

BANGALORE 'CITY DIALOGUE' ON CLIMATE CHANGE
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ASTROPHYSICS
14th SEPTEMBER 2007, MUMBAI

Organised by the Centre for Social Markets
In partnership with Holistic Bangalore and the
Indian Institute of Astrophysics

Event report by Ms Tejashree T.¹

It is Time for Action
The Changing Climate on Climate change

There has been enough talk. It is Time for Action now. That is what CSM is saying as it deploys a series of initiatives to catalyze India into practical action on the Climate front.

'**Bangalore City Dialogue on Climate Change**' which took place on 14th Sept, 2007, at the '**Auditorium, Indian Institute Of Astrophysics**' Koramangala, Bangalore, was one such Initiative of '**Centre for Social Markets(CSM)**' in their endeavor to create awareness about causes and effects of climate changes and instigate action amongst India's masses at all levels, to contributing some concrete visible results

They were supported in this by their Bangalore Partner '**Holistic Bangalore**' and '**The Indian Institute of Astrophysics**' and distinguished Experts from fields as varied as: Industrial Ecology – Ramesh Ramaswamy, Pollution Control – Dr Sharatchandra H C, Theatre – Arundhati Nag, Youth Organizations – Pradeep Sebastian, and also an Art Historian – Dr Annapurna Garimella, and co-ordinated with easy expertise by Malini Mehra the founder of CSM. It uncovered ways on how such seemingly unrelated fields could be used to control and remedy factors impacting climate changes

Was it prophetic that there were very heavy rains, flooded roads and traffic jams on Sept 14th? An ominous portent of future trends if timely measures are not taken...

An atmosphere of absorbed interactive interest prevailed throughout among the more than one hundred or so packed auditorium covering all age groups but dominated by the younger generation.

¹ Ms Tejashree T is a correspondent with Holistic Bangalore. This is an independent report of the proceedings.

Dr Annapurna who was looking at things from an historian's perspective specifically drew attention to the very sensitive issue of water. From ancient times, water in India, she said, had been given a social, caste and religious connotation. The supposedly untouchables were not even allowed to draw water from water bodies which were frequented by the supposedly upper caste. Anybody who flouted these rules was ostracized, flogged and tortured by society. Traces of these still linger here and there. So, unlike in other fields where there is a rich knowledge base to draw from ancient/traditional models of Indian culture, she emphasized that 'it is time for a new model where water is made available to everyone'.

There is no dearth of organizations or systems working towards these causes and goals or addressing pressing issues, Ramesh Ramaswamy pointed out. Most of them were working in isolation and the vital missing factor was an overall co-ordinating and planning system. He called for a 'systemic' approach, which alone could result in not just efficient but effective solutions to the whole problem.

Pradeep Sebastian was very emphatic about finding solutions to issues rather than blaming each other. He said it was time for everyone to come forward and take personal responsibility and he specially urged the Youth of the country to take these issues and solutions forward through the next 50 years.

Having become part of the city it is very vital that one assumes responsibility for one's city and invests some quality time and a bit of oneself for a place which is one's home, was Arundhati Nag's main message. She added that even the floating population who consume the city and its resources owe a contribution to the place which gives them so much. Theatre on its part, she said, could as always be utilized as a medium for its enormous potential of spreading any sort of message.

Dr Sharatchandra said that in the last decade or so Bangalore had developed at such a fast rate that the government, like all sectors, could not have predicted or anticipated this scale and, like all sectors, is challenged to keep pace with it. He added that the very industries and their infrastructures who contributed to pollution, congestion and other aspects by their very Industrialization complained about the fall outs of it. These statements of his were countered with – 'That is exactly what the government is there for, to place control and checks when and wherever necessary'.

There was a very angry spectator from amongst the audience who said that in her own effort to make a contribution towards combating pollution and environmental aspects she constantly made an effort to travel by mass

transportation systems like buses, but 90% of the time these buses either didn't turn up or even if they did, they would not bother to stop at the bus stop. Perhaps these very attitudes, she said, would one day force her to go back to using a single unit transportation and hence contribute more towards pollution in terms of burning of fossil fuels.

Dr. Sharatchandra shared some interesting statistics demonstrating the significant improvement in number of bus services across the city in the last few months. He also briefly mentioned a coming initiative by the Government that would resolve Bangalore's water problem for good in the next 5 years.

The event was interspersed with short film shots on the Environmental & 'Climatic Aspects' scenario in and around Bangalore. A special mention must be made here of a touching, piquant real life story of a woman, old now, who has lived all of her life growing alongside a tree which has sustained her for a lifetime, providing her with a home and reassurance. And here we are cutting down trees left and right.

Malini Mehra said that the time had come for India to come to the forefront and assume leadership on Climate Change.

She added that CSM on its part was looking at establishing a strong Communications network and know-how foundation through Media which would include film broadcasts as also state of the art Web Technology, Youth, Leadership, Professional bodies as also other relevant media.

They were also looking to putting in a lot in research for establishing a ground base as also introducing fresh perspectives which would work to a progressive policy dialogue on climate aspects in India.

Climate, she said, does not differentiate between Countries. It is a global responsibility to realize the implications and impact of climate change and rampant carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions and take requisite controlling action.

India, on its part, could use the next UN's Climate Change Convention to be held in December this year at Bali to convey their ready, positive approach to climate significances on the International front and simultaneously bolster up domestic efforts through relevant ministries - particularly power, Coal, Petroleum and natural gas, renewable energies, nuclear - as well as state and municipal level bodies as also the public to gear up to the challenges of climate change

Companies could use these climate debates to their advantage to innovate and create things of greater value and formulate energy efficient systems using alternative energy sources like solar, wind, etc., which would control green gas emissions. The process would meet their own energy needs as also those of India's masses specially the poor while simultaneously creating new markets and providing for more employment opportunities.

Like Malini says 'The gains are waiting to be realized, What are we waiting for?'

Other than **The City Dialogues**, CSM's Other Initiatives include **City Exchange**- a series of Seminars, **Climate Conversations with CEO's**, Climate Change- Filmed Stories from India's frontlines, Climate Conversations and its meaning for India, Portal on Climate change & India, Climate of Hope-The US India Connection, United nations Framework Convention on Climate Change- Presentation of the Climate Challenge India.