

April - June 2006

Green Voice

Quarterly Newsletter

CMS ENVIS

Newsletter on
Environment & Media



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CMS Environment

Operational since 2000, CMS ENVIS Centre had initiated several activities towards making itself effectively functional. The area in which CMS has expertise is communication strategies specifically in the context of the electronic media. It has been working in developing itself as a resource centre, as a coordinating body and as a centre for dissemination of environmental related information. In the short span CMS ENVIS Centre has identified the database on different parameters. Also initiated innovative programmes to highlight the environmental concerns.

Among its various activities the centre has been indexing coverage of environmental issues from print media as well as electronic media, conducting small research studies to bridge the information gaps, the mailing list with addresses of agencies, individuals, institutions, departments NGOs, Radio and TV channels, advertisers along with computerized database of Audio-Visual resources has been updated regularly, media orientation programmes including screening of films, discussions and interactive sessions on different environmental topics are conducted. The main thrust is upon maintaining ENVIS CENTRE/NODE websites.

www.cmsindia.org/cmsenvis

IN BLACK & WHITE

Films on climate change

Correspondent: Staff Reporter

New Delhi, May 30

Discovery Channel has announced that it will premiere a series of four documentary films, by Indian filmmakers, dealing with the effects of global warming, on the occasion of the World Environment Day on June 5.

The one hour programme will explore the reasons for the climatic changes in India, which if not checked could impact agriculture, water resources, rise in the sea level and the overall eco-system of the country.

The programme has been produced under the UK-CMS Environment Film Fellowships announced in November 2005, an initiative funded by British High Commission in India.

Source: The Hindu Business Line, Wednesday, May 31, 2006

Green broadcasts' on Dibrugarh AIR

Correspondent: Staff Reporter

DIBRUGARH, May 24 For the second year in a row, the Dibrugarh station of All India Radio is beginning a month-long "Green Broadcasting" programme from June 1 to 30. Described as "broadcasting with a purpose", the local AIR station director, N M A Khampti said the broadcasts would dwell on environmental and conservation issues.

He said that environment and conservation should not remain mere slogans by government departments, and that this calls for active participation by the public. According to him, a month-long environmental broadcasting by a radio station should help mould public opinion for proactive conservation of nature.

The purpose of Green Broadcasting is to generate demand for environmental awareness, create a rational public opinion on such issues, and conservation as an instrument of conflict resolution. This year's theme of the Green Broadcasts is, "Conserve the Hoolock Gibbon."

With a high listener audience, the Dibrugarh radio station has been able to achieve upwards of 90 per cent listenership in its territory of operation. Innovative programming by the station has helped to keep its listenership ratios at a high level.

During the month-long Green Broadcasting this June, 14 live phone-in programmes have been chalked out. Other programming includes documentary features, discussions and debates, talks, interviews and musical programmes. Most of these programmes would be on air during prime time in the morning and evening sessions.

Source: The Assam Tribune, Thursday, May 25, 2006

International honour for documentary filmmaker

Correspondent: Lakshmi B. Ghosh

Not surprising then that Dhananjoy Mandal is a name better known in the international festival circuit than in his own country. Just back after winning the best documentary award at the third Minsk International Environment Film Festival held in Belarus for his film "A Silent Killer", Dhananjoy is thrilled with the response the film received at the event.

The winner of the National Film Award in 2003 for the best investigative film of the year, the international recognition at Belarus has only strengthened Dhananjoy's resolve to make documentaries.

A self-taught filmmaker who has been involved with documentaries, short films and features, Dhananjoy has nearly 25 works to his credit.

"A Silent Killer" revolves round arsenic contamination of ground water in West Bengal. According to the film, ground water drawn through tube-wells in 75 blocks of eight districts of West Bengal has shown arsenic content well above the permissible limit. Of the State's 80 million plus people, nearly 28 million were found to have been affected by the contamination. And with no antidote yet available for the diseases caused by arsenic water, Dhananjoy feels his film is very relevant.

"The problem for us is not making the film but screening it. There is no slot on which documentaries, even national award winning ones, are finding space on television. We

need to do something to reach out to the people that these films are made for," he notes. -- Lakshmi B. Ghosh

Source: The Hindu, Friday, April 28, 2006

Artist speaks up for environment through art

Correspondent: Kavitha Srinivasa

Bangalore: The man-made demolition of the green belt has made artists react through their own medium. Some like Arundhati Vartak have expressed their concern by depicting trees in all their glory. It could perhaps be an ironic response, considering that many trees are on the verge of extinction.

This artist is synonymous with tree painting in India and has been acknowledged for recreating them faithfully. Her canvas portrays trees in every possible mood, in season or their stage of growth, besides offering a visual of the surroundings and the birds associated with them. Her sketches are realistic full of details like the bends and curves of branches, the flowers from various angles the typical postures of birds and different shades of new and mature leaves, buds and fruit.

"Every tree has a personality of its own and a distinctive charm, besides sharing a relationship with the environment and human beings. There are many ways of viewing and drawing them. My presentation is aimed at viewers so that they can cherish trees in all their diversity," said Vartak at an exhibition, a slide show titled "The Charm of Trees".

Inspired by miniatures, the artist has focused on just one or two aspects of trees, the sketch is detailed and natural, with minimal texturing. To an extent, this detailing could be attributed to her knowledge of Sanskrit and ancient texts.

"The Charm of Trees" also illustrates specimens like the gulmohar which has been painted more than once. The difference lies in the varying colour tones.

While the colour scheme reflects an overall mood, the gradual variation speaks for the seasonal change and depicts the time of the day. These finer aspects caught the attention of the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation in the US, which published a 40-page coloured catalogue of her tree representations titled "Portraits of Indian Trees".

