple. Half of the collective proceeds from such plantations could be given to a charitable institution for arranging marriages for poor families.

#### CONCLUSION

##### Organizational Strengths Required

After going through these many ideas on promotion of and participation in social forestry one may ask if these ideas are feasible. The answer is simple: potentially they are. All of them together may not be applicable to one state or region. With

modifications to accommodate regional variations, however, most of them could be effectively utilized. The belief is, it is easier to travel on a dimly lit path than grope in the dark.

Extensive touring of 8-10 states in connection with social forestry towards the end of the study gave us a broader (national) perspective, and more important, insights into the issue of people's participation in the raising and protection of trees. The ideas in this paper, hopefully, manifest the same gain.

During our visits we came across a number of intelligent and creative forest officers at all levels. We are optimistic about their abilities to transform some of these suggestions into action. The issue of operationalising the suggestions is not considered here for that is not the aim. In fact, it needs a separate region-based and not even state-wide, inquiry. Part of this proposed exercise can be left to the forest department itself.

Another well founded hope is that, if nothing else, these suggestions (not necessarily prescriptions) will lead forest department personnel and others concerned about social forestry to come up with more ideas, suggestions and concepts on these and similar lines. We will be happy to track this triggering effect. Such an outcome from the experienced forest people is likely to be more workable too.

An illustration of this is the rise of a family planning norm developed out of wide publicity - a norm that has been developing over a couple of decades. This, inspite of family planning, being a more sensitive area because it is essentially a private and individualistic affair. It, therefore, took years to gain acceptance at the first-level-awareness. Afforestation with people's participation by comparison will evoke less resistance. It would take lesser time to develop into a norm. Nevertheless, patience and intensive efforts are required.

Among other things, this paper has advocated the creation of a social forestry norm for tree protection and against tree felling by the people in organizations with the guidance of those in forest departments,

The methods suggested in this paper have one particular point to be noted. Built in rewards exist for every effort. Hence, the chances of their acceptance could be rated high. But that is not enough. A majority of the methods suggested here aim to enlist the participation of divergent groups of public. In order to achieve this formidable task a strong, dynamic, flexible, and result oriented organization both at the centre and the state is a prerequisite.

While in some states social forestry has gained primary importance, there are others in which such cells continue to receive either very low priority or only a casual treatment. It is not uncommon that social forestry divisions get created in a

week's time without proper assessment of regional potentialities and priorities, resources available and required, and the competence of the staff posted. It is assumed that things will work out once a man is posted to assume the responsibility. Funds would flow in, work would also get done, but it certainly would not secure people's participation. This requires promotion.

To make millions of isolated, unaware, and unprepared village people participate in the scheme requires the participation of another equally powerful but similarly isolated, unaware and unprepared group of people and organizations with the skills and resources or both. These people and organizations have been identified in various schemes recommended above. Comparatively speaking, this is a small group to approach and influence. But to influence this second group will need a participation of yet another group of extremely busy but favourably disposed, knowledgeable, efficient and influential senior officials and leaders who matter.

Simply stated, the three levels of participation involve the first group of ministers, secretaries and other political leaders acting as influencing agents to solicit and secure participation of the second group of senior officials commanding the skills and resources to motivate the ultimate target group. The extension wing of social forestry should be capable of influencing these two groups. To achieve this the extension executives will need appropriate organizational status and support. If sufficient funds for publicity are at

the disposal of the department of forest, then it can initially proceed on its own. To make people participate in such a programme is as difficult as it is vital. Only rational, highly persuasive, and constant promotion is the key to achieve such participation.



**Chart:** Rural and Urban Publicity Contact Points for Enlisting Participation in Social Forestry

