

Swetha Stotra Bhashyam: a leader of the Global Youth Biodiversity Network



SWETHA STOTRA BHASHYAM, INDIA



Swetha Stotra Bhashyam is a budding wildlife biologist from India. She is the Global South Focal Point for the Global Youth Biodiversity Network. She works on policies issues under the Convention on Biological Diversity. She is currently facilitating the creation of GYBN National Chapters and also coordinating several on ground biodiversity conservation projects.



**Global Youth
Biodiversity
Network**



**UN Major Group for
Children & Youth**
Children and Youth
 the space for children and youth in the United Nations

Policy is the ultimate tool to create a permanent change in society. So engaging policymakers at the highest level is an important step to conserve species and their natural habitats. Swetha Stotra Bhashyam is a leader of the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN) and one of the official youth constituencies of United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

She is a prominent youth voice in influencing policy. She played an instrumental role in the creation of GYBN's many national and regional chapters. She started her talk with a

brief about how she started her journey in climate activism when she was an undergrad in 2009. As soon as she knew about the climate crisis, she wanted to spread awareness to everyone about it. She tried to modify her campaign in many creative ways like talking to people about climate change in blood donation camp, influencing people and catering staff in train while travelling from Delhi to Hyderabad as a part of campaign 350. She was selected for the Climate Conference of the Parties (COP) where she came to know about the difficulties of

influencing the policymaking process. After attending the Climate COP she shifted to Biodiversity COP to avoid the politics happening in the previous one. After that she tried for the Indian Forest Service exam to make a change in the system but was rejected in the interview, unfortunately.

Then she met Sanjay through Priyanka in Biodiversity COP 2012 in Hyderabad. After volunteering at Zoo Outreach Organization, she joined NCBS wildlife masters programme to pursue her career in wildlife field. She witnessed the conflict of human rights and



RHATC Fellows attending Swetha's 'Follow the Leader' session.

wildlife conservation in political extremism affected areas of India during her field excursion of NCBS Masters program. She worked on "CBD in a Nutshell" as a main author besides doing the masters course. After completing her masters, she started doing workshops with young students of various countries on the climate crisis as a part of CBD.

Swetha later introduced us to how Global Youth Biodiversity Network is helping local chapters to raise funding, networking and connecting to the right people to save a particular habitat or a species. She also talked about Aichi Biodiversity Targets and Global Biodiversity Framework. She emphasized on the need for fundamental change of industries as well as holistic cultural change in favour of nature and environment through education. After that she brought out the point of indigenous knowledge and its contribution to the conservation of natural resources. Indigenous communities have been conserving nature for thousands of years in their own cultural and philosophical

way. So the conservation of those indigenous cultures is also significant to conserve natural resources. They are living in 3% of the land and protecting 80% of biodiversity. She highlighted the uneven distribution of food, food wastage, and the crisis because of it. On a global scale everything is interconnected and it needs a whole system change to fix the problem. She talked about the carbon footprint of meat consumption and the 'meatless Monday' trend in the first world countries to reduce their dependence on meat, though Indian culture is already practicing it in its own way. She touched upon controversial topic like 'cool veganism' which people practice only as status symbol. At last she advised that we should choose our role in the fight for nature on the basis of our own strengths and skill sets. She ended her talk with a quote by Yoko Ono, "A dream you dream alone is only a dream. A dream you dream together is reality".

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