



Geo-Ecological Interventions in the Drought Prone Regions: An Interface between Science and Society

UGC Sponsored National Seminar on 'Geo-Ecological Interventions in the Drought Prone Regions: An Interface between Science and Society' was held on 23rd and 24th March, 2007 at Walchand College of Arts and Science, Solapur, Maharashtra.

Seminar was organised by Dr. P.T. Sawant and Dr. R. M. Chennaveer. Organising secretary for this two days seminar was Principal Dr. A. H. Manikshette. Prof Gangadhar Sonar was team incharge. Dr. Iresh Swami, Vice Chancellor, Solapur University, Solapur spoke in his inaugural address quoted couplets from Vedic scriptures that since ancient times our sages attempted to find ways to calm down natural imbalances and it was advised that natural resources should be preserved for the benefit of human kind. Any imbalance in nature and its components like mountains, water, forests, and air creates havoc and humans suffer. During the present times, these sermons become more important as human beings are over using the natural resources not for long term economic use but for short term monetary gains. Natural and Social Scientist should come forward to find out ways to bring equilibrium between science and society to create harmony for the long term betterment of mankind.

Science community and Social Scientists from various institutions submitted sixty three papers to the organisers. Out of these, more than fifty were presented in the two days seminars. Drought and famine are one of the natural disasters that repeatedly occurred in India and claimed more lives than any other disaster. Flooding is the most universal natural and human made disaster. To add on this, contaminated water from industry creates more problems for farmers and households. Students from engineering and bio-technology institutions presented their papers how waste water and waste materials can be used to treat each other to make water and other material reusable for the benefits of society. Geologists presented papers on earthquake, flood

and other natural disasters. Social Work Scholars emphasised on techniques to work during problems. Economist attempted to find opportunities from threats and convert weakness into strengths by using the scarce resources in drought prone regions which are results of overuse of natural resources and natural calamities.

The biggest environmental issue of today with serious implications and truly global dimensions is that of 'climate change' Climate change or global warming refers to the irreversible changes taking place in the earth's climate due to increase in the proportion of greenhouse gases in the atmospheres. The whole world is trying its level best to address the issue of expected climate change and its detrimental impacts. The introduction of low emissions technology that can support economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability is the need of the hour. The developing countries including India are maintaining an extremely positive outlook for overcoming the problem of climate change¹.

De-notified, Nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes are the most neglected and marginalised communities of India. A limited livelihood space in welfare state have been narrowed down by ecological distress, broken agrarian society coupled with anti poor policies and laws followed by challenges of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. These marginalised communities can be developed through National Rural Employment Scheme along with assured water rights, judicious use of common pool resources and micro level planning. Schemes like LEISA (Low External Input for Sustainable Agricultural) with zero budgets which have been experimented with 1000 Square yards and 1200 square yards can be useful to marginalised and poor families². Water stress tolerant crops needs to be developed and promoted for location specific agro climatic zones under watershed development programmes. Waste water and agriculture return flow should be considered as alternate supply to agriculture³.

Information technology plays a significant role. Reliable meteorological, hydrological, and agricultural and socio economic information is essential to analyse, assess and understand the drought process and its mitigation on the micro level. Information led agriculture development in India requires a sophisticated information

¹ Dr. P.L. Roy Dy Director, Central Mining and Research Institute, Barwa Road, Dhanbad, Jharkhand.

² Mr. Jagdish Jadhav, Dy Director, National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi Nomadic Tribes, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, GOI (Solapur)

³ B.K. Sethy Department of SWE, CTAE, Udaipur, Rajasthan.

and communication technological network, facilitating an integrated approach of Internet technology and sustainable agricultural development with its farm and non farm linkages for sustainable livelihood of rural poor. As a step towards building such a network for reaching technology to small holders, central agricultural ministry has taken an initiative to build up information network ARISNET and AGRINET⁴

Seminar was concluded by Prof D.B. Yedekar, Vice Chancellor, SRTM University, Nanded. He said social scientists should look back to progress ahead. Overuse of resources has created situations like drought. District Solapur is an example and we shall have to learn lessons from our past misdeeds. Districts of Punjab and other northern states are going to face the same problem in future. If we wish to improve the situation, we shall have to adopt neo-traditional methods. For instance organic farming is not new to Indian farmers. We are traditional organic farmer, but now we have to realise what we did in the past was more beneficial and we shall have to adopt the same with an improved face along with modern technology.

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⁴ Jyoti S Katahne, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Aland Road, Gulbarga.