

FOREST POLICY FORMULATION : A NEED TO REVIEW

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Background

The policy represents the will and vision of a nation or an individual. In precise terms it is defined as 'a course or a principal of action adopted or proposed by a government, party, business or an individual' to translate its vision into a concrete shape and form. It is a unique combination of the way and the direction to reach a defined goal. It embodies a set of objectives and strategies to fulfill the intentions of a nation or the wishes of an owner.

The history of the National Forest Policy formulation is more than a century old. It emerged from the need to have a planned and scientific management of forest resources. Over the years the policy formulation has been evolved into a set of well-defined objectives and strategies for the regulation and use of the forest resources. The first forest policy - National Forest Policy 1894 (hereinafter denoted as 1st Policy) was formulated by the Revenue and Agriculture Department. The policy enunciated general principles for the administration of the state forests. It prescribed functional classification of the state forests with the objective to govern treatment and focus attention to the kind and objective necessary in each class. It also provided guidelines for legal classification, such as, the Reserved Forests and the Protected Forests.

After independence, the nation had a new vision and goal for its progress and development. The new vision of the nation took the shape of a new forest policy entitled as National Forest Policy 1952 (hereinafter denoted as 2nd Policy). While agreeing with the fundamental concepts underlying the previous policy, it prescribed six paramount needs of the country which the forests were envisioned to fulfill. The policy also stressed 'functional classification' of forests while realising the multi-use character of the forests with the objective to achieve the highest efficiency in respect to the chief function assigned to each class. This policy enunciated the aim of one-third of total land area under the forest cover and provided for bringing non-forest tracts under forest cover to restore the hydrological nutritional balance of the country.

Over the years, the nation struggled through various developmental phases to self reliance in food, education, health, industry and basic infrastructure. The forests, along with other natural resources have to bear the brunt of the process of development. Moreover, the changed environmental scenario world over as well as resource conditions urged for a new outlook and approach for the management of forest resources. The new outlook took the shape of a policy entitled as the National Forest Policy 1988 (hereinafter denoted as 3rd Policy). The policy outlines the strategy of conservation for sustainable management

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of forest resources. Besides prescribing basic objectives that should govern the forest management it embodies a holistic approach - Essential of forest management - in place of functional classifications provided in previous policies. It has, categorically, recognised the role of minor forest produce in the sustenance of tribal populations as well as their first right on it along with its sustainable management and use. Keeping in view the prevailing environmental scenario, resource conditions and changed perceptions of the people the policy, indeed, embodies a major shift from the previous policies.

Since, formulation of the first National Forest Policy there had been tremendous changes in the perceptions and aspirations of the people. The major advances and evolution in the modes of resource management and use were also experienced during this period. These changes were not, adequately, incorporated in the policy formulation from time to time that made it irrelevant and handicap, to an extent, at the time of implementation. In order to make the forest policy formulation a holistic, professional and democratic process there is a need to have a fresh look and introspection into the existing process of policy formulation to give it a new shape and form.

Present Process of Policy Formulation

As per rules of business in government, policy formulation is the primary responsibility of the secretariat while its implementation is the responsibility of concerned department. The concerned department also provides the necessary technical support for policy formulation.

As per process in vogue whenever a

need of policy review or change is realised, an expert group for the purpose is constituted with definite terms of reference by the concerned ministry. The committee prepares a policy draft after wide consultations and discussions with individuals and groups who have stakes and concerns. After receiving the policy draft from the expert committee the ministry seeks opinions of States and other ministries on the policy draft and makes necessary amendments to incorporate their concerns. Thereafter, the policy draft is put before the Cabinet for consideration and approval. After seeking Cabinet approval the policy is enunciated by the concerned ministry by a government resolution.

A close perusal reveals that the process of policy formulation is, primarily, a bureaucratic exercise having little involvement of people and other stakeholders, including, the concerned department. It epitomizes a typical top-down approach having little scope for local issues and concerns.

The national policy is considered as a public document reflecting the wishes and concerns of the people of the entire nation. The constitution of India also prescribes an onerous role for everyone in regard to the protection and safeguard of forests and natural environment. Moreover, the spirit of democratic decentralization calls for the reversal and change of the present top-down approach to an approach more akin to the needs and concerns of the people. Thus, there is a need to decentralise, democratise and naturalise the process of policy formulation. The policy must grow from local areas and concerns to regional and subsequently to national concerns and shall assume natural shape and form.

Salient Features of National Forest Policy Formulation

The process of national forest policy formulation was initiated with the adoption of scientific management of forests in 1860s. The objective was to formulate general principles that should underlie the management of forests, so as, the forests shall serve the agricultural interest more directly. Dr. Voelcker's report on the Improvement of Agriculture and Inspector General of Forest's report on Review of Forest Administration provided the required basis for formulation of National Forest Policy 1894. Since then we have two more policies viz. National Forest Policy 1952 and National Forest Policy 1988. The later two policies were formulated after independence and reflect an urge for self-reliance, development and concerns for other life forms. Each policy document is a comprehensive set of noble ideas, concepts, principles and modes of its time.

The process of policy evolution is a unique mix of continuity and change, success and failure, progress and introspection as well as a process of learning and maturing for the entire nation and the department. The salient aspects of national forest policy and its evolution have been summed up under the following parameters.

A Set of noble objectives and innovative modes

Each forest policy document is a combination of latest ideas, noble objectives and innovative approaches. It embodies noble vision, pious intentions and ethical modes aiming at betterment of humanity and nature. Over the years, it has been observed that despite being noble and innovative in nature and form, each policy

had been questioned at the time of implementation. No policy has been understood and implemented in totality and spirit it was made. The field managers were not, adequately, oriented and made fully aware about the various aspects of the policy formulation in right perspective that caused problems and doubts in implementation.

