Social Forestry in Kerala:

Concept, Purpose and Practice

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ABSTRACT: The present research attempts a comprehensive assessment of social forestry practices in Kerala, the southernmost state in India. Social forestry is a practice of forestry outside the traditional forest area that aims at the production of forest goods for the needs of the people. It is related to afforestation of barren lands and planting of trees on the farms, homestead, building compounds, public places, roads sides, canals, and railway strips. It is presumed that the social forestry initiatives are socially configured, adaptive and dynamic and serve the purpose of the supply of fuel, wood and fodder; generate employment opportunities; maintain ecological balance; promote village industries; conserve soil and moisture and stabilize agricultural production. Because of this reason social forestry is considered as one of the core activities in the integrated rural development programs. It is universally acknowledged that at present, natural resources fall short of the requirement of human and livestock population and hence the only possible alternative is the promotion of social forestry. The population pressure, developmental activities and increased production of food and other materials led to the large scale felling of forests in Kerala and hence found necessary to rebuild the decreased forest area and plant more trees in the non -forest or outside the traditional forest area. The social forestry activities were started in Kerala from 1980 with a centrally sponsored Rural Fuel wood Scheme. This programme was followed by National Rural Employment Scheme and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme. In 1982 a social forestry wing was formed as a part of Kerala forest department. An effective and massive programme on social forestry was started in Kerala in 1984 with the help of World Bank and has contributed for the substantial growth of forest wealth in the non forest areas.

KEYWORDS: *Social Forestry, Vanamaotsava, Nammude Maram, Ente Maram, Vazhiyorathanal, Community forestry*

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Introduction

From the beginning of the human existence forests are the residing places of mankind. Forests are essential for the ecological balance and prosperous environment and economy. The trees clean the air, cool it on hot days, conserve heat at night and act as excellent sound absorbers. Plants provide a protective canopy that lessens the impact of raindrops on the soil, thereby reducing soil erosion. The layer of leaves that fall around the tree prevents runoff and allows the water to percolate into the soil. Roots help to hold the soil in place. Dead plants decompose to form humus, an organic matter that holds the water and provides nutrients to the soil. Plants provide habitat to different types of organisms. Birds build their nests on the branches of trees, animals and birds live in the hollows, insects and other organisms live in various parts of the plant. They produce large quantities of oxygen and take in carbon dioxide. Transpiration from the forests affects the relative humidity and precipitation in a place. A proverb from Kashmir says "mankind will live as long as forests live."[1] The Social forestry is a practice of forestry outside the traditional forest area that aims at the production of forest goods for the needs of the people. Simply it is the practice of forestry of the people, forestry by the people and forestry for the people. The emergence of social forestry began as a consequence of the wide spread loss of tree vegetation on account of human passions of greed, envy, fear, ambition and the desire to surpass. Preservation of environment, meeting the scarcity of biomass and facilitating the social and rural development are the principal objectives behind the social forestry initiatives.

Social Forestry in India

India has a total forest cover about 678,333 km^2 and has a variety of habitats ranging from tropical rainforests to alpine vegetation and from temperate forests to coastal wetland. It is a homeland of nearly 167 cultivated species and the global exchange of biotic existed since historical times. The country had a rich tradition of protecting nature and forest. From the pre-historic period onwards people of India were found to be the worshipers of nature in its various forms. There are evidences from

the Indus Valley civilization sites establishing the fact of people interest in tree goddess *(Vrkska)* and *Avatta Adhisthari Devata."*[2] The epics, Vedas and Upanishads contained enough evidence about the caring of forests and trees. The ancient people of India maintained harmonious relations with nature and used its resources for satisfying their need and not creed. Their ashrams were an epitome of man living in close with nature, with trees, birds and animals. Lord Buddha describes the forests as a peculiar organism of unlimited kindness and benevolence, which makes no demands for its sustenance but extends protection to all beings, offering shade even to all the men with the axe which destroys it. It is found in the preaching of Buddha about 2500 years ago. Lord Buddha preached that every good Buddhist should plant one tree and look after it over five years so that it grows to a full tree and in this way he should plant about 5 trees in his life time. The Great Emperor Ashoka is credited to have got planted shady trees and fruit trees long the roadsides for the benefit of travellers.

