

A Wave to Save Environment: Initiatives Undertaken by the Dera Sacha Sauda, Sirsa, Haryana

Dr. Raj Kumar Siwach* and Rajvinder Kaur**

1. Introduction

Environment is a global concern and its protection is one of the challenging tasks that mankind is facing today. The state of our environment is very dilapidated. According to the Millennium Development Goals Report (2014)¹: “Many of the greatest challenges to humanity in the future will relate to the effects of global environmental changes in climate, urbanization, water availability, and loss of biological diversity.” The eco-system of the earth has been destroyed by the so-called development. In the race for creating huge heaps of money man has turned all water, soil and air around into poison. The materialistic life-style has played havoc with environment and has endangered the very existence of the planet itself. Rising pollution, mounting filth, dirty & poisoned rivers, melting glaciers and unstable ocean, all these are just due to reckless exploitation of nature by the insensitive human. Today we are facing a number of environmental issues: global warming, climate change, depletion of ozone layer, shortage of drinking water, desertification, disasters, acid rain, pollution and loss of biodiversity. Here are some important facts about the degrading status of environment in India:

- India ranks 155th out of 178 countries in its efforts to address environmental challenges, according to the 2014 Environmental Performance Index (EPI)². “Although India is an ‘emerging market’ alongside China, Brazil, Russia, and South Africa, its environment severely lags behind these others,” said Angel Hsu of the Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy and lead author of the report. “Very low GDP per capita coupled with the second highest population in the world means India’s environmental challenge is more formidable than that faced by other emerging economies.”
- Over 3.5 million people die each year of outdoor air pollution. Between 2005 and 2010, the death rate rose by 4% worldwide, by 5% in China and by 12% in India³.
- *Cost of air pollution* to society in 2010 was estimated at US\$1.4 trillion in China and US\$0.5 trillion in India according to a recent study by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD)⁴

2 Initiatives Undertaken by the DSS for Environment Protection

DSS is a ‘Sarva Dharma Sangam’ i.e. conglomeration of all religions, where the lessons of spirituality and humanity are taught to all. Since its inception in 1948, it is catering the socio-economic and spiritual needs of the people. Here around fifty million followers visit from different parts of the world representing various religions. No discrimination is made on the basis of caste, creed, colour, sex, nationality or religion. Under the pious guidance of the present Guru Ji Saint Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh Ji Insaan, **the DSS is undertaking excellent initiatives to check gender inequality, to control population explosion, to eradicate corruption, to eliminate homosexuality, to emancipate and**

* Dean Social Sciences and Associated Professor, Department of Public Administration, CDLU

** Lecturer, Shah Satnam Ji Girls College, Sri Gurusarmodia, Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan

rehabilitate prostitutes, to counter the menace of female feticides, to provide substance abuse treatment, to provide disaster relief, to render human welfare services and to promote good human qualities - honesty, integrity, discipline etc. - vital for the sustainable development of the country. This organization has earned fifteen records in **Guinness Book of World Records**; two in **Limca Book of World Records** and eight in **Asia Book of Records**. It is noteworthy that all these records have been earned in the fields of tree plantation, blood donation, posthumous eye and body donation, anti- corruption drive, for holding biggest camps for examining blood pressure and sugar levels, eye testing, eco testing and cholesterol testing. The **New Zealand Government** has awarded the **Dera followers** with **Eco Wise Community Award 2012** for conducting '**Tree Plantation**' and '**Cleanliness Earth Campaign**' there. As the deploring state of the environment requires some solid inputs from the society, the Guru Ji has made a dynamic endeavor to save the planet. The present paper studies the initiatives undertaken by DSS for environment protection.

2.1 Sapling Plantation

To check the pollution and global warming, the DSS is consistently making efforts to plant millions of saplings across the globe. Under the programme '*Nature Campaign*', DSS is making people aware and encouraging them to plant & nurture maximum saplings for the coming generations to live in a healthy environment. Guru Ji motivates his each & every follower saying that: "Plant at least one sapling a month. Treat it as your own child. Your own son may not serve you in future, but the sapling you plant shall serve humanity for a long time to come."

The first mega sapling plantation drive under the *Nature Campaign* was initiated by Guru Ji on 15th August, 2009. Since then, every year on 15th August the followers celebrate the birthday of Guru Ji by planting a number of saplings. The volunteers do not cover only a particular city or state but almost all states of the nation and many other foreign countries. The drive does not only aim to plant more saplings but to take care of them like a child by providing them adequate water & manure till the time they grow into trees. Insisting on the importance of trees, Guru Ji said, "Tree plantation is a harbinger of prosperity. Plants reduce the pollution and are beneficial for the health too. This would let our coming generations lead a healthy life. The motive of DSS is not just to plant the saplings but rear them as well. The number of samplings planted is immaterial, what matters the most is to pay meticulous attention for their nurture, protection and growth. We must take care of them like our children." The DSS has two Guinness World Records in sapling plantation. The details of these records have been represented in the table 1.