Flexible and open ended

The policy is, indeed, a course to achieve the intended goal. The course outlined in each policy is flexible and open ended. It does not prescribe a fixed path to reach a fixed point but an open course to achieve the goal and objectives. It provides a broad vision the nation intends to achieve and indicates broad direction and strategy to guide planners, managers and people to direct their efforts in the right direction at the right pace.

Embodies a holistic treatment of forest resources

Each policy prescribes a holistic approach and concerted action to achieve the goal and objectives prescribed, therein. It is, indeed, a process that takes everything along with it, in harmony, to a desired direction alike a river tracing its course from its origin to the sea- the whole self. Each of the prescribed objectives should be seen as part of broad goal and vision provided, therein. Emphasis on areas out of context and proportion may not take us to a desired end and may prove risky in the process. The past experiences show that each policy has been a victim of emphasis and stress out of proportion to some areas at the cost of others to serve narrow gains. The nature and form of the course proposed needs to be understood in entirety and

perspectives to choose a right path and direction.

A unique mix of continuity and change

The process of National Forest Policy formulation is a strange mix of continuity and change. It has maintained a continuous but changing course conforming to the requirements and perceptions of the nation since its evolution. The process of continuity and change in the policy evolution has been summed up under the following parameters that form the basic constituents of a policy document.

1. The Basic Objectives

The National Forest Policy 1894 prescribes the public benefit as the sole objective of forest administration. It also prescribes regulation of rights and restriction of privileges of local inhabitants to a degree to be advantageous to the public at large.

The National Forest Policy 1952 prescribes the forests to fulfil the following vital needs (functions) of the nation:

- (i) Balanced and complementary land-use system.
- (ii) Checking: (a) Denudation in mountainous regions. (b) Erosion and ravine formation. (c) Invasion of sand dunes and sea-sands.
- (iii) Establishing tree-lands to ameliorate the physical and climatic conditions.
- (iv) Ensuring supply of grass, small wood and firewood for the local communities.
- (v) Sustained supply of timber and other

forest produce to defence, communication and industry.

- (vi) Realization of maximum annual revenue in perpetuity, in consistent with, the fulfillment of other needs.

To achieve these objectives in a wholesome manner 'tree consciousness' through National Vana Mahotsava Movement was prescribed. The management of private forests on scientific lines was given due importance along with providing provisions for meeting the needs of people and generation of symbiotic environment through tribal and forest-workers cooperatives.

The National Forest Policy 1952 was, indeed, a step in the direction of scientific management of forest resources and a welcome transformation in the process of forest policy evolution.

The National Forest Policy 1988 listed the following basic objectives that should govern management of forest resources:

- (1) Maintenance of environment stability through ecological restoration.
- (2) Conservation of natural heritage of the nation (bio-diversity).
- (3) Checking soil erosion in the catchment of rivers, lakes and reservoirs.
- (4) Checking extension of sand dunes and the coastal sands.
- (5) Increasing the forest / tree cover of the country.
- (6) Meeting the needs of rural and the tribal populations.

- (7) Increasing productivity of the forests through scientific inputs.
- (8) Encourage efficient utilization and substitution of wood.
- (9) Creating a massive people movement by involving women to achieve all the objectives and to minimize pressure on existing forests.

The principal aim is to ensure environment stability and maintenance of ecological balance, which are vital for sustenance of all life forms, human, animal and plants. The derivation of direct economic benefit must be subordinated to this principal aim.

A close scrutiny of the objectives reveals that forests are to be managed, primarily, for public benefit. The protection and conservation of sensitive and fragile regions/ tracts have been given due emphasis. Moreover, meeting the bona-fide needs of the local people has been given due place and importance in all the policy documents.

A close perusal of the objectives also reveals the positive changes incorporated in the policy formulation. The single objective of the 1st policy was expanded in the successive policies to focus attention on different aspects of resource management and use. Scientific management of forest resources has been given due place and importance in 2nd and 3rd policy. Moreover, the role of people in forest protection and management have been, categorically, recognized in the current policy is, indeed, a welcome change, keeping in view, the spirit of democratic decentralization and increasing awareness of people.

2. *Functional classification of forests*

For a planned and scientific management of forest resources the functional classification was proposed in the 1st and the 2nd policy. The objective was to provide basis for broad policy and treatment of each class as well as to focus attention to the kind and objective of management necessary in each case. The broad classification proposed in the 1st Policy is as follows:

- I - Forests essential for preservation of physical or climatic conditions.
- II- Forests required for commercial purposes.
- III - Minor forests.
- IV - Pasture lands.

The functional classification prescribed in the National Forest Policy 1952 with the objective to achieve highest efficiency in respect to the chief function assigned to each class is given, as under :

- A. Protection Forests.
- B. National Forests.
- C. Village Forests.
- D. Tree Lands.

The National Forest Policy 1988 does not prescribe any classification alike the previous policies. Instead, it prescribes the 'essentials of forest management' which are given as under:

- (i) Existing forests to be protected and its productivity improved.
- (ii) Diversion of productive agriculture lands should be discouraged.

- (iii) Conservation of biological diversity through PAs network.
- (iv) Provision of fuel, fodder and pasture in areas adjoining forests to prevent the depletion of forests beyond the sustainable limit.
- (v) The minor forest produce should be protected and improved to provide employment and income to local communities.

