

MAHARASHTRA RAJYA NADI SAMMELAN: 2008 (Maharashtra State River Conference) 18-19 October 2008

Objectives and Program



ADAN RIVER NEAR SANGAVI VILLAGE



K.N.College, Karanja

Sir Dorabaji Tata Trust

NADI SAMMELAN: 2008 (Maharashtra State River Conference: 2008) 18-19 October 2008

Objectives and Program

Contact: Dr. Nilesh K. Heda, SAMVARDHAN/SAMVEDANA, Karanja (Lad)

1. River Conference: Modern form of JAL KUMBH

In ancient India there was a system of Kumbh Mela (Gathering along rivers) organized after every 12 years. The main reasons behind this gathering were to discuss about various issue regarding rivers and to devise actions to protect rivers. This system is still going on but the core objective of this gathering has been vanished completely. We are celebrating Maharashtra River Conference as JAL KUMBH to revive our traditions of river protection.

2. Joining the dots:

River conservation calls for many strategies and knowledge based thinking. Complex systems like rivers are made up of countless interdependent components. This is a system with elaborated feedback mechanism. Being complex, this kind of system is difficult to manage and understand. Thus, there is a need to join as many as components of the river conservation and need to make a net work of people working for the same. To join the dots is an important objective of river conference.

3. Everybody's responsibility

Man has played an important role in the creation of environmental problems and to aggravate the same. However, we had an elaborative, self sustainable, keen ship based system of environmental problem resolution. Recent time has witnessed a crumbling in this problem resolution system. Also, there is a recent shift in the management of natural resources from the society to the government system. This paradigm shift has detached people from its environment and there is a growing thought among people that all the environmental problems can be and must be solved by the government. Generally, it is observed that, whatever solutions imposed by the government agencies are short sighted and there is little scope for the people to participate. All people have equitable share in the goods and services derived from the nature, at the same time everybody have a responsibility to protect it. To identify everybody's role in the nature conservation and to develop this thinking there is a need to come together. To unite all interested people is an important objective of River conference.

4. Scientist and common man

Our ignorance about environmental issues making it more complicated. There is a large gap between environmental scientist, ecologist, zoologist, activist, zoologist, botanist, geologist, geographer, social scientist, anthropologist and common man. All these groups are talking in different language and there is a great lack of communication between these components. To bridge this gap is another important objective of this conference.

5. Maharashtra: Land and diversity and initiatives:

Maharashtra state is famous for its bounty natural resources. Well drained area by Krishna, Godavari, Tapi, Narmada and rivers of Konkan is abode of traditional communities still depends on natural resources for their subsistence. Rich forests of Vidarbha, Western Ghats and Satpuda ranges, rich grass lands and agriculture of Central Maharashtra, 700 km long Western Coast contributed in its rich biodiversity. Maharashtra with Six major river basins, 16 catchments , 74 sub catchments , 396 Watersheds, 1504 Sub Watersheds and more than 60000 Micro watersheds harbor about 250 species of fishes. Fishing communities like Bhoi, Dhimar, even today engaged in the eco-friendly occupation of fishing. All the rivers of Maharashtra are rain fed and a large part of Maharashtra comes under semi arid zone of the country thus there found traditional system of the water bodies. Bhandara district of the Eastern Maharashtra is famous for its small water bodies and there are estimated 10000 small and medium sized water bodies dotted the area. Such Maharashtra state is famous for people working for the conservation of the natural resources especially water. Late Vilasrao Salunke of last generation or Manish Rajankar of new generation, everybody has his/her own independent methodology and thinking of the problems of water. TO learn from the experiences of such people is one of the important objectives of this conference.

6. Lack of studies: Collaborative studies

There is a lack of information about present status of our rivers and concerned biological, social elements. Although there is a serious lack of information still the management of rivers are going on and government machinery taking decisions. During my PhD research on the two rivers of Central India I was searching for performed research on the fishes of Central India. It was very much surprising thing for me that, there was not a simple checklist of fishes for the many tributaries of river Godavari. Whatever scarce research performed was for district gazetteers done by English amateurs. Through this conference, we will explore possibilities of time bound program of pilot research for various rivers of India (Through National JAL BIRADARI) and for Maharashtra state. The pilot comprehensive research for various small rivers may involve, finding out focal issues of rivers as well as concerned people, aquatic biodiversity and its present status etc. As well there is a need to develop some kind of mechanism of information sharing and dissemination. In long run, this can be performed through creating data base and using modern tools of information technology. Such information regarding various natural entities are resides with the local people. We should have to devise the program of the documentation of the traditional knowledge at least for some rivers. For Adan River we are engaged in preparation of status report of river.

Thus, the aim of this conference should not be just discussion, rather meaningful activities should be emerged from the same.

7. Fresh Water Refugia

Throughout India, there was a system of sacred pools and ponds. This traditional system can be visualized as fish refugias and protected areas in modern ecological context. As these systems had religious support, perpetuated for thousands of years. Recent time witnessed erosion of these kinds of systems and religious beliefs mainly because of market forces and detachment of new generation from the nature. To cope with this problem there may be 2 strategies viz. 1) to renovate traditional conservation systems. Providing incentives to groups who are engaged in the renovation. 2) To

establish system of freshwater refugium along the rivers through social consensus. In our study area, along river Adan we are exploring possibilities of establishment of freshwater protected areas through people's participation.