Table: 1
World Records by DSS in Sapling Plantation

Serial No.	Name of the Record	Year	No. of Saplings	Duration	No. of Volunteers	Locations covered
1	Guinness World Record	15 th August 2009	938007	01 hour	169,920	367 in India
			6,873,451	08 hours		
2	Guinness World Record	15 th August 2011	1,945,535	01 hour	340,200	408 in India

Source: Welfare Works Office, Administration Block, DSS, Sirsa

The table 2 represents the total number of saplings planted by the volunteers of the DSS in India from 2009-2014.

Table: 2

Sr. No.	Year	No. of Saplings Planted in India
1	2009	68,73,451
2	2010	43,000,57
3	2011	40,000,00
4	2012	31,21,203
5	2013	35,36,263
6	2014	35,00,000
Total		2,53,30,974

Source: Welfare Works Office, Administration Block, DSS, Sirsa

The total number of the saplings planted by the DSS in India is 2,53,30,974 contributing a lot towards environment protection. It shows a high level of awareness and commitment among the followers towards the environment protection. The

table 3 presents the survival rate of the saplings planted in India during 2009-2014.

Table: 3

Sr. No.	Year	Sapling planted in India	No. of saplings survived	%
1	2009	68,73,451	56,15,777	81.7
2	2010	43,000,57	30,777,48	71.5
3	2011	40,000,00	31,652,39	79.1
4	2012	31,21,203	24,635,69	78.9
5	2013	35,36,363	28,775,15	81.8
6	2014	35,00,000	26,459,87	75.5
Total		2,53,30,974	19545835	77.1

Survival Rate of the Saplings Planted in India (2009-2014)

Source: Welfare Works Office, Administration Block, DSS, Sirsa

The survival rate of planted saplings remained between 71 to 81 % during all the years. The average survival rate of the saplings is 77.1%. It is evident from the data that DSS followers also have nurtured the saplings well. The good survival rate shows that they not only plant the saplings, but also take care of them as their own child. It proves that the followers of the DSS have a passion to save the environment. Besides celebrating the birthday of the Guru Ji by planting the saplings, the DSS followers enjoy the every celebration of their life in the same way. The box 2 illustrates a good case how the young generation, extremely motivated by the teachings of the Guru Ji, is becoming aware to protect environment and putting their efforts to make aware the others.

Box: 1

Young Crusader against Pollution

In a rapidly changing time when most of youngsters want to spend majority of time in front of PCs, I pads and smart-phones and never think of taking any initiative for the betterment of the society, the 19 years environment activist, Prateek Bishnoi, is a big inspiration for all. Prateek, who is a BCA final year student from Shah Satnam Ji Boys College Sirsa, has been fighting a war against degradation of environment and rising pollution for last 4 years with the support of his teachers and parents. Though hundreds of animals die unnoticed and many residents see these deaths, but they don't take any initiative to prevent further deaths. For Prateek, the death of a cow shook his conscience so much that he decided to contribute his best for the welfare of society.



Prateek says he gets inspiration from Guru Ji and Dera Sacha Sauda followers, who have been taking sincere initiatives to increase the greenery. When asked when and how he started it he says, “I was 15 year old when I saw a cow suffering for a long time and died a slow death. I tried to save her, but despite my efforts it all happened in front of my eyes. I was shocked after doctor informed me that cow died because she had eaten so much polythene, but could not digest it. On that day, I decided that I will make people aware about the ill-effects of polythene waste on our lives. With in some days of that incident I started making posters with special quotes and pasting on the walls of the city,”

Prateek wake up early in the morning and start pasting self made Posters on walls of city about awareness about pollution. He make these posters by his own pocket money every month and this chine is still continue from last 4 years. But with the passage of time, now his mission has spread to disseminating information about trees, water and he has started adding information about the importance of these in his posters. “The other youngsters of his age are even not ready to concentrate on their studies properly, but Prateek is taking all steps with full sincerity to save environment. We believe it all has been happening with the blessings of almighty God,” says Dharamveer, father of Prateek. The teachers and other staff of Shah Satnam Ji Boy's College have been offering full support to their young activist.

“Under the guidance of our Guru Saint Ram Rahim Singh Ji Insaan, we have planting lakhs of trees every year. It is really great that now our students like Prateek have started taking initiatives at their own. We believe if our students start taking such initiatives, environment would improve at great pace” says Ajay Insaan, the Principal of Shah Satnam Ji Boy's College.

