



Role of Bhoovigyan Vikas Foundation

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Earth is the birth right of all people. We have only one home, the Earth, and we have an important mission- To retain it in livable condition for future generations.

Our Mother Earth, unable to bear the misdeeds of Man, cried for justice. Tired of being abused by man, Mother Earth cried out, "Who will save me?" There was no reply.

Again she cried out, "Will someone please end my ordeal"? I can't bear this any more" Still, there was no response.

Then, she shouted, "Hello! Is anybody listening to me?"

Then a feeble yet firm voice replied from a lone and dusty corner

"I do listen; I do care."

The patient Mother queried: "Who are you? What is your name?"

Then came the reply in affirmative assertion, "my name is **Bhoovigyan Vikas Foundation**".¹

¹In the speech on "Significance of the Event" delivered by the Founder and Chairman, Bhoovigyan Vikas Foundation, during the First International Conference on "Sustainable Development and Sustainable Life Styles" at New Delhi on 22-23, April 2001.

Earth, together with the human species, is a wonderful gift of God. Earth is our Mother, and water flowing from its rivers is like milk from mother's bosom. It gives us life, provides land for our agriculture and provides greenery. If we spoil this earth and the environment, we will decimate human kind. Therefore, life with sustainable consumption and life styles should be the mantra of the present century. If we are able to translate this mantra into action, we will do a great service to ourselves and for posterity.

The root of lifestyle is the mindset. BVF wants to get this message across that unless the mindset of man changes, unless our paradigm of thinking changes, there is no possibility of sustainable lifestyles and sustainable development.

The Foundation- How it was born

The Bhoovigyan Vikas Foundation is a coming-together in a consortium, of various professionals from different walks of life, with a desire to do something to stem the continuous degradation of the Earth. It is but a little voice of concern, meant to create a national awareness of Earth-related issues. It aims to serve as a think-tank on Earth-issues and policies and advise various governmental and non-governmental agencies on policy matters of sustainable development, sustainable lifestyles, conservation of resources, land use planning, food security, agricultural development and related subjects.

At the inauguration of the annual seminar of the National Association of Geographers (India) in December 2000, several academicians and professionals, planners and geographers urged its then President, Dr. K.V. Sundaram to put to action, the visions that he outlined in his presidential address. The Chief Guest, Shri Sompal, (then) Member, Agriculture, Planning Commission also endorsed these ideas as the path to be taken. Many who attended this seminar and many who heard of it later welcomed the concept.

Thus, the seed was sown which was nurtured and brought to reality by various people. The key persons, who were instrumental in the formation of the Foundation were Dr. K.V. Sundaram, Shri. Sompal, Dr. M.Velayutham, (then) Director of National Bureau of Soil Science & Land Use Planning, Nagpur, Prof. R.P. Misra, (former) Vice-Chancellor, Allahabad University and several others.

Objectives of the Foundation

The five objectives of the Foundation are:

- (i) Advocacy and awareness building;
- (ii) Policy analysis and research including action research;
- (iii) Training;
- (iv) Advisory/Consultative services, and
- (v) Networking and information exchange

Lessons Learnt

One aspect that stares at us in the face is simple in its starkness: Rapid population growth, coupled with rapid urbanization and rapid development that do not take into account ecological factors, invariably leading to rapid depletion of our natural resources and equally rapid degradation of our environment.

We can ignore its reality only at the cost of our own future

For our sake, for the sake of our children and for the sake of future generations of India, we have to start emphasizing the need for restrained resource utilization so that our ecological integrity is not impaired. Let us prove that environmental conservation accelerates, rather than hinders, economic development. We have to look for pragmatic solutions to problems posed by development projects. We have to bear in mind their long-term impact on the environment and ecology of the region, the State and the nation.

Therefore, our model has to be one that ensures sustainable development. In short, we have to balance progress and consumption with conservation of resources. This will be possible if we make environmental security a national mission, a movement that involves the people. Voluntary associations, through people's participation, have successfully handled many a conservation project.

Earth Day - Every Day

Spreading the Earth Day message through open air museums.

In order to deepen the initiatives of the "Earth Day Message", it is the ardent wish of Bhoovigyan Vikas Foundation that "Open-Air Geographical Museums" carrying the message of "Saving our Planet" and paving the way for

'Restoring our Biospheric Environment and Human Culture' should be established in all states of the country. The genesis of this idea of "Open-Air Geographical Museum", may be traced to the 21st Indian Geographical Conference held at Nagpur during 2-4 January 2000, when the President of the Congress, Dr. K. V. Sundaram, in his introductory remarks referred to the great educational role that could be played by such geographical museums in our country, and particularly their contemporary relevance, when the Earth's ecosystems are under severe strain. Subsequently, the Bhoovigyan Vikas Foundation took a bold initiative and incorporated the advocacy for such museums in the country as one of its activities in its 'Vision Paper'. This was followed up with well-known Museologist and Art-Historian, Dr. K.K. Chakravarty. As a result of this advocacy, and thanks to the vigorous efforts of Dr. K.K. Chakravarty and the Bhoovigyan Vikas Foundation, an Open air museum (Purkhauti Mukangan) - The Museum of Earth, Man and Environment - is taking shape in Chattisgarh state near Raipur. .

