

Community Forestry:

The Hope for Reforestation in the Hills of Nepal

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## Foreward

One of the reasons I went to Nepal in the Spring of 1979 was to get some insight into the extent of environmental degradation in a developing nation. I was particularly interested in deforestation in Nepal, a land which has traditionally depended on wood as a source of fuel and building material. I knew that deforestation is considered a major environmental problem by outsiders who have visited or worked in the Hills, the foothills of the Himalayas. If I were able to spend an extended amount of time in a Hill village of Nepal, I might get an idea about how the people were utilizing their forest resources. If there were effective reforestation programs, how were they viewed by the people living in the Hills? If the Hill people themselves were responsible for the rapid disappearance of forested land, how were reforestation programs aimed at changing their lifestyles?

Although I went to Nepal with only a little understanding of the deforestation problem in Nepal, I had the vague notion that the situation might be hopeless. Indeed, I found people in Nepal who feel that large areas of the Hills region are already beyond reclamation or soon will be. Happily, I was able to visit an area where reforestation is being undertaken with comparative success. In Banskarka Panchayat, Sindku Palchok District, Bagmati Zone, the residents are working

to replant rather than continuing to deplete their precious woodland resource.

I knew that because of the short time I could be in Banskarka and because of my limited knowledge of the language and the culture, I might have difficulty in understanding much of what I found there. However, due to the generosity of the people of Danga Durbar in Banskarka, I was able to learn a great deal in a short time. I am especially grateful to Mr. Laxman Dong Tamang and his family, Mr. Krishna Karke, and the Banskarka Forest Nursery Staff. Once they understood that I had come to learn and not to teach, they went to great pains to educate me about their reforestation efforts. I know that if I had the benefit of a longer stay with the Tamang family in Danga Durbar, I now would feel that the perceptions I have recorded in this paper are inadequate and shallow. But whatever understanding I have of the situation in Banskarka is mostly due to the kind efforts of the people of Danga Durbar. I owe them thanks for many things, but especially for giving me a feeling of optimism about the future of community efforts to reforest parts of the Hills.

Another reason I found for hope that the deforestation in the Hills of Nepal may be halted is that the people with the afforestation programs of foreign-aid agencies and the Nepali government work with thoughtfulness and sincerity. Some of these people to whom I am especially indebted are Laura Mac Pherson and Merv Stevens of U.S. AID and P. K.

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