*Amit Rukhaya, Saying Truth, Delhi, 9-15 September, 2013. Vol-1, No. 28

The DSS volunteers have initiated the tree plantation programs in other countries also. It is important to note that the New Zealand government has awarded '**Eco-Community award**' to the volunteers of the DSS for planting 200200 saplings. Similarly, the DSS volunteers has planted 240795 saplings in Australia, 10,777 saplings in Canada, 2500 saplings in USA, 2337 saplings in UAE, 2612 saplings in Kuwait and 1577 saplings in Italy.

2.2 Initiatives Undertaken for Sanitation

India is facing a major crisis of insanitation. In every city one can see the reeking heaps of decaying garbage, putrid open drains, and choked drains - all inviting to the serious health consequences. In fact the sanitation scenario of our cities is very poor. The troublesome sights of choked drains & sewerage smell foul that overwhelm one's nostrils. DSS promote cleanliness and hygiene in a major way. The followings are the major initiatives undertaken by the DSS to check insanitation.

2.2.1 Mega Cleanliness Campaign

To overcome the problem of insanitation Guru Ji has initiated the 'Mega Cleanliness Campaign' under the slogan - *Ho Prithvi Saaf, Mitey Rog Abhishap* (**Cleanse the planet earth; to remove disease and curse**) with an aim to create awareness about the need to have clean surroundings and also sensitize people about various diseases like dengue, malaria, etc, which are spread due to poor sanitation. This drives is carried out periodically. Guru Ji inaugurates the events by releasing balloons "to symbolize the freedom to live in surroundings that are clean, and the opportunity for every soul, to fly unencumbered in its spiritual progress." Then Guru Ji starts the campaign by unfurling green flag and by wielding the broom himself along with his mother **Pujya Mata Naseeb Kaur Ji Insan**. Explaining the motive behind such mega cleanliness, Guru Ji utters "These campaigns are aimed at making the people aware about cleanliness. Clean surroundings are necessary; the external cleaning is the stepping stone to internal cleansing, of abysmal thoughts and evil impulses. Secondly, due to insanitation India has fallen prey to various serious diseases such as dengue. As India is credited with the crown of '*Vishvaguru*', the West looks towards India for spiritual satisfaction. But it is very painful when it refers India as dirty. It is just because of our insensitivity towards cleanliness. We want to inculcate the value of hygiene and aware the people about the cleanliness, hence the drive."

The mega cleanliness campaigns focus on to clean not just solid waste, litter and filth but also choked sewers, stagnant drains and putrid public toilets. The dense

vegetative overgrowth is also checked. People from all walks of life - government employees, doctors, businessmen, teachers, engineers, retired officials as well as common people volunteer in the drive with an endless zeal and zest. According to Anil Kakkar, “the enthusiasm of the volunteers stayed at fever pitch. It was the charge of the cleanliness brigade, who courageously attacked and defeated the savage ruthlessness of insanitation. The onlookers were speechless, a lot of locals were frankly ashamed when they realized that the ones who were cleaning up, were in no way responsible for the mess⁶.” They don't hesitate to clean up drains that are choked for years with solid waste. “The dirty open drain right adjacent to the Badshah Khan Chowk was so choked with refuse that it appeared to be standing still for several years. Without the service of any heavy equipment, the volunteers took no time and headlong into the putrefying mass of hellish protoplasm. Hundreds of volunteers toiled in the drains with bare hands and implements to fish out hundreds of tons of polythene, broken bottles, matted refuse, plastics and smelly unknowns from the drain. In a couple of hours, the drain wore a change look⁷.”

During the cleanliness campaign in Bombay, DSS also provided the dustbins at significant vantage points in the city. According to BMC officials⁸, the volunteers collected more than a 100 metric tonne of waste from R-North ward (includes Dahisar), R-Central ward (includes areas under Borivali and Charkop) and R-South ward (includes Kandivali) and over a 400 metric tonne of waste from N ward (includes Ghatkopar) alone.

The volunteers render a selfless service; bring necessary tools (broom, hoes, spades, shovel and scuttle), bear the transportation fare and even made their own arrangements for food. The level of commitment and dedication among the volunteers is very high. The observations reveal that they do it not as a formality, but with a rare dedication. The distance does not matter in front of their zeal, as 5 lakh volunteer participated in the Bombay cleanliness campaign from the north India and different parts of the country. One of the residents from Mumbai told: “I have never found any Saint motivating the disciples to conduct the humanitarian activities to this extent. It is an admirable effort and other people should also learn.”

The box 2 demonstrates a case of the extent of the commitment and dedication among the volunteers to participate in the Mega Cleanliness Campaign.

