

SAL FORESTS OF EAST PAKISTAN AND THEIR MANAGEMENT HISTORY

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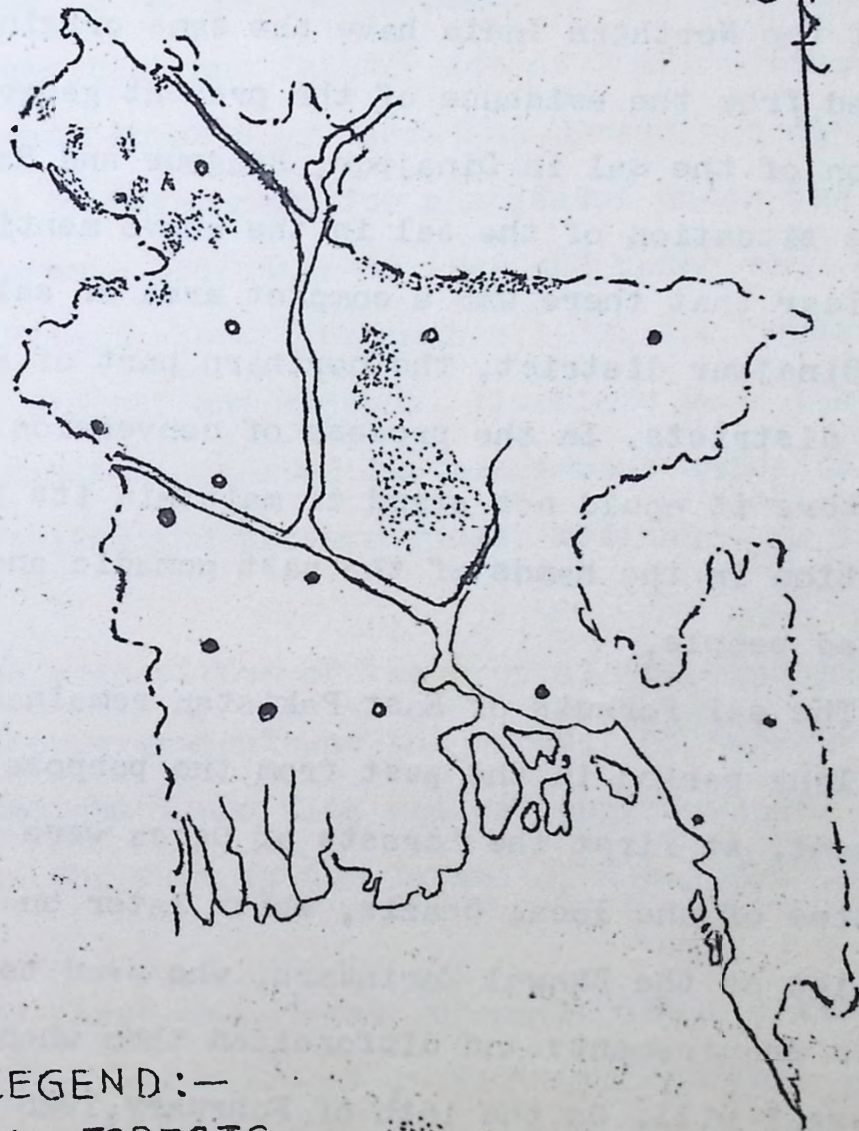
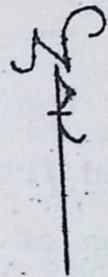
In East Pakistan, Sal is found only in the plains of Dacca, Mymensingh, Dinajpur, Rangpur and Rajshahi districts. The biggest patch is found in the chalas (high lands) of Dacca and Mymensingh districts intercepted by numerous depressions known as baidis. The portion of the main patch in Dacca district is commonly known as Bhawalgarh and that in Mymensingh is known as Atia forests and Madhupurgarh. The sal forests of Dinajpur, Rangpur and Rajshahi districts are very scattered in nature and are remnants of the ancient days.

In Dacca district, the sal forests are limited within the Dacca sadar North Sub-Division and in the district of Mymensingh these are limited within the Mymensingh Sadar and Tangail Sub-Division and in the foot hills of Garo hills. In Dinajpur district, these are limited within the Sadar Sub-Division and small patches in Thakurgaon Sub-Division. In Rangpur district it is limited within the Sadar Sub-Division. In Rajshahi district it is limited within the northern portion of Noagaon Sub-Division.

In area, Sal occupies approximately 64000 acres in Dacca district, 1,78,890 acres in Mymensingh district, 16,344 acres in Dinajpur district, 3410 acres in Rangpur district and 1057 acres in Rajshahi district.

EAST PAKISTAN

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SAL FORESTS ·····

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There are controversies about the origin of the sal now available in East Pakistan. In spite of the difference in opinion, it can be safely said that this sal and the sal of Duars of the Northern India have the same origin and this can be proved from the evidence of the present geographical situation of the sal in Dinajpur, Rangpur and Rajshahi districts. From the situation of the sal in the above mentioned districts it is clear that there was a compact area of sal covering the entire Dinajpur district, the northern part of Rajshahi and Rangpur districts. In the process of conversion of land for agriculture it could not stand to maintain its trend of propagation in the hands of the past nomadic and the present civilized people.

