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Editor's Note



TOGETHER IF WE WANT, WE CAN...

Odisha is going to celebrate the Panchayati Raj Divas Samaroh on the 5th of March 2013. Ours is the first State to streamline the Panchayati Raj and Local Self Government Institutions to make democracy participatory and not being under the control of a few. It is the birthday of legendary leader, visionary, statesman and the beloved leader of our State Shri Biju Patnaik.

In respect of his decision to reserve 33 % of the seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions, he emerged as a pioneer in India. He had a vision of his own on the Panchayati Raj System and rural development. As it were, he had deep faith in the power of the people and great confidence in their ability to participate in the process of governance and development at grass-root level. He designed the Panchayati Raj as a systematic scheme for devolution of power to the lower strata of administration. The 73rd Constitutional amendment in 1992 ushered in a new era in the federal democratic set up of our country. Biju Babu led from the front and India followed.

Under the leadership of our present Chief Minister Shri Naveen Patnaik, the concept of community development, decentralized village level planning and participatory governance is gaining ground. The concept of social audit is bringing in more transparency. Now the Village Panchayat is really functioning as the core of decentralized democratic set up. Capacity building and training of elected PRI Members is one of the major initiatives to promote grass-root leadership. The initiative undertaken by the Government of Odisha shows tremendous commitment and political will to empower the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Gram Sabha Sashaktikaran Karjyakram, 2012 was launched through conduct of Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha from 2nd of October till 18th of October 2012 across the State. The State Government deserves appreciation for the simple fact that the reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies has been increased from 33 % to 50 %. As Naveen Patnaik leads now India follows.

Belying hopes of recovery, India's economy growth rate is estimated to step to a decade low of 5 % in 2012-13, pulled down by poor performance in manufacturing, agriculture and service sectors. So abject has been the failure of the Central Government that skepticism has

been a natural consequence. On the other hand, Planning Commission Member Shri Abhijit Sen during the review of implementation of Annual Plan of the State opined that the State has performed well in the programme implementation in the last decade and has overcome its fiscal crises. Now, it is a leading State in the implementation of Integrated Action Plan. On February 19th our Finance Minister presented his maiden budget for the year 2013-14 with the highest ever Budget outlay of Rs. 60303.09 crores. It is estimated that the State's economy will grow at a rate of 9.14 % in the year 2012-13.


The present Government, for the first time since Odisha became an independent entity in 1936, presented a special separate budget for Agriculture and allied sectors as well as welfare of the farming community. There has been increase in the Budgetary Outlay in the Agriculture and allied sectors like Fishery, Animal Husbandry, Irrigation and Co-operative Credit. The Budget makes provisions for Health Insurance for farmers, organic-farming and establishment of Agro-Industrial Estates along with Insurance of Crops as well. These are historic steps which are bound to yield optimum results leading to a quantum jump of our State. From the desk of Odisha Review, we salute the Chief Minister and his team for this exemplary effort.

As I write this note, there are a lot of deliberations across the State for formulation of a State Youth Policy. The initiative has been participatory and is the need of the hour. The future of the State is in the hands of its young population. Therefore, the Youth Policy will further the interest of the State.

This wonderful volume is a special issue on the occasion of Panchayati Raj Divas. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all those who are involved in making this issue relevant and successful. I would also like to thank the entire team of I & PR Deptt. and Panchayati Raj Deptt., especially to Shri Saroj Das, Deputy Director, SIRD for his continuous support all these years.

Last but not the least, as we approach the International Women's Day on March 8th there is an attempt by the administration to bring about gender equality in all fields. Crimes against women needs to be removed and that to very fast. Even more important than legal changes are the changes needed in values and mores. The entrenched inequality needs to be addressed so that it does not alienate men, whose dominance it will automatically challenge. On the other hand, each man sensitive and self-respecting should feel and act to stop violence against women.

Together if we want, WE CAN...



Editor, Odisha Review

The Greatness of Purusottam Kshetra

Bhagaban Mahapatra

The greatness of Purusottam Kshetra is narrated in Skanda Purana (Vaishnav Khanda) which is the largest of all Puranas. It contains eighty eight thousand and one hundred *slokas* (stanzas). Once, while sage Jaimini was describing about the greatness of Purusottam Kshetra to the assembled sages, all of them curiously asked him “Where is Purusottam Kshetra ? “Jaimini replied Purusottam Kshetra is situated at the eastern coast of Bharatvarsha and to the south of the river Mahanadi which is in Utkal. There is a Nilagiri mountain at the sea coast known as Tirtha Raja Mahodadhi.

*Odra desha Iti Khyate Barshe Bharatsamgyake
Dakhinasyodadhestire khetram Sripurusottamam*

(Sloka 23Ch. 7 Skanda Puranam)

All the persons of this land are devotees of Lord Vishnu. This holy place never experiences natural calamities of any kind. This Purusottam Kshetra is graced by the presence of a majestic wooden idol Vishnu i.e. Lord Jagannath. During ancient time, Lord Vishnu incarnated as Varah liberated Prithivi (Bhu Devi) from the depth of Rasatala from the clutches of a mighty demon Hiranyaksha and Prithivi had then gained normalcy. Lord Brahma thereafter resumed the task of creation with forests, mountains and holy places wherever necessary in a beautiful manner.



Being affected with the task of creation and wondered about the means by which the human beings could get escaped from three major types of sorrows that is Adibhoutika, Adhidaivika and Adhyatmika. Lord Brahma prayed Lord Vishnu for guidance and the latter directed him to go to Purusottam Kshetra for solution. This Kshetra is the holiest of all places in the world. Those who have fully devoted to Me take birth in this Kshetra. This place is not affected by deluge. I dwell at this holiest place leaving all my kith and kin as Lord Purusottam.

*Sarbasangaparityaktastatra tishami dehabhut
Surasurabatikramya barteham Purusottame.*

(Sloka 36 Ch. 1 of Skanda Purana)

In That Kshetra there is one Banyan tree known as Kalpa Bata and near to that tree there

is a holy pond called Rohini Kunda. Anybody who gets chance to take a holy dip in Rihini Kunda or get in contact with the water of that pond gets absolved from all of his sins in life. O Brahma ! You pay your visit to that place so that you will be able to know the virtuous of the place. Lord Brahma went to Purusottam Kshetra as per instruction of Lord Vishnu. On reaching Purusottam Kshetra Lord Brahma could see Lord Vishnu in the same form as he could see at the time of prayer and meditation. At this moment Lord Brahma saw a thirsty crow came and after taking bath in Rohini Kunda and seeing the celestial body of Lord Vishnu, his crow image was changed alike of Vishnu. Lord Brahma was astonished and thought that like crow all would be freed from vicious cycles of birth and death. Suryanandan Lord Dharmraj (Yamaraj) also equally thought that his power of causing death had no effect on people living in Purusottam Kshetra. Worried with this, Yamaraj rushed into Purusottam Kshetra and prayed for Lord Vishnu's intervention in the matter. Being satisfied with the prayer of Lord Yamaraj, Lord Vishnu glanced at Goddess Laxmi to advise Yamaraj. Goddess Laxmi replied- "Your aim and desire will not be fulfilled here; because this Purusottam Kshetra is our dwelling place and We will remain here always. Further whoever enters this place, whether the man, animal, birds and insects, there

sins will be completely absolved of like cotton sets in fire. Those who reside here are not under your control." Yamaraj then wanted to know the area of the Purusottam Kshetra. Goddess Laxmi said- Purusottam Kshetra resembles like a conch shape voluted towards the right hand side and its area is ten sq. miles, of which about six sq.miles are inside the sea for which the sea is known as Tirtha Raj. Rest portion of Kshetra is graced by the presence of Lord Shiva. They are Yameswar, Kapalmochan, Markandey, Isaneswar, Nilakantha, Khetrapala, Bilweswar and Bateswar. Man becomes liberated from gravest sins on worshipping the above eight Lord Shivas. Further the Purusottam Kshetra is well protected by eight Goddesses from all the eight directions. The names of these eight Goddesses are Mangala, Alamba, Kalaratri, Marichika, Ardhasini, Chandarupa, Sarbamangala and Khetreswari Vimala. As the center of this conch shaped Kshetra Lord Vishnu manifests Himself in the form of wooden structure as Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, Mother Subhadra and Chakraraj Sudarshan to bless all in the world.

Bhagaban Mahapatra, Sri Gundicha Vihar,
Sarbodayanagar, Puri 752002.

GOOD GOVERNANCE



The First Special Agriculture Budget of Odisha Since Independence

Odisha is primarily an agrarian State. Agriculture is the backbone of our rural economy and livelihood. It provides employment, directly or indirectly, to more than 60 per cent of the State's total workforce. In this sense, the Agriculture Sector is still the mainstay of Odisha's economy. Madhubabu, the symbol of Odisha's pride and glory laid stress on Agriculture and Agro-based Industries. In his own words, "Culture of the land is agriculture and culture of hand is industry."

Keeping in view the constraints of the agricultural sector in our State, a Special Package through the Agriculture Budget for the development of agriculture and allied sectors as well as welfare of the farming community under the able guidance of our beloved Chief Minister Shri Naveen Patnaik the first Special Agriculture Budget of Odisha has been laid by our Finance Minister. Unlike the practice of previous years the present Budget of Odisha has been placed in two parts.

It is felt that to increase the agricultural productivity in same rate at which our GSDP is rising so that the incidents of poverty among the people dependent on agriculture will decline. This is the way by which one can reduce poverty in an agrarian economy like Odisha. Application of agricultural technology through the use of high-yielding varieties, economy in input use, the availability of quality seeds and modern farming techniques such as system of rice intensification (SRI) with an effective marketing link would go a long way in improving farm productivity. On the supply side, there is need for increasing farm productivity and investment in infrastructure through superior water management, soil nutrient management, quality seeds, pesticides management, development of dairy farming, livestock rearing and fisheries. Besides adequate planning, there are some inherent structural constraints hindering the development of agriculture and allied sectors which are required to be addressed through appropriate budgetary interventions in order to make agriculture profitable and viable. They are lack of investments, lack of appropriate technology, lack of partnership and natural calamities.

Some of the salient features are as follows:-

1. Intensive extension campaign on agriculture for technology transfer and human resource development in agriculture sector.
2. Organic farming.
3. Development of infrastructure for post-harvest management.