However, most frames at the exhibition highlight familiar trees like the mango, tamarind, neem and the banyan.

Revered in ancient India, the banyan tree has been a desired choice of birds like the myna that take refuge in its branches.

The Pune-based artist included favorites like babul or acacia nilotica, which has been painted in summer and winter. "The thorny tree grows in arid regions and except for goats, probably no other animal enjoys its shade because of its thorns. Ironically, it is a safe place for baya birds to build their nests," she added.

She started painting trees in the Nineties, and since then, it has been a fascinating experience. But her first creation was Kalidas' poem titled Meghdoot. It taught her the subtleties involved in an artistic work.

As she explained, "I learnt to appreciate the graphic descriptions in the poem, which came in handy during my tree series. I chose a specific season of the year."

With time, she enriched herself by reading books, including those written by the Birdman of India, Dr Salim Ali. It was a deep-rooted interest that saw her visiting jungles and dense forests. She chanced upon lesser known varieties of trees like Ankola or allangium lamarkii in Kolhapur.

While in full bloom, it is identified by fragrant, white delicate flowers. However, the best part of her research was when she came across a 2,000 year-old collection of poems titled Gatha Saptashati. They speak of a bygone era, and throw light on a lifestyle that no longer exists. She is trying to bring out the essence of the then flora and fauna through her works.

While her botanical study has taken her to places like the Corbett National Park, in her own way, Vartak is branching out into related areas, without being an activist. As a member of the Maharashtra Vriksha Samvadhini, she voices herself on environmental issues through slide shows. Besides that, she has initiated the children in her neighbourhood to plant and nurture greenery.

Right now, Vartak is busy exploring possibilities of studying the leafy creations. Eventually, she plans to even write a children's book on the subject.

Source: The Asian Age, Friday, April 14, 2006

GREEN FILMS

1. Wild India 24 Hours

English / 13mins / DVD / Mr. Rupin Dang

This film covers the entire Indian subcontinent in one sweeping montage, from Pakistan to Myanmar, and from Kashmir in the north to Kanyakumari and the Indian Ocean to the south. Everything is happening in one 24-hour sunrise-sunset-sunrise period on a winter day in December 2003, and yet there is a sense of timelessness about this fantastic journey through the heart of Wilderness India. Definitely a first-ever attempt on such a scale, and in such a tricky geographic sweep of terrain!

2. Me Masa Boltoy!

Marathi (With English Subtitles) / 8mins / VCD / Ms Jyoti Patil

The dam Sites in Effect turn out to be rich fish catching waters, and more fish are caught than is necessary. Can there be a way to conserve water but at the same time not affect the life cycle of the fish, and not break the chain of life, that are a part of? The film tells the story of an exploratory initiative to conserve both water and fish. The Film, through the character of a fish, narrates the need for and use of such solutions

3. Langur Business

English / 26mins 58sec / DVD / Dr. Sukarna Deb

India is known for his rich biodiversity. There are thousands of different kinds of species that are found from Northern Himalayan region to Southern Coastal region. In Tripura we find a beautiful species called Phayeris Langur. Many people call them Spectacle monkey as white rings encircling the eyes giving them an appearance of being bespectacled. The film is a beautiful piece and one that shall leave you enchanted by this creature!



4. Toxic Tresspass

English / 22 mins 54 secs / VCD / Mr. Jyoti Sarup

The industrial Hazardous Waste is generally disposed off via sewage system or by uncontrolled dumping of the solid waste, thus posing an imminent risk to the environment & human health. The consequences of such uncontrolled disposal of industrial waste is slowly but surely contaminating our water bodies and damaging our ecosystem. This phenomenon is equally effecting rural as well as urban areas.

One Industrial Estate which pioneered the move towards environmental protection and hazardous waste management is the Ankleshwar Industrial Estate housing more than 1000 industries with half of them being chemical industries. The member industries set up a solid hazardous waste landfill site BEIL under the Bharuch Enviro Infrastructure Ltd to facilitate the same. This site is the first ever such facility in India and amongst the very few existing the world. The film highlights the metamorphosis from zero waste management to effective waste control in engaging and interesting manner. The message of the film is - 'Industrialization is required, but with it comes responsibility to save the environment, locally and globally.'

5. A Second Hand Life

Hindi and English with English subtitles / 26mins / VCD / MS. Nutan Manmohan

This investigative film brings to light the grim, murkier side of information technology. Tonnes of electronic waste from obsolete computers and televisions are being exported to poor countries like India from the Western world. More than 1.38 million obsolete PCs have been dumped in India in the last five years.



Asif, the film's central character, is a worker in the e-waste recycling business. His life reveals how this huge global e-waste business is engulfing us and how dangerous are the

working conditions in these recycling ghettos. We see how blue chip MNC's sell e-waste as second hand computers to Indian traders and how unscrupulous agents import dangerous waste under the guise of 'charitable donations'. We get a peep into the sweatshops where thousands of labourers, including children, burn, smash and tear apart electronic waste to scavenge for heavy metals such as copper and iron, precious metal such as gold and platinum. The methods of disposal are rudimentary. It results in heavy metal poison affecting the entire food chain. The film is quite hard-hitting with an interesting and vivid narrative.

6. Waste

No spoken language (with English subtitles) / 26mins
10sec / VCD / Ashish Paliwal & Tarun Bhartiya

This documentary sees environment through the voice of one of the most vulnerable groups in urban India-: children waste pickers. Not only are children a known vulnerable population, but those working in hazardous occupations even more so. The film tries to bring out the idea about how the brunt of the supposedly environmentally 'green' activity, recycling, actually takes place.

