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BAMBOO AND ITS FUTURE IN INDIA

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BAMBOO IS KNOWN TO BE ONE OF THE GREENEST BUILDING MATERIALS AVAILABLE TODAY

Worldwide, building with Bamboo is an ancient tradition in the regions where plant grows in abundance, such as South America, Africa and, in particular, in South-East Asia, Indian Bamboo sector itself generates about 432 million workdays annually.

Today, the diminishing wood resource and restriction on forest cutting has resulted in shifting the focus towards more renewable, environment friendly and widely available building material. Due to its rapid growth, adaptability to most climatic conditions, superior to most juvenile fast growing wood, Bamboo emerges as a very suitable alternative to the conventionally used resources.

WHY BAMBOO?

Bamboo as building material stands very relevant for both economic development as well as environment protection – a balanced tool for sustainable development which is much sought after these days. It has over 1500 documented uses ranging from fuel wood and light bulb to even aircraft manufacturing. It grows 3 times as fast and can be harvested as often as eucalyptus. It can yield 6 times more cellulose than fast growing trees found extensively in natural forests. A pole of Bamboo can fully regenerate to its full mass in just six months, while other commercially important species, mature in 4-5 years. This ability of Bamboo to grow fast makes it an attractive harvest for farmers since it provides quick cash returns to them compared to traditional cash harvest and timber yielding trees. It is also suitable for afforestation of degraded lands and soil stabilization. It occupies 12.8 per cent of the total area under forests in India. It has short growth cycles and low water requirement. A grove of Bamboo releases 35 per cent more oxygen than an equivalent stand of trees and absorbs four times as much carbon.

BAMBOO IN INDIA

For centuries, Indian communities have used this resource in sustainable yet feasible ways. The country therefore possesses the advantages of a legacy of traditional skill and knowledge, an extremely valuable resource that can be built upon to utilize Bamboo in newer and innovative modes.

In India, coastal regions, North Eastern States (Tripura, Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Arunachal), Kerala etc. are all traditional users. A wide range of innovative use of Bamboo is also arising due to tourism for aesthetic uses.

THE CHALLENGES : HOW THE REGULATORY RESTRICTIONS HURT US

The old law Indian Forest Act, 1927 classified Bamboo as 'Tree' and fallen Bamboo as 'Timber', contrary to the scientific classification of Bamboo as 'Grass'. Hence, many regulatory restrictions are applied to Bamboo in cutting and transportation. Had it been considered 'Grass', it would have been exempted from many such restrictions.

Even though Supreme Court, in 1996, held that Bamboo was not a tree, and felled Bamboo was not to be considered as timber and the Forests Rights Act, 2006 (FRA, 2006) classifies Bamboo as non timber but Indian Forest Act, 1927 still holds valid. Hence, there is confusion in implementation.

States have not aligned their legislations in line with the FRA 2006 and therefore the restrictions imposed on timber are largely still applicable to Bamboo. FRA 2006 imposes restrictions – It vests the right of ownership and the right to collect, use and dispose of Bamboo in Tribals. Hence, the upstream producers and manufacturers of Bamboo based products continue to face transit pass requirements, which is another impediment in development of Bamboo industry.

CURRENT STATUS OF THE BAMBOO INDUSTRY IN INDIA

India's current demand for Bamboo is estimated at 27 million tons per year. Even though we have 30 per cent of the world's Bamboo resources, only 50 per cent of that demand is met domestically, rest is imported from China and other South East Asian countries.

50 per cent of our tribal population depends on non timber forest produce which includes Bamboo for their livelihood. Currently, Bamboo sector has employed only 10 million people, much shorter than the potential that this sector has in our country which can range from 50 million going up to 129 million.

KEY POTENTIAL : HOUSINGS

Housing shortages in the world are mainly in the South eastern and tropical part of the world. It is of a low energy consumption material; a Bamboo house requires 1/7th amount of energy to build compared to a brick, cement and steel house hence more sustainable. Bamboo has very high tensile strength. In panel form, it is well suited to substitute wood. With the national goals turning its focus towards housing for all, Bamboo hence becomes a crucial commodity for India.

On a national level, an established system for ensuring the quality of Bamboo housing is required. This would help to increase the popularity of Bamboo houses and consequently more and more people, authorities and countries will adopt them.

Further, this will bring livelihood security, solve housing shortage, and combat global warming all at the same time.

THE WAY FORWARD

There is a pressing need to create the implementation structure; hence the focus needs to be on policy as it's a tool for enabling the industry to grow. The traditional practices and existing initiatives can be used for understanding feasibility; the potential is huge and ripe for mainstreaming Bamboo. In order to use this potential, all the different sectors of the construction industry need to recognise it and come together for successfully establishing a flourishing Bamboo Industry in India.

Sources:

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(Courtesy : Rural Habitat Observatory – Basin South Asia)

(Contd. from page 4)

initiation of action for removal of a member on the ground of the said disqualification. The phraseology used in Rule 16(4) clearly indicates that the ineligibility should be a continuing one continuing till the time when the Registrar initiates action for declaring that the member concerned has ceased to be a member of the society. In other words, the ineligibility should be one that was suffered by the member subsequent to his acquisition of membership and should be one that continues till the date of initiation of proceedings under Rule 16(4) against the member, so held in *Sivadasan vs. Joint Registrar (General)*, 2016 (3) KLT SN 7 (C. No.6).

(viii) On a harmonious reading of Section 30, Rule 18(a) and Rule 36(1)(b) of the Rules, it is categorical and clear that, in order to call a special general body proposed by a member or members, there should be a requisition in writing from one fifth of the total number of members of the society. That apart as provided under Rule 18(a), the managing committee is vested with powers to make inquiries with respect to the complaint made by any member of a society against any other member proposing to bring a resolution against such member. Therefore, after the inquiry made by the committee in accordance with Rule 18(a) on a proposal from a member and if it decides to constitute a special general body, then it should have a requisition in writing from one fifth of the total number of members, vide *Cochin City Service Cooperative Bank Ltd., vs. Joint Registrar of Cooperative Societies*, 2016 (3) KLT SN 51 (C.No.37).

(ix) Looking at the phraseology used in Section 33(1A) it is clear that the Registrar on securing permission from the Government is to extend the term of the 'said administrator or administrative committee', which means that if already the authority in power was the administrative committee, on the basis of permission secured from the Government, the Registrar has only the power under Section 33(1A) to extend the term of the said 'administrative committee'. In other words, the Registrar is entitled to extend the period of the administrator only if an administrator was appointed under Section 33(1)(b). However, the phraseology used is 'extend' in Section 33(1A) and in the second limb of Section 33(1)(b). If the intention was to replace the administrative committee after the expiry of one year period, the term used would have been 'appoint'. The terms 'extend' and 'appoint' are two different connotations carrying different meanings, and cannot replace each other, unless it is defined so under the Act is the ruling in *Hamsa vs. State of Kerala*, 2016 (3) KLT 429.

(x) Government contribution or share are provided and secured in a society not only to support the society with financial assistance but also ensuring its functioning properly and legally. It is clear that the petitioner is not at liberty to return the shares to suit its convenience. The attempt of the petitioner in *Pattanakkad Service Cooperative Bank Ltd., vs. Joint Registrar of Cooperative Societies*, 2016 (3) KLT SN 86 (C. No. 74) was to get over the apprehended proceedings under Section 32 which thus means since Section 65 inquiry was going on, petitioner could not comprehend that it is likely to end in the proceedings under Section 32 (1).

(To continue in Next Issue)