The 'essentials of forest management' is altogether a different approach of forest management than the forest classification proposed in previous two policies. It is an indicator of a professional and holistic treatment of entire forest resources. It takes into consideration the condition of resources, the need of conservation of bio-diversity, the bona-fide requirements of tribal and local communities and sustainable use of forest resources. It also places a limit on extension of forestry to non-forest areas.

3. *Minimum area under forest cover*

How much area should be under the forest cover is a debatable issue. Its origin may be traced to the cultural evolution of a nation. It is not purely a scientific or statistical issue. The 1st Policy does not fix any definite proportion under forest cover. It prescribed for the minimum area under forests to supply general forest needs of the country as well as to meet reasonable present and prospective forest requirements of neighborhood communities. It also prescribed preferential claims of agriculture on forest lands by stating that forest lands shall be released for agricultural purpose without hesitation except in category I and conditional in category II.

The National Forest Policy 1952 prescribed 1/3rd of total land area under forest cover as a national aim with the following variations, keeping in view, the ecologically fragile/sensitive areas as well as the agricultural productive tracts.

60% - Himalayas, Deccan and Mountainous regions.

20% - Plains (productive agricultural areas).

The policy also prescribes the need to combat the preferential claims of agricultural requirements on forest lands along-with taking difficult areas on priority basis to fill the deficient proportions.

The National Forest Policy 1988 prescribes a minimum 1/3rd geographical area under forests/tree cover as national goal with variation of 2/3rd of geographical area in hills and mountainous regions. The diversion of forest lands to non-forest use is subject to the most careful examination on lines of social and environment costs and benefits. Moreover, diversion of good and productive agricultural lands to forestry is to be discouraged.

A perusal of policy details reveals that no policy provides a sound scientific basis for the fix proportion prescribed, therein, the document. There is a need to evolve a sound basis, in consistent with, cultural ethos and prevailing constraints to prescribe a definite proportion under forest cover to meet the present and prospective demands of the people in a sustainable way and to restore the hydrological nutritional balance of the country.

4. *Scientific management of forest resources*

Each policy prescribed varying degree

of emphasis on scientific management of forests. The 1st Policy prescribed preparation of working plans or plans of operations for management of the forests.

The 2nd Policy prescribed the forests shall be managed through sound working plans based on sustained yield concept. It also focused emphasis on forest research and training of lower executive staff in technical skills for efficient forest management.

The current Policy also prescribes scientific management of forests. It, categorically, enunciates that no forest shall be worked without approved working plans and prescribes a limit for exercise of rights and concessions to a sustainable limits i.e. carrying capacity of forest areas. It also prescribes for initiation of specialized and orientation courses for developing better managerial skills. It focuses attention on forestry research and extension on scientific lines by defining priority areas. Furthermore, it prescribes for survey of forest resources on scientific lines for updating the information base for scientific forest management.

The scientific management of forests has evolved with each successive policy to give it a concrete and real shape for efficient management and use of forest resources.

5. *Wildlife and Bio-diversity conservation*

The forest policy has evolved, over the years, as a result of changed perceptions and world views of the people and the policy makers. The right to live and exist has been recognized and given due regards and place in the current policy for other life forms as well.

There is no mention of wildlife and bio-diversity conservation in the 1st Policy. It prescribed for preservation of areas on climatic and physical grounds and maintenance of integrity of the forests.

The 2nd Policy prescribed for protection of rare species, such as, Lions and Rhinoceros. Moreover, there is a provision for special act and setting up Sanctuaries and National Parks for regulation and protection of birds and animal life.

The 3rd Policy takes a holistic view of the forest management. It prescribes to take a special care for wildlife by including prescriptions for wildlife protection and conservation in forest management plans. There are provisions for 'corridors' to maintain genetic continuity and conservation of bio-diversity by creating a network of National Parks, Sanctuaries and Biosphere reserves.

The current policy is the result of changed world view of the nation that believes and regards the right of existence of other life forms along-with the human beings. It is, in fact, in tune to our cultural ethos, the spirit of which has been eclipsed for a short period under British rule. It also emphasizes that we should live and work with nature in harmony and give due respect to all life on earth. The process of policy evolution has grown in the real sense to seek its roots in the cultural soil of the nation for search of right path and direction for the future course.

6. *Protection and conservation of ecologically fragile areas*

The protection and conservation of ecological sensitive and fragile areas has

been the focus of policy formulation since its beginning. In each policy document, main focus has been placed on this aspect in the basic objectives as well as in strategy provided to achieve these objectives. The issue has been elaborated in details in the current and the previous policy. The increased focus and attention to this issue represents the concern of the nation, regarding, fragile and sick natural eco-systems and need to restore their health, richness and vitality. It is, indeed, a noble approach because the survival of mankind and other life forms depend on the health, richness and vitality of the natural eco-systems.

7. *The Forest education, research, training and extension*

The emphasis on forest education, research, training and extension has been focused in order to ensure scientific and professional management of forest resources. The forest education and training is essential to generate awareness and create capacities to manage and use forest resources on sustainable basis. The research support and extension has a prime role to play to achieve this objective. Increased emphasis on forest education in schools, universities and forestry training institutions through syllabi, training courses, oriental courses, seminars and workshops has been prescribed. The role of people in forest conservation has been recognized along-with the need to generate awareness about clean and healthy environment for clean and healthy living.

8. *The forest based industries*

There is a major shift in policy evolution, in regard to, meeting the raw material requirements of the industry. The

1st Policy emphasized the classification of valuable forest tracts for commercial purposes, in order to, cater the industrial need of the rulers. After independence, the forest resources were required for the development of the nation. The 2nd Policy formalized the process by prescribing a sustained supply of the timber to the industry.

