

# ◆ 1. Deforestation: Why and How?

■ **Definition:** Deforestation means the permanent removal of forest cover to make land available for other uses like agriculture, plantation, or industries.

By 1995, about 13.9 million sq. km. (9.3% of the world's land area) had lost forests.

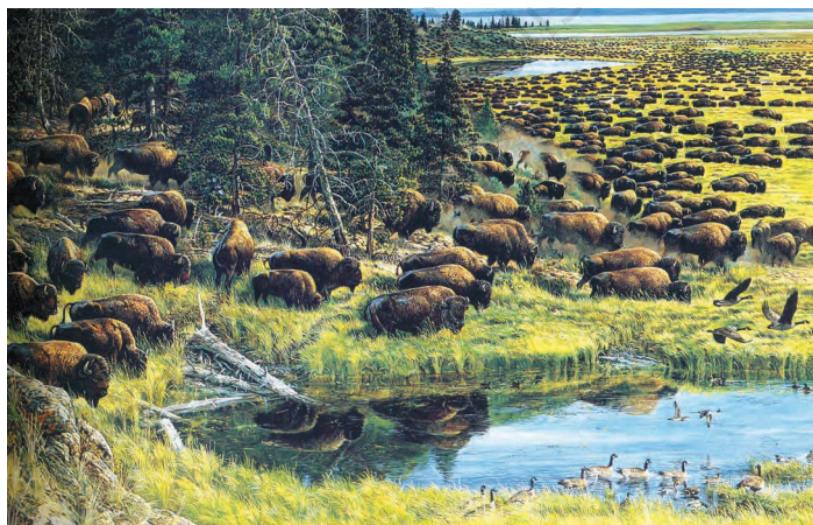
## 1.1 Land to be Improved

- In 1600, only 1/6th of Indian land was cultivated. By the colonial period, it had risen to 1/2.
- British encouraged cultivation of commercial crops: wheat, cotton, sugar, jute → increased deforestation.
- Forests were seen as "waste land" which needed to be "improved" for revenue generation.

☞ Note: Expansion of cultivation was seen as progress, but it destroyed forests.



☞ Fig.1 – Sal forest in Chhattisgarh



☞ Fig.2 – When valleys were full (Painting)

## 1.2 Sleepers on the Tracks

■ Sleepers: Wooden planks used to hold railway tracks.

- Railways required massive timber for sleepers and fuel.
- 1850s onwards, with railway expansion, trees were cut at a large scale.
- 35,000 trees per year were cut in Madras Presidency alone.



⌚ Fig.3 – Sal logs turned into sleepers



⌚ Fig.4 – Bamboo rafts for timber transport



⌚ Fig.5 – Elephants transporting timber



Fig.6 – Women collecting firewood

### 1.3 Plantations

- Natural forests were cleared to make tea, coffee, and rubber plantations.
- British gave land to European planters at low prices.
- Plantation agriculture replaced biodiversity with monoculture.



Fig.8 – Tea advertisement (Pleasure Brand Tea)

## ◆ 2. Rise of Commercial Forestry

### 2.1 Scientific Forestry

**Definition:** Scientific forestry is a system where the forest is surveyed and managed by cutting old trees and planting new ones in straight rows (usually a single species).

- Introduced by Dietrich Brandis, the first Inspector General of Forests in India (1864).
- Indian Forest Act passed in 1865; revised in 1878 & 1927.

#### The 1878 Act classified forests:

- Reserved forests: Most restricted
- Protected forests: Some access

- Village forests: Limited community use



☞ Fig.10 – Deodar plantation in Kangra (1933)



**Fig. 11 – The Imperial Forest School,  
Dehra Dun, India.**  
The first forestry school to be inaugurated in  
the British Empire.  
From: Indian Forester, Vol. XXXI

☞ Fig.11 – Imperial Forest School, Dehradun

## 2.2 Impact on People

- Forest dwellers lost access to resources: firewood, fruit, medicine, grazing, and tools.
- Villagers were criminalized for using forest products.
- Forest guards took bribes; women were harassed.



