Forest Department Then and Now

A.N. Srivastava

Forest plays a vital role in the economy of a nation and so the old saying is "Where there is no forest, there is no happiness". In proper conservation of the forest wealth and rational utilization of the forest produce.

Bihar formed part of Bengal till 31.3.1912. The Bengal Forest Department during 1870-73 was constituted as follows:

Conservator of Forest, Bengal

Cooch Bihar Div.

Assam Div.

Dooars Div.

Chittagong Div.

Bhagalpur Div.

Coinciding with boundaries of the

Coinciding with boundaries of the

Coinciding with the

comprising the whole

Cooch Bihar Commission (The forest officer was under the orders of C.F.)

Assam Commission (The Forest Officers were under the Commissioner but C.F. could inspect and control accounts)

Dooars Forest Officer normally under the Conservator

C.F. Bengal had no control but could be asked to advise...


The hoary past, forest shaped the Indian civilizations. In other words it can be said that the modern civilization is founded on wood. The great Indian Epics tell us of the existence of mighty forests on the Indian soil. The present State of Bihar, which was carved out into a separate Province in the year 1912, had then more forest area than now. But the rapid increase of population and consequent steady reclamation of forest tracts for agricultural purposes, combined with abuse of forest, caused serious diminution of our forest wealth. Today the forests are mainly confined to hilly tracts in Bihar and are only the remnants of past glory. This down-slide caused rethinking about arrangements for taking over of the Saranda forests were first considered in 1864 when a report of the Deputy Commissioner of Singhbhum stated that there were several forest tracts in his district, namely those of Saranda, Karaikela and Porahat, being the property of Government. In 1870-71 the forests were examined by Captain Losak, Dy. Conservator, in charge of Bhagalpur Division.

Forest administration had in fact commenced only in three of the above Forest Divisions, namely, Cooch Bihar, Assam and Chittagong. The C.F. in the above organization was little more than official controller of accounts. Subsequently the Dacca and Bhagalpur Divisions

* PA to CCF, Bihar (Reel 1)
Excerpts from an article of the Souvenir published on the occasion of Ninth meeting of The Central Board of Forestry at Ranchi in January, 1965
were temporarily closed down with a view to carry out an organized survey of the forests and the staff were transferred to Cooch Bihar and Assam Divisions. But before the work could be started in Bhagalpur and Dacca Divisions, a separate Province of Assam was formed. Thus the Bengal Forest Department had only two Forest Divisions, viz. Cooch Bihar and Chittagong. The former had 120 sq. miles of R.F. to manage and the latter had none. From 1876, the Forest Department devoted greater part of their time in examining different forest tracts as a result of which 3,390 sq. miles of forests were gazetted as Government Reserved Forests. These included 151 sq. miles in Palamau, 37 sq. miles of Rohtas forests, 400 sq. miles of forest of Saranda Pir in the district of Singhbhum, 60 sq. miles of Kodarma forest in the district of Hazaribagh and 40 sq. miles of Damin-i-Koh in Santhal Parganas. The Bengal Forest Department was then constituted with the following Forest Divisions:

1. Darjeeling Division ... 161 sq. miles R.F. area.
2. Jalpaiguri Division ... 390 sq. miles R.F. area.
3. Palamau Division ... 188 sq. miles R.F. area (including 37 sq. miles of Rohtas in Shalbhad District).
4. Sunderbans Division ... 1581 sq. miles R.F. area.
5. Chittagong Division ... 570 sq. miles R.F. area.

2890 + 500 (Saranda, Kodarma & Damin-i-Koh) = 3390 sq. miles.

The forests of Saranda Pir, Kodarma and Damin-i-Koh having a total area of 500 sq. miles, even though gazetted as R.F., continued to be managed by the Civil Department. During 1876-77 the superior staff consisted of the following:

1. Conservator
2. Dy. Conservators
3. Asst. Conservators
4. Sub Asst. Conservator

Total 11

In other words, for every 300 sq. miles of R.F. there was one Forest Officer.

The monthly expenditure on subordinate staff was 1/13/-per sq. mile.