4. Establishment of Agro-Industrial Estates.
5. Establishment of 10 nos. of Agro-Polytechnics.
6. Operationalization of Soil-testing and Quality Control Laboratories.
7. Rastriya Krushi Vikash Yojana
8. Jananidhi and sustainable harnessing of ground-water in water deficit areas.
9. Popularisation of agriculture implements.
10. Micro Irrigation to ensure access to water in more areas.
11. National Horticulture Mission would facilitate an integrated approach for improved nutrition and increased return to farmers.
12. Management of Acidic Soil.
13. Promotion of system of Rice Intensification.
14. Odisha Rural Livelihood Programme (Jeebika)
15. Interest subvention on short-term loan by Commercial Banks and on term loan by Co-operative and Commercial Banks.
16. Warehousing Facilities and Computerisation.
17. Establishment of Agro Service Centres and Soil Testing Laboratories.
18. Free Mobile Phones to 20,000 Farmers.
19. Conversion of Kisan Credit Cards as Smart Cards.
20. Establishment of Market Yards.
21. Indemnity for Crop-insurance.
22. Interest subsidy on short-term credit and long-term credit to fish-farmers.
23. Empowering fishermen and assistance to fishermen for dwelling houses.
24. Infrastructure for Aqua Culture.
25. Creation of additional irrigation potential and their proper management.
26. Flood Control and Drainage.
27. Command Area Development to reduce the gap between irrigation potential created and actual utilised.
28. Health Insurance for farmers under Biju Krushak Kalyan Yojana.

It is intended that new production techniques of ever-green revolution has to be adopted and farmers assisted with appropriate public policies can make agriculture an economically viable occupation. This has to be done to attract and retain the youth in farming sector. We have to re-double our efforts to help the farmers' produce more and more food and other commodities under the condition of diminishing per capita availability of arable land and irrigation water.

Light a Lamp and Remove the Darkness

Biju Patnaik

(Addressing a packed audience of girl students and ladies) All of you are studying history : British history, Indian history, this history, that history, etc. But many of you do not know your own history. How sad it is ? You were all born here. What is the history of this land ? What about our heritage ? What was our land 200 years back, 500 years back, 1000 years back, 2000 years back ? Do you know Ramanujan ? What was he ? Ramanujan was a very poor man. He was merely a Clerk under the British Government. He turned out to be the greatest mathematician the world has ever seen. The top mathematicians of the world are still working to decipher his formulae. He belongs to our land.

Have you heard of Pathani Samanta ? What was he ? When was he born ? What was his contribution ? By using some simple device he could precisely study the movement of the galaxy. His scope of mathematics or of astronomy was so fantastic that what he wrote about is the subject of research today for the world mathematicians. He was our man, a member of our family.

In the world history, two or three women stand out as great personages. One is Cleopatra, the Queen of Egypt, another is Elizabeth-I, the Queen of England and the third one is Helen of Troy... They created empires where sun never

set. They were the Queens" that men surrendered to them and carried out their behests. Until and unless you go to the 21st Century with that kind of power, authority and magnetism, the men who have so far ruled this world are not going to surrender to you. In every sphere you should raise yourselves to that status, so that men would willingly serve you.

There are various facets of modern life. One can be a lawyer, a doctor, an administrator or a Member of the Legislature, or a Member of the Parliament or a minister here and a minister there. But how do you raise yourself to the status which is superior to men ? This is really the heart of the problem where men must willingly respect you, regard you and take second place when you have the first place. This is really the problem of 21st Century. I am a little worried. You children, who are here; you are going to standard schools and colleges and getting standardised education. Now ask yourselves, when you graduate, even if you get a first class or whatever it is, are you equipped, mentally equipped, socially equipped to do something for your own State or are you going to look for a job ? To look for a job presents a servile mind, to step into the open world presents a challenging mind. I want not all of you, all of you cannot, but some of you to present to yourself, a mind which can assume great ascents and great

challenges. Why this girl Nivedita whom I sent across to Bali, some 9000 kms. fighting the high seas ! She is only one of the kids. She was in some College. She was at the beginning of her younger days and she was full of adventures. She wanted to do adventurous things. So I sent her to Cochin, to the Navy to get three weeks' training and I requested the Chief of Naval Command, "Well, if this girl can pass out rigid tests, I shall send her to Bali", and she did pass the test. But she was afraid. Her mother was afraid, her sister was afraid, her brother was afraid, her father was afraid that she might be drowned, etc. etc. Only I had to tell her, "If you do not do this I am going to cut your head" and that gave her the strength. I transferred some of my strength of adventure to her and she did it. This I want you to do whether through Karate or Judo or Wushu or games or sports or whatever, at all levels. You should be able to pick up challenges and meet them. Only then your mind will be free. We have some Oriya girls who have done very well, as entrepreneurs in the field of Electronic or some other things like that. I want more of you to come more of you dare to pick up the" challenges that would lead - you to the 21st century. Nothing else. All your bouffant hair-do or lipsticks will not lead you to the 21st century. "What would lead you to the 21st century - your guts, your courage, your determination. So, even if I do not see through the 21st century, in the coming years when you kids will have to live for next 30-40 years or more in the 21st century, all I can tell you is this, 'Do not betray your history'. Try to study your own history of 2000 years, of 3000 years, when you were a part the great empire-the Kalinga. The Kalingans created an empire and pushed the Greek dynasty beyond Hindukush. They had spread a maritime power through whole of the South-east Asia. Your forefathers did it. Do not forget that. Never forget you *buniadi*, your

heritage. Suppose, by some magic I squeeze these 2000 years and throw it to the Bay of Bengal, then you will be that women who fought with swords, with bows and arrows and conquered nations. Imagine yourselves. You will be a thousand Rani Jhansis, and a thousand Elizabeths. You have created history in this world.

Well, this is a symposium for training your minds for the 21st century. Our education is wanting. I know it. There was an English man called Lord Macaulay. Two hundred fifty years back when the East India Company came here and founded the empire, he thought that he must teach some English to some clerks who can convey the Englishman's message to the natives. So that was the beginning of learning English language. But the English people are so clever that they built the empire, not for nothing, they spread it among the intelligentsia of the country who used the language in law, in literature, in history, in everything which they themselves pursued. Everything goes in the British way of thinking-British Jurisprudence, British Law. When you talk of 21st century, remember, you are only a few girls in schools and colleges who have the advantage of getting education, however, deficient the education is. In my opinion you still have some education. You have a responsibility. Each of you have a responsibility to those millions of women, children who did not have the privilege or advantage of education like yours. Twenty first century means more responsibility, more responsiveness, more determination and greater strength of mind to meet challenges (Reacting painfully to the large scale dropouts, i.e., 5: 1 from Class I to Class X) Why ? Because the mother of the little child says, "Go to the forest and fetch me some fuel for cooking. Tend the cows of that headman, earn two rupees so that I will feed you". The child is thus unable to study. Similarly, we have to find out ways of uplifting their economic

status, Your parents can afford it. They are the Government servants or contractors or in business or whatever. They can afford the cost of your study, cost of your clothes, cost of your eating, cost of everything, hostel expenses, whatever. Millions, hundreds of millions of my countrymen cannot afford it, Have you any responsibility for them? Do you feel responsible? Apart from your fun and frolic what you must have of the young life, You must also think of your responsibility to the people, to the poor, to the girls, to the children who do not have your facilities. That would also present to you a challenge in your mind. You are educated. You are intelligent. Can I be defeated that my children next door must remain poor and uneducated? Can I not raise them? If my father can earn so much, why cannot their parents earn much? How to do it? All these, my children must present before you a great challenge of life time. Only then you will grow. Do not waste yourselves

away into the 21st century. Make the 21st century a standard-bearer for your strength of mind to meet all kinds of challenges, especially the challenges of your own society. It's a very hard task, a very difficult task, but you my daughters, my daughters' daughters, cultivate great confidence in you. "Wherever you may be, light a lamp as I have lighted here and remove the darkness from the society where you live. If you have done this, you have done a great service to yourself, to the society and to the nation.

Excerpts from an extempore speech presented by Biju Patnaik, the then Chief Minister of Orissa, while inaugurating the State level symposium on "Indian Women towards 21st century : Orissa, a step ahead" held at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar on August 8, 1993. The symposium was organised by Ramadevi Women's College Students' Union in collaboration with Vyatikrama, a voluntary organisation.

Brain Storming Deliberations of Biju Patnaik

(I)

At the Meeting of the National Development Council on June 18-19, 1990

This is an important meeting of the National Development Council as we have assembled here today to finalise the approach to the Eighth Five Year Plan which will certainly be a significant milestone in our path towards social change and transformation. I compliment the Planning Commission for preparing a pragmatic Approach Paper which will be the blueprint for our future growth. This, of course, will need to be supplemented in various ways for drawing up operational schemes for removing disparities and the sources of discontentment among various sections of the people as well as for instilling in them a sense and self-confidence as self-respect to achieve the objectives.

2. There is no doubt that excessive obsession with target and target-oriented growth during the past plan periods has led to the emergence of imbalances in various spheres. It has also led to a slowing down of employment

opportunities, sickness in industry with consequential loss of jobs as well as increasing disparities among various sections of the people and regions of the country. Widespread dissatisfaction among the people has resulted in a change of the Government through the democratic

process. It is, therefore, in the fitness of things that the Approach Paper for the Eighth Plan has identified generation of employment alongwith integrated Rural Development with active involvement of the rural people and Panchayat Raj institutions and Voluntary Organisations as the prime thrust areas. We welcome this change.

3. The challenge before us is to break out of the various circle of low productivity, unemployment and poverty. Our primary emphasis should be on increased efficiency and productivity in all sectors of development. Economic growth should be seen not merely in terms of a "rate" - the emphasis should rather be on the content of development than on a "growth rate" per se. Growth has to be combined with equity, a reasonable minimum standard of living



and provision of an essential social amenities to every one as speedily as possible. It should ensure special attention to the needs of the disadvantaged and the vulnerable sections of the society and at the same time ensure more rational and wide spread diffusion of the fruits of development across regions and classes. In other words, growth with equity and diffusion of the benefits of development in a balanced manner among the regions as well as among various sections of the society should be our primary goal in tackling the twin problems of poverty and unemployment. I may mention in this context that we are formulating a programme for making two of our districts viz., Bolangir and Kalahandi as “Zero Unemployment Districts” within this plan period by integrating various sectional schemes.

