

## AN ENVIABLE RECORD

We must single out for special mention the record set by a team of youngsters from Bangalore who for the first time descended from the nearly vertical cliff at Jog falls in shortest possible time. Those who have seen the Jog falls and the formidable cliff can easily visualize the dare devilry of this venture. The team members who accomplished this task were Jayanth Dofey, Ramachandra Sangogi, K.V. Venkatesh and Veeraj, who are experienced trekkers and rock climbers. We are informed of their performance in a record single longest stretch of 'rappelling' (1000 ft) ever undertaken (*The Hindu*, 3rd November 1997). This expedition, we understand was undertaken by a voluntary organization dedicated to promoting adventure sports and environment protection.

## A PERSPECTIVE TO ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Our earth is unique and the only planet that supports life in this Solar System. It has taken aeons to cool, consolidate and cradle life and millions of years for life to emerge from unicellular amoeba, plants and animals leading to highest evolved and complex form of life – *Homo sapiens*, wise man. To support the whole biosphere, earth has an intrinsic balancing mechanism in the natural ecosystem.

The recognition of role of environment for the well being of all life forms, dates back to about 3000 BC by the oldest of the world civilization and is Indian in origin. 'Vasudaiva Kutumbikam' (world is one large family) is one such maxim. The environmental components such as light, heat, rain, water, air, land have all been worshipped as deities. Infact, the first Scripture of human civilization the 'Rig Veda' extolls their benign effects and propitiates them.

Every human has a basic right to life, liberty and development. With the formation of Society, certain discipline in the conduct and behaviour was devised by ancient seers and savants for the well being of all. These universal codes with respect to individual and society form 'Ethics'.

Environmental imbalances create inequilibrium in the ecosystem, affecting all life forms. This disturbance is small in case of volcanoes and earthquakes whereas, human interference, in guise of development, has reached alarming proportions threatening the very security of the earth as a bio-geo entity. If we have to move ahead on all fronts, it is necessary to protect environment and sustain all life forms, of course without sacrificing development. All these endeavours aimed at promoting quality of life compatible with ecosystems, come under the scope of 'Environmental Ethics'.

Environmental ethics, is the awareness of 'bio-geo physicochemical balance' (BGPCB) in nature, detection and regulation with a view to maintain and improve ecosystem and strike a balance between environment and development. This requires active human participation in maintenance of eco balance and intervention in cases of disturbanc of life supporting systems.

This century has witnessed a growing mastery of Science and its applications. The tremendous leap in human activity has produced prosperity, elevated standards of life style through expanded opportunities far beyond what earlier generations could have ever imagined. Many of these developments have however damaged and deteriorated the environment and natural ecosystem that threatens the well being of the inhabitants of this planet. Every day a new toxicant is added to the ecosystem. Many man made molecules are persistant or non-degradable. Even to detoxify the present load requires new technology, not nil technology.

In order to reverse the trend and arrest further decay, it is imperative that human species being the most evolved and thinking inhabitant of this planet, ponder over value judgement to save our earth from further degradation. Furthermore, serious attempts should be made to develop more environment-friendly materials for use. There are already encouraging efforts to devise ways of alternate methods of designing materials, that offer substitutes for conventional pesticides, fertilizers, refrigerant and so on. The newly emerging 'Redeeming Technology' gives us hope for a better and safer environment. This requires a multi-disciplinary research effort at national and international level. Environment is global in concept, and transcends geographical, social and political barriers. A holistic global approach where all countries could agree to protect lithosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere and biosphere has now become an ethical necessity.

Environmental ethics is based on the fundamental concept that nature has rights. A real environmental awakening can be created if one taps the vast knowledge base available in history, philosophy, religion and frontier science. It requires a systematic study of values carried by the natural world coupled with duties towards plants, animals, species and ecosystem components of rocks, soil, air and water. This environmental ethical theory has to be ingrained in social, public, industrial and business activities.

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### **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON "GROUNDWATER IN THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT", NOTTINGHAM, UNITED KINGDOM**

The XXVII, conference of International Association of Hydrogeologist was held at Nottingham, United Kingdom from 21st to 27th September 1997. About 300 delegates from 54 countries (3 from India) participated in the deliberations.

In the conference presentation of papers was followed by demonstration and interaction with manufacturers of equipment used in monitoring various parameters of groundwater. The discussions centered around ways and means of sustainable use of groundwater for water supply, waste disposal in urban environment, assessment of risk as a result of pollutants, aquifer protection and remedial measures. Recharge technique and its implication on quality were also discussed.

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## **ANNOUNCEMENT**

**COAL AND MINERAL EXPLORATION: UGC-Sponsored 3-week Refresher Course 9-28 February, 1998.** It is proposed to conduct the course in the Department of Applied Geology, Indian School of Mines, Dhanbad for College/University teachers belonging to Geology/Applied Geology discipline. Interested teachers should contact Dr A.S. Venkatesh/Dr Atul K Varma, Coordinators, 6th UGC-Refresher Course, Department of Applied Geology, Indian School of Mines, Dhanbad-826004.