The story revolves around children living under a bridge, along a stinking drain, in Nizamuddin in Delhi, as part of a much-derided community that 'dirties' rather than cleans the city. The livelihoods of these 200 families come from waste picking around Delhi.

The film calls upon the public to include this community in all waste-recycling efforts and accept it. Moreover it is an appeal to those producers of toxics like pesticides and other users of toxic products to follow the idea of Extended Producer Responsibility. Waste recycling cannot be termed as a green activity unless the waste recycling community is given healthy and safe working conditions, while phasing children out of it. The film is based on the work Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group has done at the grass roots level with the waste-recycling sector.

Moef Initiatives

An awareness programme on discovery channels: an awareness campaign on the diminishing population of vultures due to the use of the drug Diclofenac in cattle was launched on the Discovery channel. A film produced by the private producer called "The last Flight" was broadcasting in Discovery Channel with the collaboration of the MOEF. As a part of the campaign the film was broadcast thrice along with promos and factoids about the vultures. Special screening for the Press in four cities in Delhi, Jaipur, Chandigarh and Ahmedabad were conducted and about 200 CDs were distributed to Veterinary Doctors in all over the Country.

FACETS

Filmmaking may be a glamorous profession but documentary filmmaking still remains a road less traveled. Sanjay Barnela took on the challenge in 1987 as a documentary filmmaker and cameraperson and has now created a special place for himself in environment documentary circles.



Sanjay Barnela

Infact this journey was not all straight and simple, Sanjay has seen quite a many contours in his career. For around four years he worked as a Producer at the Centre for Development of Instructional Technology (CENDIT) from 1987 to 1991. He then took a detour into video journalism before returning to making documentaries. Today he has over 20 films to his credit, most notably, Pastoral Politics, Turf Wars, The Elusive Mountain Gya, Vidyalayam, Boond Boond Se, Reaching for the Sun & Tales from the Indian Countryside. Also, he is the co-founder of the production group Moving Images.

Not only does he creates his craft with passion but the same passion also reflects in the tone his documentaries adopt for the cause they stand for. Of course he is a filmmaker with versatile tastes but he selects his subject with utmost specifications. A widely acclaimed filmmaker, he has worked on a range of related issues including women in panchayati raj, wildlife conservation, the politics of water, livelihoods vs conservation and has also filmed a few high altitude mountain climbs in the Himalayas. Some of his notable films are, Hunting Down Water, River Taming Mantras, Pastoral Politics, Devta Activists & Turf Wars.

His films have been screened and awarded at several national and international film festivals. Hunting Down Water won the Best Documentary award at the Festival du film de Strasbourg, 2004 and Best Editing award at the Miami International Documentary film festival, 2004. River Taming Mantras won the award for Best Documentary in the environment category at VATAVARAN 2005 and Turf Wars won the Third Prize in Jeevika 2003 organized by Centre for Civil Society. This filmmaker has not only been recognized for his art but has actually been a driving force to take on the cause of environment internationally through his green strokes!

TALK OVER

Environment is one of the most pressing issues of present times. Documentaries have been addressing the various aspects of the situation but still environment documentary filmmaking is in its nascent stage in the country. Why this is yet a road less taken, what challenges does it present and whether they are really making a difference or are caught in invisible ceilings. Eminent Documentary filmmaker Mr. Amar Kanwar shares his concerns with us on these.



Amar Kanwar

Environment being such a sensitive issue, now days, what are main aspects that you keep in view when you embark on an environmental project?

I think it was a sensitive issue all the time but to respond more seriously to your question - there are a range of issues that come to mind but the fundamental question always is - Why am I making this film? It's a question that one needs to keep asking before, during and after the production. Yes there are multiple reasons for making a film but can I list them down. Do they make sense, who is a priority in this list. Am I addressing a conflict? If so then what are the ways to understand this conflict from different perspectives. What is the meaning of its resolution? What is my perspective? Who is financing the film, what are their motivations, are they open, am I part of building a certain opinion or interpretation, if so what are the various arguments presented by this point of view. These questions are critical for me. How to understand and feel so that I develop the intuition, the eye and the compassion required. Somehow transparency and honesty of purpose and continuously introspecting on it seem more important than production skills or the cinematic strategies of telling a story.

You have directed and produced many award winning environmental documentaries, what is your opinion about the dealing of the environmental issues by the electronic media?

If by electronic media you mean the television then I would say that yes it has played an important role, there are always a few programs and films that show us what is really

happening and these do influence people - but by and large the television industry is too sanitised, too scared and does not have the will, capability or independence to speak always clearly. I keep saying that we are in a war like situation the scale of destruction is immense and continuous and every media intervention has to accept this and intervene with clarity and honesty like you should in a war. We need to understand that opinions will be controlled because the stakes are very high and as media practitioners we will have to reexamine our principles, our biases and decide which side we are on. It may even be a third point of view but it must not fudge, distort or hide the truth. The story is not about a few trees getting cut, it's about injustice, profit multiplication, inequality and ecological genocide.

With reference to independent films on ecology I would say that they have played a far greater role than the television industry. The dedication and perseverance of several individual filmmakers has contributed immensely towards the general public's understanding of the scale and complexity of the problem.

How far do you think that your environmental documentaries are able to disillusion or awaken the audiences?

My own work varies at times it tries to inspire by showing the wisdom, strength and ingenuity of people and communities in their methods of conservation. Some films try to enter the heart of a particular conflict or peoples resistance so as to help others understand and some films seek to directly shock an audience. I am interested in pushing and disturbing audiences out of their inertia. If you get motivated that's good, if you get disillusioned even that's okay for its better than being indifferent. To be disillusioned is always temporary, it means you care and you will always find a way to resolve your disturbance by taking some action, however small it may be.