4. In this context I would specially suggest the need for particular attention to the weaker regions and the backward States and for devising special measures to enable them to play their appropriate role in the mainstream of economic development. Take for instance, the case of Orissa. After 40 years of planning and development the State has not been able to improve the relative position vis-a-vis other states in the matrix of economy development. Orissa's economy has retained its predominantly agrarian status and the contribution of agriculture to the Net Domestic Product has been stagnating around 60% or thereabout, throughout the Sixth Plan and Seventh Plan periods. Another striking feature of the economy is that there has been no substantial change in the pattern of inter-sectoral contribution to the Net Domestic Product over the years. Obviously the pace of structural change is relatively slower compared to that at national level. This is reflected in a comparison of per capita income of Orissa with that at the national level. Though there has been an increase in the State's per capita income both at constant and at current prices, this has not been adequate enough

to keep pace with the level of development achieved at the national level. The gap between the per capita income of Orissa with that at the national level started widening significantly during the Sixth Plan. This was aggravated during subsequent plan periods indicating a slower pace of growth at this State level. At current prices, a gap of Rs.376 in the year 1980-81 increased to Rs.623 in the year 1985-86; it rose further to Rs.934 in 1986-87 and is about Rs.1,397 in the year 1988-89 (quick estimate).

5. The relative backwardness of Orissa as compared to other States both in regard to extent of poverty and its intensity are reflected in the available data. In fact, the intensity of poverty is much higher in Orissa than in many other States. This calls for appropriate remedial measures particularly in regard to the devolution of financial resources between the Centre and the States. I would suggest that the existing Gadgil Formula might be supplemented by a composite index of backwardness, appropriately devised, which might benefit relatively backward and poverty-stricken State like Orissa.

6. I am sure, you will agree with me Mr. Chairman, that situation like this deserves special attention for devising specific measures for bridging such widening gaps. I would not like to go into details at the present stage but I am confident that such problems would be tackled and solved appropriately when we finalise our 8th Plan.

7. I would now like to give my comments briefly on several important issues raised in the Approach Paper. It has been suggested that many of the existing problems can be corrected by transferring a substantial part of the responsibility for planning and implementation of economic and social development programmes, e.g., minor irrigation, soil conservation, primary education, health, drinking water, housing etc. to the elected

representative institutions of local Government alongwith provisions of necessary financial resources and staff. It has been further stated that the local area plans at the village or Panchayat level will first aim to expand employment, production and income in various economic activities. While agreeing with the approaches, we must remember that employment generated must be productive and relevant. The job seekers have a legitimate right to work; at the same time, those who are already in employment have a duty to work sincerely and generate assets. The objective of our planning should be to work more and produce more so that in the process the nation gets benefited.

Decentralisation of the planning process including formulation and implementations of relevant schemes at the district level and below is necessary for utilising the latent energy of the people in our plan efforts as well as for plugging the loopholes. It would be rational in this context to entrust the elected Panchayat Raj institutions with implementation of all rural employment schemes like J.R.Y. etc. This brings into focus the urgent need for introducing a proper system for human motivation as well as a clean and impartial system of administration at the grass-root level. In the absence of these inputs, a combination of other resources - men, material and capital - will fail to achieve the desired objectives.

8. Agriculture still being the main-stay of the people deserves our particular attention. In my view the entire gamut of activities in this sector requires a thorough reorientation with particular attention to the needs of agriculturally backward regions as well as needs of refined tacts, dry lands and wastelands. I strongly feel that greater attention be paid to development of horticulture, sericulture and cash crops so that we can build on it a network of suitable agro-based industries.

This will be of great help to the farmers in remote, rural and tribal areas not only in terms of employment but also in terms of generating higher income by ensuring a better price for the produce. There is also a great scope for development of our



huge untrapped potential in complementary sectors like Dairy Development, Poultry Development, Fishery Development, Sericulture etc. These have to be taken up in an integrated manner for promoting rural employment and for reducing urban bias. This is particularly relevant for accelerating the pace of development in our Scheduled Areas which still suffer from lack of communication and marketing facilities exposing them to exploitation by various agencies.

9. Irrigation as an input to agriculture must receive the highest priority. All on-going Major and Medium Irrigation Projects should be completed as quickly as possible. Greater emphasis should be given on Minor Irrigation and Lift Irrigation during the 8th Plan period. Here, as in many other sectors, we have a tale of missed opportunities. Had we been fortunate in translating into reality Pandit Nehru's dream and commissioning the Tikarpara Project on the Mahanadi river in Orissa in the early sixties, Orissa's economy would have been transformed. However, we can still retrieve a part of the vision by implementing quickly the irrigation part of the Rengali Multi-purpose project in our State. I mention this particularly as Irrigation canals have to be completed within the next 7 years or earlier if possible, for taking full advantage of the Dam and Power Plant which has already been constructed. I would further suggest that for ensuring optimum utilisation of our water

resources, investment in irrigation sector should be proportionate to the availability of irrigation potential in various regions. How can a State like Orissa progress when the investment on irrigation is as low as 2% against its potential of 11% ?

10. I firmly believe, Mr. Chairman, that in consonance with our accepted objectives for the 8th Plan, the social services sector, particularly, education and health, deserve a much higher priority. This is necessary for ensuring that the benefits of development percolate down to the poorest of the poor and the vulnerable sections, specially women and S.C./S.T. population. Such a change will also significantly help in making our population limitation measures more effective. We agree that a major overhaul of our Education Policy is necessary to achieve the goal of greater equity as well as the necessity for providing adequate technical inputs at various levels. Greater thrust on our programmes of mass literacy with skilled development as well as elementary and secondary education is essential for achieving the goal of complete eradication of illiteracy by the end of 1990s. I have already started a scheme for involving all secondary school students in the literacy campaign.

I am glad to announce in this context that we would be launching a special drive for making two of our districts, viz. Kalahandi and Bolangir "Full Literacy Districts" within this plan period.



11. On the health front, it is heartening to note the adoption of multi-disciplinary approach for tackling the problems. It has been rightly stated that education, specially women's education, has a great deal to contribute to the health delivery system. Similarly in our strategy for population control, it is accepted that the focus should be on women's status, female literacy, responsible motherhood and control of infant mortality. I would suggest that Malaria, Filariasis, Kala-azar and Encephalitis should be integrated into a single programme of control of vectorborne diseases. The Universal Immunisation Programme should

be implemented vigorously to reduce infant mortality. As malnutrition is one of the important factors leading to high infant mortality, additional inputs would be necessary for the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) so that nourishing food may be served to the children. I fully agree

with the suggestion in the Approach Paper that the better off sections of the community should pay adequately for the services utilised by them both in the sphere of Education and Health.

12. In the social services sector, our main aim should be to increase the purchasing power of the poor through employment preferably in rural agro-based industries. However, we must provide a minimum of food security through a restructured, more efficient and decentralised Public Distribution System (PDS). Its coverage particularly in the rural areas has to be expanded and local Panchayati Raj institutions and voluntary

organisations involved to a much greater degree. Stopping the present leakages and cutting down costs are equally important. As rightly suggested in the Approach Paper, we should also explore the possibility of procuring those food-grains that are relevant to the food basket of the lower income groups in particular areas.

13. The strategy for industrial development as spelt out in the Approach Paper. Mr. Chairman, deserves particular attention. This is an area where we have to take an integrated view taking into account of various relevant sectors, viz., the need for developing our resources, the requirements of balanced regional growth, the balance of payment problem, the need to ensure a minimum 12% annual volume of growth in export, the need for modernisation and updating of technology, promotion of technological innovation, environmental issues as well as provision of requisite infrastructure facilities particularly in the energy and transport sectors. It is imperative to ensure that our resources are optimally used to promote product quality and cost effectiveness in all spheres and more efficient use of energy and other infrastructure inputs. Employment need not, as rightly stated in the Approach Paper, necessarily be the primary consideration in certain areas. However, even in areas where additional demand generated for consumer goods is expected to be met through labour intensive processes of production on a decentralised basis, our motto should be improvement in productivity and cost effectiveness.

14. We should encourage building up of a network of viable and efficient Small Scale Industrial Units - both modern and traditional - which would work in a regime free of irksome regulations utilising local resources and manpower. We must aim at larger value addition to all our primary produce and raw materials. Just as we are trying to step up agricultural production

by re-organising it according to Agro-Climatic Zones, industrial production should similarly be raised by utilising the natural resources of various regions to the fullest extent. In other words, we must develop those sectors where we have a comparative advantage in a most appropriate manner. Infrastructure support like provision of power, roads, railway lines, port facilities etc. should be tailored to meet such requirements. For example, in many parts of the country including Orissa, there are vast reserve of mineral resources, marine wealth as well as convenient locations for off-shore and on-shore facilities. In a scenario where the world situation is changing fast we should be poised to grab the opportunities that come our way and do away with dilatory bureaucratic fetters which stifle initiative and growth. A determined effort must be made in this direction both by the Central and State Governments, so that national requirement is met in the most efficient manner. The multiplier effort of such growth centres will obviously quicken the pace of development.

15. One brief word on Plan Finance before I conclude. Even after taking into account the devolution of financial resources recommended by the 9th Finance Commission, some State still emerge as deficit State on Plan Revenue account. I, therefore, strongly endorse the Finance Commission's suggestion in their report that the Planning Commission should consider granting special long term loans for bridging such deficit so that the Revenue deficit States do not have to divert their borrowings for meeting their Plan Revenue needs.

16. Mr. Chairman, planning by its very nature, implies imposition on our selves of a certain degree of discipline and self-restraint. This also involves a common vision and a common heritage of dreaming together and working in unison utilising all our resources endowments for the

common good. We need not be daunted by the magnitude of the task that lies ahead. Well-begun, as they say, is half-done. I am sure, Mr. Chairman, the Planning Commission under your guidance will rekindle the spirit of objective self-reliance, which was the essence of Pandit Nehru's vision of planning for development with equity.

Thank you.

Sources : *Orissa Review*, August, 1990.

