

As I see a Green Assam and Pollution free Assam

Assam, a beautiful state surrounded by hills and rivers and innumerable flora and fauna. A state renowned for its tea, silk and oil. A state, whose economy is mostly aided by wildlife tourism, centered around Kaziranga National Park and Manas National Park which are World Heritage Sites and whose 70% of the population derives their livelihood from agriculture.

But, Assam of late has frequently suffered the wrath of this nurturing nature as well. The state, over the past decade have witnessed massive changes in climate which in turn has made it increasingly vulnerable to floods, droughts, heat waves, cyclones, and other natural disasters. The mighty Brahmaputra and its tributaries, though a boon sometimes act as a curse to the land as well with the yearly occurrence of floods that wash away houses and livestock and causes damages to bridges, railway tracks and roads that result in communication breakdown in many places.

The increase in frequency and intensity of climate change and the floods can be primarily attributed to the massive deforestation suffered in various parts of the state owing to logging, encroachment for agriculture, shifting cultivation, mining, forest fires, and infrastructure development due to the rapid population growth in the state.

Now let's understand how deforestation can be directly attributed as a cause of flooding in the state. The leaves in trees of the forests absorb some of the rainwater which ultimately over time transfers back to the atmosphere via. evapotranspiration. The leaves also reduce the impact of raindrops on the soil, resulting in reduced erosion. Moreover the roots of the trees not only absorb water from the soil, it also prevents the soil erosion thereby preventing sedimentary runoffs and subsequent siltation of the rivers. Now, with the advent of deforestation, lesser trees imply more erosion and siltation that chokes the river and significantly increases the likelihood of floods in the land.

Deforestations also results in reduced evapotranspiration, which in turn results in reduced rainfalls and increased atmospheric temperature owing to lesser transfer of water from the land back to the atmosphere. The deforestation, if encouraged to continue will adversely affect the climate with more frequent and intense droughts and heat waves and eventually lead to a non-reversible condition of global warming. It will also lead to increased air pollution, because trees have been known to intake carbon-di-oxide and other harmful pollutants that harm the atmosphere and release oxygen in return. With lesser trees to do the job, the air we breathe continue to grow dirtier resulting in decrease in the amount of breathable air and hence increased diseases for mankind.

Thus, deforestation in the land not only causes water but air pollution as well along with the direct effect of global warming.

Thus, the week-long celebration of the Van Mahotsav festival in the state is a welcome reminder of what we stand to lose with the advent of pollution and global warming and how we can overcome it by doing the right thing by our Mother Nature by restoring balance to the Nature in the form of planting of trees.

Sensitizing the general public of the adverse effects of deforestation and the pros of conservation of forests and planting of trees will go a long way in reducing the pace of the impending global warming. Making the general population aware via. means of awareness programs, street shows, etc of the long-term advantages of sowing a sapling like providence of alternative fuel options, fodder, soil conservation by prevention of soil erosion, enhanced evapotranspiration resulting in increased rainfalls and reduced droughts and less drastic climate changes and enhanced natural aesthetic beauty with a 'Greener and Cleaner Assam' will go a long way in making the state initiative of 'sowing a sapling' on Van Mahotsav week a grand success. This knowledge will eventually be transferred to all our subsequent generations and create a sustained change in our ecosystem. Soon, we will once again be the land of flora and fauna that we once boasted of. We will take care of the Nature, restore its balance and eventually Nature will once again take care of us will more rainy days, less parched summers and less drastic changes to the everyday climate with a healthy dose of breathable air and drinkable water sources once again without having to worry too much about the occurrence of floods on a regular basis.

Thus with the advent of monsoons this July, find a patch of land and try to work your magic into the soil. Sow a sapling and watch it grow and thrive. Take inspiration from the words of Ronald J. Sider - "No one can do everything, but everyone can do something and together we can change the world" and use it as your motivation. You might not plant saplings to cover an acre wide land but even if each one of us plants just one tiny sapling, the overall result would be baffling. Eventually one day, together, we might overcome the deforestations and the global warming and pollutions that haunt our land. One day we will be 'Greener, Cleaner and Pollution Free'. One day with the nature restored to its former glory, we will make Assam a state sought after by tourists for its green and serene natural beauty and that day with everyone coming forward to 'sow a sapling' might come sooner than we anticipate.

Wishing everyone an eventful Van Mahotsav week!!

Don't forget to "Sow a Sapling"!!!

Cheers!!

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