The advent of civilization and sedentary agriculture marked the beginning of deforestation in India. Up to the end of 17th century, as the forest resources of the country were plentiful, the impact of deforestation was not very spectacular. The population growth and increasing demand for forest products and policies followed by the British government further increased the deforestation in the country. The advent of the British East India Company and later subjugation to the Crown of England had a drastic effect on forest policy in India.[3] During early period of British rule, need for industrial expansion and communication required timber from the forests. Attempts made by the British were simply to reserve and demarcate forests for their industrial needs. No significance was attached to important role of trees to the local population. The colonial British rule facilitated the extension of cultivation in order to augment revenue, for the whole policy of the time was to extend agriculture, and the watchword of the time was to destroy the forests.[4] With a view to preventing large scale deforestation and to conserve the forest resources for meeting their own requirements, the British government introduced scientific forest management in India. Later as a part of forest management, a forest policy indicating various priorities and plans in forestry sector was formulated. It was only after independence, considering the importance and

potentialities of the forestry sector, the government of India formulated and implemented forest policies.

It is evident that several countries launched the social forestry and community forestry programmes to meet the demands of the expanding population for fuel, fodder and timber. They promoted the social forestry practice by the rural people who plant, tend and maintain trees by themselves. People's Republic of China was one of the first countries to embark on a major community reforestation programme. It was at the International Conference of Stockholm in 1972 the problem of deforestation and environmental degradation was addressed seriously by the world countries and discussed about the need for changes in approaches to resolve the environmental degradation and overcome tree depletion.

In India the first National Forest Policy resolutions issued in 1894 provided that the sole object for which state forests were to be managed was for the public benefit. The policy however considered it necessary in the interest of the preservation of the forests, that the rights and privileges enjoyed by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood be regulated and restricted. Four categories of forests were recognized, namely: (i) forests, the preservation of which is essential on climatic or physical grounds; (ii) forests which afford a supply of valuable timbers; (iii) minor forests and (iv) pasture lands. The Royal Commission on Agriculture in India (1928) suggested that there should be a close connection between the forests and agriculturists and the foresters should work in close relations with the common people particularly farmers. The forestry situation in the country was totally altered after the Second World War and meeting the demand for soft timber and fuel wood for the village people was one of the major problems in the post war period. [5]

The forest policy was renewed in 1952. Which was formulated on the basis of some important needs of the country, viz., (i) the need for evolving a system of balanced and complementary land use; (ii) the need for checking denudation in the mountain regions and erosion in large areas; (iii) the need for establishing tree lands for amelioration of physical and climatic conditions; (iv) the need for ensuring supplies of grazing,

soft wood, and in particular firewood to release cow dung for manure; (v) the need for sustained supply of timber and other forest produce to meet national needs; and (vi) the need for realization of maximum annual revenue consistent with the fulfilment of above needs. [6] This Forest Policy emphasized the need for solving the requirements of the village people for forest produce.

After the attainment of independence the Government of India gave special attention in remodelling the management of Indian forests with the purpose of giving predominant role to the forests in promoting national welfare and development of nation. In order to create awareness among the people on forest and its importance for human existence and ensuring their support and co- operation in protecting them the Union Minister for Agriculture K.M. Munshi, started '*Vana Mahotsava*' a festival of planting trees in 1950. Inaugurating the programme he argued that the noblest and best in Indian culture was born in ashrams and suggested that *Vana Mahotsava* was not a poetic fancy nor a spectacular festival but a process of land transformation to recreate forests.[7]