During 1879-80, the strength of the superior establishment was raised to 13 officers as follows:

1. Conservator of Forests
2. Dy. Conservators of Forests
3. Asst. Conservators of Forests
4. Sub Asst. Conservator of Forests

Total 13

The subordinate staff comprised the following:

Rangers 13
Foresters 56
Forest Guards 171

Total 250
The Palamau Division was divided into 4 Ranges (exclusive of Rohtas forests) and 20 Beats for administrative purposes. The subordinate staff entertained for looking after the forests of Palamau Divisions including Rohtas forests, were:

- Rangers 1
- Foresters 4
- Forest Guards 25

The chief work of the Officers of the Hazaribagh Division was at the time to bring the Saranda forests under proper management by demarcation. The forests in the Santhal Parganas district were managed by the Civil Department.

In the year 1884-85 with effect from 1.4.1884, the Chhotanagpur Forest Division was formed comprising the forest charges which till then had been known as Palamau, Hazaribagh and Singhbhum Forest Sub Division. One Gazetted Forest officer was placed in charge of this new division. He retained charge of this Hazaribagh Sub Division and Gazetted forest officers were Posted to Palamau and Singhbhum Sub Divisions.

The strength of the superior and subordinate establishment of the Bengal Forest Department increased with the addition of fresh forest areas as shown below:

**Superior establishment**
- Conservator of Forests 1
- Dy. Conservators of Forests 8
- Asst. Conservators of Forests 4
- Sub-Asst. Conservators of Forests 7

**Subordinate establishment**
- Forest Rangers 27
- Foresters 78
- Forest Guards 298
- Clerks 32
- Peons 10
- Menials 10

Out of the staff sanctioned, the following staff were entertained for looking after the forests in Bihar:

**Shahbad (Rohtas Forest)**
- Forest Guard 1

**Palamau Subdivision - 188 sq. miles**
- Forest Rangers 2
- Foresters 3
- Forest Guards 22
- Clerks 2
- Menial 1
- Peons 2

**Hazaribagh Subdivision - 48 sq. miles**
- Forest Ranger 1
- Forest Guards 3

**Singhbhum Subdivision - 730 sq. miles**
- Forest Ranger 2
- Forest Guards 3
### Chhotanagpur Division

Clerks 3, Peons 3, Menials 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forest Ranger</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foresters 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Guards</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peons</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menials</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During 1890-91, the management charge of the forest falling in Bihar were reorganized as follows:

1. **Singhbhum Division**
   - 730 Sq. Miles was constituted into 4 Ranges.
2. **Palamau Division**
   - 188 Sq. Miles was constituted into 2 Ranges.

### Direction Division

The Kodarma Range and the Ranchi Range having areas of 46 and 2 Sq. miles respectively.

In the year 1902-03, Government forests in Santal Parganas were constituted into P.Fs. and were taken over by the Forest Department and the management charges were reorganized. The area of the R.F. and P.F. in Bihar and their distribution by Forest Divisions are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>R.F. Sq. Miles</th>
<th>P.F. Sq. Miles</th>
<th>Total Sq. Miles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Santal Parganas Dn.</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Hazaribagh Dist.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>292</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Palamau Division</td>
<td>188</td>
<td></td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Singhbhum Division</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singhbhum District</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranchi District</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membhum District</td>
<td></td>
<td>515</td>
<td>1817</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the formation of Province of Bihar and Orissa on 1.4.1912, the Forest Division of Santal Parganas, Palamau, Singhbhum, Chaibasa, Sambalpur, Angul and Puri were taken away from the Lower Province of Bengal and constituted into Bihar and Orissa Forest Circle and Mr. H.A. Forteath held charge of this new Circle with effect from 1.4.1912.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Division</th>
<th>R.F. (area in sq. miles)</th>
<th>P.F. (area in sq. miles)</th>
<th>Total sq. miles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Palamau</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palamau</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazaribagh</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singhbhum</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singhbhum</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranchi</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>178</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaibasa</td>
<td>182</td>
<td></td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singhbhum</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Subsequently renamed as Kolhan Dn.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santal Parganas</td>
<td>292</td>
<td></td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sambalpur</td>
<td>396</td>
<td></td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angul</td>
<td>229</td>
<td></td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puri</td>
<td>116</td>
<td></td>
<td>473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2675</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The strength of the staff sanctioned for the two Forest Divisions, Viz. Singhbhum and Kolhan was as follows: October, 1916 during the year 1916-17. From this date the Singhbhum District now contained three Division, Viz Singhbhum,
This organization of the Forest Department was inadequate and with effect from 1.8.1920, Hazaribagh Forest Division was created comprising 56 sq. miles of R.F. and 32 sq. miles P.F. in Hazaribagh district thus reducing the charge of the Palamau Division. From 1st July 1923, the following non-territorial Divisions were created:

