

Environmental Re-engineering for Enhanced Living–Series 2: Forest Resource Management

The two day national level seminar on 19th & 20th Oct.2011 on ‘Environmental Reengineering for Enhanced Living’ was the 2nd in its series & an outcome of our commitment to be environmentally conscious and an effort to learn ways and means to protect our environment. This year being declared as ‘International year of forests’ by the United Nations we chose to have Forest Resource Management as our theme.

The Chief Guest for the seminar, Dr. Priam Pillai, CEO of Mahatma Education Society and Director of International Affairs, Pillai’s Group of Institutions, shared his views on environmental conservation in the inaugural Session on 19th Oct. & emphasized the importance of preservation of our natural world which forms an essential part of our history. He pooled in his various experiences to highlight the necessity to contribute at our personal levels, in preserving the nature and saving the earth from disaster.

The Key note Speaker Dr. Nitin Desai, Dean, Faculty of Science & Technology, Dr. D. Y. Patil University, Navi Mumbai, in his address to the audience modernized the basic needs of man by replacing them with good food, good health and good environment and gave us an in-depth understanding of the bio-diversity of our country. He gave us an insight into his ongoing projects on crops, improvement of sugarcane and mango cultivation, medicinal plants, micronutrient based fertilizers and its effects on various crops. He also spoke about his various other projects on the Western Ghats, DNA bar-coding and also the medicinal properties of plants for various diseases and disorders.

Mr. Chandrashekhar Bhadsavle, a successful farmer who has raised 'Saguna Baug' a farm resort near Neral was the guest speaker for session-1 on ‘Approaches to Green Belt Design’. Being a farmer he shared his experiences of his interaction with nature. He said that we must create happiness through greenery, thus protecting the green colour. When the development of the world hits us, it’s the farmers of India who can be the food bowl for the entire country. Thus, it’s essential to give proper dignity to these farmers. As a team, the able youth can come up and make a difference by creating greenbelts.

Dr. Maitrayee Bhattacharya, a Development Consultant to various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) began session-2 on ‘Ethnobotanical Practices and Healthcare’ by accentuating on the importance of health in our lives. She explained the benefits of medicinal plants in maintaining, enriching and sustaining our health. She shared her field experiences with *adivasis* and villagers. She not only explained the benefits of certain medicinal plants like *tulsi* (holy basil), curry leaves, drumstick, custard apple, *amla*, *durva* etc. but also their effects if

taken for a prolonged period of time. Dr. Bhattacharya also demonstrated basic acupressure techniques which could be regularly practised by everyone.

Ms. Subbalakshmi Kumar, Director, Centre for Development Education, Pune, presented case studies of two schools that successfully implemented Gardens for life (GFL), a tri-nation project dealing with Science and Development Education through school gardens and school linking in India, Kenya and UK. Ms. Kumar emphasized the need for teachers to develop online educational materials which can be utilized by others for the benefit of the entire education fraternity and sensitizing the students towards conservation and preservation of natural resources.

The Valedictory address was delivered by the Chief Guest, Dr. Bharat Bhushan, Dean (Academic) & Secretary, Yashada, Pune. He spoke about various projects initiated by the government, such as a joint forest management project which focuses on how the resources can be shared and accountability can be ensured. He specifically highlighted the emerging field of Biotechnology as a pathway to sustainable future. He recommended that teacher education institutes should start Inter-disciplinary Certificate Courses on Environment. He also suggested that these institutes should collaborate with 'Warkari Sikshan Sanstha' as they have a large database, which can be very effectively used to spread awareness about various social issues.

Overall, the seminar had been an excellent platform for everyone to present and exchange their ideas, views and suggestions on environment.