

Environment Friendly Divali Celebration

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Divali means the feast of light. Many people celebrate Divali by lighting rows of earthen lamps with oil. Many people illuminate their houses with electricity. Public buildings are decorated with chains lighted small bulbs. Many people keep bulbs lighted not only during Divali but also other times. Most people would not know that electric light produces carbon dioxide which warms up the air causing environmental pollution.

Electricity has become part and parcel of our daily lives. We need lifts to go up and down in multi-storey buildings. We need fridge to keep safe perishable goods like food and medicine. Similarly to run different types of machines and instruments we need electricity. Hence the demand for electricity is constantly growing in the whole country. People who use electricity without any care and concern, do not know that there are hidden dangers in it. For instance, to produce electricity using coals, mines are dug and thousands of tribal people are dislocated. They become homeless in their own land! Electricity is produced in India mainly from atomic power and with coals. Some countries like Germany and Japan, considering the dangers of coals and of atomic power, are looking for alternative ways for electric power.

In this context on the auspicious occasion like Divali, we need to think about the use of various types of electricity. Usually for light we use either big or small electric bulbs or tube lights. Much electricity is used through them and consequently pollution increases.

Let me give you an example: “Your bulbs are powered by the blood of tribal people.” You may be shocked with such statement made by a high school girl, Sweta Marandi. She took part in an International Conference of United Nations in Brazil. In her talk in the conference she said, “Your bulbs are powered with the blood of tribal people.”

Sweta Marandi’s story was reported in THE TELEGRAPH dated June 10, 2012; and Sweta Marandi was identified as a 12 standard student of St. Joseph’s Convent School at Patna. The delegates of the UNO world conference were shocked with Sweta Marandi’s frightening statement. Innumerable adivasi people who possessed homes and own lands were made homeless by the authorities mining the Adivasi land for coals. The dust from the mines as well as from the transporting of coal has affected the lives of the tribal people living close to the mining areas causing them sickness and untimely death.

In the United Nation’s Environmental Programme (UNEP) has published a brochure called ‘Environmental Development’. The story of Sweta Marandi is published in it. Sweta from her teenage years became an environmental protection worker through the inspiration of her school and a non-governmental organization (NGO) ‘Taru Mitra’ (friend of trees). After learning about carbon dioxide pollution and its harmful effects from ‘Taru Mitra’ Sweta learnt that the use of electricity can be reduced using LED (Light Emitting Diodes) and CFL (Compact Fluorescent Lamp) instead of electric bulbs and tube lights. So Sweta with the help of her parents replaced all electric bulbs and tube lights in her home with CFL lights. Then taking the help of her friends Sweta got all the houses in their housing society to use CFL lights replacing all electric bulbs and

tubes. They also got the authorities to replace the street lights with the CFL lights. This story of reducing the use of electricity and protecting the environmental pollution by Sweta and her little band became the talk of the town. The news reached in their school and in their Church. The local newspapers too took note of them. Then they started a movement against use of electricity for illumination in public institutes, temples and churches. They told the people that one electric bulb cause more pollution to the environment than a hundred small lighted earthen pots!

Sweta and her friends met Archbishop William D'Souza of Patna and requested his help to reduce the use of electricity and conserve the environment. Archbishop William D'Souza joining the children's movements addressed a circular letter to the people of his archdiocese, entitled "Environmental Problems and Our Response". In his letter he called the people to reduce the use of electricity and preserve the environment from pollution as much as possible. In his circular letter of about 1500 words he wrote: "There is no devotion in illuminating churches and other institutions on special occasions like Christmas, New Year and Divali."

Reading the Archbishop D'Souza's circular letter I came to know that Pope Benedict XVI has been honoured as "The Green Pope" by the famous international American news weekly "News Week". Pope Benedict XVI set up 3000 solar panels in Vatican that all the buildings of Vatican City are illuminated with solar lights. Vatican is a small city state. There are not enough trees to produce oxygen to counter the pollution caused by the electricity. So Pope Benedict XVI adopted a big jungle area of Burke national park in Hungary. The jungle trees produce enough and more oxygen to counter the carbon dioxide of Vatican City.

We have to realize that human life on earth is in danger. The human made pollution threatens the existence not only human being but also others species in the whole world. Man made pollution has already caused the extinctions of many living species from the face of the earth. In such situations every person is called to take small and big steps to save the environment and reduce the pollution.

Our aims and efforts should be to save the environment from all types of pollution. So that every living and non-living beings on earth are protected from the environmental pollution.

Finally in our mad rush for development we should be alert to care for the environment and save our earth instead of destroying the environment with all sorts of pollutions. We need to take concrete steps. Let us pay attention to the call of save the earth from poet and environmentalist Natwar Hedau in his anthology entitled "Vanviharini Vanvandana".

**"Let us come together, taking care of the earth,
Look, changes are coming in the water and air."**

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