1. Forest Research Divisions (Silviculturist and Utilization Officer) to deal with the problems of forest research and proper utilization of forest produce.

2. Forest Working Plans Division to prepare working plans for execution by territorial D.F.Os.

3. Forest Engineering Division for the construction of roads, bridges, buildings, bundhs, irrigational channels, etc.

These non-territorial Divisions had to be created to aid the existing territorial D.F.Os. In addition two posts of Private Forest Officers were created with a view to tendering advice to the private forest owners for the management of their forest along scientific lines.

The charge of the Singhbhum Division gradually proved too heavy for one officer to manage and accordingly with effect from the 1st April 1924, the Singhbhum Division was split up into Saranda and Kolhan Forest Divisions. In 1924 the Bihar Forest Circle thus comprised the following forest Divisions:

- Conservator of Forests, Bihar & Orissa Circle, 2621 Sq. miles: R.F. 1783 Sq. miles: P.F. 838 Sq. miles
- Territorial
  - Hazaribagh Dn.: 95 Sq. Miles
  - Palamau Dn.: 277 Sq. Miles
  - Santal Parganas Dn.: 202 Sq. Miles
  - Saranda Dn.: 334 Sq. Miles
  - Kolhan Dn.: 326 Sq. Miles
  - Porahat Dn.: 247 Sq. Miles
  - Chaibasa Dn.: 320 Sq. Miles
  - Sambalpur Dn.: 356 Sq. Miles
  - Angul Dn.: 419 Sq. Miles
  - Puri Dn.: 2315 Sq. Miles

- Non-Territorial
  - F.R.O.
  - W.R.O.
  - Forest Engineer
  - Private Estates Forest Officer

With effect from 1st April 1928 the Sambalpur Division was split up into two Divisional Charges, namely, Sambalpur East Division and Sambalpur West Division. With effect from 1.9.1931 the Hazaribagh Forest Division was abolished by amalgamation of its two Ranges, Kodarma and Khurchutta, with Palamau and Santal Parganas Divisions respectively.
With effect from the 1st April 1936, Orissa was separated from Bihar and consequently four Forest Divisions, viz. Sambalpur East, Sambalpur West, Angul and Puri were transferred to Orissa. The Bihar Forest Circle now comprised the following 9 Forest Divisions including the newly created Dhalbhum Forest Division, two non-territorial Divisions, viz. the Working Plans and the Forest Research Divisions:

Conservator of Forests, Bihar (Total area 1983 Sq. Miles under the management of the Forest Department)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saranda Dn.</td>
<td>331 Sq. Miles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolhan Dn.</td>
<td>248 Sq. Miles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porahat Dn.</td>
<td>235 sq. Miles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaibasa Dn.</td>
<td>221 sq. Miles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhalbhum Dn.</td>
<td>244 sq. Miles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhalbhum Dn.</td>
<td>224 sq. Miles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palamau Dn.</td>
<td>307 sq. Miles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santal Parganas Dn.</td>
<td>328 sq. Miles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direction (P.E.F.O.)</td>
<td>273 sq. Miles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Forests under the management of the Forest Department then were mainly the State-owned Reserved or Protected Forests. In Bihar, the bulk of the forest were owned by private landlords who for their own immediate personal gain exploited the forests without restraint. The result was destruction and depletion of the forests. In the Province of Bihar, where agriculture is the staple industry and crop production depends largely on rainfall, the conservation of every drop of rainwater is of vital importance. Forests conserve water and tend to improve local Precipitation and thus they tend to act as self-filling tanks and storage areas which can only influence agriculture to its benefit. This benefit could be achieved by maintaining sufficiently large parts of the catchment areas of the numerous streams and rivers, rising in the hills of Chotanagpur, covered permanently with forest for the dual purpose of releasing the stored water gradually in the form of stream-flow and for influencing rainfall. The destruction of forests, which were under private ownership, gradually manifested itself into desiccation and erosion of soil in the catchments and the flooding of rivers by rapid run-off.

