

International Symposium on Environmental Water Literacy:

Japan Visit Report

Date – 5th October to 7th October, 2012

Place- International Christian Tokyo University

Sanjay Singh, Parmarth Samaj Sewi Sansthan

An International Symposium on Environmental Water Literacy was organized at International Christian Tokyo University. Mr Sanjay Singh (Social Activist) from India participated in this seminar as a grass root level practitioner working on the issues of water in India.

The seminar featured speakers / participants from USA, India and Singapore, as well as presentations from rural Japan, rural Washington State, and Israel and Palestine. The Purpose of the seminar was to -

- To provide an ecologically diverse international context in which to discuss water education on a fundamental level.
- To link educational objectives to pedagogical realities faced in various contexts.
- To provide the basis for a survey of water literacy experts, to obtain a larger international consensus after the symposium is finished.

The seminar mainly focussed on issues and problems of water crisis faced by countries like India, Philippines, China, Japan, Europe and Africa.

Today many countries are facing water crisis issues and few of these countries have also started efforts towards securing and assuring availability of clean drinking water. Japan has abundant natural resource of water. The people are remarkably well aware about issues of water and have started discussions on how to assure safe drinking water to each and every citizen of Japan according to their needs and demands. Today Japan is progressing towards compulsory inclusion of water lit-

eracy in their curriculum from primary to secondary level education system. Japan is also trying to build association with management of private run schools to join the efforts towards increasing water literacy. The success of Japan is testimony that its citizens have surplus knowledge and awareness about conservation of natural resources. The seminar also brought forward the fact that still in many countries like Philippines the availability of water is more important than the quality of water.

Today, on one hand the sources of safe drinking water are declining everywhere and on the other hand the demand for water is regularly increasing at a rapid rate. Most of the countries all over the world are facing irregular rainfall due to climate changes. This has resulted in drought conditions and the consequence can be seen in both areas of drinking water as well as agriculture.

It was stated in the seminar that regular efforts on water conservation were being made by many countries. Low cost construction structures and local community participation were given supreme importance. On the basis of advance knowledge and technical skills, both drinking water and water for agriculture is being assured in areas with minimum rainfall. Israel is a classic example of this case where even with 300 mm of rainfall they still have assured availability of water for agriculture and gardening purposes.

The significance of water literacy also came out from the developed countries like America. The various sessions brought forward the fact that more serious efforts for

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regular availability of water were being made in other countries as compared to India. The lacks of awareness in the community as well as government policies both are responsible for dismal situation of water conservation in India. India needs to take more progressive efforts towards water conservation due to its increasing rate of population. Each Student and citizen should be made aware by making education on water literacy compulsory. Many people misuse water due to lack of water literacy. Large amount of water is also being wasted due to mismanagement of water resources. Everyone needs to know and understand that we would need more water as we progress and talk about development as no work in world is possible without water.

In spite of 65 years of Independence in India, no proper planning and strategy has been developed for management and distribution of water. Today in India it is the need of the time that both community and government should come forward together to increase water literacy.

During the stay in Japan, participants from overseas also visited Tokyo Waterworks History Museum, which illustrated the process

and efforts made by their people for availability of drinking water. It made one realize that there was neither any such museum nor any university in India. India needs a full-fledged university on water literacy and conservation.

The main conclusion that came out during these 4 days seminar was to increase water literacy all over the world. If countries like India do not start focussing in this direction immediately, then they may face grave consequences in the near future.

Sanjay Singh presented the water crisis scenario in the Bundelkhand Region in India and also shared about community participation and efforts to tackle these problems. The experts showed keen interest in learning about the construction of check dams and ponds. These efforts and outcomes of the NGO, Parmarth Samaj Sewi Sansthan, with community participation on water conservation issues was shared by Sanjay Singh was appreciated by everyone in the seminar. The cases, efforts and participation of women in rights over water were appreciated and it was felt important to spread such cases all over the world.

