



NIDM Lecture Series 2: August 4th 2018 Vulnerability of Himalaya and the Challenges of Disaster Management

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Speaker :

Chandi Prasad Bhatt,
Environmentalist and
Social Activist

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National Institute of disaster Management , Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India has started its lecture series for the officials/professionals/academia/Civil Society/scientists who are working on development, climate change and disaster risk management. The aim of the lecture series is to inform and sensitize delegates about the issues, challenges, strategies for disaster risk reduction and suggest some pragmatic solutions leading to risk reduction and sustainable development. Mountain is one of the most important geographical areas of the country which influence poverty and prosperity of the millions of people in the mountain and the foothills.

The second lecture series was organized on dated 4th August 2018 at India Habitat Centre. **Shri Chandi Prasad Bhatt** addressed the august gathering on a very contemporary issue: **Vulnerability of Himalaya and the Challenges of Disaster Management**. The talk was attended by 65 delegates from various central Ministries/

department/ Institutions and Universities. Resident commissioners of the Himalayan States were also invited.

Chandi Prasad Bhatt is an Indian Gandhian environmentalist and social activist, who founded Dasholi Gram Swarajya Sangh (DGSS) in Gopeshwar in 1964, which later became a mother-organization to the Chipko Movement, in which he was one of the pioneers, and for which he was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in 1982, followed by the Padma Bhushan in 2005. Today he is known for his work on subaltern social ecology, and considered one of India's first modern environmentalists. In 2013, he was conferred with the Gandhi Peace Prize. He was also conferred with UNDO 500 Award and Padma Shri 1986.

Shri Bhatt in his speech gave the holistic perspective of Development in the Himalayas. He mentioned that Uttarakhand disaster which happened in the year 2013 was no the natural calamity rather it was the impact of bad development in the Himalayas. There are many more such impending tragedies might happen in future also, if we do not understand Himalaya holistically and take actions accordingly. Mapping of Himalayas and its hot spots should be done at least once in every ten years. This would help the local people and govt. in planning their investment. Any disturbance in the Himalaya will have larger implications in the valley and also in the foothills and plains.

He also acknowledged the changes occurring in the temperature and rainfall pattern in the Himalayas. He mentioned that Himalaya is fragile and new mountain. Such changes could be very devastating in times to come. Capacity building, engagement of local people in the planning and especially women, development of early warning system are going to be the key action for reducing the impact of disasters. He also shared his experience of his engagement in post Alakhnada floods on 1970. When large devastation took place, the entire affected people from the affected villages got together and raised a simple question that are they going to hit again or it was just a one time event? The question was answered scientifically to them that it might gets repeated, if the vegetation is not protected in the region. This led to the birth of **Chipko movement**. Inhabitants of the affected villages got engaged in the tree plantation and also completely stopped the cutting of the trees by imposing their own local wisdom. They fought with either by the contractors, govt forest department and others who were initially against their movement. The entire **Chipko movement** was led by women. He further added that the knowledge and wisdom of women have not been utilized in disaster





management. It is important that they should participate in planning and decision making process. In Chipko, Women's Key women leaders were: Gaura Devi, Sudesha Devi, Bachni Devi, Mira Behn, Sarala Behn Amrita Devi. The name of the Chipko moment originated from the word 'embrace' or 'Hugging'. Birth place - Gopeshwar in District Chamoliin 1973. First Chipko action- March 1974 in Reni village.

Another important point he highlighted about the formation of consortium of five countries (Bbutan, Nepal, Pakistan, India and China) as mountain is affecting these countries equally. Many of the disasters are trans-boundary in nature and this cannot be resolved without engaging neighboring countries with whom we share our border. He said that NIDM may initiate the process for taking it to the appropriate authorities.