(II)

Conference on Human Rights on September 14, 1992 at New Delhi

Mr. Home Minister and Friends,

I must congratulate the Union Home Minister for the comprehensive agenda papers he has sent us. I would like to make a small suggestion before I respond to proposals contained in the agenda papers. The issues referred to are extremely important and we must devise strategies based on mature deliberation. Some of the suggestions in the agenda notes have a bearing on Centre-State relations. Some others have serious financial implications. Some others, it seems to me, do not take sufficient note of ground realities. Before any specific decision is taken, it will be appropriate that our response based on years of experience and first-hand acquaintances with problems under discussion are carefully considered. We should avoid the temptation of coming out with solutions at the end of the meeting and producing the impression that these solutions were always round the corner and all that was needed was the will to find them. I would advise that the proposals contained in the agenda notes are reviewed in the light of today's deliberations : we can meet again to discuss the results of the review and design strategies inspired by pragmatic perceptions rather than summons issued by self-appointed defenders of human rights from abroad and from within the country.

It is odd, and certainly humiliating that we should be treated to lessons on human rights by foreign organisations whose good will towards India is not at best doubtful. They accuse the Indian state of abridging human rights of terrorists and of scoundrels intent on dismembering India with the help of foreign arms and money. For these organisations, human rights of terrorists and secessionists and sacrosanct and indubitably superior to those of the innocent people they kill and of the women and children who are forced into a life of penury, anguish and insecurity. Their conscience, if any is inexplicably dumb when thousands of families are forced to abandon their homes and properties and become refugees. These organisations and their high priests have not thought it fit to condemn terrorism or secessionism or systems of governance that openly subordinate human rights to what they think are laws of their religion. They have also desisted from condemning interference by one state in the internal affairs of another, leading to enormous human rights abuse. While the erstwhile Soviet Union was accused of human rights violation in eastern Europe, open support for armed rebellion in Afghanistan resulting in mass killing and exile of millions of Afghans was viewed differently and kindly. Our neighbour's dirty work in Kashmir and in Punjab has also been viewed with extraordinary indulgence. Is it because Indians, Afghans and people of other Asian and African countries have no human rights unless they are murderers, robbers, or on foreign pay rolls ? Why is it that there is such clamour when one of these species is killed and none when the basic human right-the right to live - is abrogated every day in Somalia, Ethiopia and the erstwhile Yugoslavia ?

I submit that throughout the ages as well as today India can boast of human rights record which is superior to the record of any other country. This will be evident from the fact that

minority populations have grown and flourished in India whereas in the history of the west, they have often been victims of relentless carnage. Those who raise an outcry over the reported death or torture of a terrorist in India have no word of sympathy for a Malkankit Natt who was mercilessly bashed up by the London Police or for a Rodney King who was administered 56 video-taped blows by the Los Angeles police or for the Korean immigrants who lost practically everything they had earned in the race riots that followed the acquittal of policemen who had assaulted King but who the Jurors thought were simply doing their duty.

Let us therefore say, and say it openly that we do not mean to take these experts at doublespeak seriously at least not until they have taken up defence of human rights in their own countries and not until they have launched an impartial campaign against outside inspiration for militancy and terrorism.

The basic objective of our freedom struggle was to restore to the Indian people the human rights they were deprived of by colonial rule. Our constitution guarantees these rights and also provides for their enforcement. I frankly do not see much merit in the proposal to set up a Human Rights Commission. I can understand a commission going into certain issues in greater detail than the Government which has its hands full with everyday problems and recommending policies, laws and procedures of implementation but actual implementation has to be the function of Government and not of an agency outside it. It is not correct that a Government elected by the people should assign its functions to an organisation outside people's mandate. Such institutions, I am afraid are not legitimate in terms of our Constitution. This is precisely what has been happening over the past few years. We have Commissions for the Scheduled Castes and

Tribes, for women and for minorities. Is the Government incapable of looking after India's Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, women and minority communities? The proposed Human Rights Commission will also, I am afraid, impinge on the powers of State Governments public order, police and prisons fall under the State list. Clause(3) of Article 246 vests in State Government to "exclusive power to make laws" in respect of matters enumerated in the state list. It is no doubt suggested in the agenda notes that the commission will be a fact-finding and advisory body, but I would also have the mandate to recommend prosecution of the offenders and to advise authorities about the steps they should take to uphold human rights." There is absolutely no doubt that it will function as an authority that believes that State Governments are accountable to it, especially when it is set up as has been suggested by an Act of Parliament. We may perhaps have a Commission to enquire into human rights questions and submit its report to Government, but it should cease to exist after a specified period during which it must submit its report. To go beyond this will lend strength to the thesis that the Union Government and the State Government cannot be trusted in the matter of human rights. Let us be clear that it is the Government's duty to uphold human rights and it will do so at all costs.

Agenda item No.2 is far more important. Custodial crime is utterly reprehensible and must be curbed regardless of the status of the offender. We should however look at the problem in its perspective. In large number of cases, policemen responsible for such offences have been punished. This is the position in my State and is, perhaps true for other States. What this means is that the State in India does not take an indulgent view of custodial crime. We should also take note of the fact that in a large number of cases, allegations of

custodial torture are motivated, the motive being to force the investigating officer into a position of self-defence and thereby deflect him from single-minded pursuit of the case. The motive may also be to win the court's sympathy. This phenomenon has been observed in several countries.

A disciplined and motivated police force is seldom guilty of custodial crime. Such crimes are committed by a few deviant members of the force, but their proportion to the number of correct and responsible policemen is no higher than such proportion in other profession.

The most effective insurance against custodial crime is the morale and the attitude of the force. Unfortunately police morale had suffered serious erosion both due to politicisation and unionisation. For the first evil, we ourselves are responsible since we would like to use the police to protect people whose only virtue is that they are with us and persecute people who have different loyalties. As long as we persist in this behaviour, no system can be effective against custodial crime. The offending police officer may have done us some service in the past or may promise to do in future. This distortion is matched by a corresponding distortion caused by unionisation of the force. If an investigation into an alleged custodial crime is taken up against a police officer, there is a tendency on the part of others to combine and protect him. We must make up our mind that we shall not suffer this impediment and must proceed against every police officer, guilty of such crime.

While allegations of custodial death and torture are exaggerated, such allegations are widely believed to be true because there is very little openness in enquiries and because the results of enquiry are seldom published. We can consider a system that would ensure expedition and objectivity in enquiries. There is no advantage in a mandatory judicial enquiry in such cases. Section

176 of the Code of Criminal Procedure already vests in Magistrates the power to hold an enquiry into cases of custodial death including death allegedly due to suicide. We can examine whether the provisions of the Code cannot be enlarged and made more effective so that cases of custodial death and rape are enquired into by authorities other than those of the police. Greater authority to the District Magistrates or to functionaries nominated by the State Government would go a long way in investing transparency and credibility both to enquiries and follow up actions.

Award of financial relief should be informal and left to State Governments. I do not see why State Government that provide financial relief to victims of natural calamities and communal riots cannot be trusted with this task and must act in pursuance of a central law. We can agree on certain guide-lines, but their implementation is best left to State Governments. Let us consider setting up a task force to formulate the guide-lines, but let us desist from doing under law what can be done through an attitude of concern and compassion.

I have said earlier that there is a correlation between the incidence of custodial crime and erosion of police morale. In addition to the two aforesaid causes of declining police morale, there is another, the alarming fall in convictions due largely to the present system of prosecution. The earlier system of prosecution which had succeeded in securing convictions for the larger number of criminals was replaced in 1973 by the new Code of Criminal Procedure. After the new system came into force, acquittals have far outnumbered convictions. The result is that, the law breaker is no longer afraid. Citizens are afraid of the law breaker. So great is the citizens' fear that they have lost the capacity to resist the most heinous crimes committed in broad daylight. So great, again, is the erosion in the State's will to

govern that several such crimes go unpunished although there is no doubt either about the identity of their perpetrator or the distress of their victims. The powerful and the rich have acquired the capacity to abuse the judicial process and to be immune to retribution under the law. We are fast moving into a situation which Shakespeare described as follows :

Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear
 Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
 And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks,
 Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw both pierce it.

(King Lear, Act 4. Scene 6).

I would submit that it would be artificial to dislink human rights from punishment of crime. It will be artificial for two principal reasons. Firstly in a situation in which the system of punishment for crime is ineffective the criminal has the licence to trample upon the human rights of hapless victims. Secondly in such a situation, society which includes the police, will be compelled to devise other methods of containing crime. The police are accountable when the crime situation deteriorates. If the normal system of investigation and prosecution does not yield results, there will be a tendency to resort to other methods; so that the police can give a good account of itself. I should think that the incidence of custodial crime should be seen in the perspective of our system of administration of Criminal Law. If amendment of the Evidence Act and the Code of Criminal Procedure is being contemplated so that those responsible for custodial crime are punished adequately and quickly, there is clearly a stronger case for contemplating amendments so that criminals and killers do not acquire the power to dominate the society.

The need for educating police officials in human rights is both great and urgent. It should be possible for us to devise a programme of training the cost of which can be shared between

the Union and State Governments designed to promote human rights literally. Financial support to State Government is also necessary for expanding and modernising jails.

As for crimes against disadvantaged sections of society including women all that we need is a strong administrative will. Crimes against these groups have come down significantly when there is clear evidence of the State's will to punish the offenders. These criminals do not belong to the under-world. They have social status, being either land-owners, or Government employees, or employees of the corporate sector or persons who are prospering in their own business. I have recently issued instructions to the effect that a Government servant against whom a prima facie case of dowry offence is made out shall be placed under suspension and if his responsibility for the offence is established, he shall be dismissed from service. I am aware that this will not have more than marginal effect on crimes against women but this is an illustration of State will. We do not unfortunately have a worthwhile social movement that creates awareness against such crimes. During the days of our freedom struggle the goal that inspired us was not only political independence but a society in which the individual whatever his religion or caste or sex or income status, could live with dignity. Gandhiji who gave direction to the freedom struggle integrated issues like removal of untouchability, rights of tenants to land and freedom from poverty with the issue of political independence. We are incapable today of understanding his integral philosophy and have assigned the task of social engineering to thousands of non-Governmental organisations supported with munificent Government grants. Societies do not change through the work of persons who are paid to bring about change. We, regardless of the parties we belong to, and the political goals we cherish, must combine to create

an awareness which will not condone any crime against a Harijan, a woman, a poor man or a person who calls his God by a different name.

I am sorry I have taken a lot of time but then the issues you have raised do not admit of a summary response. I would make a final submission. Human rights are important not because foreign human rights organisations have asked us to honour human rights but because our culture and our history have embedded respect for man in our soul. We should devise methods consistent with realities of our situation to operationalise this respect. If these methods do not conform to the prescriptions of some self-righteous organisations, there should be no cause for distress.