Schools and universities in the country, particularly those which are well endowed with land and financial resources, can also try to build such 'Geographical Museums' small in scale and within their means, on their campuses. In these museums, the whole landscape of the surrounding region may be transported into a pavilion through large scale models, maps, photographs, pictures and other illustrations, with appealing poems, inspiring thoughts and well-known quotations about healing the planet and spreading the philosophy of sane living. In this pavilion, a model of the 'palaeo-geography of the area may be attempted and how through man's interventions, these have been transformed, with both positive and negative effects. In another pavilion, how the care for the earth, the care for the future generations and the care for the well being of all sentient beings may be depicted through picturesque models. Such Museums will serve as great "Knowledge Dissemination Centres" and effective instruments of change to promote the vision encapsulated in the term "Sustainable Development". Such museums will greatly aid to impart the message of Earthcare in our children with impressionable minds² and initiate a genuine movement for 'Saving our Planet'.

Vision and Prayer for Heavenly Earth

BVF's vision of a vibrant India is one in which afforestation will be replacing deforestation, enriching soil with micro-nutrients and replacing it

² For more information about 'Open Air Museums', See the Publication of the Bhoovigyan Vikas Foundation, "Restoring Human Culture and Biospheric Environment", Northern Book Centre, 4221/1, Daryaganj, Ansari Road, New Delhi-110002

with soil degradation, natural manure replacing artificial fertilizers, a recycling process fully utilizing all wastes without degrading the environment, and cleaning up rather than polluting. When practiced by all, this will lead to a sustained green revolution, bring about a rural renaissance, enhance employment opportunities, revitalize Mother Earth's plundered resources and usher in a golden era, to retrieve the Paradise Lost.

We should build a Heavtly Earth, which can last through eternity. This vision and dream is set out in the following Prayer, which is an adapted version from Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali*:

Heavenly Earth, A Prayer³

(Adapted from Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali*)

Where the mind is without fear and head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by
narrow domestic walls;

Where the Earth retains its greenery, sanctity and natural beauty;

Where birds in freedom sing and chirp without fear;

Where all living societies and life-support systems co-exist without
threat and extermination;

Where man's greed does not overtake his need;

Where the Earth's diversity and vitality are preserved and protected;

Where man lives in perfect harmony with the bounties of nature,
within the carrying capacity of the Earth;

Where man listens to the cry of an ailing Earth- "Avani-Dhwani"
and acts with veneration and respect for natural laws;

Where man uses Vasundhara's resources with restraint and
wisdom;

³Reproduced from "Policies for our Plundered Planet Some Pathways to the future - occasional paper by K.V. Sundaram, Bhoovigyan Vikas Foundation, 2004

- Where the Earth's precious resources and fragile ecosystems are managed with prudence and care for a sustainable future;
- Where humans desist from causing air and water pollution and increasing economic toxicity;
- Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards conservation, preservation and scientific management of natural resources;
- Where governments, U.N. entities, private sector and the civil society march in unison, towards the goal of sustainable development;
- Where man learns to produce and consume wisely and sustainably, and holds the Earth as a "Treasure in Trust" for the future generations;
- Where a benign Science and Technology is truly harnessed for promoting sustainable development and a livable planet;
- Where human leadership is able to rise above the narrow domestic walls of caste, religion, community and exploitation of man by man;
- Where mega-cities, metropolises, slums and shantytowns yield place to a Micropolitan - centred sustainable human settlement pattern of development;
- Where nations share the bounties of Mother Earth in just and equitable proportions in the global system;
- Where women's potentials are harnessed for environmental governance, through emancipation and participation in national and international ecosystems management, and control of environmental degradation;
- Where the unsustainable use of our finite natural resources is effectively controlled to reduce their depletion;
- Where "water wars" are averted by ensuring water and food security through a steady supply of water for safe drinking and productive irrigation;
- Where equity and justice in the use and control of water are ensured through people-centred watershed development approach and inter-linking of river basins;

Where "Village Swaraj", with the just devolution of powers and finances, manages all local affairs and the Civil society takes over the management and control of local projects with active public participation;

Where the voices of the poor and the disadvantaged groups are listened to with justice and freedom;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by THEE into ever-widening thought and action towards sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles;

We should leave to the next generation,
a stock of Earth's Natural Resources,
in quantity and quality,
no less than those we inherited.

We should therefore strive for a "development, that meets the needs of the present, without compromising on the ability of future generations, to meet their own needs"!



