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Contribution of "Ranwata Nisarg ani Paryavaran Sauvardhan Mandal"NGO, in Environmental Protection of Satara District

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ABSTRACT

The environment is an integral part of human life. The nature fulfills all the requirements of human life. The excessive use of natural resources has created serious environmental problems. They have become the global problems as well as posed serious challenges and threats to all living beings on the earth. The government has made various laws, but these laws are not sufficient to maintain the eco-balance. The NGOs play a vital role in maintaining the balance of nature. The government cannot solve these problems, so the non-governmental organizations have entered in the field of environmental protection and conservation. Moreover, there is a need of creating awareness about the environmental problems and it is necessary to have participation of people, law enforcement and direct action to solve these problems. The GOs and NGOs conduct various activities for the protection and conservation of environment and sustainable development for the survival of society. 'Ranwata' organization has made considerable efforts regarding this.

KEYWORDS : Environmental protection, NGO.

1. Introduction:

The industrial and population growth had taken place in the last century. The objective of the industrial growth was development of human beings and it resulted in increased urbanization and as a result of it people moved from the rural to urban areas. The increasing population in the urban sectors created a number of problems i.e. housing, clear water, fresh air, sanitary facilities etc. The human needs increased due to population growth and to fulfill his needs the man has excessively exploited nature. This exploitation is mainly through forest cutting, forest fire, change in land use, unplanned expansion of the city, depleting forest cover, loss of productive agricultural land, increasing rainfall runoff, depletion of water table, waste garbage, use of plastic, changes in cropping pattern, excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, excessive use of water, hunting of animals and birds etc, in the last few years. It resulted in the environmental degradation and change in the cycle of nature.

Today the environmental problems have become the global problems. The first environmental conference was held at Stockholm in 1972 for the protection and conservation of environment. This conference evoked attention of the whole world regarding the environmental problems. The environmental problems are very serious and the government alone cannot solve the multi-dimensional problems, so the non-governmental organizations have entered in the field of environmental protection and conservation. It is obvious that in India, NGOs have grown enormously over the last 25 years. NGOs have contributed with their dedication and selfless service and promoted socio-economic condition of the society. The NGOs play a vital role in maintaining the balance of nature. The voluntary agencies are the non-governmental and non-profitable agencies. They have undertaken various programmes and activities to create awareness among the masses about the environmental protection.

Satara district occupies an important place in Western Maharashtra. The Western part of Satara district is mainly surrounded by the Sahyadri ranges and Eastern part is drought-prone region. In the Western part of district there are peculiar tourist centers like Mahabaleshwar, Kas plateau (valley of the flowers), Thoseghar, Koyana sanctuary etc. These places come under eco-sensitive zone. There are more than 60 NGOs in Satara district. "Ranawata" is one of the prominent organizations working in the field of environmental protection and conservation in Satara city. It was established in 2001 and it is registered NGO. The name of the organization is taken from Marathi word 'Ranawata' which means' The organization has 50 members and Mr. Dr. Sandeep Shotri is the president of the organization. This organization is purely working in the field of environment. The executive body members are well educated. It is working at the state level since last twelve years. The pledge is prepared by the members of Ranwata: "We the members of Ranwata take herewith an oath in front of Rayreshwar temple by keeping in mind that nature is great and we will be alert ourselves to keep environment as it is and try to maintain environment by following lifestyle which will be less harmful to nature and will persuade others to follow such type of lifestyle" (17th Aug. 2003).

2. Objectives of the Study:

The main objective of the present paper is to discuss the contribution of "Ranawata", an organization at Satara, working in the field of environmental protection and conservation. Other objectives are as under:

1. To understand the different environmental problems in Satara district.
2. To understand various activities run by the 'Ranwata' organization in this district.
3. To understand the role of 'Ranwata' in environmental protection of Satara district.

3. Methodology: This paper is mainly based on the primary data collected from the key activists of Ranwata by conducting interviews. We have also used structured questionnaire, Interview and survey method for the preparation of this paper.