Box:2

Flying Brooms

Nikhil Aggarwal had come especially by the morning flight from Mysore, to attend the cleanliness drive. Carrying his king sized broom and wearing the uniform of the Shah Satnam Ji Green 'S' Welfare Force Wing, he worked furiously to clean the clogs. Nikhil is a prosperous wholesaler of spices and dry fruits. Accompanying him were two software engineers Amit and Raj, from Bangalore and a shopkeeper from Mandya. It was a comical sight at the airport as people looked on quizzically at these men walking in with elegantly covered brooms. Nikhil has an interesting anecdote to share. After the brooms were sent into the cargo hold, a co-passenger who had seen him carrying it ended up sitting next to him. Prior to the take off, the co passenger was visibly upset, sitting next to a 'sweeper' flying with him. But, as Nikhil's phone rang and in an animated conversation he closed a big business deal, the co-passenger discovered that he had been a long term client of Nikhil's company. And sheepishly, he mustered courage to confirm his identity, hastily posing an additional query, if the broom was a good luck charm? When he learnt about Guru Ji's campaign, he was so moved that he promised to join in at the next available opportunity.

CP Arora, Group CFO for Dentsu India was sweeping the roads furiously and so was Dr. Sharma, an MDS in dentistry who has a roaring practice. When we asked Dr. Sharma, what led her to negotiate the filth with such zeal, she replied, "As a medical professional, I have learnt only from Guru Ji how the rising tide of Dengue, Malaria, Typhoid and community acquired infections need to be checked, period." CP Arora, the unassuming and yet sophisticated gentleman who came by a chauffeur driven Skoda, said plainly, "We get many times more in return. Spirituality is pure selfish interest, but everyone is not able to realise this."

Anil Kakkar, Faridabad Beautified and Purified, Saying Truth, Delhi, 11-17 March, 2013, Volume-1, No: 2. P.2-3

Starting from the capital of India on the 21st September 2011 the caravan of the DSS has cleaned 28 cities. The war against insanitation by Guru Ji has arisen a hope to dream of a newer, neat & clean earth. The table 4 presents the list of mega cleanliness campaigns conducted by the DSS.

Table: 4
Series of the Mega Cleanliness Campaign by DSS

Sr. No.	Name of the City	Date	No. of Volunteers	Duration
1	New Delhi	21-09-11	4 lakh	2 days
2	Jaipur	01-11-11	3 Lakh	7 hrs.
3	Bikaner	23-11-11	3 Lakh	4 hrs.
4	Gurgaon	17-10-11	3 Lakh	7 hrs.
5	Sirsa	24-12-11	2 Lakh	3 hrs.
6	Jodhpur	02-02-12	1 Lakh	7 hrs.
7	Kota	17-03-12	2 Lakh	6 hrs.
8	Hoshangabad	31-13-12	50 Thousand	3 hrs.
9	Puri	05-05-12	12 Thousand	4 hrs. 30min.
10	Hissar	25-08-12	3 Lakh	2 hrs.
11	Rishikesh	01-11-12	2 Lakh	5 hrs.
12	Haridwar	01-11-12	5 Lakh	5 hrs.
13	Ajmer	08-12-12	2 Lakh	4 hrs.
14	Pushkar	08-12-12	70 thousand	2 hrs.
15	Rohtak	13-02-13	3 Lakh	3 hrs.
16	Faridabad	02-03-13	3 Lakh	4 hrs.
17	Narela	15-03-13	3 Lakh	2 hrs.
18	Karnal	24-03-13	4 Lakh	2.30
19	Kaithal	26-03-13	4 Lakh	2.30
20	Noida	13-04-13	4 Lakh	6 hrs.
21	Delhi	11-09-13	3 Lakh	16 hrs.
22	Siker	07-10-13	2 Lakh	2 hrs. 30 min
23	Alwar	08-10-13	2 Lakh	3 hrs.
24	Dausa	09-10-13	1 Lakh	2 hrs.
25	Sawai Madhopur	10-10-13	1 Lakh	2 hrs.
26	Sheopur	11-10-13	70 thousand	1hour 30 min.
27	Tonk	14-10-13	70 thousand	1hour 30 min.
28	Mumbai	28-10-14	5 Lakh	6 hrs. 30 min.

2.2.2 Cleaning of the Holy Ganga and other Rivers

There is a universal reverence to water in almost all of the major religions of the world. Being the holiest river of India, the Ganga has a cultural and spiritual significance. It is worshipped as a living goddess. Since time immemorial, people from across the country have come to the many historic temple towns on its banks to pray and bathe. Despite this symbolic status and religious heritage, the Ganga today is facing alarming pollution pressures and associated threats to its biodiversity. Situation has become so worst that the Ganga water is at present not fit just for drinking and bathing but has become unusable even for agricultural purposes.