We often face ignorance, indifference and biased audiences and we need varied types of films to respond to this situation. Further films need to be seen in a context, seldom do isolated films create change. Films emerge from processes, they need to be part of public awareness programs and campaigns. A film cannot save a forest but a film about people saving a forest can motivate others to save their forest. A film about the devastation caused by mining in Surinam can resonate with people in South Orissa and can inspire others resisting indiscriminate mining in Romania.

Please share some interesting experiences while shooting some of your films?

There has been a lot of fun and adventure along the way but I would like to recall a particular conversation that I never forget. In 2000 I was filming in the Kashipur valley in South Orissa, this was where the anti bauxite mining resistance began. I was fortunate to have an exchange with a few tribal men who were part of the resistance. I recount this conversation as it happened.

A young tribal boy, about eighteen years old pointed to a low sloping hill and said "do you see this hill, it is about twenty two kilometers long, four kilometer's flat on top, it is filled with a hundred and seventy three millions tons of bauxite". He then pointed to his head and asked me "Do you see this. This is a skull. This is my skull, and it has a brain and this brain inside can think." "Does that surprise you?" he asked. "This hill has now been sold. The entire range has been sold and so have several of these hills around this particular one been sold. Here me and the last three generations of my family and about twenty five hamlets have lived." He then continued "but I am not going to let it be sold. I am not going to let them take it away, I would rather die than let them take it away, I can see, I can see what is happening around me. I have seen what has happened in the next valley. I have talked, I have listened, I have analysed and I have come to my conclusions. It is because I have a brain which you do not think I have."

I pushed this a little further essentially to see the reaction. I briefly spoke about the good of the nation and about the larger good verses the smaller good. Another tribal, but older, sitting next to him, replied with an even stranger response. It was difficult to immediately understand.

I present almost exactly as he said it. We were sitting outside and he pointed to a knife on the ground and said "You see that knife, with it you can cut grass. Now how would you describe that action. You would describe it as an act of cutting. Now if you take the same knife and cut my throat-how then would you describe that action. You could also describe it as an act of cutting... a kriya, like a verb. The knife cut the grass, the knife cut the throat." Then he asked me "Can you explain to me the difference between these two acts of cutting. Once you explain to me the difference between these two cuttings I will explain to you the difference between the nations good and our good and the good of this little valley". Both these men were talking about values, of justice, of ecology and of life.

They were asking several very basic questions. They were asking - was the removal of bauxite or the purchase of entire hill ranges for mining only a question of economic growth or a question of ethics as well. They were asking - will we discuss why it should be sold, who will buy it, how much will be ours, to what extent will it be ours, what will be the nature of the mining, will it stop at some point. What will be produced from the mining. Will we benefit? Can we discuss benefits. Can we discuss the meaning of benefits and who would benefit and who wouldn't. They were also talking about the Indian constitution actually.

What are your ideas about the issue of censorship keeping the environment based documentaries in mind?

As I said earlier there is a process of sanitisation that takes place continuously. Everybody the TV channels, the governments, political movements and the NGO's all want to remove what is uncomfortable from the film. It is our responsibility to resist this and collaborate with all those who can systemically strengthen and support the free and independent flow of information and ideas. The situation we are facing can be described simply as well our governments and media are influenced and to a large extent controlled by industrial and other lobbies. Ecology is not a primary concern for these lobbies so it up to us to decide what we want to do - ignore it, support those who resist ecological destruction and the taking away of homes and livelihoods of poor people or say that its too complicated for me to understand so I think I will avoid the whole issue and make films about butterflies. Now I don't have a problem with making films about butterflies, infact a film that can help us enter the fascinating and intimate world of the butterfly can have the capability of making us understand the beauty of life and its impermanence. It may make us more humble and compassionate. But what I am arguing is that I cannot only make films about the magic of the butterfly. Nor am I willing to accept neat categorizations of environment films. I need to also understand the inter linkages of the butterfly with other multiple species which in turn could be linked to community knowledge systems and so on. The inter linkages open up far more in my mind and that is what interests me. And if by any chance - the inter linkages that begin from the story of the butterfly leads me to a complicated political / economic conflict then take me there for I need to understand that as well. So what I ask for is to not slip into practicing a certain safe self censorship. I feel we need all kinds of films for we need to speak in multiple voices about a complex process of destruction and the resistance to it. To be safe is to be sterile. To not disturb, to not confront, to avoid passion is to fall into the hands of those who wish to neutralise our films.

With all the laudable success that your environment based films like "Marubhumi", "Freedom" and "Many Faces of Madness" has received, how far do you think films can be used to bring central issues on environment?

Films are very useful, they take us and audiences to places we may never go to, they open up what is concealed, they record achievements and inspire all of us but I must reiterate that films are only a part of a process. It is the process, the campaigns, the collective and individual resistances that make ecological issues central to public consciousness and our films emerge from that consciousness.

During interactive sessions with the audiences have you ever been questioned on the style or approach of carrying out the film on environment?

Yes several times, everyone has an opinion and over time I have learnt that some people want to only see 'feel good' films, some want aggressive films, some are only satisfied with a fast and exciting pace and others want reflective films. There are several who also want dumb pretty films. Some want only information and a pretense of objectivity while others insist on a pedagogic style to enlighten the ignorant. I accept all these desires and make what I feel is right for me.

Your documentaries bring us very close to the image, however there is concoction of the language of conflicts and the language of poetics. How far do you think is this relative to your documentaries on environment? How effectively do you think, your documentaries, are able to bridge aesthetic and diverse representations when it comes to environment based issues?

I shall respond to your question by three extracts from Pablo Neruda's writings. He answers better than anything I could ever say.

