

# Banko Janakari

A journal of forestry information for Nepal

---

## Managing forestry outside forests

Trees that exist outside forests contribute greatly to rural construction and energy supplement in Nepal. Roadside plantation, canal plantation, bund plantation, homelot plantation, and plantation on religious sites, etc. are some such examples. In this connection, the unused roadsides of Nepal offer a huge potential for biomass production which would also add beauty to roads.

The concept of roadside plantation has reemerged recently from the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation and Ministry of Works and Transport. This concept was put to work through the opening of plantation activities by the then Prime minister Mr Lokendra Bahadur Chand at Gaindakot, Nawalparasi, and thereafter by the Works and Transport minister himself at Saptari district. This is indeed a welcoming step.

Where there is road, there are possibilities for roadside plantations. This is the present day phenomenon all over the world. Roadside plantations can be seen on places where it is possible to grow plants. No need to go far, one can find a lush green plantation cover along much of the roadsides at the next door - India, where since long, every possible bits of roadsides have been planted. To a great extent, they also look perfectly managed.

Attempts have been made quite a few times in Nepal to beautify roads through plantation. Unfortunately, the remnants of plantations that we see scattered here and there are the proof of failure of such endeavours. The only sector from Janakpur to Jaleswor, probably Nepal's first roadside plantation with considerable promise, has also started showing signs of deterioration. One can see the tree-lined avenue being utilised for rearing livestock, trespassing, erection of huts, etc. Moreover, standing trees are not being spared the axes anymore.

The right of way (road boundary) belongs to the Department of Roads (DOR) (Public Road Act 2031 Section 2-B) and the department may initiate tree plantation on the road boundary (Section 16 - 1). This act also applies to all matters related to trees standing on road reserve land, all indicating that the legal provisions to protect trees on road sides are in place. Nonetheless,

the current status of roadside plantation has clearly indicated that some forces other than the provisions of the act, have a crucial role to play. Some of the constraints here could be: the existing dual ownership of land on roadside, inadequate protection measures, lack of DOR's knowledge of managing trees, lack of coordination with the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation or with the local government, initial and recurrent budget, etc. As an organisation responsible for civil engineering works, such matters might not have also drawn much of the DORs' attention, for managing trees in whatsoever form, never directly comes under their domain, nor is it their priority programme. Similarly the District Forest Office (DFO) has nothing to do with the trees planted on roadsides as there is no mention of roadsides trees in the existing Forest Act. But, in fact, as the only authority for protecting and managing Nepal's forest products - tree being one of the components, it falls back on DFO to look after trees and their products, and to exercise control over any unauthorised encroachment or damage inflicted on the standing trees.

Trees, if systematically grown on a larger scale on public lands, must automatically involve the government's forestry sector. This is proper and justifiable because the DFO is the repository of the required knowledge and expertise to manage trees on the public land. Especially, after the commencement of community forestry programme in Nepal, it is not only the hard science of forestry, but the social aspects involved in it, have also been dealt with perfection by Nepali foresters and those involved in plant research. It is in this context that, the responsibility of managing roadside trees might also be entrusted to them, even if such plantation is handed over to the user groups as done in community forestry programme. Sooner or later the DOR is likely to seek co-operation from the forestry officials, because managing roadside plantations on the stretch of 10,000 Km road, and even if the plantations is to cover a mere forty percent of the roadside, - the task is going to be a massive undertaking. The protection and nurturing of roadside plantation which is currently proposed to be given to the local communities, especially to the disadvantaged women and children of the society seems rather ill-advised. Also, supplying them with the technical assistance and above all, development of a transparent mechanism of benefit sharing are other critical concerns. Unless this is guaranteed, this excellent idea might never bear out concrete results.

Therefore, the commitment that has been shown belatedly at the political level, to do something better for the country must not be wasted in the din of mere publicity. It is now the responsibility of all concerned authorities to work to materialise it. Forestry, is indeed, an appropriate sector that might play a crucial role to achieve the success of this worthwhile approach.

**Sushim Ranjan Baral, Ph. D.**  
**Editor**