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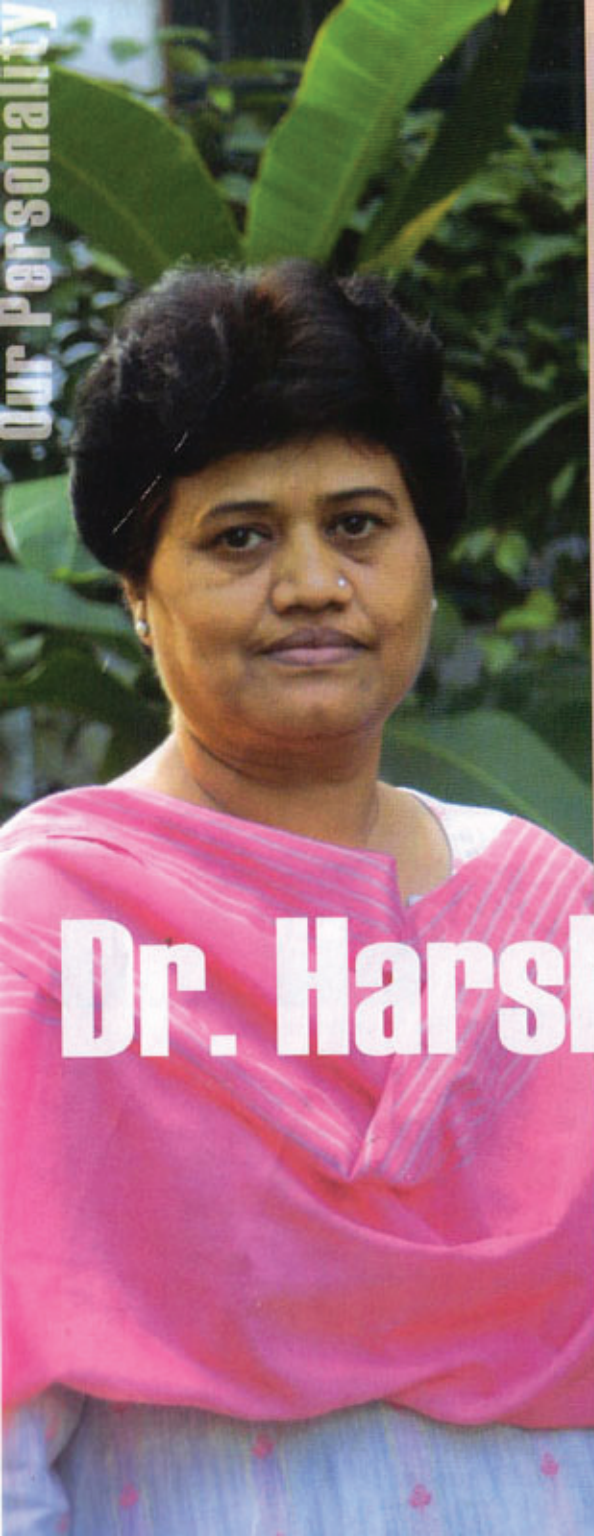
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The versatility of
*Dr. Harshvanti
Bisht* aptly

signifies the many faces of
Uttarakhand. Dr. Bisht has
made a name for herself
in various fields be it
Education, Adventure
Sports or Environment.
And she has still many
milestones to cover.

Life'n'Style team
interviews "*Our
Personality*" and
discovers the reasons,
which make
Dr. Harshvanti Bisht
stand out as the face of
this Himalayan state.

**Dr. Harshvanti
Bisht**



Plantation Site at Bhojavasa, 1996

LnS: What was your dream as a child?

Harshvanti Bisht : I wanted to do something extraordinary, something different. I excelled in both studies and sports but I was not able to figure out what I wanted to achieve.

LnS: Do you think you have achieved your dreams so far?