The matter was engaging the attention of Government and publicity and education were undertaken to bring home to the people the advantages of conservation of forests and the evil
consequences of their destruction. The publication of articles and distribution of posters had gradually the effect of inducing the private landlords to apply for reservation of their forests under section 38 of the Indian Forest Act. Government on their part offered to take over the management of private forests on scientific lines on behalf of the owners. The net profit, if any, was payable to the owners after meeting the cost of management. Even upon these terms of concession only a few landlords applied for either reservation or protection of forests. Till 31st March, 1946, only 312 sq. miles of private forests were declared R.F. and 55 sq. miles as P.F.

Formerly the Private estates forest Officer had the duty to tender advice to the private owners regarding the management of their forests on scientific lines. He also was directly managing the forests which, upon the application of the private owners, had been taken over for the management as R.F. or P.F. Since the private forests were situated in the districts of Ranchi, Hazaribagh, Palamau and Singhbhum, it was considered desirable to create a new Forest Division called the Hazaribagh Forest divisions for management of the private forests in the districts of Ranchi and Hazaribagh, while the private forests in the districts of Palamau and Singhbhum were distributed among the existing Palamau and Singhbhum Divisions. The Hazaribagh Forest Division was created in the year 1943. The Monghyr Forest Division was created in March 1945 for the management of private forests taken over in Monghyr district. At the request of the owners, 277 sq. miles were declared R.F. and 102 sq. miles P.F. These areas were being managed by the owners themselves.

This procedure of taking over private forests under the Forest Department did not prove sufficiently effective and so Government decided to enact a special legislation to save the private forests from further destruction and ultimate extinction. In the year 1946, the Bihar Private Forests Act was enacted which enabled Government to take over management of the private forests on scientific lines. A gigantic task was thus suddenly thrown upon the Forest department. The Ranchi, Manbhum and Giridih forest Divisions were created from 1.4.1946, 1.11.1946 and 27.8.1947 respectively to deal with the private forests under the B.P.F. Act. A Conservator's Circle, called the Damodar Development circle, was specially created with effect from 1.9.1946 to cope with the work load of these managed private forests. Some 14,160 sq. miles of private forests were taken over for
management under the new Bihar Private Forests Act 1946. All the private forests were rightburdened. The immediate task was their demarcation and protection. The ex-landlords whose forests had been taken over under the new Act did not co-operate with the Forest Department in the management of the private forests even though the net profit from the management of the private forests after deduction of the cost of management was to be theirs. They rather created problems for the Forest Department by instigating the people not to abide by the legal and necessary restrictions. The other difficulty that lay in the way of the Forest Department was that a large number of subordinate staff, viz. Rangers, Foresters and Forest Guard, had to be appointed for protection and management of the newly taken over private forests. These staff were all untrained. The urgent task before the Forest Department was now to train and appoint sufficient number of gazetted and subordinate staff. As for training Gazetted Forest Officers, each year candidates were deputed to the Forest Research Institute and Colleges, Dehra Dun, for training in Diploma Course in Forestry according to the tentative programmes drawn up for this purpose. Forest Rangers were also similarly deputed to Dehra Dun Ranger's College. As regards the training of Foresters and Forest Guards, a Foresters' Training School was established from 1.3.1949 and training centres for Forest Guards at Betla, Mahilong, Kathikund and Kodarma were established to train the personnel as without training in forestry the staff could not prove useful.

During the period 1946 to 1950 the Forest Department concentrated on the demarcation of private forests, settlement of rights of the people and protection of the forests.

Jamshedpur, Jharkhand

- From jungle to forest is a long process. What we have inherited today is the making of a succession of martyrs who have served, often with their lives.
- Yesterdays will never return, yet they are always with us-often jostling with todays.