1. "The saws cutting the huge logs ground out their shrill lament all day long. First you heard the deep underground thud of the felled tree. Every five or ten minutes the ground shuddered like a drum in the dark at the hard impact...giant work of nature, seeded there by the wind a thousand years before...The forest was dying. I heard its lamentation with a heavy heart, as if I had come there to listen to the oldest voices anyone had ever heard."

2. "When tyranny darkens the earth and punishes the people, the loudest voice is sought out and the head of the poet falls into history's deep well. Tyranny cuts off the head that sings, but the voice at the bottom of the well returns to the secret springs of the earth and out of the darkness rises up through the mouth of the people."

3. "Earth, people, and poetry are one and the same entity tied together by mysterious subterranean passages. When the earth blooms, the people breath freedom, the poets sing and show the way."

About ENVIS



Working towards the conservation of environment, an environment information system (ENVIS) was established by the government in Dec 1982, with a view to provide information regarding environment to decision makers, policy planners, scientists and engineers, research workers etc all over the country. Environment being a broad ranged and multidisciplinary subject, requires an involvement of concerned institutes/organizations that are actively engaged in the different subject areas of environment, therefore a large number of nodes have been established to cover the broad subject areas of environment.

ENVIS is a decentralized system, which ensures collection, collation, storage, retrieval and dissemination of environmental information to all concerned. These centers have been set up in the areas of pollution control, toxic chemicals, central and offshore ecology, environmentally sound and appropriate technology, bio-degradation of wastes and environmental management etc.

www.envis.nic.in

NGO VIGNETTES

Charkha- Development Communications Network

Charkha - a voluntary, non-government organization began its mission on 24th October 1994. Its aim was to present the scene of development as it is, from the grassroots to the national level. And highlighting both problems and solutions through shared news and views. The organization also aimed at promoting connectivity through two-way dissemination of information and knowledge. The larger goal was to use communications as a tool towards empowerment of the marginalized.



Through the use of various tools of communication, Charkha serves as a dynamic link between grassroots activists, rural India, NGOs, and the mainstream media. For this purpose the organization has employed several strategies. For instance, Charkha runs a trilingual feature service in English, Hindi and Urdu. Through these articles from rural reporters, writers and development journalists in English, Hindi and Urdu find a place in regional and national print media. In fact, its Urdu feature service is the first of its kind in India, which provides content on developmental issues to online and print media publications in Urdu. Besides features Charkha has also begun bimonthly publications like the Charkha Samvad, a Hindi newsletter, and its E-newsletter.

The organization also runs workshops to empower groups of people with the ability to project their thoughts and experiences effectively. Thus enabling them to become opinion leaders in bringing about positive social change. Rural journalists, grassroots activists, village committee workers, Panchayati Raj functionaries, and women activists, among others are some of the beneficiaries. Comics for Social Change is yet another innovative attempt to portray an expression of people, by themselves, of their problems and issues relating to development through cartoons and comics. This initiative explores the immediate impact of the images and pictures.

Charkha has initiated media interfaces by providing a shared platform to media representatives and rural writers and social activists in order to sensitize the mainstream

media to grassroots issues. In selected states Charkha has developed a network of rural reporters and development journalists to cover on-site issues concerning the rural poor and project their voices through the media. Moreover Charkha also recently initiated the Sanjoy Ghose-Charkha Fellowship for Peace and Development for local journalists in the tension-ridden region of Jammu and Kashmir.

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World Environment Day-5th June

World Environment Day (WED) is one of the pioneer endeavours by UN to stimulate worldwide awareness of the environment and enhance political attention and action. Celebrated internationally on 5th June, WED was initially established by the UN General Assembly in 1972 to mark the opening of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. Another resolution, adopted by the General Assembly the same day, led to the creation of UNEP. WED is hosted every year by a different city and commemorated with an international exposition through the week of June 5.

The day's agenda is to give a human face to environmental issues; empower people to become active agents of sustainable and equitable development; promote an understanding that communities are pivotal to changing attitudes towards environmental issues; and advocate partnership, which will ensure all nations, and peoples enjoy a safer and more prosperous future.

The World Environment Day theme selected for 2006 is Deserts and Desertification and the slogan is Don't Desert Drylands! The slogan emphasizes the importance of protecting drylands, which cover more than 40% of the planet's land area. The main international celebrations of the World Environment Day 2006 will be held in Algeria.

On Air

Earth Matters

English/22min

Producer: Mike H. Pandey, Riverbank Studios

Sponsored by Doordarshan, Prasar Bharti

Earth matters is an environmental series that takes an incisive look at the state of our environment and wildlife today. The series travels across the varied landscape of India and takes stock of India's rich and vibrant ecological heritage. It attempts to educate and sensitize people to the threats our environment is facing today. It empowers the viewers with the knowledge that we alone can make a difference.

OPEN WINDOWS

International : Convention to Combat Desertification

Link: <http://www.unccd.int/>



The official Website of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. It provides an excellent space to information pertaining to action programmes, documents, publications, meetings etc.

CIESIN: Land Degradation and Desertification

Link: http://sedac.ciesin.columbia.edu/tg/guide_frame.jsp?rd=LU&ds=1



In the past two centuries the impact of human activities on the land has grown enormously, altering entire landscapes, and ultimately impacting the earth's nutrient and hydrological cycles as well as climate. Land-use and land-cover changes are local and place specific, occurring incrementally in ways that often escape our attention. Yet, collectively, they add up to one of the most important facets of global environmental change. This thematic guide provides an introduction to these changes, and walks the readers through important topics in land use and land cover change research: deforestation, desertification, biodiversity loss, land cover and the water cycle, land cover and the carbon cycle, and urbanization.

