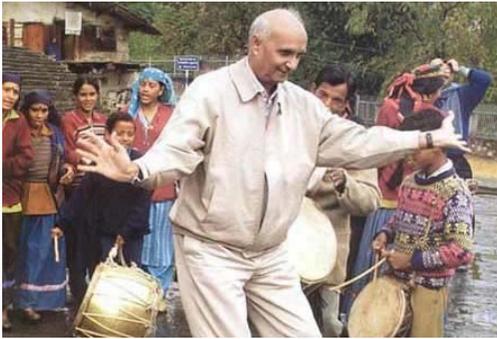


"You Can Change Things If Only You ..."



"Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed."

These words of Mahatma Gandhi were just the right entrée to the Gandhi Memorial Lecture delivered at the Raman Research Institute (RRI) Auditorium on 2 October 2004 by Prof Avdhash Kaushal, Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra, Dehra Dun. In the "rain forest" campus of RRI, with a lovely downpour offering the perfect audio-visual backdrop, Prof Kaushal talked of his days at Lal Bahadur Shastri Academy, Mussoorie, the time when he opted for voluntary retirement, the

founding of the NGO Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra (working for the forest tribes and villages of Uttaranchal – see www.rlek.org). how he tirelessly fought PIL's (in the true sense of the term – without seeking publicity through media), brought about legislation against limestone quarrying (Environmental Protection Act, 1986) , illegal drug cultivation (Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1988) and exploitation of natives' livelihood (Bonded Labour Abolition Act, 1976) in the garb of development, and Supreme Court orders to hold Panchayat Raj elections with suitable representation of all.

Seeing Prof Kaushal wear his heart on his sleeve, one wondered at the average educated urban elite who carries on with no thoughts (let alone concern!) for the environment and conservation. He cited touching, even heart-wrenching instances of issues faced by the Van Gujjars of Uttaranchal, official, officious apathy of the lawmakers and also comically ironic situations where one-man crusades were required to bring out even a modicum of humaneness from powers that be.

Whether it's a question of taking up a case against use of plastic (cups etc) in NAL or educating one's own family on methods of water conservation, certainly Prof Kaushal's simple talk is sufficient, one hopes, to convince one that "Yes, You Can Change Things if Only You ... Will Try"

R Swarnalatha