To check the frightening pollution of the Ganga, the Ganga Action Plan (GAP) was launched in 1986 by the Government of India. Despite heavy expenditure, the plan was not a success. It continues to be in worst state with being used it as disposal point for the dirty, toxic and chemical wastage of the factories. Thousands of bodies are cremated on the banks of the river yearly with many being released into the river with hope that their souls may have a direct path to heaven. Hundreds unwanted or 'illegitimate' babies, cattle and other animal carcasses are also dumped into the Ganges again with religious implications. The Ganga is extremely intertwined in every aspect of life for Indians. It is a source of water, energy and livelihood to countless millions of Indians. It becomes our moral obligation to keep it neat and clean for the sake of humanity and our coming generations.

The DSS has come forward to save the rivers of India. It was in November 2012, around five lakh volunteers of DSS under the guidance of Guru Ji, undertook a massive cleanliness campaign to clean the twin cities of Haridwar and Rishikesh and the banks of the Ganga. People of every cast, creed and vocation including highly placed dignitaries joined the campaign. To carry out the drive properly the area from Haridwar to Rishikesh was divided into 8 zones. This drive concluded with aggregation of thousands of tons of solid waste. The outcome of the entire exercise was the message it sent out to the various organizations- "rather than idle talk, it was important to practice what you preach".

Demanding explanation from the government over more than Rs 20,000 crore spent on the Ganga Action Plan and the Ganga cleaning drive, Payal Bisht¹⁰, social activist, said it's high time respective governments, departments, NGOs and saints should take a lesson from the Dera Sacha Sauda volunteers." In the age of utter selfishness, volunteer took time out from their busy schedule for such a noble cause.

Swami Gang Das¹¹ of the Jugat Ram Mission describes this drive as a '*Cleanliness Kumbh*', "these volunteers had shown that nothing was impossible if people carried on any good work with sincerity, devotion and determination. the Dera Sacha Sauda volunteers did a remarkable effort and the people of Haridwar along with the pilgrims and tourists should sustain it further... This unique effort can be stated as '*Cleanliness Kumbh*' and the deity Ganga will be happy that with such a concerted effort and devotion, the Dera Sacha Sauda devotees carried out such a massive drive in the twin cities in a single day."

Umesh Dimri¹², a corporate executive, said: "the Dera Sacha Sauda volunteers have shown mirror to the civic body, the state government, the Central Government and local citizens who keep on shifting blame on one another when it came to cleaning the city or the Ganga."

In an answer to a pointed query by a journalist during the opening ceremony of Mega Cleanliness Campaign at Noida, Guru Ji assured that the DSS volunteers are ready to clean the Yamuna not as a onetime gesture but we are ready to maintain it clean forever. DSS is ready to keep not only the Ganga or the Yamuna but all the rivers and holy places also filth free. Government's attitude towards the cleanliness remains unconcerned as the Saying Truth¹³ reported that, "the Sirsa based Dera Sacha Sauda has approached the Delhi government on several occasions to seek permission and co-operation for a cleaning up campaign for the Yamuna. During a Cleanliness campaign at Noida last week, Saint Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh Ji Insaan said that it was possible to marshal over 1.5 million well equipped volunteers clean the banks of river Yamuna. When he was asked about the state of the Yamuna a few days ago at Kaithal, in the presence of Haryana's Water Supply and Sanitation minister Randeep Surjewala, Guru Ji asserted that DSS is open to do a voluntary service even to make the proposed sewage canal. However, the Delhi government needed to facilitate this since the heavy equipment is not ordinarily available outside, He said. He reiterated that DSS had no axe to grind in making an offer of voluntary service. All phobias and any perceived insecurity on any one's part was unnecessary. Guru Ji repeated that it was a selfless agenda for larger public good, but he was pained to see it thwarted for petty considerations."

Recently, the new elected government has announced the 'Namami Gange' project to clean the Ganga. However, any such project need the cooperation from the society along with a strong political will to clean the Ganga.

2.2.3 Cleanliness Campaign Abroad

As per the teachings of the Guru Ji, the DSS volunteers render their welfare service abroad also. They have conducted Cleanliness Campaigns in the cities of Italy, Canada, UK, Australia, New Zealand

and USA. In today's life of hustle and bustle, when a person usually have little concern with others, the DSS volunteers leave no stone unturned to follow the path of humanity shown by the Guru Ji. Even the adverse weather conditions can't dare to shake their commitment. It is evident from the following statements: "Regardless of the chilling winter, participants were passionately engaged in cleaning the city. Local residents excluding these dedicated volunteers were not coming out of their homes even for their own tasks. Everyone was quite amazed to see the undying spirit of the volunteers and they appreciated this commendable task by giving thanks messages to the **Revered Saint Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh Ji Insan**. It was not less than a miracle that along with cleaning the roads and streets, volunteers also cleaned up all the drains consisting of cold dirty water and heavy garbage within the assigned range of **10 KM in just 2.5 hours**¹⁴."

