

**Key Indicator - 7.3 Institutional Distinctiveness (20)**

**QIM 7.3.1: *Portray the performance of the Institution in one area distinctive to its priority and thrust within 1000 words***

The College is situated in the hilly and rural part of Mulshi Tehsil, which is one of the **mega biodiversity** hotspots of India. Most of the students come from agricultural and economically weaker backgrounds. So, there is a need to make them aware about the **prosperity of their native place and tap opportunities of self-employment.**

**Anthropogenic activities** have caused tremendous impact on the environment and agriculture. Accordingly, there is a need to conserve the natural resources and use them **sustainably for livelihood activities.**

The distinctiveness is in accordance with our Vision and Mission which is **“Creating awareness about environment and conservation of biodiversity through sustainable development for generating opportunities of self-employment”.**

The distinctiveness is achieved through a series of actions as follows:

**1. Awareness activities:** Awareness programs were conducted to get acquainted with the importance and value of the existing landscapes, water resources, flora and fauna of Mulshi. Guest lectures of eminent scientists and biodiversity experts were arranged to acquire technical guidance. **Dr. Stefan Porembaski, Scientist, Rostock University, Germany** delivered a lecture **“ Inselbergs”** on 1st Sept. 2018.

Hon. **Dr. Sachin Punekar**, President of Biospheres, a non-government organization working for conservation of biodiversity, enlightened the students on **‘Biodiversity of Mulshi’** and its importance. Secondly, **Pledge for environmental protection** was taken by the staff and students.

An **eradication drive** of ‘Cosmos sulphureus’ an exotic weed and **collection of plastic waste** on the Lavasa Link road was successfully carried out regularly in collaboration with Bank of Maharashtra, Lavale and Pirangut Gram Panchayat and villagers.

In collaboration with various NGOs environmental awareness related activities were carried out to **reduce, reuse and recycle** waste material to propagate the idea of reducing pollution and threat to environment at an individual level.

Every year ‘**Plant identification competition**’ is organized for the students in order to increase their awareness about plants and their use in day-to-day life.

During the **NSS camps** in different villages, awareness is created regarding **residue free agri produce and its demand in urban areas**. Importance of local varieties of Pulses and Cereals and their seed is also highlighted.

**2. Surveys:** Historical, geographical and Plant surveys of the villages in Mulshi Tehsil were carried out to make students understand more about their native place, its socioeconomic condition and how this impacts the regional biodiversity. The first hand data collected was processed and analyzed. The college has also identified some places with tourist potential.

**3. Biodiversity Spectrum:** Scientific studies were carried out in the adjoining villages to understand the floral diversity. **Students published a research paper in Journal of Medicinal plants.**

**Dr. R. B. Bhagat** worked on a **major research project** entitled “**Floristic Vegetation and Species Diversity in Mulshi Water Shade Catchment Area**” funded by **Science Engineering Research Board (SERB)** with an objective of exploring the rich biodiversity and detailed floral study of the area. Based on this extensive research of the rich biodiversity, a book was published entitled “**Floristic Diversity of Mulshi Northern Western Ghats**”.

Based on this study, she presented a **research paper** in **International Botanical Congress (IBC) held at Schenzhen, China.**

**4. Training to Conserve biodiversity:** In order to know the appearance of plants in the field, a small **Herbal garden** is also established in college in which a few **aromatic and medicinal plants** are planted.

Various techniques were taught to the students for conservation of plant diversity, including various **training programmes for stakeholders**. In-house faculty conducted a **workshop on ‘How to prepare Herbarium’** wherein students prepared herbarium of the plants collected from the different parts of Mulshi Tehsil.

**5. Sustainable use of natural resources and livelihood activities:**

**‘Ganesh Patri Udyan’:** The puja forms an important part of ‘Ganesh Festival’, where 21 varieties of leaves (patri) are used to worship Lord Ganesh. There is an alarming situation over the use of rare and endangered plant species of Western Ghats as part of the ‘Ganesh Puja Patri’. Most of them are illegally collected that are not included in any of the puja rituals (vidhi). The excessive use of endangered plants is throwing the conservation ethic in the Ghats astray, these include plants like wild turmeric, mahalungi and screw pine.

To create awareness about original plants and their role in puja, a Ganesh Patri Udyan was established in college on 18 Jan. 2021. It was also observed that there is a market of original puja leaves in metropolitan cities. Accordingly, students were trained and now they are selling original puja patries in Pune and its suburbs. It is developed as a source of income for our students. Now they can grow or sustainably harvest naturally growing plants which are used during various festivals and worships.

**Eco-tourism:** College encourages students to be self-employed by considering ecotourism as one of the best option because Mulshi has scenic beauty and is a favorite tourist destination. ‘Girivan’ is the most popular and favorite ecotourism center located in Mulshi. College **signed MoUs with ecotourism centers** in Mulshi to provide internships to interested students. Students of our College **Amit Gole** owns a peacock farmhouse at Lavale, Pirangut and **Rahul Pawar** runs a holiday resort ‘Atharva Residency’ at Girivan, Mulshi. Around twenty students from our college are presently engaged in this field.

**Agro-tourism:** College caters the needs of the students enabling them to be self-employed in the field of agro tourism. **Pratik Bhumkar** owns 'Mulshi Agritourism' Near Bhare Bridge, Ambadwet, Mulshi. Around ten students from our college are presently engaged in this field.

**Organic farming:** Programs were conducted for students to understand the use of biofertilizers, green manures and biopesticides. **Workshops and Add On Courses** were offered for students in order to understand the importance of soil conservation, harmful effects of chemical fertilizers and pesticides on crops and human health. Moreover, in the academic year 2020-21 we introduced **Diploma course in Organic Farming , Fruit and vegetables Drying /Dehydration Technician. These** courses are running successfully.

These consistent efforts resulted in enhancement of awareness about regional biodiversity and helped to generate opportunities of self-employment . It has created an unique and distinctive identity.