2006 International Year of Deserts and Desertification

Link: <http://www.iydd.org/>



2006 International Year of Deserts and Desertification presents an excellent opportunity to get the message across effectively that Desertification is a global problem, which we ignore at our peril. It also provides an impulse to strengthen the visibility of the drylands on the international environmental agenda while providing a timely reminder to the international community of the immense challenges that still lie ahead.

Centre for Media Studies (CMS)



CMS is an independent professional forum engaged in research, policy advocacy, advisory services and programme evaluation. CMS endeavors for accountability, responsiveness and transparency in policymaking and public systems and services. CMS initiatives, debates and dialogues on important public issues are well appreciated nationally.

CMS has emerged as an inter-disciplinary professional body with a wide range of concerns and capability in areas of communication studies, environment, social research, social development, public opinion research, training and performance appraisal. CMS initiatives with regard to regulatory framework, including in the media sector, are well known.

Over the years, CMS has taken up lead initiatives in evolving citizens' charter, Social Auditing, capacity building, transparency in public utilities, electoral reforms, information equity, good governance and campaign strategies. CMS Academy is well known for its conferences, seminars, training and orientation programmes for senior functionaries, decision makers and those in voluntary organizations.

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VIEWPOINT

Taking Green Battles Online: Does Cyberspace Offer Options?

Environmental journalists are unlucky in some ways, and, in other ways, luckier today. While the mainstream press has only shrinking space for green news, even as the crisis worsens and global warming (and extreme weather conditions) becomes more of a reality, there is more space opening up on that ubiquitous frontier. In cyberspace.



Frederick Noronha

But let's not kid ourselves. Cyberspace still remains a rather exclusive affair. With just about five in a thousand Indians able to access it, you can exaggerate its impact to your own peril.

But, on the other hand, overlooking its potential is unfair too. In a country where the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing, and states have been largely unable to communicate with one another, cyberspace offers much potential. It is cheap, fast, reliable and above all, able to link-up those who share a common interest in green issues.

Linking Journalists

Sometime in the Summer of 1998, as we were winding up training programme at a Swedish institute called Fojo, in the scenic coastal resort town of Kalmar, we were thinking of the usual seminar-end question that plagues everyone's mind. What next?

Since one had encountered the wonders of cyberspace, and its possibility of networking, I suggested setting up a simple, inexpensive tool called the 'mailing list'. Who doesn't know what a mailing list is? Maybe quite a few. It's a tool that anyone can set up in under five minutes flat. Try it out by visiting yahoogroups.com. But, unlike other fields of technology, it has hardly been hyped up as much as, say, the website or the blog.

In short, it is one-to-many email.

It gives you the power of having a community, at the cost of next to nothing. If well utilised, a mailing list can indeed be a powerful tool, through which to share ideas and contacts. For understandable reasons, the mainstream didn't smell money in this tool. So it barely good any of the hype that,

say, websites have attained before being collectively and cruelly dotbombed.

We set up networks called ThirdWorld-EJ, followed by IndiaEJ.

The first was meant to be a mailing list for environmental journalists from the Third World regions of our planet, while the latter is for India. For some time, the first list helped us stay in touch with colleagues who were attending the Fojo training programmes. It brought across a range of messages -- from simple how-are-you notes to articles that told us about the reality of environmental concerns and the response in other parts of the Third World.

But then, distance and a lack of volunteers lead to the India-EJ list closing down. We also had some problems with having to move servers, and this further complicated to the dislocation.

India-EJ still does its job. Of course, it could surely be more pro-active, involve more volunteers, and play the role of a being more efficient networkers. But then, 24 hours a day is never enough, and the fascinating model of volunteer-driven ventures in cyberspace has its own limitations.

On the other hand, we also perhaps need to spend more time working out more sophisticated forms of volunteering and supporting such initiatives. Entire campaigns -- like the Free Software movement -- have been sustained over two decades and more, so successfully, in cyberspace. So, there's no reason why similar ideals cannot be extended to networking journalists interested in green issues.

Let me interrupt myself, though. The story of expanding green frontiers in cyberspace goes back further than these two lists. It goes back to around 1995.

Little more than a decade back, a group of a few non-profit organization -- the Centre for Education and Documentation in Mumbai and Bangalore, the Jesuit-run Indian Social Institute at Delhi, among them -- started promoting the idea of building communication links among the alternative sector. They were working in parallel, and with the support of, similar initiatives happening globally, such as Greenet, the Association for Progressive Communicators (apc.org) and the like. With support from overseas, they build the IndiaLink network in India.

Those were interesting times.

Aspi Mistry (the brother of his more famous Canada-based author Rohinton) from Mumbai would walk into NGO

offices, with untypical wires and entangled modems, explaining what UUCP and Pegasus Mail was all about. It looks almost elementary today. But keep in mind that these were times when 99.9% of India (outside of a few academics and top officials) didn't know what email was. To envisage the concept of an 'electronic post-box' was a difficult job. You needed permission to attach a modem to your telephone (after paying a Rs 3000 fee), and telecom officials didn't know what a modem was!

Few years later, this all became passe. But it was still largely uncharted waters. It made a huge difference to some of us. It allowed me to leave my full-time job and go in for freelancing. If one was able to support and encourage others to start mailing list-based networks, it was largely due to such initiatives. Thank you IndiaLink.

Of course, in some time, IndiaLink ceased to exist. When email became widely available, and the commercial sector offered solutions at far lower costs, there was no need for non-profit groups (and journalists, who were given access to that service) to have their own networks.

But, in the meantime, it did make a difference.

We had repeated casual meetings in Bombay, and a more structured meet in Bangalore. At the latter, it was people like Gopi Garge (then with the official educational network ERNET), who made us aware of the wealth of content that non-profit groups and journalists held. And of the need to digitize the same.

