

Report on ‘Understanding Challenges in Rural India’ “You can neither grow nor cook food in computers!”

Centre for Indian Psychology, Jain University and Youth for Seva, Bangalore co-hosted an interactive session on Challenges of Rural India on Sunday, 30 June 2013 where Sri A. S. Anand from Krishi Prayog Parivar painted a vivid picture of the challenges faced in rural India with a sharp focus on agriculture and cultural invasion. Sri Anand is the Chairman of Karnataka State Organic Farming Mission, which is the first of its kind in the country. He has done his masters in Agriculture. Krishi Prayog Parivar is an organization that has been promoting organic farming in Karnataka for almost 30 years.

Mr. Anand began with some facts about Sindhanur Taluk in Raichur district. He said that families there receive news of death every alternate day! He said that no farmer family there is debt free and it is a herculean task for a woman to give birth to one healthy child. If one wish to see the doctor, appointment has to be procured before 9 am that day otherwise there is no chance of viewing the doctor that day. What is the cause for such gloom in Sindhanur? He asked the audience and “pesticides,” came the reply. He nodded in agreement that it was the right answer. He revealed that Sindhanur stands first in pesticide sales in the state! And much to the audience’s shock, he also revealed that Sindhanur has the highest yield and it is the rice bowl of Karnataka!

He then went to compare and contrast the lifestyle in rural and urban areas. He mentioned that money is not the parameter, unlike in the urban setting. He said, “You can’t grow food in computers! You can’t cook food in computers!” A person’s richness can be measured with different scales – a farmer is rich – knowing his land well, able to walk for miles without ‘Reebok’ shoes, understanding the life ensconced in Mother Earth. People in the village enjoy 330 varieties of paddy enhancing each one’s taste by preparing a different delicacy with each type of paddy.

Further, he stated as a matter-of-fact that there hasn’t been a farmer who practices organic farming attempted to commit suicide. He said that organic farming is the best approach especially in areas of low rainfall. Also, a farmer who is using pesticides and chemicals will need 3 years to convert his land to 100% organic land with better yield. This conversation will happen in phases.

There is also a need to change the perception of people. Typically, in the news, villages are projected as poor and dirty and lacking basic facilities. This is affecting the youth in the village prodding them to move to the cities which in turn puts a dent to the labour force in the villages for agriculture. Even in schools, the image of the farmer is projected as illiterate without even the mention of the richness of knowledge and experience of the farmer. Mr. Anand believes that children who sit within four walls for the bulk of the day cannot be a farmer who spends his days with nature.

In the urban populace, awareness about organic products is on the rise which is good. However, the middleman makes money by hiking the prices of organic products that actually are cheaper to harvest. There is a dire need for a direct linkage between the farmer and the consumer. Currently, even though farmers and organizations like “Krishi Prayog Parivar” are selling organic products, they are not able to find the right consumer.

He humbly said, “My request is that you all become farmers! This is not an advice, but a request!” He invited everyone to come to his village (near Shimoga) and spend time with the farmers and enjoy life to the maximum without money or electronic gadgets. The interaction between Mr. Anand and the audience was lively and the 120 minutes just flew by in the blink of an eye! About 150 people participated in the event.

Testimonial of participants about the session:

- “It was explained in simple language with realistic examples. Enjoyed every minute of it” – Prakash
- “Very honest and forthcoming speaker” – Prasad
- “Very interesting and wonderful to hear about Rural India” – Dilip
- “It was an absolute honour to listen to Mr. Anand A. S, Master’s in agriculture, Chairman of Karnataka State Organic Farming Commission, Chief of Krishi Prayog Pariwar, with years of experience working at the grass root level. Humility personified. A jaw dropping experience to understand the connection an ideal farmer has with nature.” – Raghu
- “It was very good. It broadened my knowledge about current situation in rural India” – Aakash
- “The session was effective as there was more interaction with audience. He was very informative and answered/clarified all the questions” – Parimala