Tamara Teruel, HR Manager, Fairmont San Francisco said, "I just wanted to express my thanks and gratitude for your group coming out and participating with us at the Annual Coastal Cleanup Event. It was a pleasure to meet all of you! Everyone commented on how lovely your group was and how dedicated to the clean up you all were, especially with the rain! We cannot thank you enough for joining us and helping us have a successful Coastal Cleanup Day! Again, thank you very much for your participation¹⁵!"

2.3 Asthi Daan (Donating the Remains from Cremation)

The passion to serve the humanity is so intermingled in the life of DSS followers that they seek every step in their life to be an occasion to serve humanity, whether it is a birth of baby (no matter a male or female), birthday party, marriage ceremony, marriage anniversary, getting a new job, retirement from job or any festival. Even the death can't stop their caravan for serving the humanity. They donate their eyes to light the life of blind ones and donate their body for medical research. Adding a new chapter in the history of humanity, and diverting the centuries' old tradition, Guru Ji has initiated a new trend to save our environment - *Asthi-Daan*.

Apart from other factors, the remains (ashes and bones) of the cremation add a lot to the pollution of the sacred Ganga. A religious myth behind this is that in this way the departure soul will get the liberalization from the cycles of death and rebirth. But in the process of 'spiritual purification' the Holy Ganga gets impure. As Guru Ji is very keen to protect the environment, He invited suggestions to tackle this problem. And it was the brilliant suggestion from Dr. Mohit Insan, an Associate Professor from Rostock University in Germany that was accepted. He suggested a bio-degradable urn to grow saplings. Guru Ji accepted the suggestion and added that instead of the urn, direct disposal of remains from cremation for plantation would be more advantageous. In this way, the

departured soul would be able to perform a supreme act of benevolence even after death as the remains of cremation will nourish the plants. A noble act that will serve the generations! Really it is the “way that maintains the sanctity, environmental safety and ensures complete recycling of the remains”¹⁶.

Responding to the call from Guru Ji the DSS followers pledged to bring the remains of their deceased family members to DSS, where they would become an ingredient for this eco-friendly burial. Till now the thousands of people have donated the remains of the cremation of their relatives. Pankaj Garg¹⁷, a leading surgeon and medical researcher confessed. “Guru Ji has advocated the fastest method to accelerate the assimilation of the bony remains. It breaks down bone, absorbs carbon from ash and gives a decent dose of phosphate to the sapling.”

2.4 Promoting Eco-Friendly Agriculture

Direct consequences of agricultural development on the environment arise from intensive farming activities, which contribute to soil erosion, land salinity and loss of nutrients. The introduction of Green Revolution in the country has been accompanied by over-exploitation of land and water resources and excessive usage of fertilizers and pesticides¹⁸. Severe diminution of soil fertility due to excessive and indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers is threatening the stability of green revolution and food security of the country. The situation is further aggravated due to the uncontrolled use of pesticides which are contaminating food materials, water resources and polluting the land. To control the ever increasing infertility of the soil the ancient technique of green and organic farming is the need of hour. Guru Ji is working zealously to generate awareness among the farmers to diminish the pollution by minimizing dependence on synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. DSS teaches and guides farmers to get better yields from their land under agriculture through promoting **scientific and organic techniques of cultivation**.

- In an endeavor to promote the message of organic farming for healthy living, the 500 volunteers of DSS made World's largest Vegetable Mosaic made up of organic tomatoes, chilies, capsicums, cauliflowers, beat and peas.
 - Under the guidance of Guru Ji, DSS is leading in wasteland renovation, dry farming, herbal & organic farming etc. Everything from apple, almonds, cashews, pomegranates, litchis, dates; mango, vanilla etc. are being grown in the premises of DSS. Using the poly house and green house techniques, non-native species are regularly grown. Thousands of farmers have benefitted from the training programs. But to give direction and impetus to the entire farming movement, since December 2012, a regular farmer fair *Nav-Chetna* (New Awareness) has been organized as a platform for the proper dissemination of the information

to the farmers. In this farmer-fair the renowned agricultural scientists from several universities, including some overseas ones, participated in the event.