It was the National Commission on Agriculture instituted by the Government of India in 1976 that proposed massive scale introduction of forestry with people's participation and the credit for coining the term social forestry goes to Westby who defined it as "Forestry which aims at producing flow of production and recreation benefits for the community."[8] Even though forestry has traditionally been assigned a backseat in the economic development of the country, the social forestry initiatives of the 1980s became one of the major programmes of national development and it attracted the attention of international funding agencies. Social forestry should be viewed not as a rigidly targeted tree planting programme to be achieved in a particular time frame, but as a complex process of interaction with farmers, all geared towards improved standards of rural living. The first Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru believed in the dictum "a growing tree is a symbol of a progressive nation." Social forestry has been part of Indian national forest policy since the mid 1970s. [9]

The National Commission on Agriculture in its final report reviewed the prevailing forestry situation in the country. The report suggested that

by taking up the programme of raising trees, grasses and fodder in the farmers own lands, village commons, wastelands and degraded forests close to habitations, it would be possible to meet the requirements of fuel wood, fodder, soft timber for small housing and agricultural implements, thorns for fencing, etc. On the basis of the recommendations of the commission social forestry programmes were strengthened in various parts of the country. During the Fifth Five Year Plan a central social forestry scheme embracing degraded government forest land and village common land. The social forestry programme has received sufficient budgetary allocations since sixth five year plan and social forestry plantation scheme came to be included in the state sector. The plan proposed to encourage the programme for ecological security; fuel, fodder and other domestic needs of the population and village small scale industries. [10]

The government succeeded in strengthening the programme by procuring financial assistance from different international funding agencies. They included the World Bank, the Food and Agricultural Organizations (FAO) the United State Agency for International Development (USAID), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the Overseas Development Administration (ODA), and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). The total external assistance for the social forestry projects over the decades 1980-1990, was about Rs.10 billion. In 1984, the World Bank approved the Indian National Social Forestry project for $165 million. A review of the project document reveals the main objectives as follows: (1) to increase production of fuel wood, soft timber, poles and fodder. (2) To increase rural employment, farmer's incomes and opportunities for participation by landless people. (3) To increase the forest cover (4) to strengthen forestry institutions.

Several states, viz., Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, etc., started various social forestry programmes during the second and third five-year plan periods. In Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh forest department started raising plantation along canal and river banks as early as in 1956 for preventing erosion and increasing the supply of timber and firewood. In 1960, a programme of planting village

wastelands was started in Tamil Nadu, UP, Gujarat and some other states. Under this scheme, village common lands, government wastelands, etc were planted with trees yielding fuel and fodder in UP, Haryana, Gujarat and Punjab. Gujarat was perhaps the first state to create a separate social forestry wing in the forest department to give organizational support to the programme. Since then other states have also created social forestry wings in state forest department.

Social Forestry in Kerala

The high population pressure necessitated large scale developmental activities coupled with increased production of food and other materials, led to the large scale felling of forests in Kerala. A peculiar system that prevailed in Kerala was a practice in which people planted tree saplings in the same land along with agriculture and horticulture. This combined system helped the people to attain more earnings.[11]As part of the implementation of the report of National Commission on Agriculture several states initiated ambitious social forestry projects availing generous loans from international aid agencies and World Bank. Following this a Social Forestry Department was constituted in Kerala in the year 1982, with the launch of World Bank aided Social Forestry project. For administrative convenience the social forestry wing was divided into three circles. They are southern districts which include Kollam Circle, Middle parts of Kerala including Ernakulum circle and northern parts of Kerala including Kozhikode circle Social Forestry. The National Forest Policy envisages at increasing the extent of forests to 33% of the land area.[12] This target was against the national average of above 20% of forest cover. Even though Kerala could maintain about 28.39% of land area under forest cover, it was difficult for the state to achieve the national target where the per capita land area is 0.122 hector, and the per capita forest area is 0.035 hectare. The only possible solution was to increase the tree cover in the non- forest areas.