Sources : *Orissa Review*, October, 1992.

(III)

Chief Ministers' Conference on Administration of Criminal Justice November 13, 1992

This conference, in my view, is not merely a conference to discuss administration of criminal justice; it provides us all with an opportunity to review the manner in which the Indian State is functioning. The basic function of the State is protection of the life, liberty and property of citizens and prevention of their harassment by any individual or group. The State has now come to acquire several other functions, but these are clearly not in lieu of its basic function. A society in which the security of life and property of its members is under frequent jeopardy is clearly not a well governed society. Such societies are characterised by the emergence of individuals and groups who assume to themselves the illegitimate and wholly mercenary authority to compel others to live in terror and deprivation and to punish what, according to laws fashioned in their imprudent imagination, is deviant behaviour. The

larger the extent of such wicked authority, the greater is the irrelevance of the State which, in course of time, becomes so feeble that assorted scoundrels and criminals, instead of dreading its instrumentalities, take control of them. Since the State is unable to punish crime, they coerce a hapless society into giving them the honour and status it used to assign to the wise, the brave, the honest and the industrious. The law-breaker is no longer afraid; citizens are afraid of the law-breaker.

Such a society is clearly reprehensible. All enlightened Governments have, throughout history, endeavoured to ward off such distortions in the social process through installation of a system in which crime is quickly punished. Where they have succeeded, individuals have striven to realise their higher aspirations and have not been driven into diminutive cocoons by fear or insecurity. Societies that have ensured freedom and security have made remarkable advance in material and intellectual development; societies that have failed in this basic task have remained underdeveloped and have frequently had to surrender political sovereignty, for mercenaries and criminals who had acquired positions of pre-eminence were the most unlikely defenders of freedom.

We had, in this country, a reasonably effective system of punishing crime. It certainly had several drawbacks, but it had the merit of denying the criminals the sense of impunity they have lately come to acquire. Immediately after independence, we thought that the whole system was evil and started a romance with exotic concepts. One such concept was the separation of the judiciary from the executive. We forgot to take note of the fact that this concept had evolved in an altogether different situation and was administered by altogether different people. In those societies, it is a functional distribution,

whereas in ours, the judiciary is convinced that the entire authority of the State vests in it alone.

The overall result, as the agenda papers for this conference show, has been a disturbing rise in acquittals and a disturbing fall in convictions. It is significant that these trends became manifest after the new Code of Criminal Procedure, which effected the separation of powers and installed a new system of prosecution in Courts of Magistrates, which came into force. Our first duty should be to contain this development and reverse these trends. We should give some time and thought to evolving implementable strategies so that no Indian citizen lies in fear and so that whoever transgresses the law is quickly and effectively dealt with. If these strategies requires a change in the law, we should be prepared to effect these changes without being hamstrung by shibboleths. The illustrative areas where the law may have to be changed are : the system of prosecution; empowering executive magistrates to try offences under certain chapters of Indian Penal Code and under some minor Criminal Act and Special Acts; and provisions relating to preventive arrest and bail. With regard to the prosecution system, I would like section 25 of the Code of Criminal Procedure to be amended so that the State Government can appoint a police officer to conduct prosecution subject to the condition that he has not taken any part in the investigation into a case under trial. This would go a long way towards eliminating lack of co-ordination between prosecution and investigation which has benefited criminals. Some States have amended several sections of the Code of Criminal Procedure. In order that we have a uniform Code of Criminal Procedure, these amendments, along with certain others which are found necessary, can be incorporated into a Central amendment which can become the law for the whole country.

Delay in completion of investigation is another major contributor to the worsening crime situation. It not only creates a public impression that nothing much is going to happen to a criminal, at least for quite some time, it also enables the criminal to tamper with evidence, win over or liquidate witnesses and in effect decide the case. There are three major reasons for delay in investigations. Firstly, the police manpower is inadequate. Secondly, the available manpower has several other pre-occupations, such as performing security duty for a horde of dignitaries who relish the illusion that their lives are in danger. Thirdly, investigating officers do not have adequate mobility or access to modern techniques of investigation. The first and third factors would require financial and technical collaboration between the Centre and States. If this collaboration materialises immediately, we should be able to register improvement in the immediate future. As for the second factor, demanding security cover has become a status symbol. It is time that self-appointed luminaries of our political firmament realised that, in the unlikely event of some madcap disposing them of, the only cost to the country would be a by-election.

I would reiterate that improving the administration of criminal justice should be the collective responsibility of the Union and the States and that it would be disastrous to leave resource-deficit State to meet the full cost of desired improvement. Cost-sharing should extend to enlarging accommodation in jails. There has been no significant enlargement of such accommodation which has been under great strain due both to the increasing number of convicts and of under-trial prisoners. A few days ago, we met here to discuss human rights abuse and, in particular, infringement of such rights in custody. Such infringement becomes inevitable when we have to pack 500 people in space meant for 50.

There are two further points I would like to make. An increasingly significant factor in the present crime situation is crime by organised groups whether subscribing to terrorism as a political activity or bound by a common criminal intent. The distinction between these two groups is very often a fiction since, for the first group, politics is a veneer for crime and the second group has little compunction in seeking political patronage when driven to a corner. I would like it to be understood that as long as organised crime is not effectively dealt with, no refinement in dealing with individual criminals would improve the crime situation. Individual and small-time crime is yielding place everywhere to organised crime. While the individual criminal offends an individual victim, criminal gangs offend society at large and challenge the authority of the State. Let us not, in dealing with them, be shackled by international prescriptions on human rights. Innocent citizens of this country and their society have certain rights and if conglomerates of criminals assault these rights, we have to protect the larger and superior rights. If necessary by abridging and indeed even extinguishing inferior and irrelevant rights. If we act otherwise, we would bring about a situation in which no true human rights exist. I have to say this because it is necessary that we are not overwhelmed by the latest inspiration doled out by human rights activists.

Secondly, some amount of introspection on the part of the community of politicians is overdue. Quite a few crimes occur because we ourselves organise agitations on a number of non-issues with a view to keeping ourselves in limelight. Since we have been in power and since it is not unlikely that we will come back to power, the law enforcing machinery is handicapped in dealing with our proteges in the manner they deserve to be dealt with. Let us be frank and admit that we ourselves have inducted into legislatures and

endowed high offices on a number of persons whose legitimate place is in the jail. This criminal aberration afflicts all political parties and the result is that no political party today has the moral authority to suggest any reform. By far the larger part of my life is behind me. I would hope to see, in the remainder of my life, that the profession of politics does not admit persons who find in politics protection for their past and present criminality. This may cost us a few votes, but the voting system itself may cease to exist very soon if such persons enjoy the immunity and prestige they have come to enjoy for sometime past.

Sources : *Orissa Review*, December, 1992.

(IV)

Orissa of My Dreams :

I have been commissioned here in the memory of my dearest friend Binod Kanungo - not to speak but to dream. I have been told that I should project Orissa of my dreams. What would I dream ? Once Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore said, "When you dream, dream big. It is only by dreaming big things that big tasks are accomplished." We are born to die. While dreaming think of big things - Dream the biggest dream of all. In his poetry, what did he say ? "Sapan dekhi tulab ami badi, prabal dwipe manimuktar" This was the dream which urged the young people of those days to dream big. I have not forgotten these lines of Rabi Thakur.

When I want to dream of Orissa what should I dream ? Orissa has become a small little place. One day it was the greatest empire of India. Its army defeated Alexander's Army and threw them across the border of India. Kalinga was the largest maritime power ever known in the world. That Kalinga spread her civilisation throughout the South East Asia; relics are found in all these countries even today. What better dream can I have than dream of those magnificent days, when

Orissa was vital, when Kalinga was vital, when Kalinga was the greatest empire of India, when the sailors of Kalinga did not know fear, when the soldiers of Kalinga did not know fear, when the mothers of Kalinga were known as “Biranganas”. That was Kalinga. Therefore that is a dream worthy of Kalinga.

In my dream of the 21st century for the State, I would have young men and women who put the interest of the State before them. They will have pride in themselves, confidence in themselves. They will not be at anybody’s mercy, except their own selves. By their brain, intelligence and capacity, they will recapture the history of Kalinga. I would like my Orissa of 21st century to have excellent artisans, superb craftsmen and sculptors, greatest musicians and poets. After all it is we who built Konark. It was in Orissa or Kalinga where the great Geeta Govinda was composed. It is the same place where Great mathematicians like Pathani Samanta looked at the sky and created astronomical wonders. A place where we have mathematical genius, great sculptors and artists, great musicians and dancers and men and women of great culture, this should be the dream of my Orissa, should be the dream of my life.

There is no English word for “Karuna”. When a young woman goes to pray before her God she asks for one blessing. “O’ Lord, fill my soul with ‘Karuna’, I ask for nothing else.” That is the epitome of culture, which Orissa of my dream would have.

We men and women of today, have shrunk. Because we do not dream big, we have become little men and women with little problems, little conspiracy, little likes and dislikes, little gain or loss. Orissa can be lifted by collective will. We are the descendants of great ancestors. Look at my beautiful hills, beautiful rivers, beautiful sea, rich forests which are gifts of God, given to our

people. I would like my men and women, young people of my State, in the coming years to take all these gifts that God has given and produced the greatest machines that produce wealth for all and provide employment and productive work to all. In my dream of Orissa no cultivator would go with his field dry. Every drop of water that percolates through our soil is recovered. In my dream of Orissa of tomorrow, I will not like to hear a whisper about oppression to women. I dream of a day when women would play equal role with men. They will exercise with men equal power and enjoy the same privilege. This should be my dream of tomorrow the 21st century. In that time no child of my State will go hungry without food or suffer from malnutrition. And all over my land, there will be no illiteracy or ignorance.

For my farmers, I would like to dream that never and never his crop shall perish for want of water. Each drop of water will be conserved and used. Natural calamity, the scourge of Orissa, would be a thing of the past. All the rivers would be tamed, all the water storages reconstructed so that parched lands get that water when needed.

