

## REPORT ON WEBINAR

### **New Perspectives on Nature Conservation in Post-COVID 19 Era**

#### **World Environment Day- 5th June 2020**

The Internal Quality Assurance Committees of Anand Institute of Social Work, Anand, Bhopal School of Social Sciences, Bhopal, and Sri Guru Nanak Dev Khalsa College, New Delhi, jointly organised a webinar on the “**New Perspectives on Nature Conservation in Post-COVID 19 Era**” on 5th June 2020, to commemorate World Environment Day 2020.

The resource persons for the seminar were Professor Radheshyam Sharma from the Department of Environmental Studies, University of Delhi. A passionate environmentalist, he has a huge experience in his field, and Dr. Suneetha TB, Acharya Institute of Technology, Bengaluru.

Dr. Ashish Thomas, the convenor of the Environmental Studies Department of SGND Khalsa College, welcomed the speakers to the programme. He introduced the theme for the day and explained how our current relationship with Nature were threatening our life on Earth. He discussed the concept of “need vs greed” to show people take the resources of nature for granted. Biodiversity is threatened due to the irresponsible behaviour of humans. This webinar is an attempt to make everyone, especially young students, realise the importance of maintaining the delicate balance of nature.

Professor Radheshyam Sharma spoke on “Ecological Entrepreneurship to Redesign the Earth and lead the Global Market in the Post-Covid World”. He said that this was an important time to discuss and review our relationship with nature. He said that while life expectancy had risen considerably, the bad news is that the whole generation is at risk due to environmental degradation and pollution. This is an anomaly. In India, we can afford better things, but the quality of life has not improved. Water, air, soil—all these elements are contaminated. The quality of our environment has deteriorated. Economic indicators are strong, but social, health and environmental indicators are weak. It was with this backdrop that Professor Sharma explained that our growth is not sustainable, and our link with environment and nature is broken.

The speaker pointed out how we have been left devastated by a single virus—not just in India but the whole world. The solution he offered was to follow the simple principle: that “I Am Second” in all levels—family, community, industry and nation. The first is Nature, or environment. We have to adopt this principle in life.

For this we need to strengthen market-based instruments. Any company should be answerable and accountable to the community. It is their responsibility for any harm they bring to the environment. Institutional mechanisms should be set into place. Monitoring and legal tools should be put into place so that market as well as environment can go hand in hand. Professor Sharma gave the example of the snow leopard, whose conservation category has improved simply by giving incentives to the people. Forest degradation should be avoided, so the UN offered to pay for conservation. There are several tools through which biological resources can be preserved, even with the development of industry. Professor Sharma recommended Eco-tourism and other ideas of ecological entrepreneurship. Need to develop a way of working which ensures the sustainable development with Nature. This will achieve a strengthened ecosystem. The ecosystem is our insurance against natural calamities.

Ecosystems play an important role in saving our lives. “Ecosystems are large-cap stocks of Nature’s market. He also discussed Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs to discuss how most of the time, majority of people only reach the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> level of subconscious. Excellence should be made available to more people. Worthy goals need to be defined to develop a relationship and connection with nature, so that we do not suffer from nature deficit disorder.

Professor Radheyshyam Sharma advocated soil engineering, sustainability consultation, cultural biodiversity and ecotourism as examples of ecological entrepreneurship. He said that the environment is the way to better economic restoration, both of nature and economy.

Dr. Deepak Sharma introduced the next resource person. Dr. Suneetha TB, an Associate Professor of Biotechnology at the Acharya Institute of Technology. She leads the NAAC and NBA of her college, and has more than twenty years of academic experience. Her talk was titled “Impact of Pandemic on Environment and Social Development” Dr. Suneetha spoke about the origin of the pandemic and discussed the nature of the virus and the environment it thrives in. She explained the difference between endemic, epidemic and pandemic diseases. She described the nature and origin of the Corona virus and then presented the chronology of the spread of the disease, from a localised infection, to the pandemic proportions it has achieved presently.

Dr. Suneetha explained the effect of the Corona virus on our social behaviour. The entire world is hoping for a vaccine. She enumerated certain behaviours which we should incorporate in our daily life. Use of masks and gloves have increased, but people are not educated about their safe removal and disposal of this waste. Socially, we have been affected in the healthcare and food supply sector. Poverty is a major fallout of the pandemic. Everyone is directly affected by the lockdown, and it may take a long time to come back to normalcy.

Social distancing, methods of protection, all such precautions need to be taken. Policies and procedures need to be developed in working spaces to safeguard the people. Managing the people needs good communication. The government needs to build trust with its citizens, Dr. Suneetha opined. One can imagine the worst, but we need to educate the common public about the situation so that we can live with this situation. Resources need to be made accessible to the common people. Also, the public needs to turn to nature and change their way of thinking. She spoke about producing biomass at home, de-fluoridisation of water, and other ways in which nature can be preserved despite human activity. Effect of Corona on wastage and emissions was also discussed. She called for innovation and new skills to live in the “New Normal”. Corona has indeed taught us to respect our environment more.

Sukhvinder Kaur took forward the session by conducting an interactive session with the participants, who had many questions for the speakers.

The programme concluded with the vote of thanks, which was delivered by Dr. Ninad Jhala, the principal of Anand Institute of Social Work, Anand.