Excessive human pressure on forests satisfying the requirements of firewood, soft timber, manure and fodder was identified as a reason for forest degradation in Kerala. Hence a strategy of production of short rotation trees in community lands and private land reduce the pressure to

traditional forest to meet their needs. Many international agencies gave help to the social forestry projects all over the country. In Kerala, the assistance was given by the World Bank. The state of Kerala is known for higher literacy rate and prevalence of social consciousness where environmental protection committees, Non Governmental Organisatons and private individuals very often raise their concerns over the depletion of forest wealth and destruction of environment. The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held at Stockholm from 5 to 16 June 1972 helped to create a strong environmental awareness. The agitations like the Silent Valley in late 1970s helped in the creation of eco friendly and environment friendly mind in Kerala. Environmentalists and environmental lovers strongly argue that commercial forestry and the plantations is a colonial product which should be opposed. For them the cause of all environmental problems is deforestation and the solution to the problem is to control tree felling inside the forests and plant trees in the possible places outside the conventional forest.

The social forestry activities were started in Kerala from 1980 with a centrally sponsored Rural Fuel Wood Scheme.[13] This programme was followed by National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP). An effective and massive programme on social forestry was started in Kerala in 1984 with the help of World Bank with an estimated outlay of about Rs 600 million for a period of six years. [14]In the initial stages special attention of the social forestry was given to farm forestry and plantation forestry. Along with it tribal welfare measures, extension and training activities and civil works were also undertaken. Till 1984 the quantity of saplings to be handled was very low and hence the distribution was done by the social forestry department directly. After the implementation of World Bank aided social forestry project the quantity of saplings was increased and the department had to depend on the NGOs for distribution. [15] As the part of the social forestry activities in the farm forestry sector, regular monitoring and evaluation activities were carried out by the social forest department. Field survey is done for ascertaining survival rate, attitude of the farmers and future requirements.

Along with farm forestry plantations have been raised in the available lands, though in small patches. In the lands belonging to the government or semi government bodies, the tree planting activities have been carried out not only to provide fuel, fodder, timber, and manure but also to make the barren areas green for environmental protection. Saplings were planted in the larger plantations of the reserved forest areas where the soil is highly degraded and eroded with scanty or no vegetation. Species like *Acacia*, *Auricluliformis, Swietenia Macrophylla* and *Casuarinas Eqisetifolia* were planted in these areas. Within three years the barren areas get closed with the fast growth of acacia. Strip plantation or tree planting done in the form of strips along the sides of roads, canal banks, by the sides of railway lines and coastal areas were implemented in the beginning. These strip plantations were raised in the lands of various government departments. For protecting the trees planted under this scheme fencing facilities have been used. Under this programme fruit trees, flowering trees, shade trees, medicinal trees and timber trees were planted.

Agro-forestry or the practice of agriculture and forestry on the same piece of land was experimented as part of social forestry programme. Agro-forestry is a sustainable management system for land that increases overall production that combines agricultural crops, tree crops and forest plants.[16] This system was implemented in 90 colonies of Kerala for the benefit of 2058 families till December 1990. The tribal fuel wood plantations were raised under the social forestry programme for the benefit of tribal communities who were given permission to collect fuel woods. Fuel wood species like casuarinas *equisetifolia, grevillea robusta, acacia auriculiformics* etc. were planted in the tribal areas that guaranteed them employment opportunities as well. The tribal medicinal plant schemes were started in 1984 that ensured the tribal people employment opportunities with wages and utilisation of the sale amount for the welfare of tribal colonies. Mulberry plantations have risen during 1990-1991 on an experimental scale in the lands belonging to the scheduled castes and tribes in Idukki district. The extent is about 55 hectors covering three colonies.

Among plantations raised under the World Bank Aided Social Forestry

Project, Large Block Plantations were 15841 ha, Small Block Plantations were 2087 ha, Strip and Coastal Plantations were 776 ha, Tribal Fuel wood Plantations were 1592 ha and Tribal Mixed Plantations 113 ha. Survey conducted by Kerala Forest Research Institute revealed that the plantations raised under the World Bank aided Social Forestry Programme in forests and public lands, survival rate of seedlings was 80 percent at 1.5 years where as the survival rate of seedlings supplied house compounds in 1987 was estimated as 38.5 percent. The significance of the social forestry programmes initiated in Kerala mainly lies in the achievements of the specialised projects having emotional touch with the people.

