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Topic : Tree Plantation.

“Plant a tree today for a better tomorrow.” The significance of forest cover and tree plantation cannot be stressed upon enough, and their importance has only increased in the present scenario, with global warming and climate change being very real threats to our planet and all its inhabitants. Tree plantation refers to the transplantation of saplings or sowing of seeds in order to facilitate green cover and promote afforestation. People who will not sustain trees will soon live in a world that will not sustain people". A world without trees is akin to a barren desert with no life. All forms of life on earth are interdependent and one cannot hope to exist without the other. Preservation of all-natural resources is imperative for the balance of our ecosystem. Hence the need to promote tree plantation on a war footing.

Trees benefit us in numerous ways. They absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen during the process of photosynthesis. This helps in combating climate change. Studies have shown that an acre of trees can absorb the same amount of carbon dioxide produced by a car that has been driven for twenty-six thousand miles. Strong healthy trees act as carbon sinks, absorbing atmospheric carbon dioxide and reducing the effects of climate change. Also, in a year an acre of mature trees can provide oxygen for eighteen people. By absorbing pollutants like sulfur dioxide, ammonia, and nitrogen oxide, trees play a huge part in purifying the air. Tree canopies act as physical filters by trapping dust and absorbing pollutants from the air. Trees help cool the environment, thereby conserving energy by reducing the need for air conditioning. Streets and cities with a larger green cover are significantly cooler as compared to those without. Ultraviolet rays are known to be the leading cause of skin cancer. Trees shield against UV rays by 50%. Trees play an important part in conserving water. The shade from trees slows down the rate of water evaporation from lawns, gardens, etc. Trees also help in preventing water pollution. They reduce runoff by breaking rainfall, thus allowing water to flow into the earth. They act like sponges that filter rainwater and recharge the groundwater table. Moreover, trees play an important part in the water cycle and control the moisture level of the ecosystem. Tree plantation has a major role to play in preventing soil erosion. The roots of trees bind the soil, thus preventing it from getting washed away during rains. Trees are a source of food and wood, both of which help promote the economy of the region. The forest industry provides ample job opportunities. Additionally, sustainable tree farming provides timber to build homes and wood for cooking and heating. Trees are also a habitat and sanctuary for many species of birds, animals, and insects. When young, they provide shelter to birds, insects, lichen, and fungi. The trunks of ancient trees can host owls, bats, and beetles, to name a few tree-dwelling species. Thus, trees are unique hosts of complex microhabitats. The power to heal is inherent in nature. Research has shown that exposure to nature improves concentration and reduces mental fatigue. Children diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder have been found to show improvement when they have access to nature. Studies have also shown that within minutes of being surrounded by trees and green spaces, BP drops, heart rate slows and stress levels reduce.

Unfortunately, in our bid to modernize and progress we have been systematically destroying forests and depleting the earth's resources. The history of deforestation dates back

centuries. During earlier times, it was balanced through a natural growth process as tree cutting was done for personal or community use only. But with the expansion of agriculture, forest lands started being cleared. Destruction increased after the industrial revolution and the urbanization and commercial exploitation that began during the colonial period was the main cause of deforestation. The consequences of all that mindless destruction are now there, for all to see- global warming, erratic weather patterns, increase in the frequency and volume of, floods, melting of glaciers, desertification of once fertile area, loss of soil productivity, extinction of several species, imbalance in the ecosystem and non-availability of forest products. Franklin D. Roosevelt very rightly said, "A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself. Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people". It is essential to remember this truth if we are to prevent more species including ourselves from becoming extinct.

Many countries across the world are beginning to realize the importance of afforestation. Several local bodies, private citizens and non-governmental organizations are working tirelessly to mitigate the damage inflicted over the years. In India, tree planting is usually carried out during the monsoons, which is from June to September. Van Mahotsava or Tree Plantation Day is celebrated during the first week of July every year. There are a number of steps that can be taken to conserve forests. Cutting down of trees can be regulated using methods like clear-cutting, selective cutting, and shelter cutting. Large scale commercial deforestation should be avoided. Forest fires can destroy large tracts of green cover. Measures should be taken to avoid forest fires. These include making fire lanes, clearing dry leaves and trees, and spreading chemicals to control fires. Also, better farming practices can be adopted. It is necessary to avoid slash and burn farming, overgrazing by cattle, and shifting agriculture. The concept of national parks and game sanctuaries have become popular over the past years. This method of developing forests as tourist centers can not only protect forests but also earn foreign exchange. Several countries have developed their forests as tourist centers.

Before embarking on a plantation drive it is important to keep a few things in mind. The type of trees to be planted depends on the topography and climate of the area. It is preferable to

plant indigenous species as they are better suited to the local habitat. Also, this helps preserve traditional flora.

This is the ideal time when people must realise the significance of plantation and contribute to it. The government must take this issue seriously and more and more individuals must work to pursue this essential objective.