4. Role of Ranwata in Environmental Protection:

The 'Ranwata' is performing various activities for environmental protection and conservation The specific activities of the organization are as follows:

1) Tree Plantation and Conservation:

The beginning work of this organization was tree plantation activity at Ajinynkatara fort and after that in the nearby villages. Kas plateau is a unique place for the flowers and it is known for the flora and fauna. The organization has actively participated to protect the rare plant species at Kas plateau and they have found there some rare medicinal plant species. The members of organization and social scientists, who are working on different plant species and flowers discover new plant species and create awareness among tourists regarding the significance of these medicinal plants in human life.

2) Use of Pollution Free Vehicles:

The organization has conducted an innovative activity of donating old bicycle to avoid air pollution. The members of organization appealed to people to donate the old bicycle to the poor students and positive response was given by the citizens. After receiving positive response they have appealed citizens to celebrate 'No Vehicle Day'. For creating awareness about pollution one member of Ranwata Shri, Ravindra Joshi on his 62nd birthday travelled 160 km distance on bicycle and he gave the message of its dual benefit that bicycle is not only beneficial to avoid pollution but also for health.

3) Seminar on Global Warming:

The global warming is the world issue. This organization has arranged various lecture series on global warming for creating awareness among masses. The renowned personalities who delivered lectures were Dr.Madhukar Bachulkar, Shri. Abhijit Ghorpade, Dr. Rajendra Shende, Dr. Madhav Gadgil etc. In their speech they said that the developed countries in the world have used natural resources unlimitedly and CO_2 has increased and there is depletion of Ozone stratum in atmosphere which is known as Greenhouse Effect and this blame is

given to the developing countries.It is the failure of Copenhagen conference.They also noticed that 27 nations in the world are threatened to sink and thousands of people will become homeless. There is fear of global warming and if such situation is to be continued the earth will become the hot-spot.

4) Save Kas Plateau and Kas Lake:

Kas plateau is 25 km away from Satara. It is known as the 'Valley of flowers'. Nowadays it has been included in the list of World Heritage. The organization has taken lot of efforts for its inclusion. It has made continuous struggle to maintain the natural beauty of Kas through the media. The members of organization have collected the waste and garbage with the help of students. Kas Lake is situated at the bottom of the Sahyadri ranges. Its shape is like saucer. It was built in 1885 by the British for drinking water purpose to the people of Satara city. Water is supplied to the city with the siphon method. But nowadays it has become a picnic point and most visitors visit this place and they enjoy the parties and throw waste there. Now this place is recognized as 'Kach Lake'. All organizations including Ranwata have strongly opposed the plans suggested by the Nagarpalika such as boating in lake and to increase the height of dam. The main purpose of opposition was the loss of biodiversity and pollution of water.

5) Oppose to New Mahableshwar Project:

The natural beauty of flowers of Kas plateau and wild life of Koyana sanctuary would be endangered due to this project. So, different organizations in Satara and nearby Satara strongly opposed this project. The Ranwata organization has actively participated in creating awareness among the masses through organizing rallies, experts' lectures, public campaign and organizing competitions in schools and colleges. All the organizations have come together to stop the government's proposed the New Mahableswhar Project and as a result it was stopped.

6) Save the Electricity Campaign:

India is an agricultural country and for the agricultural production electricity is essential. There is more than sixteen hours load shading in rural areas and result of it agricultural production is far down beyond the expectation. Electricity is an integral part of human life. Now the use of electricity has been increased tremendously and in future its demand will be definitely increased. Today to save electricity is a need a time. This organization has organized different competitions such as essay writing, elocution competition, debating, picture competitions etc. in schools and colleges to create awareness to save the electricity. At the time of festivals we use extra unproductive electricity and we must try to save it. This organization has been creating awareness about the use of solar energy among the masses since last five years.