We all agreed to set up some mailing lists to link the not-for-profit or development sector. We did set up lists dealing with issues like tribals, NGOs, education, environment and the like. Most didn't take off well, but the one on environment -- called IL-Environment -- did become and stay fairly successful for a while.

For the first time, a wide network of citizens and campaigners was able to share information. Across the length and breadth of India. Even if this was a narrow information-elite, it still had the power and the ability to share information widely. Issues from one end of the country could actually travel, and sometimes get disseminated, at the other end.

At the peak of its performance, we had about 120 members on the IL-Environment mailing list. Some prominent members included the politician who went on to become India's environment minister, Ms Maneka Gandhi. Even

though it ran on old software (Majordomo), it was a real thrill to be able to effectively share information so speedily and relatively inexpensively.

Today, what's the situation? A decade later, we have the technology with us. Costs are on our side, and have declined sharply. We no longer have to dial up a number in Mumbai (from Goa, some 600 kms away!) to check our mailboxes. And yet, we lack the organisational skills, the persistence we earlier had, the ability to inspire more volunteers.

We have a number of environmental mailing lists such as MakingIndiaGreen (317 members at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/makingindiagreen/>), IndiaEJ (www.indialists.org/mailman/listinfo/india-ej) among others. Lists are even being set up by a new generation of green enthusiasts (such as WildGoa <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wildgoa/>).

But there is a crying need to keep such lists active, to build more lists that better reflect the diversity of India, and to encourage discussions to happen in the regional languages. Even the Delhi-based Centre for Media Studies has an interesting list for environmental news-updates, which one only wishes would have been put out in a light-weight plaintext version too. Given the right approach, a lot can happen.

Frederick Noronha is a Goa-based journalist who has been active in writing about development, environment and ICT-for-development. He is co-founder of BytesForAll, and is active on a number of mailing lists in India. He believes strongly in the power of sharing information, and has been chronicling the Free Software and Open Source movements in India. See <http://fn.goa-india.org>. The author can be contacted at fred@bytesforall.org

MEDIA ANALYSIS

TV Trends in Reporting Environment News

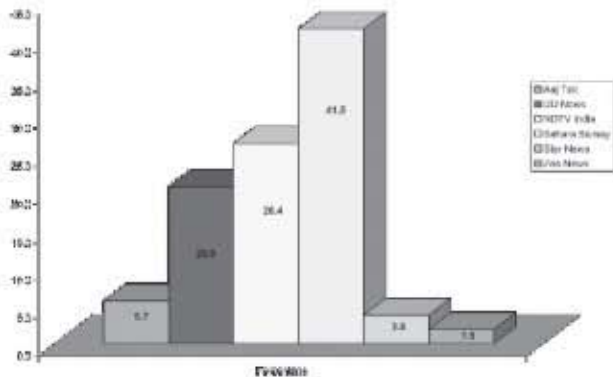
Chandra Prabha

Environment comprises just about 0.35 per cent of news on popular Hindi news channels, closely trailing agriculture at 0.4 per cent, and Health at 0.5 per cent. On the other side of the spectrum, Cinema makes up 7 per cent of prime time news and Fashion/ Lifestyle 1.7 percent. Compare these to the coverage of National Politics that occupied 10 per cent

of prime time coverage for April and May. These prime time news (7 to 11 pm) figures are based on coverage of six Hindi News channels DD news, Star Plus, Aaj tak, Zee News, NDTV Hindi and Sahara Samay.

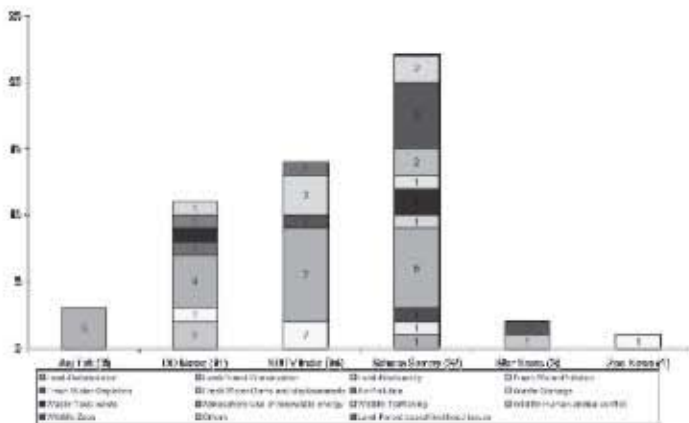
Among the channels tracked, quantitative coverage on environment was maximum on Sahara Samay at 41.51 per cent, this was followed by NDTV Hindi at 26.42 per cent and DD News at 20.75 per cent; Aaj Tak, Star TV and Zee News had respective contribution of 5.66 per cent, 3.77 per cent, and 1.04 per cent to television prime time news on environment.

Percentage of environment news on various channels



Sahara Samay led also in terms of diversity in the coverage of issues; DD news and NDTV followed next. Diversity in environmental news coverage leaves much to be desired on Aaj Tak, Zee News and Star TV. Zee News and Star TV even overlooked Medha Patkar's issue, whereas Aaj Tak's entire environmental news coverage during this period was three news spots on Medha Patkar.