Fig.12 – Collecting mahua (*Madhuca indica*)

## 2.3 Cultivation and Shifting Agriculture

■ Shifting cultivation (Swidden): Traditional practice where land is cleared by burning, cultivated briefly, then left fallow.

Local terms: jhum, podu, bewar, chena, etc.

- British considered it harmful and banned it → led to displacement and resistance.



Fig.14 – Carrying grain



⌚ Fig.15 – Taungya system in Burma (temporary farming)



⌚ Fig.16 – Burning podu land for farming

## 2.4 Hunting

- Traditional hunting banned → forest dwellers called poachers.
- British promoted large-scale hunting of tigers, leopards, wolves.
- Hunting became a sport for officials and kings → endangered wildlife.



Fig.18 – Lord Reading's tiger hunt (Count dead tigers)

## 2.5 New Trades & Labour

- Forest tribes began collecting and trading forest products (e.g., latex, spices, horns).
- Many lost traditional jobs and became labourers on plantations or in factories.

Example: Santhals & Gonds recruited for Assam tea gardens.

Result: Poor wages, harsh working conditions, isolation from home



Fig.19 – Army camp in Bastar, 1910.

This photograph of an army camp was taken in Bastar in 1910. The army moved with tents, cooks and soldiers. Here a sepoy is guarding the camp against rebels.

## ◆ 3. Rebellion in Bastar (Chhattisgarh, 1910)

### 3.1 Causes

- Forest reservation restricted access to land, hunting, and cultivation.
- Famines (1899–1900, 1907–08), unpaid labour (begar), high rents angered people.
- Led by Gunda Dhur (symbolic figure), villagers revolted.

■ Symbols used to mobilize rebellion: mango twigs, chillies, earth, arrows.

■ Actions: Burned schools, police stations, looted bazaars, redistributed grains.

## 3.2 Aftermath

- British suppressed rebellion using force.
- Gunda Dhur was never caught.
- Forest reservation plans were partly reversed.

■ Even after independence, forest policies continued to exclude people until protests stopped harmful projects like tropical pine plantation in sal forests (1970s).

—

## ◆ 4. Forests in Java (Indonesia)

### 4.1 Colonial Control by the Dutch

- Like India, the Dutch in Java controlled forests for timber.
- Kalangs (forest tribe) resisted in 1770 but were suppressed.



⌚ Fig.21 – Train transporting teak in Java

—

### 4.2 Scientific Forestry in Java

- Dutch forest laws restricted local access.
- People punished for grazing, collecting wood, or using carts.

■ blandongdiensten system: Villagers provided free labour in return for rent exemption.

—

## 4.3 Samin's Challenge

- Surontiko Samin opposed state ownership of forests.
- By 1907, 3000 families followed his peaceful resistance → refused to pay taxes, obey forest laws.

—

## 4.4 Wars and Deforestation

- WWI & WWII → Forests exploited heavily for war needs.
- Dutch followed 'scorched earth policy' to burn logs before Japanese arrived.
- Japanese also cut forests recklessly.
- Villagers used the chance to reclaim land.



⌚ Fig.24 – Dutch log yard, Rembang

## 4.5 New Ideas in Forestry

- Since 1980s, shift from timber extraction to forest conservation.
- Local communities are involved in joint forest management.
- Sacred groves like sarnas (Jharkhand), devarakudu (Karnataka) show how locals protect forests.

—

## Summary

- Colonialism led to large-scale deforestation in India and Java.
- Forest laws restricted local people and promoted commercial forestry.
- Traditional practices like shifting cultivation and hunting were banned.
- Tribal resistance movements like Bastar Uprising challenged colonial authority.
- In Java, resistance came from people like the Kalangs and Samin.
- Modern forest management now involves local participation and focuses on conservation.