



A PERSONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC

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Zafar Futehalli is one of India's most respected and admired environmentalists. Our country's earliest environmental activist, Mr. Futehalli's life and achievements are examples of commitment towards our role in conservation. His interest in the environment began soon after graduation in 1942. He wrote articles on the environment in leading dailies and was later appointed Honorary Secretary of the Bombay Natural History Society, one of the first of its kind in India. Mr. Futehalli was instrumental in the initiation of the World Wildlife Fund in India and also served on the board of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature from 1969 to 1975.

Mr. Futehalli's most cherished contribution is the newsletter on ornithology, which he began and edited from 1959 to 2004. A project that later became a passion and which kindled newfound interest in the vibrant field of ornithology also in the year 1970 he became a member of the National Committee for Environmental Planning, appointed by the then honorable Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Project Tiger was born.

As a student of B.Sc-CBZ, I was given the opportunity to have a meeting with Mr.Futehalli. I found him to be an eternal enthusiast whose humble request was to use this article as a tool towards awareness rather than an enumeration on his work. And I hope to share with you the essence of our discussion in this article.

With respect to conservation Mr. Futehalli firmly believes that a balance among the five natural renewable resources is key to environmental conservation. This

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balance is essentially maintained by the interaction of the five renewable natural resources namely water, air, soil, flora and fauna. Our mindset today is one of greed and complete independence from nature. Man believes he is now captain of his ship and master of his fate! We have shunned the signs of impending chaos so that we may satiate our greed. In the process we slowly and irreversibly dismantle the web of nature that holds us together.

Our role in this web is to empower the world towards the desire to amend with conviction. Mr.Futehalli stressed on inculcating a "personal environmental ethic." A conscience that is sensitive and humane towards the needs of nature as much as it is towards our very own. Care for the environment must be a sincere effort and not superficial activism. Just as charity begins at home so does the first step of awareness and action. Every individual is accountable and every individual can change.

In hindsight we are indeed masters of our fate. If we choose to act, we live. Choose to look away and disaster looms. The time has come and it is now.

A small step today is tomorrow's giant leap. The national forest policy, involvement of the youth and the human conscience can make a difference.

As Mr.Futehalli rightly said, "Environmentalism is equality, efficiency and ethic put in action with a purpose." It must conquer boundaries and must become a way of life.

Nature is our best teacher. Learn, set an example and make the difference!