The Forest Resources of Kalahandi District - Past, Present and Future

Manoranjan Pattanayak

Introduction

The District Kalahandi was previously known as Karond. According to Lieutenant Elliot Deputy Commissioner, Raipur (1856) 'This dependency is known on the Nagpur side of the Kharonde (Karond), the Oriya name being Kalahandi, and there is no place or village corresponding to the former name it would appear to be corruption of the latter. Since 1905 when the territory formed of Bengal Presidency the name Kalahandi is commonly used. The district of Kalahandi occupies the south west portion of Orissa. It is bounded on the north by Bolangir district, South by Nowrangpur district and on east by Khondamal district and on west Chhatishgarh state. Bhawanipatna is the headquarter of the district is named after the presiding deity Bhawanisankar Mahadev.

The Word Forest is derived from the Latin word 'Foris' meaning outside, the reference being to a village boundary or fence. The palebotanical evidence testifies to the fact that there were dense forests in India in the Permean period 250 millions years ago. The Fossil evidence of a tree found in Raniganj Coal Field is nearly 30 meters long and 75 cms in diameter at butt end and 35 cms at the top end. It has been named by Dr Birbal Sahni as Dadoxylon, an extinct genus of plant. The Oxford meaning of Forest says" Large areas of trees and undergrowth."

The forest resources can be studied in two different period:

a. Pre-Independence period
b. Post-Independence period

Forest in pre-Independence period:

Dr. Dietrich Brandis, a German national who is also the 1st Inspector General of Forest of India introduced the first scientific management of Forest in India. Then Dr. Voelker another German Expert submitted a report in 1893 to the Government. The Govt accepted it and the first Forest Policy of British India came up in 1884. The sole object with the state forest are administered is public benefit. It was managed as commercial purpose as a revenue to State. Ordinarily if a demand for agriculture land arises, it can be met from Forest alone.

So Forest were regarded as a sources for earning revenue. So massive deforestation started and large scale felling of trees were done for construction of railway sleepers or timbers used for construction of Ships for British navy. So the history of India saw biggest loss to the forest during the British times.
Forest in Erstwhile Kalahandi State:
The Forest was managed in Ex-Kalahandi State by the Ruling Chief called Maharaja by his own rules known as "The Forest Rules for Kalahandi State" Here very specific guidelines regarding scientific management of Forest and punishment for the timber smugglers are formulated. The Forest were classified as:

1. Reserved Forest or Closed Forest
2. Khesra Forest or Nistar Forest

Reserved Forest or Closed Forest:
The Dewan will specify the limit of such Forest. No person is allowed to enter inside the Forest. Any person who enters a Forest and sets fire to forest, fells lops or burns any tree, queries stone etc. shall be punished with imprisonment for six months with fine not exceeding Rs.500 or with both.

Khesra Forest or Nistar Forest:
The following classes are declared to be reserved in Khesra Forest and demarcated Nistar Forests, and no person is entitled to cut the same without permission. List of Reserved (Baran) trees in Khesra Forest:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common name</th>
<th>Botanical name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Saguan or teak</td>
<td>Tectona grandis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sal</td>
<td>Shorea robusta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sissoo</td>
<td>Dalbergia laatifolia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Bija</td>
<td>Pterocarpus marsupium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sahaj</td>
<td>Terminalia tomentosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Khair</td>
<td>Acacia catechu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides other species like Asan, Harda, Kendu, Kusum, Sunari, Tental, Char, Panas, Aam, and Mahul were reserved trees in the Khesra Forest. The persons were not allowed to cut the above trees for the protection of the Forest by the King.

Schedule of rates for firewood, charcoal and bamboos in Kalahandi state:

**FIREWOOD**
1. For regular sellers
   a. For each headload 6 anas per month
   b. For each Kawar load 12 anas per month
   c. For each cart load 4 rupees per month

**CHARCOAL**
   a. For each head load 12 anas per month
   b. For each Kawar load 1 rupee 8 anas per month

**BAMBOO**
   a. For head load only 4 anas per month

This was the rules framed by the Ruling Chief of Kalahandi State in the pre-merger times.

Forest in Post-independence period:
After India got Independence in 1947, the first National Forest Policy was prepared in 1952. It suggested that one third of the land mass should be covered under Forest. It stressed the demand for clearance of Forest for extension of Agriculture.

The last and current forest policy came up in 1988. It suggested that the mountain region should have 66% of land area. This policy recommends sharing of forest revenue with the local people. Basing upon the principles of Forest policy 1988 the idea of Vana Samrakshan Samiti (V.S.S.) came up subsequently in 1992. It emphasized the partnership approach in protection of Forest with Forest Department and the village communities. In turn the village community will get some usufructory benefits from the Forests.
Till now 891 V.S.S. were formed in Kalahandi district with 63,716.52 ha of Forest land were given to the villagers for protection of Forests.

