

FEATURES

WONDERFUL
WORLD OF
WILD FLOWERSBY
RAVI PRASAD
HEART

Wild Flowers are one of nature's most beautiful creations. Although we tend to forget this fact, it was recognised even in the time of The Buddha.

The Jathaka Katha story of 'Indrasala' refers to a God Sakra, who earned a long life as a result of having performed a good deed.

He had watered some withering flowers in an earlier birth. During the reign of King Parakramabahu, the Buddhist monks were said to have planted saplings of trees and bushes, such as Na (Messua Fera) and Saman (Jasmine) around their Temples.

But today, at least 35 acres of arable land earth turn barren every second. In the process, the flora and fauna essential to human and animal

life are fast disappearing.

In every early times, people lived off plants which grew wild. They gathered fruits of various kinds, nuts and berries, as well as roots.

Even today there are Nomads and people who live in tribal communities live off with what nature supplies. (Ex. Mahiyangana 'Dambana' tribes and Puttalam 'Sirambiadiya' tribes).

Are Wild Flowers used as medicines?

Wild Plants have always been a source of drugs since many of which are poisonous! However, if these are taken in small amounts; usually with other substances, they can be beneficial. Many native remedies are now out of fashion but were good in their time. The best and the safest cosmetics are believed to have been derived from herbs. Butter worth, gromwell and Lithospermum officinale are old fashioned dye that turn the hair a golden yellow, while gromwell has been used to make rouge.

Although man relies so much on plants, he has not always looked after them carefully enough. As a result, many wild flowers have become rare. Man has changed the vegetation areas by cutting down trees and planting with others,



and cultivating land. Even grass verges by the new motorways have caused problems for wild

flowers of Sri Lanka. Besides changing the habitat of flowers that grow in great numbers, the continuous mowing of grass causes death. As land is drained or even flooded to create reservoirs, plants suffer. Chemicals kill weeds and pretty flowers do not form a part of a farmer's crop, cause disaster. It is advisable not to pick large bunches of wild flowers; for even this can cause disaster for some species. As towns expand (even now in Colombo and other metropolitan areas) to 'beautify' and to accommodate the increasing population, plants have progressively less room to live.

Man does not think but he must be made aware of the damage he causes to the plant world around him. Various organisations are buying lands which contain wild plants of rare species, or simply wild. Government realises the necessity of conservation and has begun to play its role. Nature reserves are being established. If each individual grows one or two native plants in the garden, we are contributing towards conservation in Sri Lanka.

Remember that, it is better to admire rather than to pick a flower which would die in a short period without being able to reproduce itself. Constant plucking of flowers could destroy a particular species. When a plant species cannot produce off spring by any manner, it will become extinct.

It would be hard to imagine the world without flowers and by growing, you and I ('Anata tho Wathashi') could be a part of the 'Green Survival Campaign'.

Conclusively, it is a simple theory that why the mankind is so wicked while the nature is so gentle.

One crucial day this planet would be destroyed by another 'environmental-tsunami'. Then the nature would not tolerate!

*'They haven't got noses,
The fallen sons of Eve;
Even the smell of roses
Is not what they suppose;
But more than mind discloses
And more than men believe*

-G.K. Chesterton
(The Song of Quoodle)
[RPH]

30 Years with wild flowers

BY
DESAMANYA LATE DR. P. R. ANTHONIS - MEMBER OF JAPAN'S ORDER OF THE SACRED TREASURE



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"Full many a flower is born to blush unseen

And waste its sweetness in the desert air".

When Grey wrote these in his famous Elegy in a Country Churchyard, I am sure similar thoughts as ours must have been passing through his mind regarding our own so called wild flowers.



