

“Bamboo and the environment”- The grass grows in balaghat

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ABSTRACT

Bamboos play very important role in the socio economic and culture lives of Balaghat District there are bamboo resource available throughout the district in natural as well as plantation forest .Mostly planted by farmers in their own yards and by the community in communities forest lands Bamboo is an integral part of the lives of the tribal people living in the Balaghat district of Madhya Pradesh .Bamboo in crucial as material for very large number of house hold and utility items and also as a source of income (both in cash and kind) for same .For these reason bamboo is an ideal starting point for a people centered development approach .A craft tradition is in existence in the area and the resource is available locally at low cost there is local market for bamboo articles and scope for expanding the market for these goods .starting with a better definition of the resource base indigenous knowledge about the resource and an improved understanding of the opportunities and constraints in processing and marketing bamboo products, the paper aims to use bamboo as a tool to strengthen tribal culture and provide a means to deal with market forces in a rapidly changing world.The bamboos are an incredibly versatile and useful group of plants. Bamboos have been used by people in imaginative and widely varied ways where ever they are found they have long histories of use and play important roles in the daily lives of millions of people .Further more and especially important in these days of rapid environmental degradation they are highly renewable resource .Therefore research on bamboo can help improve the efficiency of production, processing and marketing of bamboo products and stimulate development.

“Development” and that ubiquitous term sustainable development have been defined in almost as many ways as bamboo is used without going into semantic,”development”in its essence means improving human welfare and “sustainable development” means improving human welfare without degrading environment.

Keyword :- the environment, the resource, communities

Introduction:-In Asia bamboo take the character of "poor men's timber" since for many people, bamboo growing, harvesting and processing are essentially subsistence activities. Bamboo is a fundamental part of people's overall livelihood strategies .In some cases, bamboo may be mainly for home consumption, as raw material for shelters, fences, bridges, fish pens or even water pipes.Bamboo products have high value in use. Without bamboo these products have to be constructed from another less suitable materials, or purchased, using scarce cash resources, from outside. There are also millions of people who depend on bamboo for part or all of their income .For example, in India, it is estimated that there are two million traditional bamboo artisans. Their livelihoods depend almost entirely on the harvesting, processing and selling of bamboo and bamboo products such as basket, mats and handicrafts.

Balaghat is in the south eastern portion of the state of Madhya Pradesh. The district is situated within 21.19'to 22.24'North latitude and 79 .31 to 81.3' East longitudes the total area of Balaghat is

9245sq.km.According to 2011 census total population of district is 1701698.The important resource of Balaghat is its forest land. The district is also rich in mineral deposits like Manganese, Bauxite and Copper. The important tourist places are Kanha National Park, Lanji Fort/Temple Dhuti dam Gangulpara Reservoir etc.

Bamboo At The Rural Level:-There are several reasons why bamboo is so closely associated with the lives of many poor people. To begin with, raw material has been available at low cost. Large amounts of material still come from natural stands, often on state lands.Indeed, part of the problem encountered in managing bamboo resources is that they have often been treated as “free goods” and so have been over exploited. Bamboo is also relatively easy to cultivate and manage; it is especially good for sloping lands and other land that is unsuitable for agriculture-the kind of land that the poor are often related to. Furthermore, there are traditional low - cost processing technologies available and ready

markets for the many products which can be fashioned from these versatile plants. Entry into the industry is relatively easy with low overhead costs, and relatively low skill requirements, poor people can create job themselves. In many cases, the timing of the work can be synchronized with periods in which people would otherwise be unemployed or under -unemployed. Handicraft work can be done at home , making it ideally suitable for women's who must stay at home to perform domestic duties but who have period of spare time . For many , the sale of bamboo is one of very few opportunities to generate cash income in otherwise subsistence economies: it is the money that is needed to pay for school fess and supplies , agriculture inputs ,medicine, and good from the cash economy.