Special Programmes of Social Forestry in Kerala

Ente Maram Padhathi (My Tree Programme)

The Entemaram Programme is one of the innovative programmes to revive the green cover of Kerala launched by the Government of Kerala. Alarmed over the massive degradation of its green cover, Kerala has introduced a social forestry project aimed at promoting a love for nature among the student community. The programme was conceived by the state Forest department. Under the 'My Tree' programme, around two million students from Classes 5 to 9 had planted trees in their household premises and school campus. 'My Tree', the world's biggest forestation project, had been launched on World Environment Day, June 5, 2006.[17] The then Kerala Forest Minister Binoy Viswam was the mastermind of this programme. He took keen interest in implementing this environmental project. The forest department had provided saplings of around 25 varieties of trees including *teak, jackfruit, anjili (Artocarpus hirsuta)*, and *gooseberry* that would be planted as part of the programme. Around two million children from schools across the state had planted a tree each and took good care of it.[18] All the students had been supplied with a dairy to record their treatment and the stages of growth as they observed.

From the year 2008 onwards Kerala Forest Department decided to supply 10, 0000 saplings to students every year. When 24.35 lakhs seedlings were planted by school children throughout the State on 5 June

2007 (The World Environment Day), it became a record. The successful implementation of this scheme was recognized at national level and was awarded the Indira Priyadarsini Vrikshamithra Award- 2007. During the year 2008-09 a total number of 977726 seedlings were distributed under the scheme in which 5691 schools involved. During 2009-10, again in the similar way as in the year 2008-09, 7.99 lakh seedlings were distributed to students from 5583 schools. To provide encouragement to the Schools for their involvement in implementation of Entemaram Padhathi, the Vanamithra Award 2008 (Rupees One lakh) of Kerala Forest Department was instituted to be conferred on the school showing best participation and involvement in the implementation of Entemaram Padhathi. For the year 2007-08, the award was shared among the two schools.

Nammude Maram Paddhathi (Our Tree Programme)

With the success of 'Entemaram Programme' involving school children of Standard V to IX during the year 2007-08, the Govt authorities decided to take up another massive tree planting programme involving Plus Two and College Students during the year 2008-09. This programme is named as 'Nammudemaram Padhathi. The 'Nammudemaram Padhathi' was launched on 10 June 2008. This Programme is being implemented in Govt. Colleges, Govt. Aided Colleges, Technical Educational Colleges, Vocational Higher Secondary Schools, Recognized Self-financing Colleges and Plus Two Higher Secondary Schools. Under this programme required seedlings have been supplied to the Educational Institutions by the Social Forestry wing. The students have planted the seedlings in the college and school campuses. The planting of seedlings their protection and maintenance etc will be the responsibility of those concerned Educational Institutions, its teachers and students concerned.

During the year 2008-09 a total of 555613 numbers of seedlings was distributed to 2323 various educational institutions under Nammudemaram Padhathi. Similarly during the year 2009-10, 5.01 lakhs seedlings were distributed to students of the 1906 educational institutions. A total of 10.57 lakhs seedlings was distributed under this scheme during the year 2008-09 & 2009-10. The average survival percentage was found to be 68% under the scheme. For this programme, necessary seedlings were

supplied to the Educational Institutions by the Social Forestry wing before June 10, 2008. The students planted the seedlings, on the college/school campuses. The planting of seedlings, their maintenance and protection were the responsibility of those Educational Institutions, teachers and students. During the year 2008-09 a total of 555613 numbers of seedlings was supplied to 2323 educational institutions of various categories under Nammudemaram Padhathi. This scheme was proposed to be continued during the year 2009-10.[20]

Vazhiyora Thanal Paddhathi (Shade of Road Side Programme)

This is the project of avenue planting, with shade trees. The Scheme was initiated with the participation of head load workers belonging to various Trade Unions. About 92000 seedlings were planted during the first year 2007-08. Hence due to the absence of promised support from the head load workers of the various Trade Unions, this programme did not reach up to the expectation level of Forest Department. During 2008-09, 10000 bigger size seedlings (about 4ft. height) were planted and tree guards provided. During 2009-10, 20000 taller seedlings were planted with tree-guard along the major roadsides. The total number of seedlings distributed under this scheme during three years from 2007-08 to 2009-10 was 1.22 lakhs.