What will be the strategy of establishment of such refugias along river? What will be the ecological methodology to find our important areas for conservation? We will try to explore the answers of these questions.

8. River Policy:

We are looking towards fresh water fish fauna of India as a production unit of valuable protein only. Due to this attitude there is good information about merely 8-10 species of aquaculture importance in contrast we have about 1200 species of fresh water fishes in Indian water. Regarding larger river systems, there being some decisions has taken but the effectiveness of such decision is a matter of debate. Thus, for rivers there is a need to devise national and basin wise regional river policy. Nature changes from places to place and time to time thus such kind of policy should be regional and may be different for every basin. We all have to think about the river policy. Those rivers who nurture civilization along its bank, those rivers who contributed in the agriculture, art and literature, are we deteriorating such rivers merely for the production of hopeless things? Those rivers which are like mothers for millions of people in India, do we make those rivers merely gutter to absorb sewage of our cities? There is a need to devise such a policy which can answer these kinds of questions clearly.

9. Fish policy:

Invasive alien species of fresh water fishes are increasing in the Indian inland waters. In past various governments departments (such as fisheries department) due to their ignorance to ecological consequences of invasive species introduced blindly in the Indian water. Those species today becomes worst enemy to local fish fauna. For Maharashtra we have 8-10 species of invasive fishes cultured and accidentally introduced (For example Tilapia. Along with USA in many countries this fish is banned. Although In India we can easily see this fish in diverse fresh water aqua regime). We do not have any firm and clear rules and policy for the introduction and eradication of these species. Thus along with river policy we have to discuss about these issues too.

10. Social Responsibility:

Millions of people, throughout India are depend up on aquatic resources for their subsistence. Fishermen, labor of sand mining, farmers, aqua culturist are facing multiple problems due to degradation in the quality of aquatic resources. Present condition of fishermen is best example of social and ecological discrimination. In comparison to agriculture and industrial sector little attention is given to fishermen. In fact, river, lakes are agricultural farms for fishermen. In contrast to agriculture this do not create any pollution, no need to add pesticides and manure. Today we do not have any systematic census of fishermen working in unorganized sector. If river becomes dry these people do not get any financial help from the government. Nobody has a right to create pollution in the agriculture farm of farmer, just like that nobody should have right to pollute the agriculture farm of fishermen (River).

However, social chaos in these communities is also responsible for the present conditions of these people. Depleting fishes, adverse changes in the ecology of rivers and lotic water bodies created wave of social depression in these communities. Whatever the situation, I believe that only fishermen are

the entities which can take first lead in the river conservation because they are directly depend on this resource.

To work with these communities for river conservation we need to work on livelihood issues of these people. This is expected for this conference that fishermen from Adan river basin and from different parts of Maharashtra will share their thoughts and conditions. This will help us to devise more effective strategies to work with fishermen.

11. River March (NADI PARIKRAMA)

River March can be a most effective tool to understand river and to do awareness about the concerned issues. In Vidarbha successful example of river March has been put forth by GAON BANDHANI an NGO from Bhandara for Garvi River (One of the tributary of Wainganga). After this conference, in November 08 we are organizing such River March for Adan River. For Maharashtra through this conference we have to explore the possibilities of river march for various rivers.

12. Concluding remark

In short, the objectives of river conference will be as follows

- 1) To share experiences of people working for river conservation.
- 2) To devise collaborative studies of rivers for Maharashtra.
- 3) TO devise effective strategy to work with the fishermen of various part of state for livelihood and river conservation issue.
- 4) To create some examples of fresh water protected areas on various rivers and other water bodies
- 5) To create awareness in the main stream society and government departments about these various issues.

We believe that this river conference should not be like so called CONFERENCE. We should not forget to present our work in the conference rather there should be emergence of time bound activity for river conservation. There should be creation of network of NGOs, field workers, interested government officers and researchers. Although it important for any conference that how much problems we solved but how many questions we aroused is also important.

Megasese award winner Mr. Rajendrasingh Rajput, who through his work proved that Gandhi was not utopian, will be president of this conference. Rajendrasingh renovated many rivers of northern India and an inspiration for all those who are working for sustainability of rivers.

In the historical college of Karanja Kisanlal Nathamal College, we are organizing this event. This college has contributed a lot for enriching education for this area. Karanja is a historical city famous for its richness and test for art and one of the important financial centers of this area. We welcome all of you in this city.

Come forward and contribute in the conservation of wetlands.

Program Over view

- **Dates:** 18 and 19 October 2008
- **Venue:** K.N. College, Karanja (Lad)
- **President:** Mr. Rajendrasingh Rajput, JAL BIRADARI, Tarun Bharat Sangh, Jaipur
- **Contributory Amount:** 100 Rs (50 Rs for students and members of fishing community)
- **Lodging arrangement:** K.N. College hostel, Karanja (Lad)

Contact

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How to Reach

Karanja Lad is 220 km from Nagpur. There are direct buses from Nagpur. It is on Nagpur Pune/Aurangabad new highway.

Nearest Railway station is Murtizapur (35 km) and Badnera (55 km) both stations are on Mumbai Hawra railway track.

Nearest airport is Nagpur.

- Kindly note that there are 2 Karanja in this area viz. Karanja (Lad) and Karanja (Ghadge). You have to reach at Karanja (Lad)