

INSONA and Environmental Awareness

Environmental Awareness Campaign

To our deep satisfaction and indeed gratification, INSONA and *Environmental Awareness* are now being widely cited and appreciated—the former being the acronym for the Indian Society of Naturalists, and the latter the title of their quarterly journal. Nor can there be any doubt, in suitably enlightened quarters, about the importance of this theme, on due appreciation of which our equitable tenure of life may well depend. Meanwhile the term ‘environment’ has become a ‘household word’ very widely in India. Pertinent history dates back to the year 1975, when the Indian Society of Naturalists (INSONA), with its headquarters in Baroda, was established to foster the cause of environmental conservation and improve the general understanding of Nature. H.H. Fatehsingh Rao P. Gaekwad (then Maharaja of Baroda) and the undersigned were the Founder President and General Secretary, respectively.

The fact that the Government of India adopted the phrase ‘Environmental Awareness’ for the launching of the annual one-month ‘National Environmental Awareness Campaign’, commencing from the year 1986 on 19th November (the anniversary of the birth of the late Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi, who had consistently rendered substantial leadership to Indian and international endeavours for environmental planning), reflected the vital impact of INSONA at the national level.*

Environmental Awareness, founded and edited by the undersigned, is a quarterly journal devoted to the cause of environmental conservation for human welfare. It is the first of its kind in South-east Asian countries and has been acclaimed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Environment Liaison Centre (both have their headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya) as well as by UNESCO and other bodies. Consequently, the members of the society in the Asian countries have started showing consciousness towards preserving our Biosphere of the planet Earth. The journal is also well received among international non-governmental organizations (INGOs).

The Government of India established a separate Department of Environment in the year 1980, and this can be attributed to some extent to the crusade which the Author and his associates have long carried out. He had pleaded for the establishment of a Ministry for Conservation and Environment in India as early as 1977 (on World Environment Day), details of which were then published in *Environmental Awareness*, 1(3), pp. 134–6, 1978.

The Author’s aim ‘to educate the educated’ is gaining ground, and there has been an increasing awareness about saving as much as possible of the remaining wildlife in the Indian subcontinent. This was reflected in the 55th Meeting of the Species Survival Commission (SSC) of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) being held at the Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi, in February 1981, as subsequently reported in the international scientific journal *Environmental Conservation* (8[3], pp. 249–50, 1981).

Special National Campaign

A month-long National Environmental Awareness Campaign was subsequently organized at the instance of Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, wherefor INSONA’s conservation endeavours received support from the Ministry of Environment and Forests of the Government of India. Now INSONA is collaborating with the Baroda Museum,

* Note, for example, her letter reproduced on page 172 of this issue.—Ed.



FIG. 1. Students taking a pledge to ‘Save Our Biosphere’ at the Bal Bhavan, Baroda, soon after the environmental rally shown in Fig. 2. Photo: Vallabh Shah.



FIG. 2. Environmental rally supported by the Author and his Wife (standing to left of figures holding banners), the first such event ‘in the living memory of the citizen of Baroda.’ Photo: Hitesh Raval.

the Gujarat State Forest Department, the Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Ltd (IPCL), and the Bal Bhavan Society of Baroda, on the vital need of due environmental awareness for human well-being and the growth and development of the nation.

During the National Environmental Awareness Campaign, a great diversity of projects and lecture series on various aspects of environment, conservation, and wildlife, were planned for the benefit of schoolchildren, university students (Fig. 1), school teachers, and people in general. Special field-trips and marches—such as that shown in Fig. 2—were also organized, illustrated lectures were given and films were shown, and special posters and stickers were distributed. Postcards were also issued. Further details may be obtained from the undersigned.*

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* As an example of the effectiveness of Dr Oza’s efforts, we may note how a theme of his has inspired a very favourable comment from one of the world’s leading scientific establishments, the Smithsonian Institution of Washington, in the form of Dr F. Raymond Fosberg’s ‘A living museum of Ceylon trees’, published on page 79 of our latest issue.—Ed.