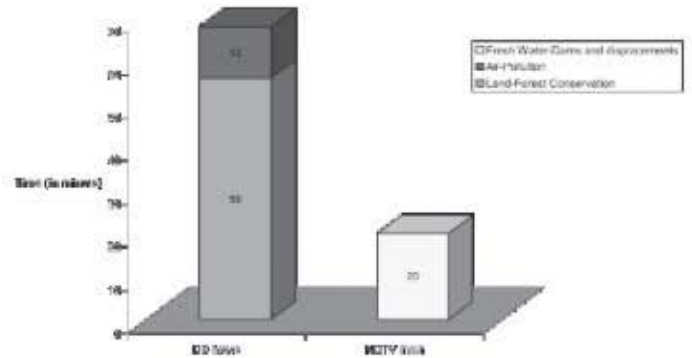
Issue diversity across channels



The comparative analysis of various channels' coverage shows that DD News and NDTV were the only channels to

debate environmental issues in their prime time coverage. During the period, NDTV was the only channel to raise and debate various issues of development and rehabilitation in relation to Sardar Sarovar project. DD discussed forest conservation in north-east and air pollution in small cities.

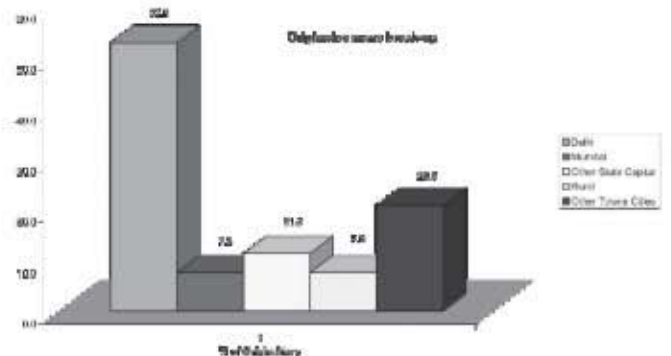
Special Programmes



In this entire period, 37.7 per cent of environment news was about Dams and Displacements, and 13.2 per cent about zoos; the third largest category in environmental news was on biodiversity and forest conservation issues. However, only Dams and displacement stories were considered significant enough for repeat mention in different bulletins; 80 per cent of Dams and Displacement news was repeat mention. A number of environmental stories did not find repeat mention.

In terms of news origin, environment news is reflective of the general trend with 52.8 per cent reports emanating from Delhi, 11.3 per cent from other state capitals, 7.5 per cent from Mumbai, 20.8 per cent from other towns and cities, and only 7.5 per cent from rural areas.

Origin of news headlines



CMS ENVIS GREEN MEDIA E-NEWSLETTER

Daily e-newsletter Green Media, an electronic documentation of news and features, which appear in English News dailies in India.

Green Media satisfies information requirements of environmentalists, wild lifers, conservation activists, researchers, media professionals, filmmakers, political activists, NGOs/ scientific organizations, mass communication institutes, lobbyists and advocacy groups in an effective and functional manner. The newsletter reaches to more than 3000 email boxes every day.

This e-newsletter also facilitates easy organization, maintenance of archival material electronically and quick retrieval of information. Presently, over twenty national dailies in India are documented in Green Media the largest ever-daily compilation on environment and wildlife.

With the click of the mouse, you gain access to all news and features and other updates on environmental issues including environmental management, air pollution, water pollution, noise pollution, ecology, wild life, nature and natural resources conservation, health toxicology, solid and hazardous waste, energy, policy matters etc. These topics are also available in the archives of CMS ENVIS.

CMS has established this site to provide access to back files on news and features related to environment, wildlife and conservation issues.

For Subscription email to:

Web Master at webmaster@cmsindia.org

Green Media: Daily Update on Environmental Reporting in Newspapers - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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Green Media

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING IN NEWSPAPERS

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Thursday, August 03, 2006

Pesticide in Coke, Pepsi brands
The Assam Tribune
NEW DELHI, Aug 2: The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) today came out with a fresh study claiming the presence of 'pesticide cocktail' in 11 brands of soft drink giants Coca Cola and PepsiCo, three years after the same brands were found to ha [more....](#)

3 consortiums shortlisted for sea-bridge project
The Hindu Business Line
Rs 4,000-cr project is for building a 22-km bridge from Sewri to Nhava The lesser flamingo preferred brackish water and is a habitat-specific. The birds spend nearly eight and a half months at Sewri but they do not breed here. Mumbai , Aug. [more....](#)

Environment Ministry drawing up plantation plan
The Hindu Business Line
Multi-stakeholder partnership on cards Though the land title would remain with the landowner, an agreement has to be signed amongst all partners — all of whom would have rights and duties — for the specified period. New Delhi , Aug. 2 [more....](#)

Soft drinks still contain pesticides
Deccan Herald

Subscription Feedback

(1 item remaining) Downloading picture <http://www.cmsindia.org/cmservisnode/newsletter/enews/Image> Internet

start 3 Internet Explorer - Inbox - Outlook Express - Opposition - Microsof... 9:25 AM

Environment Calendar

January

- 4th - Oil Conservation Week
- 15th - Oil conservation Fortnight
- 30th - National Cleanliness Day

February

- 2nd - World Wetlands Day
- 21st - Science Day
- 28th - National Science Day

March

- 2nd-4th World Sustainable Days
- 21st - World Forestry Day
- 22nd - World Water Day
- 23rd - World Meteorological Day

April

- 5th - National Maritime Day
- 7th - World Health Day
- 22nd - World Earth Day
- 31st - No Tobacco Day

May

- 11th - International Migratory Day
- 22nd - International Day of Biological Day
- 31st - World No Tobacco Day

June

- 5th - World Environment Day
- 8th - World Ocean Day
- 17th - World Day Combat Desertification

July

- 11th - World Population Day

August

- 6th - Hiroshima Day

September

- 16th - International Day for Preservation of the Ozone Layer
- 28th - Green Consumer Day

October

- 2nd-8th Wild Life Week
- 4th - World Animal welfare Day
- 5th - World Habitat Day

November

- 6th - International Day for preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Arm Conflict

December

- 2nd - Bhopal Tragedy Day

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