

Sasyagraha – 100th Green Sunday

Today is “Constitution day”. It was on this day on 26th Nov 1949, that the constituent Assembly gave to ourselves this constitution. This wonderful document, apart from being an elaborate protocol of Governance, enjoins us to adhere to a set of “Fundamental Duties”. As a Parliamentary Affairs Minister, it has been my proud privilege to serve the country by coordinating activities of this great institution and help Government of the day deliver Governance.

However, I write this article with a specific focus on one aspect, viz. Fundamental Duties, which has been somewhat relegated to the background by the legal eagles as well as political parties in general. Wikipedia states – “The Fundamental Duties are defined as the moral obligations of all citizens to help promote a spirit of patriotism and to uphold the unity of India. These duties, set out in Part IV–A of the Constitution, concern individuals and the nation. Like the Directive Principles, they are not enforceable by the law”.

Not being enforceable by law, fundamental duties have to be seen in the moral background rather than something that can be imposed by law. Unfortunately, today many of the Directive Principles and fundamental duties have become pawns of politics, rather than be looked as a societal imperative. It is time to look at these in its proper spirit.

One of the fundamental duties that has been very close to my heart for a good long time is – “To protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures”. Green Protection or Sasyagraha– in short. This by no means should be considered that Fundamental duties are to be unbundled & chosen for our convenience. Rather, it is my view that the entirety of duties form a single bundle & that it should be considered sacred from an individual’s view point. My social engagement through my NGO Adanya Chetana, founded in the memory of my late mother Smt Girija Sastry, a strong willed woman with an “indomitable spirit” has given me ample opportunity to implement

Sasyagraha.

Back to the point of Green protection & promotion. I have believed that the best way to espouse any idea is to make that part of our lifestyle. For instance, at our kitchen at Adamyia Chetana, we have become a "Green Kitchen" for the past 8 years. Input wise, there is no fossil fuel at all in preparing food .(LPG, in a way, we adopted the "give it up" campaign of Modi Govt in a much more comprehensive way, instead of just giving up the subsidy) . Output wise, there is no garbage bins, as any so called organic waste is used, reused, recycled in ways more than one. (biogas plant for instance, "eats up" all the wet waste & vegetable peels & the water used to wash rice is used to plant water at Lalbgah or parks near by). Adoption of solar panel with grid-on connect is another aspect that complements our Green beliefs.

Egged on by a relevant research done by IISc scientist lead by Dr. TV Ramachandra, I realised that our city will no more be the Green city what it used to be. While 7 trees per person are required for a healthy living, Bengaluru of today, has a pathetic 1 tree per 7 persons. Compare this with the Bengaluru of Kempe Gowda, with a recorded summer temperature of around 18 degrees and a winter temperature closer to zero degrees! In my own small but significant way, we started the Green Bengaluru 1:1 campaign, to bring back the ratio of trees to human to at least 1. What started as a weekly event each Sunday two years ago, has grown in a silent but strong mass movement.

Today it has reached the milestone of 100th Green Sunday. I feel grateful that the team of Green warriors along with the common citizens of Bengaluru & even beyond along with Adamyia Chetana have taken it upon themselves to strengthen this initiative. Important campuses like NIMHANS, NDRI, KIDWAI, Jayadeva, KMF, Narayana Hrudayalaya etc have supported us all along and have pledged their support going forth.

As we celebrate this 100th Green Sunday event at over 100 locations simultaneously today I am again reminded of my Fundamental duties (on this constitution day as a citizen) – to protect nature. I am glad that with the support of thousands of Green warriors, we are taking a small but a significant step in this direction in the form of Sasyagraha. I call upon my fellow citizens to join me in this initiative and also together let us resolve that we implement in spirit,

the Fundamental duties required of a citizen. It doesn't require to be reminded – Nation comes First, always.