Bamboo In Small And Mediium Scale Enterprises:- Bamboo is important as a tool for development because it is not only a "poor man's crop", but also a raw material in an increasing number of high value consumer goods and building material. Some, including involvement large scale, and especially international, markets. However to be effective products which people abandon as soon as they have access to or can afford better substitute-"inferior goods" in the lexicon of the economist-bamboo provides an impressive range of products, for which there is a steady or increasing demand. Therefore, there are many possible points and types of intervention along the bamboo production -to-consumption system which can be used to influence the system for the benefit of the target groups. Overcoming poverty requires creating employment and income generating opportunities. In an increasingly market-oriented, cash based world, people need access to cash income. Bamboo is an important commodity in the cash economy. Growing demands translate into jobs within the processing sub-sector, and increase the demand and cash income in the raw material production sub-sector.

Research has shown that small and medium-scale forest based enterprises are very significant providers of employment and income, and within that sector bamboo industry is a major component. One of the major advantages of bamboo as an entry point to development is the fact that so many products can be produced from it, and most of them can be produced by small and medium scale enterprises .Such enterprises can be established with modest capital investment ;the economies of scale are not nearly as high as in some other manufacturing industries They are labour-intensive industries, and result in large-scale employment generation.

Research For Development:- How can research help the people involved at various levels in the bamboo sector? How can one ensure that developments in the sector help poor people and do not leave them out?

To begin with, one needs to know much more about the bamboo industry, about who is involved and about the main problems they face. Unfortunately, bamboo has hitherto not been considered an important commodity and consequently, government bureaux of statistics have not kept good records. Gross inconsistency exist in the data in terms of: the definition of categories(one year bamboo products are lumped together with wick ware, in another year they are placed with handicrafts ,and it is impossible to know what portion is actually bamboo);differing units of measurement(number of culms and tones);lack of standard grading and classification system for bamboo raw material; in complete and out of inventory data; large gaps in time series; non-existent data on the people involved in the sector. These inherent weaknesses in the statistics are compounded by the systematic under reporting of production and consumption information, especially with regard to the large volume of material traded in informal markets which are never recorded in official statistics.

Statistical information is just the beginning; it is necessary for strategic planning and, perhaps for marshalling political support for bamboo. But one also needs to know much more about the constraints and the opportunities which exist in the bamboo sector, and to devise approaches to take advantages of them. At any level in the economy people face a range of constraints from the technical through to the economical and political.

Research, and especially extension, in the bamboo sector has been limited. Perhaps, this is because of its status as "poor man's crop", or because it falls through that big crack between traditional disciplines of agriculture and forestry, or because the statistics do not reveal how important it is to Research so far has focused primarily on technical aspects; reproduction silviculture and management, post harvest preservation and processing engineering characteristics etc. Such research has had important impacts, and has supported the growth of bamboo industry. However, the benefits have not always reached the very poor.

There is also a need to improve the way research is transmitted to those who need and use research result. In same way, researchers need to improve their understanding of the real problem faced by the people

working in the bamboo sector so that they ask the right questions. There is a large community of organizations - grassroots and NGO-which could become very effective partners in bamboo- based development.

Conclusion:- Rural bamboo cannot be separated from people. Unlike bamboo in research stations or conservation areas, rural bamboo has no meaning unless it is useful to rural people. For village-based enterprises, bamboo is the means not an end; it is one element in a complex system of rural relationship where human beings are more important. It is a natural vehicle to encourage sustainable, integrated farming system. It is an excellent resource on which to build a variety of income and employment-generating opportunities. With its multiple uses, and

high value in a range of products aimed at national and international markets, bamboo shows a great potential for value-adding operations. Consequently, rural bamboo has to be understood in the context of overall farming system and not in isolation from them. It also has to be understood from a range of prospective: not just the producer but other groups such as traders, processors and consumers. Awareness of these facts is important not just for a social scientist but also for natural scientists and all development practitioners. Approaches to identifying and solving problems should bring together a range of discipline; not to work on their own, but to work with the different sections of society who have an interest in bamboo.

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