The sal forests of East Pakistan remained unnoticed for a long period in the past from the purpose of scientific management. At first the forests of Dacca were the khas properties of the local Ghazis, which later on became the properties of the Bhawal Zamindars, who used to cut the trees at their requirements and disforested them when required at their sweet will. On the 16th of February, 1925 Govt. at the request of the owners took Atia forests of Mymensingh district for management and declared them as protected forests under section 38 of Indian forest Act and on 9th October, 1925 an E.A.C.F. was appointed as Divisional Forest Officer, and the same forests were later on declared as reserve forests under different notifications in 1927 & 1928. In 1934, the forests

of Bhawal were taken over by the Government as protected forests from the Bhawal court-of-wards under an agreement and Govt. managed these forests upto 1950 as protected forests which later on became the property of the Government under the State Acquisition and Tenancy Act of 1950. Subsequently the other private forests of Dacca and Mymensingh districts were taken over by Government for management under the East Bengal Private Forests Ordinance of 1949 and under that of East Pakistan Private Forest Ordinance, 1959. The forests of Dinajpur, Rangpur and Rajshahi districts were taken over by the Government since 1952 for management under section 38 of Forest Act 1927 and private forest ordinance of 1949 and 1959.

The composition of the crop at the time of taking over by the Government was the worst. The forests were mostly degenerated and found with weaker coppice stools due to over felling in the past by the lessee of local Zamindars and the owners.

The first management scheme for Bhawal forests was prepared by Mr. J.R.P.Gent in 1917 and the main prescription was to thin the forests on a cycle of 10 years but the scheme could not be implemented successfully due to the severe cyclone which damaged the large tracts of forests. The first working scheme for Atia forests was prepared by Mr. Dewan Bahadur M.C.Chowdhuri in 1925, to work the forests under the

system of coppice with standards on a rotation of 20 years. This system was followed from 1925 to 1934 but proved to be a failure as the standards from the old crop failed to respond to the coppice felling. In 1934, the system coppice with standards was abandoned and two new scheme one for Atia forests upto 1940-41 and another for Bhawal forests upto 1942-43 were prepared and simple coppice with standards were prescribed for the forests with 20 year rotation, which was also found unsatisfactory. Based on the past experience of Sal, a new working plan was prepared by Mr. Y.S.Ahmed for the forest of Dacca and Mymensingh for the year 1937-38 to 1957-58. The system of management was clearfelling coppice with the rotation of 25 years. Provision was also made for gradual afforestation of the blank areas under taungya system. During the later part of nineteen forties in the Dacca-Mymensingh Division more forests were taken over by Government for management under the private forest ordinance as mentioned earlier, as such Y.S.Ahmad's working plan was found difficult to execute, as a result, a new short term scheme by Mr.S.A.Aleem with 40 years rotation came into operation for Dacca-Mymensingh Division. In the early nineteen fifties more and more private forests were taken over by Government and it was found difficult to manage the sal forests of Dacca and Mymensingh districts under one Division. For better management, a separate division, styled as Mymensingh Division, with the forests of Mymensingh district was created from 1st January, 1951. Further

forest areas were taken under state acquisition and tenancy act and S.A.Aleem's scheme was found unsuitable for execution and hence a new short term scheme by Mr. M.R.Chowdhury was prepared for the period from 1955-56 to 1959-60 in which importance of conversion of the poor sal forests into valuable sal forests was emphasised and provision was made for raising of systematic plantations mostly with sal. With the expiry of Mr.M.R.Chowdhury's scheme, a new scheme by Mr.A.M.Chowdhury for the period from 1960-61 to 1969-70 came into being in which the trend of Mr.M.R.Chowdhury's scheme was maintained. Similarly a scheme for Dacca Division was drawn up by Mr.N. Ahmad, for the period from 1960-61 to 1964-65 in which the system of management was clearfelling simple coppice. The forests of Dacca Division are now being worked under year to year advance prescriptions basis in the trend of Mr.N.Ahmad's working scheme of 1960-61 to 1964-65.

As mentioned earlier the sal forests of Dinajpur, Rangpur and Rajshahi districts remained in the hands of private owners till 1951. In 1952 Government took over the forests of those districts for scientific management. There was no working plan or scheme for these forests for the period from 1952 to 1959 and the forests were managed by the Divisional Forest Officers on their discretion. Small areas were clearfelled annually and tried to raise plantations with Sal, Teak, Minjiri and Tendu on experimental basis. Success on these species were found satisfactory which lead to the preparation

of a working scheme for management of these forests from 1959-60 to 1969-70 by M.Ahmed. Under this scheme, 150 acres of sal forests were being clearfelled annually and regenerated artificially with Sal and Teak, 57 acres were being worked annually under simple coppice and the adjacent unculturable waste lands were afforested with Sal, Simul, Teak, Babul, Khair, Jarul and Jam.

At present, the pressure of population on these sal forests of East Pakistan is very heavy which is making us too much worried as to their management under the age old clearfelling coppice system or clearfelling followed by artificial regeneration. Now-a-days, clearfelling results into new human habitation by ousting the tree habitation. Time has come for us to think for some other systems of management for the sal forests and a probable better system for consideration may be selection system.

Preparations of new management plans for the forests of Dacca and Mymensingh districts which are over due, are now in progress. Aerial photography of these forests has already been completed during 1968-69. The working scheme of Dinajpur, Rangpur and Rajshahi forests will also expire during 1969-70. It is expected that in preparation of the new management plans for these Sal forests special emphasis will be given to prepare them in the trend of the present socio-economic development of the country.