The current policy once again has focused attention on the basic role of the forests. It prescribes that the principal aim of forest management is to maintain environmental stability and restoration of ecological balance in order to improve the health of life support systems. It also prescribes that industry shall not depend on the natural forests for its raw material demands. It prescribes that the industry should raise its raw material by motivating the farmers to raise trees on their marginal lands.

The industry plays a crucial role in the development of a nation. The health of the natural eco-systems is more crucial to industry, in the context of, prevailing resource conditions. The shift embodied in the current policy is in consonance with the need of the time and fragile conditions of the forest resources.

9. *Forests and people interface*

The 1st Policy prescribed that the forests are to be managed for the 'greatest advantages and convenience of the people' and consideration of income is secondary to the full satisfaction of the local needs. It also prescribed that the rights and concessions of the people shall be recorded in the Working Plans.

The 2nd Policy prescribed for the

creation of village forests for meeting the bona-fide needs of the villagers. It also prescribed for regulation of grazing and checking shifting cultivation. It provided for tribal cooperatives to instill direct interest of tribal in forest utilization.

The 3rd Policy recognizes the rights and concessions of local communities as a first charge on forest produce. It also prescribes to limit the use of rights and concessions to the carrying capacity of the forests. It prescribes for protection, regeneration and collection of minor forest produce along-with institutional arrangements for marketing. The policy also prescribes for creating a massive people's movement with the involvement of women for achieving the basic objectives and to minimize pressure on existing forests. It also stresses for creating harmonious and symbiotic relations between forests and the local communities dwelling in and around the forests. The trend is, in tune with, the process of democratic decentralization of governance intended through empowering Panchayati Raj Institutions by 73rd Amendment of the Constitution.

The gaps in the process of Policy Formulation

A close perusal of the policy documents reveals the gaps and inadequacies in the policy formulation that question its completeness, authenticity and make it handicap at the time of implementation. These gaps and inadequacies have been summed up in the forthcoming paras.

1. *Role of forest department and other sectors in policy formulation*

Keeping in view, the responsibility of the Forest Department in policy

implementation it is desirable that the Department shall play a key role in policy formulation as well. One can better appreciate various aspects of a policy and its implications if one is involved in its making from the very beginning. It also generates a sense of involvement and commitment to the cause and the vision enunciated in the policy document. Moreover, the national policy defines a role for each department as well as for each citizen of the nation. It is, therefore, essential that all the concerned departments shall play a significant role in policy formulation to give it a holistic shape and form. It will also ensure the commitment and involvement of other sectors in policy implementation.

2. *Role of people in policy formulation and implementation*

In the current approach of policy formulation there is little role for people in policy formulation and implementation. There is a need to transform the policy formulation to make it a people's program. The process needs to be reversed to give it a natural (bottom-up) and participatory shape at local, regional and national level. It will ensure the involvement of the people in policy formulation and implementation.

3. *Mechanism to ensure implementation*

A careful perusal of policy documents confirms that there is no mechanism to ensure its effective implementation. No time bound action program is provided for fulfillment of the objectives given in the policy documents. Furthermore, no definite roles and responsibilities have been defined. There is no mention of regular monitoring, review and evaluation in policy documents. It is, therefore, crucial that these modes

shall be incorporated in policy formulation to ensure its effective implementation in a given time frame. A list of instruments of implementation needs to be evolved and incorporated in the policy to ensure effective implementation.

4. *Role of the Constitution in policy formulation*

The Constitution of India embodies the aspirations and visions of the people. Besides, providing politico-legal framework for governance it guides policy formulation and provides strength to it as well. It provides provisions under 'Directive Principles' and 'Fundamental Duties' to protect and safeguard forests, wildlife and natural environs as follows.

Article 48A- The State shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.

Article 51A(g)- It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures.

The Article 48 A imposes a duty on the state to devise ways and means to protect and improve the environment, forests and wildlife of the country. The article 51 A (g) imposes a duty on every citizen to protect and improve natural environment, comprising, forests, lakes and wildlife as well as to have compassion for living creatures.

A close watch of the policy documents reveals that there is no mention or reference of constitutional provisions in the policy documents. It is a serious gap in policy

formulation that needs bridging to provide constitutional anchorage to the national forest policy.

5. *Role of Cultural traditions and practices in policy formulation*

The policy of a nation reflects its cultural maturity. Each nation has a unique tract of evolution and so are its relationship with other life forms and natural resources. We have a long and rich history of cultural evolution having deep roots and symbiotic relations with forests and natural environs. The Indian culture, in many ways resembles the nature's course of evolution. It is like an ocean or a jungle where the nature is seen in its, entirety, as a process of creation, preservation, destruction and assimilation in the great whole.

a. *Ancient Period* : The history of Indian cultural evolution is more than five thousand years old. It has struggled through various phases of making, breaking and synthesis to acquire its present shape and form. The Indus Valley Civilization flourished and, subsequently, perished, probably, due to unsustainable relationships with natural resources. The Vedic culture evolved from the ashes of Indus Valley Civilization attained harmony with nature. The people used to worship natural forces, trees and animals. The concept of *Trimurti* i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh is symbolic of natural process of evolution through creation, preservation and destruction. Vedic way of life was in fact the reflection of the way of the nature.

The forests were an important component of way of life of the people. As per the four stages of life proposed in Vedic literature more than half the life of an individual was used to pass in the jungles in

form of *brahamacharya*, for learning and *vanaprastha*, for seeking *moksha*. Thus, the forests were not only intimately associated with the life of the people but also were an integral part of their way of life.

The essence of yoga philosophy - the union of an individual soul with the Great Soul - the man with the nature - is the essence of Indian culture. It is based on the precept that nature is one in form and essence. All other things and beings are integral constituents of this integral whole. Therefore, the ultimate aim of each being and thing in this universe is to be one with the whole.

