

LESSON No. 11



FORESTS AND FOREST PEOPLE

What do you think is a forest?

If someone grew lots of trees close to each other, would this become a forest?

Look at the picture.

Forests are formed by a community of plants including trees, shrubs, climbers and ground covers. There are tall trees, many kinds of small bushes and grasses all over. Forests provide shelter to many wild animals. There are many kinds of birds and animals flying past or hiding in the bushes. Some animals live in the holes of the trees, like insects, snakes and squirrels. Monkeys live on the trees. Elephants, tiger, wild bear and deer take shelter in or under the trees. Forest thus provide a home and shelter to many animals.



One day a forest conservator said, “ If the forests are not there, we too will not remain”. Why so?

Forests play a major role in keeping our environment clean. Plants make their own food out of water and carbon dioxide in the presence of sunlight. Carbon dioxide is a gas exhaled by animals during respiration. Plants give oxygen to animals, while animals give carbon dioxide to plants.

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES CLASS- V

Besides this, forests also help in the water cycle. They help in precipitation. They prevent soil erosion as the root of trees binds the soil particles together.

Do you know anyone who loves the forest or live in the forest?

A small population of people live in the forest of India. This population mainly consist of tribals and adivasis. Their lives are totally linked to the forests. In Manipur, different tribal communities are settled in major hilly areas of the state. Can you name them?



Hillside with forest and houses.

Natural forest provides local people with a variety of products. Forests provide all the materials to survive. People depend on fuel wood to cook food, collect fodder for domestic animals and cut building materials for housing. They collect medicinal plants to treat several diseases. They practice shifting agriculture (Jhum Cultivation) and gather things like honey, fruit, roots, vegetables, herbs, gum, lac, resins etc.



Shifting or Jhum cultivation

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES CLASS- V

Not only livelihood, people earn their income by selling the different forest products. They use wood as a fuel and also sell it. They make different handicrafts from bamboo plants and sell it. They collect varieties of medicinal herbs, orchids, honey, leaves, fruits and sell to earn money.



Tribal women selling products in the market

Banana fruits, plantain leaves and flowers are good resources to generate income. Other wild edibles are also collected and marketed by the tribal women. They collect the bamboo shoots in seasons and sell either raw or in fermented form.

Do you have a friend with whom you can share the lives of forest people?

When forest trees are cut, tribal people who depend directly on them for food, fuel wood and other products, find it very difficult to survive.

The cutting of trees on a large scale is called **deforestation**. This deforestation has seriously affected the tribals. Earlier the tribals gathered food from the wild, did hunting and practiced agriculture. Nowadays, man has taken more land from the forest to cultivate and to produce main crop to feed the ever increasing population. Thus the forest cover has reduced considerably.

With the forest disappearing, it threatens in the very survival of man and wild animals. Deforestation, not only leads to the loss of trees and wild lives but also of herbs, honey bees, birds and insects. Deforestation has left the land bare, reduced the rainfall and increased soil erosion.

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES CLASS- V

Right to Forest Act 2007. People who have been living in the forest for at least 25 years have a right over the forest land and what is grown on it. They should not be removed from the forest. The work of protecting the forest should be done by their Gram Sabha.

Think :

Do you know of any who works to save forests?

Collect reports about forests from newspapers. Did you find any news about cutting down of forests affects the climate? How?

Ask your parents :

Ask your parents whether they remember places with trees/ forests where there are none today. Find and note, what is there today ?