When we think of the wild flowers of Ceylon, which are found in the forests, patanas and waysides of the up-country districts; as a matter of fact in our backyard among the weeds unseen, unnoticed Gray's lines stand out with a burning mark of interrogation. To those few of our predecessors who have searched for them, appreciated them and documented them; we must pay homage. In this we must recall to mind Henry Trimen's Handbook of the Flora of Ceylon with Alston's Supplement and Alston's Kandy Flora, Frederick Lewis' The Vegetable Products of Ceylon and D.C. Gunawardena's Flowering Plants of Ceylon, Mrs Cyril Fernando's collection of books on this subject with colour plates. It is with great pleasure, therefore, that I write this to a Botanist who is involved in the study of this subject with a unique difference, in that he has found a new avenue of exhibiting them and at the same time making it a productive industry. He has bagged the international SBYO award for the third consecutive year.

Ravi Prasad Herat is the chief organiser in Sri Lanka of a worldwide wildflower conservation project

called Ana to watashi (the world of wild flowers) discovered by renowned Japanese Botanist Prof. Totsue M. Koyama.

The programme was first launched through the International Friendship Foundation which tried to popularise growing and conserving wild flowers among young people world wide. (since 1980)

Working with volunteers from other countries, such as USA, India, Japan, Finland; Herath Scours the country's woodlands for indigenous flowers and has found about 12 varieties blooming unseen in forest glades.

Among them, Rasanduna, Paspethi, Atapethi, Kinihiri and the exotic Mollaiharuthi, the Veddahs' name for a plant with luminescent leaves which at night "undergoes rhythmic tremors before shedding its leaves", according to Uva legends.

Besides nurturing them at a nursery, which is the germ of a gene bank for these rare species, Herath also employs students to make greeting cards with the preserved flowers.

With the proposed shift of outstation workshop to the Metropolitan, he plans to extend the range of utility and giftware that can be decorated with preserved wild flowers.

Herath and his volunteers also maintain a data bank, classifying the plants according to their colour and shape. In his long interest in the project, he says "Our wild flower species are vanishing with deforestation and climatic changes and someone must do something to protect them".

(In 1956, the forest coverage was 72%, and in 1990 it was 40%) - a study report filed by a Swedish Advisory Institute on the forest resource development of Sri Lanka said that in the year 2000 it would decrease to 12.5%.

I wish to add my deep appreciation of this unique work of conservation which is praiseworthy.

I am sure his work will enrich the appreciation of all lovers of these indigenous flowers. This work is a tribute to the natural science industry and initiative and there is no doubt he would go from success to success.

I wish him and his working team all success.

To explore, enjoy, and project

You and I share a great love of this earth. The oceans pounding surf, spring covering the earth with that season's newness, a bird's song reaching out..... and we are moved.

Our curiosity calls us we explore a bit. Some travel to a distant wilderness, some no farther than a corner of the back yard. But each of us looks and listens to the wonder of the natural world around us.

We enjoy the earth's beauty and its grandeur. The endless sweep of colours, sounds, and everywhere exists the excitement of life. But there are some that do not see the wonder of it all.

Environmentalists work for legislation, that guarantees clean air and water. To regulate the use and disposal of poisonous toxic chemicals. To set aside the most special places for parks and wilderness.

The attraction for flowers is universal. They are so much a part of us that we cannot envision life without them. We garland our days from birth to death with flowers. Cities, states and countries are symbolized by flowers. We name our



children after flowers. They are used for medicine and food; they are desired by all but are often mistreated.

The flowers of the field; of the jungles and even the nameless little flowers along the wayside that go unnoticed, speak. Their simple but mysteriously beautiful whisper tells us the intimate meaning of life.

William Wordsworth muses to himself: "To me the meanest flower that blows can give, thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears".

Wild flowers initiated for the purpose of popularising wild flowers of Sri Lanka, internally. It started in 1979 and associated with IYY secretariat, of United Nations' Youth Forum in 1985.

The Institutes projected on two branches. One is to formulate a glossary of titles of Asian wild flowers. The other for introducing and popularising the rare species of wild flowers with especial emphasis on the valuable fine art of studying their natural beauty.

