

PREFACE

Every country is blessed with many natural resource that human labour and intellect can exploit for it's own benefits. Of all natural resource "Forest" is said to be one that is almost renewable. Being most important renewable resource, the forests, as green gold, are performing a number of functions including ecological, recreational and economic. Forests in the sub-Himalayan North Bengal (Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling district*) are the source of many kinds of timber with varied technical properties, which serve the requirements of the building, industry and communication as well as an expanding range of industries in which wood forms the principal raw material. Forests in the study area are also the source of fire wood. This apart, forests perform a vital function in protecting the soil on sloping lands from accelerated erosion by water. In the catchment areas of rivers of the districts, they serve to moderate floods and maintain stream flow. They influence the local climate and shelter wild life.

Forests play a pivotal role in the overall development of the study area. This is, therefore, why forests have been given due attention for the development of this region. Several forestry programme have been drawn by the state government in the area on systematic basis, consistent with the local requirements. The main objective of the forestry programme in the Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri district is to meet the economic demands of the forest products and maintain and improve the quality of the environment as well as provide substantial employment, particularly to the rural weaker section of the society. Thus the forests in the sub-Himalayan North Bengal are **productive, protective and aesthetic.**

In the present study attempt has been made to investigate the distribution of forest and their valuable species composition, industries based on forest products, marketing network of forest products, forest as aesthetic resource, several conservation measures and present and future potential of forest resource in the study area. This study has also attempted to identify various problems which are related with the forest resource. Some preventive and remedial measures have been offered by the investigator with the hope that they may be given some consideration by the appropriate authority to boost up the local economy through the proper utilisation and exploitation of forest resource of the study area.

* Spelling of Darjeeling has recently been changed as "Darjiling". The revised spelling is used only in maps in the thesis.