Yesterday I inaugurated an exhibition of the Adivasis. Those of you who have not gone, I would recommend that you spend a couple of hours there, see their style of living. You realise that 30% of our people live in this condition. I will like to see that every citizen of my State has a decent roof over his head, every family gets drinking water and all-weather protection. They must have all weather roads and bridges, schools properly manned with able teachers and hospitals with adequate number of excellent doctors. It has to be ensured that every nook and corner of my state has proper health care, proper schooling, proper road system and communication systems like telephones, like electronics - all that the modern science has given, the average villagers must have.

The wealth of minerals that nature has endowed us will sustain many major industries for long years to come, whether it is steel, whether power from coal, whether aluminium or oil refineries and petrochemicals. All these will come to us. We should make our State a place of attraction to all people from all over the world. In India, today we have no social harmony, no religious tolerance, no caste tolerance. Certainly we cannot grow with all these divisions. In my dream of Orissa, there should be harmony, broad-mindedness, greater tolerance all around and fellow feeling from neighbour to neighbour.

In conclusion, I would like to say what Max Muller said long time back, "If I have to look over the whole world to find out the country that nature has bestowed its best, I would point to India". We all together can make our State such that the whole world would say that Orissa is our dreamland.

(First Binode Kanungo Memorial Lecture delivered extempore on January 27, 1992 at Soochana Bhawan, Bhubaneswar.)

(V)

Soft State, Hard Decisions

It is unfortunate that hardly any government in this country has had the courage to adopt a tough line as far as austerity measures go. And this is because no one in the government wants to give up his own benefits - even when hundreds and thousands of our countrymen are getting no benefits at all. Running the Government is getting more and more expensive. Be it the civil, military or police administrations, hundreds of million people are employed. And who pays for them? The already over-burdened tax payer.

The public sector corporations are also a part to it. Heavily overstaffed, they employ five men where one is required. And the unions ensure that they are well protected. So the government continues to ball them out.

We should emulate the example of Mexico. The President there took a stern position. He broke the unions and as a result of that, Mexico is already looking up today. It is about time that we recognised that if we are losing in a particular area, government funding should be discontinued.

We have reached such a pathetic stage that as a nation we are now forced to borrow in order to pay wages and salaries. And if we want to develop a plan, we have to pay even more. At the same time, the public services that the government should be funding—such as schools, health services and other activities — are being ignored. In Korea, to produce 15 million tonnes of steel, the country employs 20,000 people but here to produce 15 million tonnes of integrated steel, we employ 300,000 people.

No nation can survive like this. Our overstaffed administrative machinery is too expensive. The bureaucracy is negative all over the country—both at the Centre and in the States. There is absolutely no initiative at any level to change this—all they are interested in is cushioning their interests with precedents and authority.

The political machinery is even more expensive. The upkeep of the Prime Minister, the Ministers, the Cabinet, Parliament is maintained by the contributions of the tax payers. These people are supposed to serve the people but instead they only serve as rulers. It is absolutely ridiculous that an MP should be entitled to 28 flights per year to his constituency. Their pensions also keep increasing. An MP is not part of the administrative service yet they, their wives, their widows, their children are all recipients of benefits from the government.

It is a sickening spectacle for a person like me who has fought for the nation's Independence and suffered for it. Today the entire patronage system encourages corruption at all

levels. In fact, corruption has been in-built into the system where even men in high places are corrupt. Quite simply, the common perception is that power is for the self.

Even Nehru never thought seriously about controlling the country's population in terms of incentives and disincentives—no one with more than two children should have been entitled to a government job or an elective position. Instead, we have been converted into a nation of 90 crores from one of 34 crores. The whole world is laughing at us. Every other country is increasing its per capita income but we seem to be getting poorer each year.

It is time that we took some hard decisions. Of course this will be resented. Once benefits are taken away from the political class, these “secure” men will feel naked as if they are no longer the representatives of the people. We should also redefine the concept of security - today there are 10,000 applicants for a peon's post in the government because it is perceived as a secure job. The Centre will also have to truly respect the federal nature of our Constitution. For example, it is ridiculous that even though agriculture is a state subject, the union agriculture ministry employs over 40,000 people. And for whose benefit ?

In the old days, nobody received any special benefits. Not even the Prime Minister. I remember even Nehru did not have peons at his beck and call. On one occasion, I dropped in to see him at 8 p.m. - I had just returned from a wonderful film at Rivoli. I told him about the film and suddenly, on an impulse, he decided that he wanted to see it. His devoted assistant Mathai, went down to fetch the driver but he had left. So without any fuss, we hailed a taxi and proceeded to the cinema—no security nothing. And even at the cinema hall, there was no fuss, people were happy to see him but that was all.

We have to blame ourselves for making life so cheap today. Why is there no peace in this country today ? Because even though the economic czars have left the country we continue to buy goods at ten times the price. What is this freedom about ? To abuse, to kill each other, to stab ? I am not disillusioned because I have no illusions. Yet I can not lose hope. This is my country, I was born here I fought for it, I have served it.

But half of our population is below the poverty line with no food, no water, no education, no shelter, no literacy. And every year, the negatives only multiply. If I were to run the country and if I were 30 years younger, I would certainly impose Draconian laws and punitive measures to ensure that corruption does not pay. I would lay down that if a person has more than one child, then he would not be eligible for a government job or an elected position even in the Panchayat. And if Parliament is not supportive, I would acquire the power to suspend Parliament and pass this law. Yes I would do that. Because, Parliament is far too expensive, anyway.

Hard decisions are a must. No development is possible without human sacrifice. Be it Ashoka or Peter the Great, human lives perished but that is how their great empires flourished. In Chernobyl or Bhopal, human sacrifice was the cost that one had to pay for development. When aeroplanes first started, people were sacrificed. The development of rockets sacrificed scientists. So for any human development, there have been human sacrifices galore. So why do we shy away from paying a price for development ?

(As told to Sabina Sehgal and published in the National Daily, The Times of India on June 13, 1993)

Source : Orissa Review, July-1993

Back To The Future Versus Ahead To The Past !

Lagnajit Ray

As Odisha celebrates its 8th Panchayati Raj Divas on the 5th of March this year, it is imperative to appreciate that this institution has actually evolved since ancient times. Incidentally, other parts of our country will be celebrating National Panchayati Raj Divas on the 24th of April to mark the passing of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992, that came into force with effect from April 24, 1993 and consequently institutionalized Panchayati Raj at the village, block and district levels.

Panchayat as a term connotes governance by a group of five people. It is essentially an institution of local self government at the village level. The village council, chiefly comprising village elders, was empowered with administrative and judicial functions. Manusmriti, Mahabharat, Ramayana, Kautilyas Arthashastra and Sukracharya's Nitishastra all refer to the existence of Gram Sangha, which was not only very influential but a powerful institution as well. It also quintessentially symbolized two basic features of the Indian administrative system which continued right down the ages, that is, the importance of the villages as a primary unit and co-ordination between the two opposite trends – the relentless attempt towards centralization by the monarchy and a coexisting mechanism which advocated for decentralization, exuded by the resilient Gram Sangha.

The Rig Veda provides for one of the earliest illustrations of civilizations with democratic maxims, wherein the village was treated as the basic unit of administration. The ancient Indian states were mostly monarchies, but with two democratic institutions called the Sabha and the Samiti. The Sabha or Assembly is widely interpreted to be an assembly of the elected or the important chieftains of the tribe, while the Samiti seems to be the congregation of all the men of the tribe, convened only for very special occasions. The Sabha and the Samiti kept a check on the powers of the king, and were given an elevated position in the Rig Veda as the “daughters of the Hindu deity Prajapati”.

It cannot be decried that the village has played a pivotal role in the administration of our country since Vedic times. Village administration was a significant facet of the ancient Indian political system. During the Vedic Age, the Aryans had built up small villages and the administration of the area was looked after by the village councils. A system of collecting taxes also prevailed in the ancient society. Taxes such as Pali, Sulk and Bhaga were collected from the people. The revenue was spent for the benefit of the subjects. Several hymns of the Rig Veda are essentially prayers for the prosperity of the villages. Similarly, the Jatakas underline that the prosperity of a kingdom was only an amalgamation of the

collective prosperity of its villages. It may be borne in mind that both the Rig Veda and the Jatakas are oblivious towards the existence of towns or cities that may have flourished during the period. In all probability, since the erstwhile states or kingdoms were geographically small in size, it accentuated the significance of the villages. Even with the emergence of larger kingdoms, the village retained its pivotal role in the overall administrative set up. The Ramayana too mentions about a Samiti which was summoned by King Dasharatha for ratification of Ramachandra as his successor.

One should not view it as a digression when stating that while provincial governments presently convene conferences of the District Collectors to deliberate on issues relating to administration, in ancient times rulers are known to convene conferences of village headmen. Bindusara Maurya is known to have convened such meetings with village headmen, way back in the 3rd century before the birth of Christ. It is beyond the realm of doubt that the village as a unit was the real centre of both social and economic life, since it sustained the edifice of culture, economic prosperity and effective administration.

In the ancient period of Indian history, both protection and governance of village was entrusted to the village headman. Vedic literature and the Jatakas often refer to "Gramani", who was the village headman. Kautilya's Arthashastra too emphasizes the importance of the village headman, so do several extant inscriptions from almost all provinces. Of course, the terminology used for the village headman varied from place to place. While in northern India he was called "Gramika", in eastern Deccan he was called "Mununda", "Gramakula" in Maharashtra, "Gavunda" in Karnataka, "Mahantaka" in U.P. and so on. The village headman was invariably assisted by an accountant. However Shukraniti mentions about a magistrate (Sahasadhipati),

revenue collector (Bhagahara), toll collector (Sulkagraha) and gatekeeper (Pratihara) who assisted the village headman. This could perhaps be the genesis of Panchayat, the governance by five people.