The average survival percentage was found to be 88.5 % under the scheme for the year 2008-09 & 2009-10. `Vazhiyora Thanal' scheme aimed at "greening" major road sides in Kerala by planting shade and fruit trees on the sides of carriage ways. Nearly 1,524 km. of the National Highway, 4,810 km. of State Highway, 23,170 km. of major district roads and 1, 04,257 km. of village roads were identified for the large-scale social forestry exercise.[21] Under this programme the trees were planted at a distance of 50 meters. Around 4,20,000 *Teak*, "*Poo Maruthu", Techoma, Singapore Cherry, Kani Konna, Chamatha, Neem, Mango, Mahogany, Chara Konna, Rain Tree, Silver Oak, Anjili and Kambakam* saplings were planted along Kerala's road network.

Haritha Theeram Paddhathi (Green Shore Programme)

The Forestry Activities, which included creation of bio-shield along

the coast by raising shelterbelt plantations, are being implemented through the Theera Samrakshana Vanavalkarana Smithies (TSVS). The Theera Samrakshana Vanavalkarna Samithies (TSVS) are formed under Charitable Societies Act with the involvement of all the local residents of that coastal ward. At least one adult member from all the families in that coastal or ward area became a member of TSVS. The Panchayath ward member or ward councillor is the Chairman of the Samithy and one Forest Official is the Secretary to this committee.[22] The Fisheries and Revenue officials became ex-officio members and representatives of NGOs are the members of the TSVS. The project was launched on 16 August 2007 and completed in December 2009. Since then 132 TSVS had been formed and registered in nine coastal districts during the year 2007-08 to 2009-10 and an extent of 163 ha area in 106 coastal wards covering all the nine coastal districts had been afforested for creation of bio-shield of casuarinas. The total number of casuarinas seedling planted was 16.34 lakhs. implemented in 87 coastal wards in the village panchayats of Thikkodi, Azhiyur, Cherode, Payyoli, Chengottukavu, Chemencherri, Elathur, Beypore and Moodadipanchayats; Koyilandy and Vadakara municipalities; and the Kozhikode Corporation

Haritha Keralam Paddhathi (Green Kerala Project)

Kerala Forest Department with the co- operation of Local Self Government institutions and education department implemented the Haritha Keralam Padhathi in 2009. The main aim of this programme is to plant more trees in government land and non-forest areas. For the successive implementation of this programme the government ensured the co operation of NREG Workers in the state. The target of this programme was to plant one crore trees. Wood trees like *Teak, Mahagani,anjili, Venga and tempavu,Medicinal trees like vep,nelli,ashokam,kanikkonna,nd kuvalam*, Industrial trees *like Kattadi,Bamboo,silver oke,white pine and supporta, the fruit bearing trees like Mango tree, jack fruit tree* etc were protected under this programme.

Schoolil Oru Oushadha Thottam (A Medicinal Garden in the School)

The State Medicinal Plant Board (SMPB) implemented a project named "Setting up of Herbal Garden on Schools" through the Social Forestry wing of Forest Department at the cost of Rs. 15.12 lakhs. The approximate number of schools in each district is fixed as 20 and the cost per school will be Rs. 8000. The Social Forestry wing of Kerala Forest Department raised the required seedlings of medicinal plants and got the seedlings planted and maintained by the school authorities.

The above project was implemented in all the districts of the State except Kannur and Thrissur at a total cost of Rs. 15.12 lakhs. An amount of Rs. 1, 26,000 and each had been allotted to all the districts for raising good quality seedlings of medicinal tree species. The scheme was implemented during the year 2009-10 and continued during the year 2010-11. Rs. 13.09 lakhs was spent under the scheme.