The man-nature harmony has been the central theme of the Puranas and stories of the Panchtantra. These stories embody the wisdom of bygone era that we can learn from nature, trees and animals. Many of the themes and concepts put forth are of eternal significance. The wisdom of bygone era needs to be assimilated in our way of living and working, in order to, nurture harmonious relations with nature.

The reformation movements of this period propagated harmony with nature, *ahimsa* and compassion for all life forms. Mahatma Buddha propagated love and compassion for all life forms and preached 'the middle path' for happy and blissful living. Ashoka carried forward this message of Buddha in action by planting trees and spreading this message. Later, the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi also preached and practiced *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* to generate awareness among masses for freedom and truthful living.

The Kautilya's *Arthashastra* describes various land uses including forests and

prescribes how and for what purpose the forests should be used. It is, perhaps, the first official account of a government dealing with forest resource use and regulation.

b. *Mediaeval Period* : The period from Mauryas to Mughuls was a period of political turmoil in North India except for a brief span under Guptas. The instability kept the rulers busy in settling their own affairs. A little attention was given to forests and natural resources management. The scenario in the South was quite stable that provided a scope for flourishing trade in forest produce. The writings of Hiuen-Tsang and Arab writers of 9th and 10th century testify the luxuriant export in pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, silk, sandalwood, saffron, ivory and Teak from Malabar and West India. During the Mughul regime some attention was focussed on protection and conservation of a few forest areas to provide hunting grounds for the royalty. Akbar followed the policy of reclamation of forest areas for cultivation. Jahangir was very fond of nature and beauty. He encouraged paintings and other fine arts, depicting nature, forests and wildlife. Many local kings also created their own hunting reserves and protected them rigorously.

The *Sufi* and *Bhakti* movements of this period generated a feeling of love and compassion for fellow beings, including, trees and animals. The percepts of these movements became the way of life and belief of a large section of the population. The literature of these reformation movements has ample references of nature, forests, trees, wildlife and other life forms.

All the previous invaders before the Europeans were from the adjoining regions. Despite having different cultural backgrounds they settled and were,

subsequently, assimilated in the cultural milieu of the nation. The invading tribes caused disruptions in the population of northern tracts which resulted into clearing of forests for agriculture and new settlements. Despite these fluxes from outside, the impact on environment was not very severe because a large chunk of geographic area was under forest cover and the impact was absorbed by the nature in the same way as the society assimilated the cultural impact.

c. Modern Period : With the coming of the British and other Europeans, scenario was changed altogether. They stepped in as merchants and became rulers, subsequently, by deceit and treachery. They came with different language, culture and value system. They, in fact, changed the very cultural fabric of this nation by imposing their philosophy, lifestyles and values. A new education system was evolved to cater to the needs of imperial interests that created white-collar generations conversant in alien language and following values and styles different from their own. This process created a permanent impact on the cultural fabric of the nation. The present system of governance and education is an outcome of this changed outlook of the nation.

The National Forest Policy formulation is, entirely, a process based on this borrowed outlook. The British introduced scientific management in India in 1860s on the pattern of German-French forest management. The creation of reserved and protected forests by imposing restrictions of varying degrees on the local communities resulted in alienation of local people from the forests. The trend created a permanent cleavage between local communities and the forests that caused tension in symbiotic

and harmonious relationship in our cultural milieu.

The vision and style embodied in the policy documents do not conform to the cultural milieu of the nation. Despite more than five thousand years of cultural history it is surprising that we are not able to grow our roots in our own cultural soil and assume shape and form of our own. The nation that does not grow in its own soil remains exotic in its own environment. We shall learn from experience and shall try to plug this anomaly in our way of living and working. The policy, therefore, must grow from the cultural soil of the nation.

Style of writing a Policy Document

It is true that we have a long experience of national forest policy formulation. A close scrutiny of all the three policy documents reveals that we are not able to set our objectives clearly. Moreover, the strategy proposed in all the three policy documents is not very comprehensive and clear. The *policy documents do not provide any time frame for achieving the goals and objectives given, therein. While going through the contents of these documents one has the feeling that a good essay have been written on the subject of forest policy. It, therefore, creates confusion in the mind of field managers while implementing these provisions.*

A policy document must, clearly, decipher the main objectives of forest management, besides, the supporting objectives. It shall also provide clear strategy to achieve each of the objectives. Furthermore, it shall decipher objectives and strategies for each sub-sector of forest management. It shall also provide time frame, roles and responsibilities for policy

formulation as well as implementation. It shall provide a comprehensive and objective framework for implementation, monitoring and evaluation as well as review and change. The policy must originate from the constitutional provisions and should seek anchorage from the constitution. It must establish linkages with the cultural evolution of the nation as well.

It has been seen that there is a very little reference of resource potential and constraints in the policy documents. A policy document should give due space to the resource potential, besides, providing objectives for its management and use. The human population and livestock projections are also relevant and need reference and place in the policy.