There is enough historical proof to establish the existence of a primary village assembly (Grama Sabha / Sangha) which usually consisted of all the householders. Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have ample evidence in this regard. It is this assembly which elected the village executive or council. The famous Uttaramerur inscriptions dated around 920 A.D. pertaining to the reign of Parantaka Chola, refer to five sub-committees of the Grama Sabha which existed during the rule of Cholas. The entire responsibility of the village administration was in the hands of the Grama Sabha, which looked after the maintenance of peace, tanks, roads, public ponds, revenue collection, judiciary, education and temples. The village assemblies were in charge of the payment of taxes due from the villages to the treasury. They regulated public markets and helped people at times of famines and floods. They also provided provisions for education. The village assemblies possessed absolute authority over the affairs of villages. They maintained law and order in every village. There was also an Annual Committee (Samvatsara-variya) which consisted of village elders who had served in the sub-committees earlier. It is relevant to mention that the northern Indian prototype was different, where the village head was usually hereditary in nature. Village councils were fashioned like Panchayats and enjoyed tremendous powers. Maratha rulers, including Shivaji and Rajaram and Shahu are known to have refused entertaining legal matters if they came up directly. They are known to have remanded it to the concerned village panchayat. Thus, India had a long history of "governments by discussion," in which groups of people having common interests made decisions on matters that affected their lives through debate,

consultation, and voting. During Buddha's times, though the rulers were not elected and the king's son would succeed his father, the day-to-day decisions of governance were taken in village assemblies and such decisions were respected by the ruler.

In any case, there is not an iota of doubt that British brought about mammoth changes within the Indian society. Ancient Indian political system went through substantial modifications with the British incursion. The mechanisms of administration were deftly altered to enable the British Raj to thrive and consolidate itself. The establishment of East India Company rendered India into a colony where the princely states too gradually came under the dominion of the British Crown. The village administration, which had continued to flourish during the Hindu, Muslim and Maratha phases of Indian history, surviving the disintegration of dynasties and collapse of empires, gradually became redundant. The immoral and inordinate avarice of the East India Company caused a progressive decomposition of the gram panchayats. Furthermore, the consolidation of all executive and judicial powers by the British civil servants also dispossessed the village representatives of their venerable powers and influence. As Dr Annie Besant laments, "...the old panchayat was elected by the householders of the village and was responsible to them. Now the officers are responsible to government officials and their interest lies in pleasing them, not in satisfying the electors, as of old."

At the beginning of the 20th century, Gandhiji held that "The soul of India lives in its villages". He advocated for Gram Swaraj or village self-rule. Gandhiji wanted every village to be self-reliant, with an inherent ability to make adequate provision for all its own needs and requirements, like food, clothing, clean water, sanitation, housing, education and so on, including

self-governance and self-defence. He was convinced that full independence only meant that every village should be a republic with comprehensive powers. However, there was a yawning philosophical gulf between Gandhiji and virtually all other political leaders at the time of India's independence, including Nehru, for which reason the concept of Gram Swaraj was not incorporated into India's Constitution. Perhaps because there was no endorsement for Gram Swaraj, India's political, social and industrial organisation was wont to become "top down" rather than "bottom up". For Gandhiji, political and industrial life should necessarily focus on villages, "organized as countless oceanic circles", far from a pyramid with the millions of villagers at the bottom, buttressing an elite at the tapering apex.

After independence, our Constitution-makers postulated, in Article 40 in Part IV (Directive Principles of State Policy) of our Constitution that "The State shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self government." In all possibility, this necessitated the launching of the Community Development Programme in 1952 and the National Extension Service in 1953. The former was a pilot project to provide for a substantial augmentation in the country's agricultural programme, improvements in systems of communication, rural health and hygiene, rural education and also to initiate and direct a process of integrated culture change aimed at transforming the social and economic life of villagers.

Since the people in all the project areas responded enthusiastically and indeed much beyond the expectations of the Union Government, it emphasized the need for a rapid extension of the programme to other parts of the country. The Government therefore decided to launch the National Extension Service programme

on October 2, 1953. As the basic idea underlying both the Community Development and National Extension Service programmes was the same, the two were integrated under one agency at the Centre as well as in the states. Both the programmes were complementary and interwoven and ran concurrently. The idea behind the National Extension Service Programme was to cover the entire country within a period of about 10 years. Thus, by the end of the first Five-Year Plan period, in 1956, there were 248 blocks, covering around a fifth of the population. By the end the second five-year plan period, there were 3,000 blocks covering 70 per cent of the rural population. By 1964, the entire country had been covered. It was a major development in the sphere of rural reconstruction in India.

For a better understanding, it is necessary to explain the inter-relation between the Community Development Programme and the National Extension Service. Both had a uniform unit of operation called a development block, which represented an average of 100 villages, with a population of 60,000 to 70,000 persons, spread over an area of 150 to 170 square miles. However the National Extension Service blocks were not developed with the same intensity as areas under the Community Development blocks. Only selected National Extension Service blocks were taken up for intensive development work, based on visible results and where people's participation had been remarkably enthusiastic.

To examine the working of the above programmes and to suggest measures for their better working, the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee was appointed by the Government of India in January 1957. The Committee proposed for a system of democratic decentralisation having 3-tier - Gram Panchayat at the village level, Panchayat Samiti at the block level, and Zilla Parishad at the district level. The recommendations of the committee ushered in the

establishment of Panchayati Raj Institutions throughout India during the last part of 1950s and 1960s.

In the modern era, Panchayats are entrusted with the job of preparing micro-level plans for economic development and are responsible for promoting social justice and empowerment of disadvantaged and marginalized section of society. The roles and responsibilities of Panchayat Raj Institutions, post-73rd Amendment Act of 1992, incorporating the Eleventh Schedule, have increased manifold. These institutions are fundamentally obligated for decentralized planning and for intensifying the pace of development, by involving all people in this process, so that the felt needs of the primary stakeholders as well as their development aspirations are fulfilled.

At the village level, the Gram Panchayat is now entrusted with the task of making an in-depth inventory of the village, convening Gram Sabha, enlisting the felt needs of the inhabitants, prioritizing these needs on the basis of resources available and preparing a village plan which is submitted to Panchayat Samiti at the Block level.

The Panchayat Samiti is required to make a similar inventory for the whole Block, aggregate all village plans and prepare a block level plan which is submitted to the Zilla Parishad which in turn consolidates these plans, disaggregates them by item, year and cost and thereafter distributes the activities sector-wise to different local governmental departments, which function as the executive wing. The Zilla Parishad is also responsible for preparing the district plan which is presented before the district planning committee for approval. This comprises both a Perspective Plan and an Annual Action Plan.

The 73rd Amendment Act spells out several tenets which are required to be diligently taken up by the Panchayati Raj Institutions. These

include agriculture and its extension; land improvement, implementation of land reforms, land consolidation and soil conservation; minor irrigation, water management, watershed development; animal husbandry, dairying and poultry; fisheries; social forestry and farm forestry; minor forest produce; small scale industries, including food processing industries; Khadi, village and cottage industries; rural housing; drinking water; fuel and fodder; roads, culverts, bridges, ferries, waterways, and other means of communication; rural electrification including distribution of electricity; non-conventional energy sources; poverty alleviation programmes; education, including primary and secondary schools; adult and non-formal education; libraries; cultural activities; markets and fairs; health and sanitation, including hospitals, primary health centers and dispensaries; family welfare; women and child development; social welfare including welfare of the handicapped and mentally retarded; welfare of the weaker sections, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes; public distribution system; and, maintenance of community assets.

The policy ambience of the 73rd Amendment seems to be in conformity not merely to enshrining the Panchayati Raj system in the Constitution, which is a landmark in its structural evolution, but also to making the local bodies a functional necessity for activating the contribution of the rural population to development through the process of decentralization. It is not limited to the objective of mandating the elective process at lower levels confined to the normally assumed values of participation, and of promoting political education and so on; there is also an implicit accent on rapid development of rural areas through the use of science and technology. This thrust has been well brought out in the Article 243(G) of the Constitution which reads as follows:

“... the Legislature of a State may, by law, endow the Panchayats with such powers and

authority with respect to : a) The preparation of plans for economic development and social justice; (b) The implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them including those in relating to the matters listed in the Eleventh Schedule”.

Following the 73rd Amendment, all provinces, save Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland have constituted the elected bodies at different levels. As many as 238054 Gram Panchayats, 6312 Panchayat Samities and 584 Zilla Parishads have been made responsible for making plans for development of the area under their respective jurisdiction.

In spite of both the Union and Provincial Governments' zeal for democratic decentralization, the proposition to render decentralized planning efficacious via people's collaboration has not yet been accomplished with admirable success. This is manifest in the reality that although planning of development progress has been a vital function of the Panchayati Raj Institutions, these bodies have hardly had any significant impact in planning and development thus far.

For our immediate purpose, decentralization denotes a continuous and increasing devolution of decision making functions to people's institutions and therefore it is needed to be carried forward on the basis of the cardinal principle that what is appropriate at a given level of the three-tier system should be done at that level and not thrust upon from above.

The enactment of 73rd Amendment intended to transfer decision making power into the hands of local people and thereby enable them to play a more decisive role in the process of development. For the past ten years plus, we have been experimenting with decentralized administration, yet the results have neither been very heartening nor uniform. Provinces where literacy and awareness are higher appear to have

progressed well, while those falling in the lower spectrum of literacy and awareness lag behind. However, the real pivot lies with political will of provincial governments, which actually can make all the difference.

Empowerment of Panchayati Raj system with decision making power requires among other things, availability of local level data and information on various aspects. Availability of such information will certainly assist in taking decisions which are rationale and based on local needs. Further the element of cost and time overrun and the ease of use and interactive process necessitate Information Technology tools like Geographic Information System and the like.

The impending problems of the local development spectrum has been that of timely action, reliability of data, information flow, improper monitoring systems, cost effectiveness, appropriate resource management, lack of unidirectional objectives by agencies operating i.e duplication of efforts, and lack of proper funding mechanism. These inhibiting parameters have diluted the development efforts with practically no visible outcome in rural areas, even after 65 years of attaining independence.

There exist asymmetrical variations in planning because of hindrances present in the overall development programmes like a plethora of schemes; multiple agencies including NGOs providing the same services and that too in the same geographical areas; lack of access to proper information; personality based approach, where planning is largely based on the assumption, exposure, knowledge and experience of an individual called an “expert” or a group of such experts; lack of systematic tool, when planners are reluctant to use modern tools and techniques available.

Furthermore, very often, the success of a programme in a particular area gets irrationally and mindlessly duplicated in other regions, without

assessing the needs and resources of such regions. In all such cases, the participation of the local people becomes minimal and marginalized and thereby the approach neither reflects nor quantifies the actual need of the local people of an area in the planning process. Besides, planning is quite often guilty of being grounded on schemes rather than felt needs of the people and thereby becoming supply based instead of being demand based.