HB : I don't think I have achieved my dreams so far. There are plenty of things, which I dreamt about as a child and as an adult. Apart from teaching, adventure sports and working for the environment, I still have many more things to do. Ultimately I have to do something for the economy and women of this region. I want to write books on these topics and ultimately I want to follow the line of spiritualism.

LnS: Who has been your inspiration during your formative years?

HB : My father, late Major Hoshiar Singh Bisht, an army officer inspired me the most. He instilled discipline in me and taught me that there was no alternative to hard work. My mother late Smt. Siddhi

Bisht was also a great inspiration for me. She gave me the strength to be honest, humble, simple and hardworking.

LnS: Has any author or any great personality inspired you?

HB : Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi inspired me a lot. Though I haven't read many of his books but his childhood lessons about simplicity and honesty inspired me a lot. I don't know how much his beliefs were relevant in the past but his beliefs like non-violence, truthfulness, love for humanity is relevant today and will be relevant in the future as well.

LnS: What inspires you to work?

HB : Today's system, our society, misery of the people inspires me to work. In my



Plantation Site at Bhojavasa, 2005

own way I am doing my bit for the society without thinking about the result, but I know that this is not enough.

LnS: What according to you has been your greatest achievement so far?

HB : It is really difficult to say whether I have achieved anything much yet. Talking from the point of view of my satisfaction I would say, planting birch trees (bhojpatra), the 'dev rakshaks' on the banks of the river Ganga has been my most satisfying experience. The whole process of staying in adverse conditions, raising the nursery and finally having the joy of seeing the plantation, gives me the strength and energy which motivates me to move ahead and do more. I think not even reaching Nanda Devi peak, teaching or guiding research scholars has given me this kind of satisfaction.

LnS: What type of books do you normally read?

HB : I read autobiographies and current affairs' magazines about social reforms and environmental issues.

LnS: Could you please tell us something about your book on Tourism in Garhwal Himalayas?

HB : My book on tourism is about developing tourism in this region. I have focused my writing on the resources, the utility of these resources and also highlighted the drawbacks that exist. I have also written a book on tourism at higher and middle altitudes, which was actually my thesis for my doctorate degree. In this book I have given suggestions on how to avoid destruction of nature and steps we should take to conserve the environment and make it sustainable.

LnS: Tell us something about your work on 'Bhojpatra' in the Chirbasa region.

HB : I got the inspiration to do something for my region from Edmund Hillary who climbed Mt. Everest in 1953 and worked for the conservation of the region. Maximum number of expeditions, whether international or national, pilgrims and trekkers are coming to the Gangotri Goumukh area. In one of my projects on tourism in Goumukh, I discovered that we were destructing the forest, dumping garbage, constructing unaesthetic buildings and polluting water bodies. I felt it was necessary to restore the environment by cleaning the littered place, regeneration of forests and developing automatic fuel. I, with my students, started the project by cleaning up the area and then started raising a nursery for bhojpatra and thelu trees in the year 1992, at the altitude of 11,700 feet, in the Chirbasa region. In 1996,



"Mobandas Karamchand Gandhi inspired me a lot. Though I haven't read many of his books but his childhood lessons about simplicity and honesty inspired me a lot."

when the saplings were ready, we got the permission for plantation at the Bhojbasa region, at an altitude of 12500 feet. I along with my mountaineering friend Mr Ratan Singh Chauhan, who is a senior instructor at the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering, started this project. Until now, we have planted 12,500 saplings of *bhojpatra*, willow and popular *silbeta* and the survival rate is around 65 to 70 percent.

InS : 'Preservation of ecology', - to what extent Indians are aware of this today? In the struggle for survival has the average Indian become insensitive towards his environment?

HB : Theoretically we know about conservation of ecology, about the natural calamities but when it comes to practicality, we lack the sensibility. Only when theory and practice are intertwined can we succeed. Apart from awareness campaigns, a proper channel of waste management also needs to be developed



for the conservation of the environment.

It is true that we have become more insensitive towards our environment. Media is a very strong way to generate mass awareness and now our main aim should be to put in practice whatever is being learned about preservation of ecology.