Factors responsibilities for poor implementation

It is seen that despite being a noble set of objectives and strategies provided in the national forest policies the extent of its translation while implementation is not to the limit expected. Besides, the points and issues mentioned earlier, the main factors that affect the policy implementation to a great extent may be summed up under the following categories.

a. Policy formulation :

1. A top-down approach.
2. Non involvement of people.
3. Does not conform to local needs and concerns.
4. Roles and responsibilities not clearly defined.
5. Devoid of cultural ethos and constitution anchorage.

b. Policy implementation :

1. No mechanism to ensure implementation.
2. Lack of appropriate legislation and infrastructure.
3. Lack of proper orientation of field managers.
4. No time frame for implementation.

c. Ground realities :

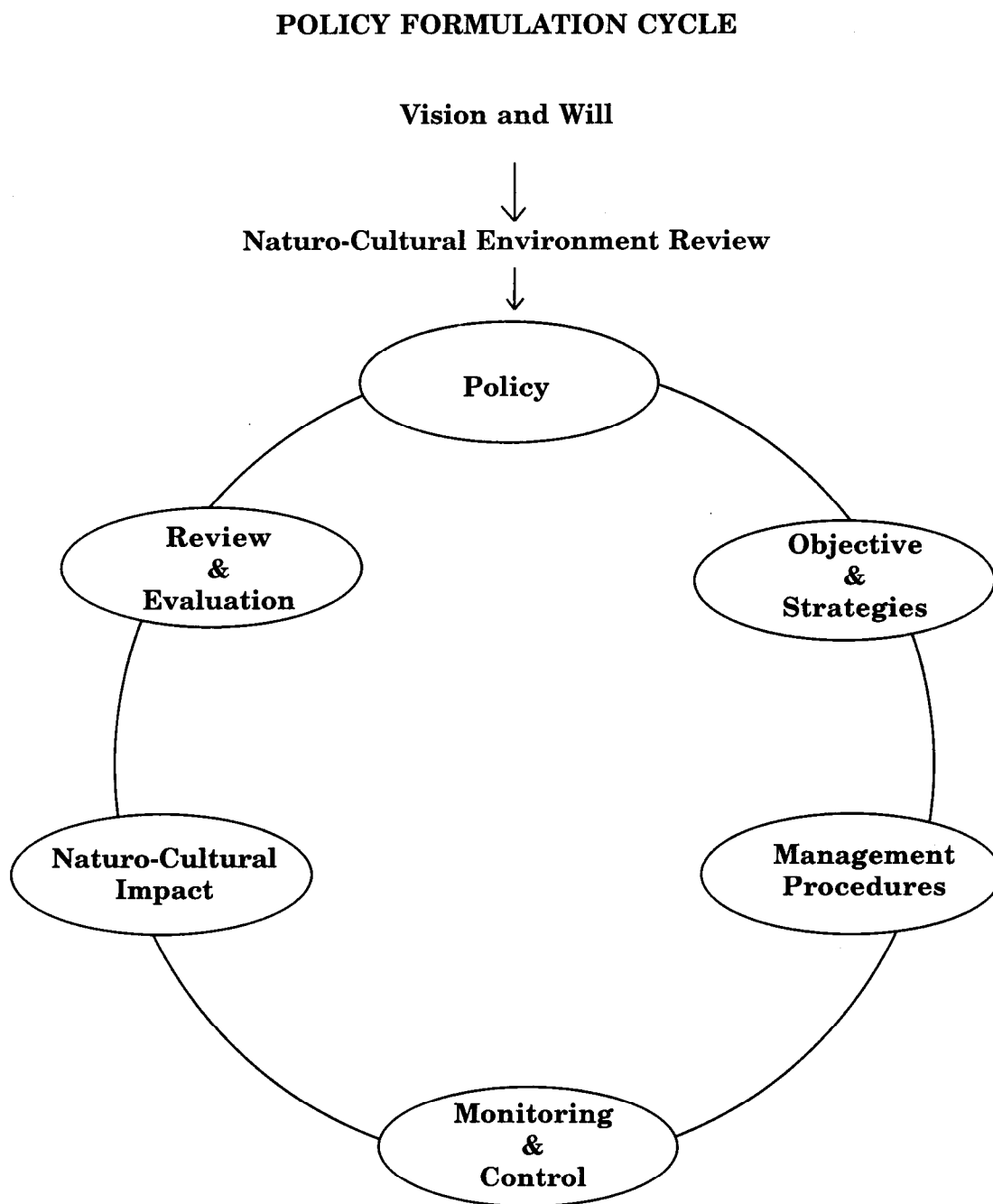
1. Lack of will and commitment.
2. Lack of democratic decentralization.
3. Lack of co-ordination and team spirit.
4. Fading cultural values and ethos.
5. Volatile field situations.

No policy or program, however, noble it may be can succeed if it is not supported by the will and commitment of the people. The experience reveals that there has been a superficial involvement of forest department in policy formulation that resulted into half hearted commitment at the time of implementation. Moreover, the political will has been often found lacking at the time of implementation of the forest policies. The will and the commitment of people as well as department and related sectors are essential to achieve the objectives in a given time frame. The reasons, put forth, need a deep introspection and analysis, in order to, make the policy a complete, holistic and realistic document.

Policy Formulation Cycle

The policy formulation is a cyclic process, comprising, distinct components as its integral constituents, organized in a definite sequence (Fig. 1). The policy originates from the will and commitment of

Fig. 1



the policy makers towards the needs and aspirations of the people. The process of policy formulation requires a comprehensive review of natural as well as cultural environment of resource evolution and use to evolve objectives and strategy for future management. In order to implement the policy prescriptions in a scientific way it requires management instruments and procedures as well as monitoring and control of various operations. The process of implementation generates changes in the naturo-cultural environment that necessitate impact assessment for its evaluation. The process, thus, generates the need to review and change the existing policy to suit the needs and the requirements of the time. There is a need to internalize this ideal process of policy formulation for the forest policy review and change.

Proposed frame work for forest policy formulation

Keeping in view the points and suggestions made in the earlier paras there is a strong need to have a comprehensive approach and frame work for framing a policy document that provides a due place and consideration to all the aspects of resource use and management in a holistic way. The necessary constituents for writing a forest policy have been summed up under the following parameters.

