

# Challenges to Reconnect with Nature



*\*Pandurang Hegde\**

Since 1972 World Environment Day is celebrated over the world to raise awareness about forests and wider issues of environmental protection. The theme of this year's World Environment Day is '*Connecting People to Nature*'. It implores us to get outdoors and into nature, to appreciate its beauty and to take forward the call to protect the Earth that we share.

Over the years the alienation of people from nature is increasing both in urban and rural areas.

The lives of modern person is ever busy and their minds are even more busier. Under such circumstances, it is very important that we reconnect with nature to calm our

minds. The green spaces available in the cities, especially trees and parks provide opportunity to reconnect people to nature.

In order to reconnect with nature, the Ministry of Environment and Forests has launched **National Environment Awareness Campaign** (NEAC) at national level. Under this programme financial assistance is given to NGOs, educational institutions, women and youth organisations for conducting awareness programmes on environmental issues.





About 12000 organisations are involved in conducting some action programmes related to nature protection and solving environmental problems.

Traditionally the pilgrimage centres are mainly located in the natural surroundings, especially in the mountains or banks of the rivers. The *Char Dham Yatra* in Himalayas is an excellent living example of how our culture provided opportunity to people across the country to enjoy the beauty of nature with reverence to the trees, rivers and mountains. The bridle path that started from the banks of Ganga river in Rishikesh lead the people to the origins of Yamuna and Ganga rivers, that are the holy pilgrimage sites visited by millions of people.

Pilgrimage routes to Amarnath caves in Jammu and Kashmir, and to Kailash Mansarovar in Tibetan plateau in China are also places of extraordinary natural beauty that has deep spiritual value to common man. These pilgrimage routes are one of the main ways to reconnect with nature and reflect on the interconnectedness between man, nature and spirituality.

Similarly the *Narmada Parikrama* is another traditional pilgrimage route on which people walk along the banks of Narmada river and learn to appreciate the beauty of the river and the natural surroundings.



The existence of 166 National Parks and 515 wild life sanctuaries consisting of 2 percent of the total geographical areas of the country provides excellent opportunity for common people to enjoy and reconnect to the nature, wild life and the green space of the country.

In order to create awareness about nature conservation the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation has initiated steps towards promoting greenery in public

spaces in cities and reducing waste generation of all kinds. The craze of paving the roads and open spaces with asphalt and cement in urban areas has alienated younger generation from nature. Felling old trees to broaden the roads, and allowing more space to vehicles than for those who walk or cycle leads to further alienation of urban citizen. Urban ecology can be maintained with active participation of all the stakeholders and involvement of the community.

Reconnecting with nature helps to reduce the modern day stress and brings harmony in the lives of individuals and the community. The greenery not only reduces the noise and sound pollution but it also helps to reduce the temperature, adding in mitigating climate change.

The Government of India is launching a massive waste management campaign in 4000 cities across the country on World Environment Day .



Under this campaign waste bins of blue and green colours would be distributed in these cities along with the awareness drive to educate common people to adopt a life-style that inculcates the culture of cleanliness.

*“I have a firm belief that we will develop a culture and the new steps that we take towards achieving cleanliness will continue. Only then will we achieve the dream of Gandhiji, achieve the kind of cleanliness that he had dreamt of,”* Prime Minister Modi said in his monthly radio programme ‘**Mann Ki Baat**’.

The government is aiming to change the attitude of people to segregate waste at its origin, dry and wet waste and to treat them accordingly. This will be the basis for cleaning up the cities that will be more nature friendly and provide the basic hygienic conditions for living. This is the logical follow up of the **Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan**(SBA) under which there is need to address the issue of waste generated in urban areas is creating mountains of waste that has adversely impacted the ground water and the quality of the air around the waste dumps.



This is a challenging task as there is need to change the habits of people, in which they become the agents of change from each family by performing the duty or dharma of segregation of waste.

In Indian culture, the connectedness to nature is the basis for attaining wisdom and serenity in life. The sages or the *Rishi*s, the learned men gained this wisdom from the forests or Aranya Culture. They lived in harmony with nature, and most of the knowledge was imbibed from their natural surroundings.

We need to inculcate these ideas into our daily lives in order to reconnect with nature. It is essential for common man to realise the air he breathes, water he drinks, the food he eats is all directly the product of nature. And linking to nature is the basis for survival of mankind.

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