Harithasree Programme

As part of the Participatory Environment Action Programme (PEAP), Government of Kerala started a special community initiative titled "Harithasree" aimed at wide participatory tree planting during the Green Hour 10.30 am – 11.30 am on the World Environment Day 2014. Planting of one million trees during the above designated green hour involving various sections of society was envisaged under the programme. The tree planting initiative undertaken under Harithasree was built on the philosophy "Oru Manushyanu Oru Maram".

This programme envisaged as a plant-and-nurture initiative so that planting leads to establishment and increase in tree cover and citizens will be encouraged such that "each person should plant at least one tree on World Environment Day and nurture it till it gets established." Under the above scheme about 34 lakh of seedlings of various species were distributed free of cost to various citizens, citizen groups, institutions, media, other departments etc throughout Kerala. Large scale participation of various sections of society including students, educational institutions, SPC, NSS, Army, Navy, Railways, Medias, other departments, NGOs,

Kudumbasree etc made the programme a great success. Of the 34 lakh of seedlings distributed, 19.50 lakh were planted during the green hour and balance seedlings were planted subsequently.

Findings and Conclusion

Trees and forests have always been considered as an integral part of the Indian culture. Planting of trees was regarded as a noble act during the ancient times. Now, due to increasing population and huge gap between demand and supply, forests were ruthlessly exploited to meet the increasing demand of fuel, fodder, timber, making habitat for human beings and other development activities. Hence, in the light of ever increasing demand, concept of multiple use of land with multipurpose tree species has become immensely important.

Growing trees in home gardens, farmlands, sacred places, along the shores of rivers and roads is an old age practice in the state of Kerala. Such trees have been important source for timber, fuel wood, fruit, fodder shade and shelter. The emphasis to plant more trees outside forests increased after the launch of social forestry programmes in India in late 1970s. The basic theme of the social forestry project was to plant trees in non forest traditional lands, private as well as public, for meeting the domestic needs of local people through the involvement of the people.

Social forestry is the activity to improve the quality of rural life. This activity has the potential of bringing about an economic revolution in the rural areas. Social forestry is the hope for saving our fast depleting forest from complete destruction. In Kerala non government organisations played a very predominant role in the implementation of social forestry initiatives. It has a place everywhere, perhaps it may be a farm, a factory, a school, an office and industry, a temple or a graveyard, be it a road, a canal or a railway line side. The environmental awareness and tree planting campaigns of government departments and non-governmental agencies helped create a positive attitude towards the people of Kerala.

After 1980 the Social Forestry wing of Forest Department in Kerala implemented many programmes with the help of international, national and state government funds. After 1990 the social forestry wing of the

forest department implemented some mass campaigns with people's participation. *Entemaram* programme is an entirely different programme compared with other programmes that were implemented here. Due to students participation it got worldwide fame. This programme was a success because it created awareness among the minds of young generation. Around 80 social forestry programmes were implemented in Kerala from the time of its inception to the present. These programmes were implemented with the help of central and state funds. The World Bank aided social forestry project in Kerala started in 1984 and created a momentum on the implementation of social forestry project effectively in Kerala.

Regarding the protection of trees planted through social forestry it can be inferred that only 50 percentages of protection activities were effective in protecting trees planted by social forestry except *Ente Maram, Nammude Maram and Vaziyora Thanal* programmes. Lack of awareness on the government programmes on deforestation is a handicap which needs to be addressed properly. The co-ordination between various stakeholders like forest department and agriculture department is very necessary for the successful implementation of the schemes. At the beginning there was no proper response to social forestry in the villages and they were unaware about the future results of social forestry.

However the social forestry projects helped to improve environmental condition of the state and protect agriculture from adverse climatic factors; increased the supply of fuel wood for domestic use, small timber for rural housing, fodder for livestock and minor forest produce for local industries; increased the natural beauty and raised the ethical value of environment; provided employment opportunities for unskilled people in the rural areas and above all effectively utilized the unusable land in the state.

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