7) Organization of Human Chain Rally:

Every Year on the occasion of the 'World Environmental Day' all the NGOs come together to form a human chain rally to appeal to citizens of Satara. All people from various strata of society including doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers, social workers, activists, shop keepers, students, workers and reporters come together to form two km human chain for creating awareness about environmental protection and conservation. They give slogans by hanging banners in neck and hands. After that they come together and take an oath for the protection and conservation of environment. The pamphlets regarding environmental protection are distributed among the people for creating awareness among the masses.

8) A Seminar on Save Kas- Save Heritage:

A seminar on 'Save Kas- Save Heritage' was organized in Satara city, state of Maharashtra, India on 1st April 2012. There were 200 participants including 18 speakers and 35 experts as well as 24 organizations at International, national, regional and local level participated. The seminar was organized jointly by two NGOs i.e. 'Ranwata' of Satara and TERRE Policy Centre, Pune. The overall objective of the seminar was to launch the process of the conservation of Kas plateau as natural heritage and influence it for sustainable development. It is not only for keeping this beautiful, colourful carpet with endless variety of the flora and fauna for the years as show piece, but also ensure its continued contribution to the natural balance, agricultural productivity through the enhanced pollination, nutrient cycle and biodiversity. The outcome of the seminar is priority should be given to the local people

9) Save the Western Ghats:

The conclave was organized at Mahableshwar from 30 Nov. to 2nd Dec. 2012. In that conclave major issues were discussed. Some issues were; how do we stabilize growing demand of the people for natural resources? In that meeting they also suggested what are the ways and means to prevent future degradation of biodiversity. The meeting was organized by AFRF Pune and 350 participants from all over the country participated. The renowned ecologist Dr. Madhav Gadgil gave key note address. Archna Godbole was the coordinator of the conclave. In those three days Dr.V.B. Mathur , Director of National Wildlife Protection Institute told untold stories about the Western Ghats. In his speech he said 39 sensational centres are in the Western Ghats and out of 39 there are four centres in Maharashtra and 19 are in Kerala. He specially announced that all the sensational centres suggested by him in that meeting approved by the UNESCO. The various NGOs participated in that conclave. The Ranwata and other NGOs combine tried for the inclusion of Kas plateau in the World Heritage.

10) Publication and Documentaries:

Dr. Sandip Shrotri has written three books related to the environmental issues, specially his book on Kas flower plateau is popular due to the photography of flowers. He has kept the photography of Kas plateau on organization's website. He has also made documentaries on Kas plateau and published various articles on environmental issues in local newspapers.

5. In view of activists of Ranwata:

1. Kas plateau (the valley of flowers), Mahabaleshwar, Chalkewadi, Panchgani, Koyna forest come under eco-sensitive zones which are beautified with bio-diversity, should be kept as it is.
2. New Mahabaleshwar Development Project should be modified.
3. Permission should be given to the new Tiger Project in Western Ghats.
4. The first priority should be given to the needs of local people and there is thrust for involving people in environmental protection and conservation.
5. There is great potential for agro-tourism, ecotourism because these regions have great historical heritage.

11) Concluding Remarks:

It is clear from the study of 'Ranwata' that NGOs play a significant role in creating awareness among the masses about environmental protection and conservation. They can involve people and persuade them by innovating different activities and strongly oppose the destructive developmental plans with the support of various NGOs. The 'Ranwata' is working to nourish nature and protect the environment in surrounding areas of Satara district. The NGO, Ranwata has undertaken various innovative programmes such as donation of old bicycles , seminar on global warming, save Kas plateau and Lake, Oppose to New Mahableshwar Project, Save electricity campaign and Save Western Ghats etc. This organization is specially working in the field of environmental protection and conservation. It works with other NGOs and takes help of other NGOs in solving different environmental problems. It seems that collaboration with other NGOs results in creating new social and environmental movements in Satara district to protect environment. It has also taken efforts for including Kas, Koyana, into the World Natural Heritage. The NGOs are working for environmental protection and conservation by putting humanistic and positive attitude for the welfare of society.

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