- The DSS has an Agriculture Research Centre, where advanced seeds and hybrids are developed. It has also received an award for developing a very advanced hybrid seed for the cotton crop.
- Guru Ji motivated the farmers to switch to eco friendly agriculture. The burning of agriculture waste increases the air pollution and depletes fertility of the land. Guru Ji encourages the farmers to **send the agricultural waste as fodder for animals** or use it as manure instead of burning it. The followers send paddy husk to the drought affected area. This is a move that will help to curb the environmental pollution, save the fertility of the land and help the animals of the drought affected areas.

Box: 3

Greening of the Desert: A Bio Green House Innovation

A couple of years ago at the mega plantation drive at Dera Sacha Sauda, an anger journalist has asked Guru Ji if he had any solutions from climate controlled farming at a low cost. Guru Ji had replied that low cost green houses can certainly be created using very simple means. The 'Parwal' creeper (Pointed gourd) can be very easily used as a biological green house while now sensational vegetables could be grown in the shade, Guru Ji had replied. Indeed, it is a perennial herb that carries on for years, and a greenhouse 'roof' that yields an income as well!

And today, the proof of Guru Ji's path-breaking idea can be clearly seen at Dera Sacha Sauda. Sat Brahmchari Sewadar Charanjeet Insan took it upon himself to do what Guru Ji had said. Armed with bamoo sticks, that he used as pillars to support creepers, he used a widely spaced wires as a mesh to take care of their spread. And today, it has become a feast for the eyes laden with a variety of cucurbits as apart from 'Parmal' there are 5 feet long gourds which are head turners and traffic stoppers.

Under this feast from the cucurbit family, there is a whole new world of blooming vegetables. Cauliflower, bitter gourd, strawberry, mushrooms, onions, tulsi and brahmi herbs grow in the shade, quite unmindful of the season outside. Compared to lacs of rupess that a conventional green house costs, this innovation merely requires a few thousands and also utilize a lot of scrap which a farmer can easily find. We ask Charanjeet, the research farm in charge at Dera Sacha Sauda, about the effectiveness of this biological green house vis-à-vis fabricated green house.

“Exactly the same, whereas the cost is a tiny fraction. Secondly, there is no energy cost involved as natural ventilation is maintained. Moreover, the saplings grown

under the natural green house show very high survival outside whereas the saplings from the more expensive green houses are weak and vulnerable,” he says.

Indeed, this is one innovation that has the potential to change the face of climate controlled farming in India. 'Parval is a creeper that lasts for 8-9 months and it gives coverage for the larger part of the year. The other cucurbits survive through the winter if they are given a simple polythene covering.

As I foray a little further, few remnants of the sandy dunes that once occupied the entire landscape that is now Dera Sacha Sauda come into view. There were thorns, shrubs and brambles atop parched mounds, I learn. It was concerted process of removal of the dunes by the volunteers that has now given way to orchards, lush farms and several examples of innovative agriculture.

The hardness (impurity) of the ground water is unsuitable for drinking, bathing and even agriculture. The soil at places still shows traces of fine white deposits which are the infertile minerals seeping out. The lands are very friendly to termites and pests and unsuitable for anything else.

Dr. Beniwal, a faculty member from the Hisar Agricultural University who has been watching the developments for a couple of decades says that the leveling of dunes, the reclaiming of land and the success of agriculture despite the unfavourable condition is a case study worth emulating in other barren areas. Farmers of late have started looking forward to innovations disseminated by Dera Sacha Sauda at the biannual farmers' fair, which it holds to educate farmers. 'This is now a university for farmers, says Dr. Beniwal and looking at the bio greenhouse, I can only nod my head in agreement.

Anil Kakkar, Greening of the Desert- A bio greenhouse innovation, Saying Truth, Delhi, 25 November- 01- December, 2014 Vol. 2, No. 1. P.5

The box 3 reveals the fact how under the guidance of Guru Ji, DSS is leading in wasteland renovation with minimal costs.

2.5 Say no to Polythene.

Plastic is one of the major toxic pollutants of the day. It is a non-biodegradable substance composed of toxic chemicals. It causes serious damage to environment both times during its production and its disposal. The plastic bags clog the drains and hit the sewage system. The plastic wastes being dumped into streams, rivers and seas contaminates the water & spoil marine life. Recycling of plastic is also not safe as the burning of plastic releases a host of poisonous chemicals into the air such as dioxin, the most toxic substance. So the only way to escape the deadly dangers of plastic is to avoid it altogether. Considering the hazards of plastics Guru Ji motivates the follower to shun the polythene and use the clothes or paper bags as an alternate, “the worn out clothes could be easily and inexpensively converted into bags and they would be extremely safe and eco-friendly option to bring shopping objects.”