InS : Being a teacher, do you think today's youth are aware of environment conservation? What kind of programmes should be introduced in schools and college-level to increase this awareness?

HB : Today's generation is more aware about environment conservation than the people of our times. Students from abroad come to India to complete their dissertation related to environment conservation but our students are not putting into practice what they are being taught. So, we should introduce the system of practical learning. Our Indian system of education lays more emphasis on theoretical studies rather than field visits, which comes in the way of a student's knowledge growth. One has to go out of the classroom and do field



studies if one actually has to gain practical knowledge.

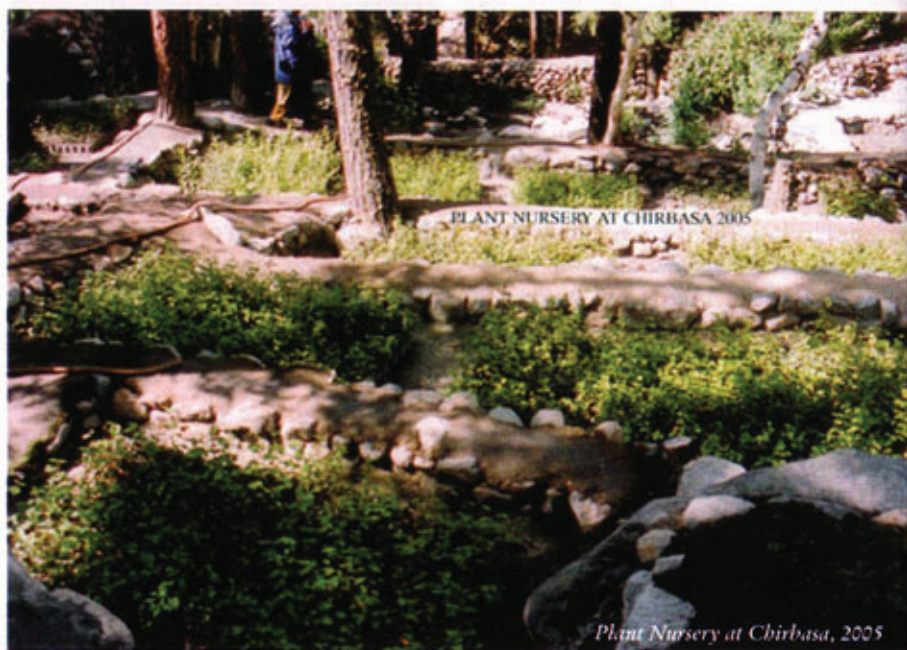
LnS : Himalayas have been a major influence in your life and you have been an enthusiast trekker and mountaineer. How do you feel about winning the Arjuna Award?

I always loved the Himalayas and I loved mountaineering. I find mountaineering very interesting and challenging because it teaches one to be more self-reliant, strong, hardworking and disciplined.

When you are all alone in the mountains, either you look for some solutions or you die out there. It teaches one to be strong, have self-determination and the most important thing is to learn to find out one's own way.

LnS : What are your plans for the future?

HB : I want to do something for the women of Uttarakhand. Our women folk work very hard and I would like to lessen their burden in some way.



Plant Nursery at Chirbasa, 2005

Dr. Harshvanti Bisht, FRGS is presently Reader in the Department of Economics, Govt. P.G College, Uttarkashi in Uttarakhand. Dr. Bisht has contributed in a great manner to the environment and society through her indepth and informative writings. Besides writing various articles and books, Dr. Bisht has taken initiative in the afforestation of Birch at Bhojwasa, raising the plant nursery of Birch at Chirbasa and organised many eco-awareness and garbage cleaning camps in Gangotri-Gaumukh area.

Dr. Bisht has also successfully done the experimental cultivation of medicinal plants- Kutki, Atis, Salam Panja and Archa.

Dr. Bisht is also an avid mountaineer and has climbed Mt. Everest.

We are giving a record of her diversified achievements in the next page. Have a look!