1. Democratic Decentralization of policy formulation

The present top-down approach of policy formulation doesn't conform to the spirit of democratic decentralization. It involves a set of top officials and legislators to frame the policy for the entire nation. It doesn't involve people and local institutions which results in lack of affinity with the

cause. The process of policy formulation needs to be reversed to give it a natural as well as grass root shape and character by involving people in policy making at local, regional and national level.

It is proposed that the policy shall be framed, primarily, on the basis of area concerns while giving due consideration to the ownership concerns. The bottom-up approach is proposed to give a natural form and structure to the policy formulation at local, regional and national level.

Level	Local	Regional	National
Unit	District	State	Country
Authority	Zilla Parishad	State Govt.	Union Govt.
Needs & Concern	Local & individual	Community & State	National & International

The policy must grow from the local level and concerns to the regional and, subsequently, to the national level and concerns. It should, inherently, be participatory in nature to ensure willing involvement of all concerned at all levels. Furthermore, it is proposed that an appropriate strategy of management shall be evolved to provide treatment on the basis of broad bio-geographical zones (ecosystems). Moreover, in order to, ensure uniformity of broad goals and objectives for management and use of forest resources throughout the country there is a need to provide broad guidelines and frame work for policy formulation at the local (districts) as well as the regional (State) level. The policy formulation must grow like a tree in *natural form and shape from its roots to the top.*

Table 1
The Frame Work for Forest Policy Formulation

Chapter	Contents
1. Part I	Introduction i. Cultural Traditions and Practices * Role of forests in cultural life * Resource use systems and practices ii. The Constitution * Guides aspirations and visions of the people * Guides and provides strength to policy formulation iii. The Forest Resources * Brief description of resource potential and conditions * Resources constraints iv. Forest policy experience and need to change
2. Part II	Objectives (General) * Main * Supportive
3. Part III	Forest Management * Policies (objectives) * Strategies
4. Part IV	Forest Research * Policies (objectives) * Strategies
5. Part V	Forestry Education, Training and Extension * Policies (objectives) * Strategies
6. Part VI	Forest Industry * Policies (objectives) * Strategies
7. Part VII	Forest Organization & Administration * Policies (objectives) * Strategies

Contd...

8. Part VIII (One part for each sub-sector)

9. Part IX Instruments for Implementation

- * Appropriate legislation for effective implementation
 - * Action Plan with Definite Time-frame, Roles and Responsibilities
 - * Mechanism for Regular Monitoring, Review and Change
 - * Guidelines & framework for policy formulation at Regional (State) level.
 - * Guidelines & framework for policy formulation at Local (District) level.
 - * Budgetary provisions
-

2. *Proposed format for the policy formulation*

A comprehensive format for forest policy formulation is proposed to provide a due place and emphasis to different aspects (Table 1). The format is self-explanatory and takes various components of policy formulation and implementation into consideration along with cultural ethos, constitutional obligations and resource conditions. It provides due place for each component considered essential for planned implementation. Moreover, it incorporates provisions for each sub-sector while maintaining a holistic outlook for the entire forestry sector.

3. *Mechanism to ensure implementation*

A close scrutiny of policy documents reveals that no mechanism is prescribed to ensure planned implementation in a given time frame. It, therefore, provides a scope for the managers to defer the implementation of programs and plans provided, therein, to suite their temperament and convenience. It does not provide regular monitoring, evaluation and review. Therefore, there is a dire need to provide a mechanism for regular monitoring, evaluation, review and change to ensure effective implementation in a defined time frame (Table 1).

4. *Rooting policy in cultural soil of the nation*

The policy, in fact, should originate from the cultural norms and ethos of the nation. It is proposed that policy must develop its roots in the cultural traditions and practices and seek anchorage from it. The cultural ethos and its relationship with resource use are proposed to be included in the introduction part of the policy document (Table 1).

5. *The policy shall drive its vision from the Constitution*

The Constitution of India entrusts a noble duty on each individual and state to protect, conserve and safeguard its natural environment as well as other life forms. It is proposed that the policy should seek its vision and will from the constitutional provisions to provide constitutional anchorage to its objectives and strategies. The policy shall originate and drive its elan from constitution. The constitutional provisions are proposed to be included in the introduction part of the policy document.

6. *Resource potential and constraints*

A comprehensive account of resource potential and constraints is proposed to be

included in the introduction part to provide a real picture of resource conditions, management interventions and use patterns. It will, in fact, provide a benchmark for policy formulation. Furthermore, it will help setting the realistic and achievable goal and strategy for management and use of forest resources. The increase in human and livestock population and demand and supply projections are relevant and must be included in policy formulation.

7. *Time frame for review and change*

A definite time frame is imperative for effective implementation of a policy or a program. There is need to provide a definite timeframe for each work, scheme or plan proposed in the action program for translation of objectives in the real life situation. The provisions for regular monitoring, appraisal, review and change are crucial to ensure effective and planned implementation and must be an integral part of the policy document.

8. *Action program with duties and responsibilities*

A time bound action program is proposed to be included in the policy formulation with defined duties and responsibilities to ensure effective and timely implementation. The instruments of implementation need a special mention to provide strength, motivation and support to the field managers.

9. *Defining the limits of management (Ethics)*

The policy embodies the vision and

wishes of the present as well as the future generations of a community or a nation. It also represents the concerns of other life forms and natural processes that are essential for the survival and well being of the mankind and the universe. The forests provide support to innumerable life forms which is a source of its potential, richness, health and beauty. It is, therefore, imperative that the policy should prescribe limits for human endeavor in the form of management guidelines so as the nature, composition and richness of natural eco-systems shall not alter or change in the process of management and use for the present generations. We are one among the billions species existing on the earth. Alike us, each species has an inherent right of peaceful co-existence. We do not have any right to alter or change an eco-system that we cannot enrich or beautify. The life-centered view of management is more appropriate and relevant than the human-centered view for dealing with natural resources.

