

## THE GOLDEN TOUCH OF NATURE

On 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2016, I was invited to talk on the event of book release and screening of the film “Discovery of Rhododendron Forest - Where Highest Rhododendron Grows”. The aim of the function was to create awareness about the climate indicator wild flower- Rhododendrons of eastern Himalayas, North East India.

North East India is known for its abundance of flora and fauna and lush greenery. The region indeed is blessed and abounds in some very rare floral species. They would fascinate you with their heavenly colors.

The Rhododendrons are high altitude plants and they help to a large extent in maintaining the ecosystem in the high altitude. The Rhododendrons are considered as one of the most beautiful wild flowers from an aesthetic perspective. They are also considered as climate change indicator plants in the present age of global warming when glaciers are melting, snow covers are disappearing.

There are 135 varieties of Rhododendrons in India and out of these, 132 are found in North East India- 121 species are found in Arunachal Pradesh alone.

### Flowers Spread Happiness:

Every flower is comparable to a soul blossoming in the lap of nature. Where flowers bloom, the people’s hearts also blim with sublime happiness. Flowers are the music of the ground, from earth’s lips spoken without sound. The most beautiful thing about a flower is that it does not compete with the flower blooming next to it. It just blooms and spreads happiness and beauty all around.

Flowers are words which can be understood even by a child. Flowers are those little colorful beacons from where we get the sunshine when dark skies cloud our thoughts. Flowers do not worry about how they are going to bloom. They just open up and turn towards the light and that makes them resplendent and beautiful.

From Mahakavi Kalidas to Subramaniam Bharati, from Wordsworth to Shakespeare, all were inspired by the variety of flowers, their enchanting beauty and smell. It lifts the human spirit. Wordsworth has described the daffodil flowers as dancing gleefully in the breeze and fluttering all the while like the stars twinkling on the Milky Way.

Not only the poets but the flowers have also been an inspiration for the singers and for women as well. They have been used for decoration, for religious purposes and to bring calm and peace to the mind.

For example, the Jasmine is famous for its sweet smell. The Jasmine flower also serves as a medicinal plant for various health problems such as jaundice, ulcers, vesicles, boils, skin diseases and eye disorders. Drinking Jasmine tea regularly helps in curing cancer. Its oil is very effective in calming and relaxing the human body and used in various beauty products.

Lotus is considered as a sacred flower in India and occupies a special place in the art and mythology of ancient India. It is also the National Flower of India symbolizing divinity, fertility, wealth and knowledge. Lotus is a water plant which is beneficial to kidney, spleen, and heart. It also helps in curing restlessness, palpitation, insomnia, liver disorders and acts as an antidote for mushroom poisoning.

People have been passionate about roses since the beginning of time. The great philosopher Confucius had a 600

book library specifically on how to care for roses. Besides many people are drawn towards its beauty and it is used in various medicines and beauty products and also in cooking. Gulkand made by mixing of Rose petals and white sugar in equal proportion acts as tonic.

### **Pious Thoughts of Tilak:**

Nature is the art of God. Thus it is our duty to protect it with love and care. Thank the Universe for all of the wonderful things you've received in your life so far.

If we want to develop trees, plants, fruits and flowers we have to love them. The plants are very sensitive by nature. The thoughts of the people around them influences their development. Once I visited the Mandalay jail in Burma(now in Myanmar) and visited the cell where Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak was imprisoned during the freedom movement to show my respect. There I read a diary written by a gardener where he narrated an emotional story. The gardener planted a rose tree in front of a room well before Tilak came. The plant did not bloom for a long time. The gardener was upset. He felt as if his own daughter was unable to give birth to a child after marriage. The sadness gripped his mind. Tilak was made to stay in this room. Tilak used to watch that flower plant from his cell every morning and went to write his book "Geeta Rahasya". Surprisingly within a period of three months of his stay the plant started blooming once again. The gardener was very delighted and felt his own daughter gave birth to his grand child. He wrote that the pious thoughts and noble presence of Tilak brought about this miracle. The way the trees flowered and blossomed during the presence of Tilak was

something never seen before nor after.

It shows how sensitive the flowers are. It too can understand the language of love. But if we turn around and do not pay attention to nature, it might wither away some day.

Everything needs love to grow and to survive: plants, animals and all living cells on this planet. It is this true love that we must share with our nature.

### **Planting of Trees:**

Deforestation is a major concern today. Deforestation is affecting our environment and so also the whole appearance of our earth. At least eighty percent of our forests have been destroyed. Our rain forests are disappearing. It has been estimated that in the last two years around 728 kms of forests roughly half the size of Delhi have been wiped out clear.

An estimated 18 million acres (7.3 million hectares) of forests are lost each year. That is about 36 football fields worth of trees are lost every minute. The world's rain forests are in danger of vanishing completely in the coming hundred years at the current rate of deforestation.

To reverse deforestation, planting millions of trees every day is the solution. The only way to stop this is to respect mother nature. Sow the seeds. Plant saplings. Grow more and more trees. The earth has been generous enough to satisfy all our needs even as we deplete her, but it cannot satisfy everyone's greed.

### **Caring Attitude of Swamiji:**

One should inculcate the habit of protecting and safeguarding nature. The true story of Ramakrishna Paramhansa is an inspiration to all.

Once Ramakrishna Paramhansa was strolling around in the fields and admiring the nature when he witnessed a painful incident. He saw some bulls running down at a great speed and while doing so they destroyed the plants and grasses. He could see that all the grasses were broken and smashed by those bulls. He felt so one with the broken grass that he could not bear the sight. It gave him immense pain. After he returned swami Vivekananda removed his shawl and was surprised to see the footprints embedded on his chest. What a great concern! We need such a concern, caring attitude towards plants, trees, fruits and flowers.

### **Grow More Trees:**

Nature is the Earth and our home. If we do not protect our home, we will eventually lose it. When we protect nature, we preserve it for generations to come. Protecting nature keeps the eco-systems in balance. When we cut down the rain forest, less rain falls and the once very green and fertile area turns into a desert.

Protecting nature keeps the flora from extinction, thereby saving precious earthly resources from dying forever. Protecting nature means reducing greenhouse gases so

as to slow down and eventually prevent Global Warming. Global Warming, if it continues at the rate it is now growing will be a disaster for the world and life, as we know, will not exist. It will be a catastrophe beyond human imagination.

Protecting nature means to preserve the life that lives within it. Remove nature and life is destroyed. We, as a human race, must ponder over the fact that if we do not preserve nature today, future generations will not be able to enjoy the benefits, the beauty, the wonder, the serenity, and the joy it brings to the hearts of people everywhere.

Efforts of preserving herbal gardens, sacred groves and Rhododendron forests are steps in the right direction and they will go a long way in controlling global temperature, which is rising menacingly today. Tree planting movement must spread in a massive way. Encourage tree planting. Establish individual trees and woodlands in both rural and urban areas that will grow for many years and which will provide valuable resources, beneficial ecosystem services and a lasting legacy for future generations.