2.6 Save Water

Water, a precious natural resource is source and sustainer of life. The rapid population growth and development activities are continuously increasing the demand of water resources. Water shortage has already become a serious problem for a large number of people in different parts of the country. In India there is no scarcity of water resources. What it lacks is the better water management. What it requires is the ability to efficiently capture and effectively utilize the existing resources for the maximum benefit. Enormous initiatives have been taken for increasing the water resources by widespread adoption of rainwater harvesting techniques. Guru Ji inspires the followers to grow the crops with low water requirement, to use the drip system for irrigation, to recycle and reuse the waste water and to adopt rain water harvesting system. In the farmer fair *Nav-Chetna* (New Awareness) the farmers are taught about the different techniques of water conservation.

The Saying Truth¹⁹ reports that Guru Ji has invented a very cost effective and simple technique of water conservation. In this, a permanent impervious shallow tank is created at the ground level that is filled up with earthen material. The floor bears water permeable pipes of the requisite diameter that drain into a deep tank. Almost all the irrigation water is recovered in the deeper tank, while the vegetables are grown in the artificial beds.

Guru Ji urges the followers to limit the use of water in their routine activities. He advises them to use the glass while brushing their teeth as it is common among the people to leave the tap on while brushing, thus wasting a lot of precious water.

2.7 Protection of Birds and Animals

To check the loss of biodiversity, DSS is extremely dedicated to save the birds and animals. Because of human greed, everyday innumerable animals and birds are butchered and slaughtered for various purposes. Several species are already vanished, while others are on the verge of extinction. Following are the major steps taken towards this direction.

- DSS strictly prohibits the non-vegetarianism. To be a pure vegetarian is the one of the three principles of DSS, which a person must have to follow for being a follower.
- DSS extols non-violence as the cardinal principle of spiritual life. Every follower of DSS undertakes a grave vow not to hurt animals or birds in any way. DSS prohibits even the killing of poisonous reptiles like snakes, scorpions etc. in the premises of DSS. The volunteers are trained to catch them and restore them to their natural habitats.
- In the times of drought the fodder is dispatched to such areas so that the animals may not starve to death.
- Guru Ji encourages the followers to minimize the use of fertilizers since excessive chemicals are polluting the environment and finally causing serious toxicity to all life forms.
- The rapid race of deforestation and ever increasing urbanization is destroying the habitats of all life forms. Motivated by the teachings of Guru Ji the followers spread the food grains and keep the water on their roofs. They are also taking initiatives to prepare nests for birds. Such an initiative will serve a lot to provide food and shelter to the birds in the forests of concretes.
- DSS followers render the all possible help to save the injured animals or birds. Sometimes, even they put their own life in danger to save any animal fallen into deep bore well.
- DSS has offered to provide for cattle shelters. It is ready to preserve the pastoral land. But despite urging the government several times for pastoral land, it has received no response.
- Guru Ji always appeals to the cattle owners not to drive their cattle on being useless. Rather they must look after them like their elders.

2.8 Population Control Awareness

According to the census 2011, the population of India, at 1210.2 million, is almost equal to the combined population of U.S.A., Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Japan put together (1214.3 million). The population of these six countries totals 1214.13 millions! Growth during the decade is slightly lower than the population of Brazil In a developing country like India,

providing adequate food, education, health care, housing & employment facilities for huge population is quite difficult with limited resources. More population requires more food, more educational institutes, more medical facilities, more houses & more jobs i.e. more strain it puts on the country's economy. So there is an urgent need to find solid answer to unchecked population growth. Guru Ji is making people aware in this regard & encouraging them to keep family size small. Guru Ji has given slogans to promote the message for population control: '*Ham ek, Hamara ek*' (We, the family, are one, And, ours too is one) & '*Baccha ek hi kaafi, varna do ke baad maafi*' (child one is enough, otherwise excuse after two). The followers are acting upon the teachings of Guru Ji by keeping their family limited to one child to two, whether that child is a boy or girl.

3 Conclusions

The study reveals that the DSS has initiated a number of programs to check the deteriorating state of the environment pollution. The DSS volunteers are planting saplings all over the world to save the earth. The important point to note is that they not only plant the saplings, but also take care of them as their own child. This is evident from the good survival rate of the saplings which is 76.8 %. The Mega Cleanliness Campaigns conducted by the DSS are exemplary initiative to remove the curse of 'dirty' from India. It is a movement to rouse the people from their deep slumber and create awareness about keeping the surroundings neat and clean. The war against insanitation by Guru Ji has arisen hope to dream of a newer, neat & clean earth. The innovative initiatives like Waste land renovation programme and water reuse system have worth, as the natural resources are vanishing at the alarming rate. The initiatives by the DSS to promote the eco-friendly agriculture have proved a boon for the soil fertility whereas; the efforts to protect birds and animals and save water will go for a long way to check the loss of biodiversity.

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