A policy documents should also indicate a broad approach to forest management with a view to provide right direction to the forest management. Besides, being scientific and holistic it must be sustainable, equitable and ethical. It shall be in tune with the life-centered world view and cosmic vision. It will keep intact the bio-capital of natural eco-systems and will ensure their long-term viability.

It is crucial that we should choose a right and clean path to tread through the nature without leaving any permanent mark on its face for the betterment of humanity and the nature. The earth is like a spaceship

in the universe and we are the fellow voyagers along with other living beings. We have the right to make our voyage a pleasant experience without being a nuisance for the fellow voyagers.

Conclusions

The process of national forest policy formulation was initiated with adoption of scientific management in forestry in 1860s. The aim of the National Forest Policy 1894 was to set general principals for the administration and management of the forest resources. Over the years, the process of policy formulation has matured with the perceptions of the nation and two more policies were formulated as a sovereign nation entitled National Forest Policy 1952 and National Forest Policy 1988.

Despite a long and rich history, policy formulation remained more or less a bureaucratic exercise at the top. The local issues and concerns were not adequately represented and provided for which resulted into poor implementation due to lack of willing involvement and indifference of local institutions and people.

The experience reveals the need of a new framework and approach for policy formulation, in order to, incorporate the needs and concerns of a democratic nation. The process of policy formulation must grown from the grass roots - local issues and concerns- to regional level (State) and subsequently to the national level.

The policy of a nation reflects its cultural maturity. It grows from the cultural

soil of the nation. The cultural ethos of a nation or a community has a strong bearing with natural resources and its use. The cultural traditions and practices provide strength and authenticity to policy formulation. Furthermore, the provisions of the constitution provide authenticity to the policy and add to its strength and acceptability. These gaps in policy formulation need to be plugged in order to provide it a holistic form and nature.

The style of writing a policy document also needs consideration. A comprehensive format that provides a due space for each aspect and concern in an objective manner, needs to be evolved. The objectives and strategies need to be outlined clearly for forestry sector as a whole as well as for each sub-sector. The mechanism for ensuring implementation in a time bound fashion need to be incorporated along with deciphering, clearly, the duties and responsibilities.

In order to, infuse commitment and willing involvement of the people and local institutions, the process of policy formulation needs to be reversed to provide it a natural growing form. The people must be involved at each stage and level of policy formulation as well as implementation to qualify it as a people's policy in form and spirit. The proposed approach of policy formulation is an effort to plug these gaps and to provide a natural framework, in consonance to, the spirit of democratic decentralization, embodied in the constitution. The process will ensure the involvement and commitment of the people and local institutions in implementation.

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SUMMARY

The National Forest Policy represents long-term wishes of the nation in term of well-set objectives. It also provides a course to achieve the objectives in the form of a well-defined strategy. The process of national forest policy formulation is, indeed, rich with over a hundred years old history. Over the years, we have three national policies, viz. National Forest Policy 1894, National Forest Policy 1952 and National Forest Policy 1988. Each policy is a comprehensive document of noble objectives and innovative strategies yet on the implementation front, the results are not very encouraging. This article examines the present policy formulation approach and points out inadequacies and gaps which are the probable causes of poor implementation. It outlines a holistic and natural strategy of policy formulation that provides for missing links in the present approach. The proposed strategy is inherently democratic, professional and transparent. It provides for mechanism to ensure implementation in a given time frame.

वन नीति निर्धारण - समीक्षा की आवश्यकता

जरनैल सिंह

सारांश

राष्ट्रीय वन नीति भलीभांति निर्धारित किए उद्देश्यों के रूप में राष्ट्र की दीर्घकालिक इच्छाओं का प्रतिनिधित्व करती हैं। भलीभांति परिभाषित रणनीति के रूप में यह उन उद्देश्यों को प्राप्त करने का मार्ग भी बतलाती हैं। राष्ट्रीय वन नीति निर्धारण की प्रक्रिया का, सच ही है, शताधिक वर्षों का सम्पन्न इतिहास रहा है। इस अवधि में हमने तीन राष्ट्रीय नीतियां बनाई हैं अर्थात् राष्ट्रीय वन नीति 1899, राष्ट्रीय वन नीति 1952 और राष्ट्रीय वन नीति 1988 प्रत्येक नीति अच्छे उद्देश्यों और नई-नई रणनितियों का विस्तृत दस्तावेज़ है, फिर भी क्रियान्वयन मोर्चे पर इनके परिणाम विशेष उत्साहप्रद नहीं रहे हैं। प्रस्तुत प्रबन्ध में नीति निर्धारण की वर्तमान दृष्टि का परीक्षण किया गया है और इसकी कमियों और छूटे स्थानों की ओर संकेत किया गया है जो इसके घटिया क्रियान्वयन के संभाविक कारण हो सकते हैं। इसमें नीति निर्धारण की समग्र और स्वाभाविक रणनीति की रूपरेखा बताई गई है जो वर्तमान दृष्टि की छूटी कड़ियां भी बताती हैं। प्रस्तावित रणनीति भीतर से प्रजातांत्रिक, पेशेवराना और पारदर्शी है तथा किसी दिए हुए समय चौखटे के अन्दर क्रियान्वयन सुनिश्चित बनाने के लिए यन्त्र समूह भी प्रदान करती है।

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