**Causes of Forest depletion**

There are various reasons for the depletion of Forest. Some of the reasons are as under:

1) *Shifting cultivation:*

Ever since the dawn of civilization, man has learned to cultivate the land for obtaining food for its livelihood. Then due to population explosion the demand for agriculture land also increased. Then the human being started entering into the forest area and cultivated the forest land. After harvesting two or three crops the fertility of the soil is reduced, So the people abandoned the old place and a fresh forest area is selected. Because the people shift from one area to another, this method of cultivation is called as the shifting cultivation. In Orissa the people clear/fell the forest growth and burn the area before cultivation, So it is called Poduchas in Oriya. The Kuduki Patta were also issued by the Maharaja of Kalahandi State during pre-merger period prior to 1st April 1948. In Kalahandi the shifting cultivation is practiced in Ampani, Th.Rampur and Biswanathpur area.

2. *Industrialization:*

Due to rapid spread of industrial development, forest cover is depleting drastically. Till December 2000, total 50,496.4999 ha of forests land were diverted for non-forestry purposes. Here industrialization is taking place at the cost of the Forest.

3. *Illicit felling:*

Due to growing demand of fuel wood heavy illicit felling and removal of trees from the forest area is taking place.

**Forest types in Kalahandi district:**

The Forest of Kalahandi displays a great floristic diversity due to wide variation in topography, altitude, climate, rock and soil. Mostly it is tropical in nature. There is no rain forest. The remarkable feature of the forest flora is the presence of sal, the only member of family-Dipterocarpaceae.

According to Champion and Seth's classification of Forests, following types and sub-types are found in Kalahandi district. Forest type may be defined as a unit of vegetation which possesses (broad) characteristics in physiognomy and structure sufficiently pronounced to permit of its differentiation from other such units. The major type groups are subdivided into types on a geographical basis since a recognizable type group varies somewhat with locality owing to differences in floristic and minor variations in climate and site occurring within the range associated with each group-type as a whole.

1. **Tropical moist deciduous forest:**

   The forest type are seen in Th. Rampur, Junagarh, Narla area, some plant species are Kangada, (Xylia xylocarpa), Chatian (Alstonia scholaris), Haldlu (Adina cordfolia), Sahaj (Terminals tomentosa), Bija (Pterocarpus maaarpium), Jamun (Syzygium cuminii), Terminalia arjuna and Terminalia belerica etc.

2. **Tropical dry deciduous forest:**

   This type is found in Kegaon, Dharmagarh and Kesinga area. Some plant associates are:- Boswellia serrata, Delbergia paniculata, Emblica officinalis. Acacia catechu, Cassia fistula, Clestanthus collinus, Lagersstroemia paravfolia etc.
3. **Dry Bamboo brakes:**

It is found in Karalapat area. The bamboos are found forming a pure crop in steep and dry hills, which were subjected to shifting cultivation in the past. The common species is Dendrocalamus strictus. Besides the above types, there are some sub-types also exist.

**Non Timber Forest Produce (N.T.F.P.)**

Forest dwellers depend upon Non Timber Forest Produce (N.T.F.P.) for food, fodder, fuel wood, fruits etc. The bamboo and Kenduleaf trade are controlled by the Government itself. The tribal people collect seeds of Sal, Char, Kusum, Harida, Bahada and Amla from the forests and sell in the local market or to the traders to earn their livelihood. It is observed that these tribal people do not get the price fixed by the Govt. and the traders get the benefit. The Govt. of Orissa announced the NTFP policy in March 2000 "Policy on Procurement and Trade of NTFP" and handed over 68 items to Gram Panchayats. But it is observed that most of the representative of Gram-Panchayat are not aware of the policy. Out of 68 items only 10 to 15 items are traded in Kalahandi district. According to this policy each trader has to deposit Rs.100.00 per item at Panchayat office for procurement of item per one year. The procurement season starts from the month of October and continues upto September next year. The rate of NTFP items will be decided at Panchayat Samiti for one year only. But it is hardly done and the traders are collecting it at their sweet will. The drastic loss of revenue in the NTFP items is caused due to ignorance of the Panchayats.

**Conclusion:**

In spite of all the efforts at Govt. level, the Forest cover in India is depleting. But it is matter of pleasure that the forest cover of Kalahandi district has increased. Another important thing is the resemblance of Forest type with the Madras Flora. So the Forest of Kalahandi has more affinity with the South India rather the North Indian type.

**References :**


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Manoranjan Pattanayak is working as Range Officer, Kesinga in the district of Kalahandi.