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FOREST PRESERVATION: WHAT WE CAN DO?

CASE STUDY/INSIGHT

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Forests are essentially an important part of the earth's biodiversity. They constitute nearly one-third of the earth's landmass. Forests are home to more than half of the world's land-based species of animals, plants, birds and insects. Almost 1.6 billion people depend on forests for their livelihood. They play an important role in carbon sequestration and climate change mitigation. Forests are the reasons for rainfall on the earth. They are the important sources of bamboo, timber, medicines, aromatic substances, fruits and other commodities that are essential for our lives. Also, forests are essential for sustainable food production. In short, forests provide us with food, water, oxygen, shelter and short, whatever essential for our livelihood.

But forests are prone to deforestation and degradation due to various reasons like rapid urbanization, expansion of agriculture and developmental activities. This threatens the livelihood of many forest oriented people and the lives of several animals and plants. Deforestation is continuing at an alarming rate which leads to reduced biodiversity. Since 1990, an estimate of 420 million hectares of forest has been lost. Over 80 million hectares of forest cover has decreased since the 1990s. The world's largest forest, Amazon has lost 17% of its forest cover in the last half-century. Around 267,000 hectares of forests are lost each year. An estimate reveals that 15% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are due to deforestation.

There are ways by which the forest can be conserved. The creation of protected areas has been the predominant forest protecting technique. This has resulted in positive impacts on conserving forests. International organizations such as United Nations, United Nation Environment Programme, Food and Agriculture Organization, World Wide Fund, Global Wildlife Conservation, United Development Programme, World Resources Institute, Conservation International are taking steps for protecting forests. United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 has put forth a set of 6 global forest goals and 26 associated targets. It targets to increase forest area by at least 3% globally by 2030.

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Forests can be protected by prohibiting illegal logging and deforestation. Planting of trees (afforestation) should be carried out on large scale. Adopting sustainable agricultural practices would contribute to protecting forests.

Throughout the world, forest fires are common and actions should be taken to prevent them. The latest fire fighting techniques should be adopted. Arrangement of fire repellents, fire extinguishers, water sprays should be kept ready and there must be a trained staff on fire fighting to control fire. Students can be taken on trips to forests for creating a bonding between the students and the forest (nature). During such trips, students should be taught the importance of forests, usual threats to the forest, ways to avoid/protect it, etc.

Recently, we frequently come across news on wild animals moving into villages near the forests. This creates panic among the villagers and sometimes leads to the killing of animals. This is a very pathetic situation. The reason for animals entering human boundary is due to loss of their habitat and in search of food. The loss of an animal's habitat is either due to human activities like deforestation or forest fires. These problems could be resolved by the restoration of forests. When animals enter the villages, people should safely hand over the animal to the forest department. People should not harm the animal and they should ensure their safety also.



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Many times, a lot of news comes about elephants are endangered to a serious extent that they even die due to the broken bottles inside the forests. It is very painful to hear such stories. Our freedom lies only until we touch another person's nose. This is a fact. This shows the irresponsibility of the persons throwing broken bottles in the forest. What will happen to animals when they are hurt by these? In the cities, we have doctors every next street to get ourselves treated. What will the animals do? Who will find out what happens to them? Forest is their home and we have no right to spoil somebody else's home.

Life on earth depends largely on forests and we should work towards protecting forests. The fact that the rate of deforestation has decreased in recent years is a success and we should keep working towards it. Reducing deforestation, increasing afforestation and sustainable agricultural practices would help conserving forests. Let's pledge in protecting our forests and not littering any wastes in forest areas.