The voluntary services and the hearty co-operation given by the Japanese Wild Flower Artists at present is very significant.

Environment

Youth have some rights and responsibilities related to the environment. They are the ones who can be most effective in bringing about changes; they are also the ones most likely to bear the future burden of an environment that is left unattended by those currently in power. Therefore, in various instruments States Members of the United Nations have accepted the following recommendations in resolutions that have been adopted. The first instrument is the 1985 guidelines and the second is Agenda 21 adopted

by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio.

I. Some recommendations are the following:

To promote the concept of sustainable development, with the assistance of youth organisations; in particular through extended efforts in the field of community participation;

II. To integrate environmental training programmes into existing training systems (for example, youth leadership training) and encourage the participation of youth in the protection of environment and exchanging experience and information on this subject;

III. To encourage young people to actively participate in tree planting and nurturing activities (Source: General Assembly resolution 40/14, para. 56 (d), (e) and (g);

IV. To advance the role of youth and actively involve them in the protection of the environment and the promotion of economic and social development.

Commemoration to mark the 10th anniversary of IYY



BY
LATE LAKSHMAN
KADIRGAMAR

P.C., M.P., MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND CHAIRMAN OF THE DELEGATION OF SRI LANKA AT THE 50TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

Young people worldwide are a major human resource for progress and the prime movers of innovation. The imagination and idealism of youth and their collective energies would be the creative impulse for any vision of the future for any nation. The problems young people face and the drive they manifest, provide political indices for devising strategies for socioeconomic development. The degree to which the Governments and the established order successfully address youth problems and the manner in which they utilise the youth potential and meet the challenges presented by them would determine the extent of success of any society, any Government of any country.

We are therefore happy that the General Assembly decided to devote this meeting to mark the 10th

Anniversary of IYY and to consider the World Programme of Action for Youth. Sri Lanka notes with appreciation the work accomplished by the Commission on Social Development and the Secretariat to finalise the world programme of Action. The decade since the adoption of the International Youth year has been eventful in terms of profound changes that have taken place within and among nations. The world programme of Action provides a good framework and multi-sectorial standards relevant to policy making as well as specific action at international, regional and most importantly, the national levels. In the final analysis however, young people themselves together with their national governments and their grass root organisations should develop the most appropriate and



viable partnerships in order to address and resolve the problems of youth in the priority areas identified by the international community.

We note that the programme of action has been conceived as an indicative framework for integrated action with a view to enhancing young people's participation in society. This will afford sufficient flexibility for national governments, national organisations and young people themselves to develop their own models and institutions - like 'wild flowers' of Sri Lanka. In this context, we were pleased to note that the document produced by the Commission on Social Development and the Secretariat has taken on board several of the areas identified by developing countries as requiring priority action such as education, employment, poverty, health, drug abuse, girls and young women. Sri Lanka on its part provides its inputs to the deliberations leading to finalisation of the Action Programme and we note with appreciation that the overriding

theme of the Action Programme is facilitating effective participation of youth in the life of society and in the decision making process.

We in Sri Lanka, have taken concerted action to rationalise and co-ordinate vocational and technical training centres through reforms based on a comprehensive research programme. With the opening up of the Sri Lanka economy, it has been our policy to rectify the imbalance between the labour market demand and the output of the education system. The rationalisation of vocational training is geared to a demand driven training system that can assist the expanding private sector where the bulk of the future employment opportunities would be available to young people. The overall objective of this strategy is to rectify the so-called education-employment mis-match.

There are other areas of importance addressed in the world programme, which is before this plenary meeting. One of the most important factors is the need and the essential role of international cooperation to promote conditions conducive to the implementation of the programme. There is no doubt that the main focus of attention and the principal actors in the implementation will be at national level. It is however, equally important that international and regional cooperation and assistance should be forthcoming in a generous manner.