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## **Bamboonomics in our state - Poor Man's Timber or Green Gold?**

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Bamboo, the mystical plant is considered as a symbol of strength, flexibility, elegance and compromise. Throughout Asia, bamboo has for centuries been integral to religious ceremonies, art, music and daily life. It is the paper, the brush and the inspiration of poems and paintings. In the north east India too, the recorded history finds mention about the various uses of bamboo and cane as early as 7th century AD during the days of King Bhaskara Varmin in Assam. Like in other parts of the north east, for people of Arunachal Pradesh the green gold is a proud heritage and it has been an indispensable and quintessential part of our tribal culture and lifestyle since time immemorial.

Starting from edible bamboo shoots consumed in a wide range of tribal culinary to structures like bamboo houses, fencing, suspension bridges, stiles, variety of storage and carry baskets, haversacks, food plates, bows and arrows, mats, to accessories like headgears, ornaments and necklaces, the traditional bamboo uses are innumerable and in itself a subject matter of study. The bamboos also hold deep religious significance amongst many tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The altars and effigies constructed for performance of religious rituals and ceremonies are made with items of split bamboos.

If we consider the bamboo resources of the country, more than sixty percent is concentrated in north east India and Arunachal Pradesh is known to harbour very high diversity of bamboo species in India. However, the resource rich state is yet to go a long way and have wider strides to make when it comes to bamboo technology and economics. We have strong bamboo and cane craft tradition and by using this local renewable resource and local skills to meet the local needs without degrading the environment, we are inculcating self-reliance which is definitely the way towards sustainable development. But the question that arises is whether the huge potential of bamboos in Arunachal Pradesh being realised in terms of economics? In the coming years, can our state be one of the major players in the Bamboo market?

With technical, financial and policy support from the GoI through National Bamboo Mission (NBM) and National Mission on Bamboo Applications (NMBA) and the Government of Arunachal Pradesh, bamboo offers a huge opportunity in the state. Industries based on non-timber forest produce including bamboo are one of the thrust areas of the Industrial policy of Arunachal Pradesh, 2008. The Bamboo Policy of the state also envisions realizing the economic, social and environmental potential of the bamboo resource of the state. Bamboo development including plantation, management, and harvesting and value addition can generate huge employment, especially for the rural unemployed youths. Rao (1996) reports stated that one ton of bamboo in the craft sector can generate an average of 150 workdays. This means that two tons of bamboos are enough to employ one person for one year. This is a very positive factor for a village cooperative because one hectare of bamboo plantation can easily yield 20 tons per year, thus providing jobs for 10 people in the community. Moreover, the gaps in the socio - economic conditions created by the Supreme Court ban on green felling in certain parts of the state can sufficiently be filled by the advancement of the Bamboo sector in the State as it can serve as an alternate timber for the wood based industries, creating local employment and income for the community and the state. The wonder grass is also an ecological value packet, with its good carbon sequestering potential to mitigate global warming, its unique soil binding properties to

prevent landslides and soil erosion and as a source of food to the endangered Red Pandas, Elephants and the ungulates.

The High Powered Committee constituted by the Supreme Court has already clarified that the production of Plywood/ Veneers by the units located inside the approved industrial estate are permitted to use Bamboo as raw material for the purpose of production of bamboo veneer/plywood. Further, under section 4.1 of Arunachal Pradesh (Control of felling & removal of trees from non forest land) Rules, 2001; there is no need of felling permission from the forest department for all species of Bamboo from the non forest area including plantations of such species.

The state has rich Bamboo resources & diversity accompanied by supportive government policies and acts. However, discernible progress can be achieved only with active people's participation. It has to become a people's movement through a viable institutional framework. While the traditional ethos of the people is to be preserved, development of entrepreneurial skills is a must to generate a bamboo based economy. Well coordinated implementation of action plans, good monitoring mechanism, knowledge and technology transfer & exchange backed by people's cooperation & participation are the keys to realise the massive bamboo potential of the state. (The author is Divisional Forest Officer, Aalo).