Repercussions of such fragmented planning processes are what can be called “sub-optimal” use of resources and dilution of development outcomes at the grassroots. At most times, resources are unevenly distributed, leading to the neglect of some areas and thereby leading to an increase in disparities. In the national scenario, at the district level, despite hundreds of crores of rupees being provided and with more than 2000 schemes in the central and state sectors, half-bred planning has bridled the outcome and impact of development schemes.

A coordinated planning process is therefore essential for a synchronized and expeditious development at the local level, and to facilitate convergence of schemes and programmes. A more consultative and participatory approach to planning can also facilitate the wider involvement of people and ensure that local needs are adequately addressed. The commitment to decentralized development must be reflected at every stage of planning, and demands the empowerment of communities to intervene effectively in planning process.

At this junction, one cannot but help recollect and recall and fervently wish to respond to Swami Dayanand Saraswati’s famous clarion call, “Back to the Vedas”, in the literal sense !

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Grama Sabha Sashaktikaran Karjyakrama : An Initiative Towards Strengthening Grassroot Democracy in Odisha

Saroj Kumar Dash

Gram Sabha by virtue of 73rd Constitutional Amendment received the statutory approval of being the core of grassroot democracy for participatory governance and decentralized democracy. This was a major step to give power to the people through legal empowerment of Gram Sabha. The underlying assumption is that the institution of Gram Sabha at the village level would ensure direct democracy with optimum community participation, transparency and accountability. In a way, it was a leap forward to translate the concept of “Gram Swarajya” of Mahatma Gandhi into reality. Recognizing the essence of participatory democracy at village level, the Government of India declared the year 1999-2000 as the “Year of Gram Sabha” to set the process of decentralized democracy in motion, with human development as the core objective of planning. This signified the importance and potential with which the institution has to serve as the basic unit of village governance and could be the most effective mechanism to involve people in planning, implementing and overseeing the village development activities.

It has however, always been a problem as to how this concept can be practiced effectively in such a way that the people will actively participate in the decision-making process at the grassroots level. In this context, Mahatma Gandhi had stated, “true democracy could not be worked by some men sitting at the top. It had to be

worked from below by the people of every village”.

Gram Sabha-A platform for Participatory Planning

The Constitution of India therefore gave specific importance to the institution of village / gram panchayat by enjoining that it shall be the endeavour of the State to take steps to strengthen the village panchayats. Gram Sabha is endowed with the power to participate in preparing village level plan, implementation and monitor the process, asking for accountability, transparency and information regarding planning and budgeting. Effective functioning of Palli Sabha / Gram Sabha will only be possible when the common people will start recognising its importance and their role in it. However, lack of awareness among the people often contributes to limited presence and participation in the conduct of Palli Sabha / Gram Sabha. Thus there is a need to sensitize, mobilize and educate the community members and the elected representative to understand the importance of Palli Sabha / Gram Sabha, its role and significance in the whole process of sustainable development.

Over the last few decades, these institutions of public interest lost some of their momentum, getting disconnected with the people they were meant for. Communities were oblivious of their significance and often, these meetings were

held with limited attendance. Overall, a feeling of mistrust and doubt was created regarding their outcomes.

Gram Sabha Shasaktikaran Karjyakrama (GSSK)-2012

Realizing these shortcomings and reconnecting the Sabha to Gram, something historic took place in Odisha during the month of October, 2012. This “October revolution” in Odisha is titled as “Gram Sabha Sashaktikaran Karjyakrama (GSSK)” - an initiative of Panchayati Raj Department, Govt. of Odisha. The conceptualisation and implementation of historical Gram Sabha Sashaktikaran Karjyakrama 2012 was launched on 2nd October across the State. This was an historical event which lasted 45 days and was mainly conducted through Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha. It encompassed the drive for social mobilisation and enhancing institutional capacity of the PRIs through administrative and technical support. This was a major step in strengthening local self governance.

This programme provided a platform to rural people to get a link up to the block and district level in order to promote participatory planning and democracy. A host of IEC activities have been implemented at the Village/Gram Panchayat, Block and District level including distribution of Chirkuts (invitation cards) to each households, hoardings, banners, leaflets, miking, print and electronic advertisements, street plays, use of local and traditional folk media, Radio/TV Jingles, signature songs in Odiya and local dialect and appeal letters etc. to inform and mobilise the people for effective conduct of Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha. It was also aimed that the preparation and timely submission of village level plans compiled at the Gram Panchayat level will enable better fund flow and effective utilization. The conduct of Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha in a phased manner across the state within a stipulated time frame has recorded over 99.44 percent success in terms of the number of Palli Sabha

conducted and 97.37 percent with regard to the conduct of Gram Sabha. Media played a pro-active role to generate awareness and make best possible coverage of the news across the State from the Panchayat level to the State level. The technical support provided by a dedicated team at the State level and the pro-activeness of the district/block administration with the cooperation of the PRIs made the campaign effective and peaceful.

The Panchayati Raj Department, Govt. of Odisha was the nodal agency to facilitate the conduct of Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha in 6236 Gram Panchayats. An effort was made to bridge the gap in government provisions and their perception among the rural people. GSSK 2012 attempted to resurrect all the essentials of organizing a successful Palli Sabba and Gram Sabha through social mobilization, individual and collective awareness building and information dissemination to involve the people in the process. The effort also consisted of facilitation for creation of leadership from among the marginalized section of the community. To provide real substance to grass root governance, special effort was put in ensuring participation of women and socially excluded communities in the Gram Sabha meeting.

Significant Feature of GSSK 2012

The communication strategy adopted a multi-pronged approach to mobilize the rural people to participate in the conduct of Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha. A comprehensive media plan supported the campaign with release of advertisements, messages from political leaders and details on the meeting. A unique feature was added as precursor to Gram Sabha, providing background information through a day-long Information Education and Communication (IEC) Mela (fair). On the occasion, a walk-through exhibition, cultural event and interaction with officials from line departments was organized.

For the first time in Odisha all the Gram Sabhas conducted during the campaign period have been video recorded which ensured transparency and strengthened the Gram Sabhas, particularly in the tribal area.

Another notable feature of the campaign was capturing the data generated in the Gram Sabha, analysis and utilising the data meaningfully for planning and the implementation for different flagship programmes namely MGNREGS, Indira Awas Yojana, BRGF, CC Road and GGY for the financial year 2013-14 onwards.

The success of the campaign, apart from registering massive turnout was the collaborative partnership of PR Department with seven line departments of Women and Child Development, Health and Family Welfare, School and Mass Education, Rural Development, Schedule Tribe and Schedule Caste, Tourism and Culture, Agriculture and Information and Public Relations. A collective energy enveloped the State, transcending official roles and bringing the community closer. In a never before effort, the information technology was used to create greater efficiency and transparency.

The success of the campaign is being seen by PR Department as a new beginning and that will empower strong community awareness, allowing people to partner the government in drawing its own agenda for development in the coming years. A strong data base laid the foundation for all future and perspective data mining and generation of reports for planning, implementation and monitoring of lead programmes of P.R Department.

Highlights of the GSSK 2012 and its Achievement

- 44294 Palli Sabha conducted (99.44% of the total planned Palli Sabha) 2-12 October 2012.
- 61011 EC Mela conducted (97.84% Of the total planned IEC Mela).

- 6072 Gram Sabhas conducted (97.37% of the total planned Gram Sabha in 6236 Gram Panchayat).
- Average attendance in Palli Sabha varies from 30% to 80 % while in Gram Sabha varies from 20% to 40% across the State.
- 1,38,531 scanned PDF files from Gram Sabha uploaded.
- 84,76,041 projects entered in GSSK web site and shared with the District and Blocks for their perspective plan for 2013-14 onwards.

The Annual Budget of Govt. of Odisha for the year 2013-14 have provisioned funds under the scheme of Grama Sabha Shasaktikaran in order to institutionalise Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha in campaign mode from the year 2013-14. Importantly, the projects as identified under the various flagship programmes have found its place as well as due recognition in Annual Action Plan – 2013-14 of Gram resulting, people faith in governance system.

Conclusion

GSSK - 2012 is the major social mobilization initiative in the State to ensure participatory inclusive planning by the people. This initiative resulted in discussion of issues of social and economic significance in such gatherings. It may be one of the first instances in Indian History of Local-self Governance that a Panchayat is planning for its own development rather than being at the receiving end of the top-down planning approach. This endeavour has reiterated the fact that Gram Sabha can become a dynamic institution working towards the development of the village if given adequate support and power. After all with power, goes responsibility and responsibility generates interest and involvement.

Saroj Kumar Dash, Deputy Director, SIRD, Bhubaneswar.

Development and Change in Odisha: Some Issues

Prafulla Kumar Dhal

Odisha has witnessed rapid development and changes in its socio-economic, political and cultural spheres since last one decade. The economic growth rate is consistent and remains above the national average. Poverty has reduced from 57.2 % in 2004-2005 to 37 % in 2009-10. The State aims to achieve 9% growth during the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-2017) and the budgetary allocation for the 12th plan is over 1.24 lakh crore. In this backdrop, it is pertinent to emphasize on some of the pressing issues while achieving economic growth. This paper highlights some of these issues for the interest of the public. Since beginning of the new millennium, the development interventions are based on some targets with reforms packages. One such target is popularly known as Millennium Development Goals (MDG) adopted by the United Nations for nation states of the globe to follow up and integrate them into national and regional plans and tryst to achieve those goals in time-bound manner. Only two years are left for UNMDG to complete its 15 year period, in 2015. What are the real achievements during these fifteen years ? This requires a serious introspection by those who are seriously concerned with development and change, basic human rights, entitlements to the poor and welfare of people in India and elsewhere. This paper highlights some of the issues for the

interest of the general people of Odisha to ponder over.

Sanitation and Health:

India spends 6 % of its GDP annually to meet the health burdens due to lack of basic sanitation and hygiene to its population (UNICEF, WHO et al.). As per the census data, in 2001, total census households were 98.73 lakh in Odisha. This has increased to 127.59 lakh in 2011. In 2001, total population of the state was 3.68 crore and this has increased to 4.19 crore in 2011. In the fields of the basic sanitation, toilet coverage is one of the minimum parameters set out by the government to be achieved 100% by 2015. But the toilet coverage in our households is really very pathetic one if one studies the trends since 2001 census.

Currently little less than one crore households (98.55 lakhs) have not covered with toilets. Over 80% of households those are covered with toilets are not using them. This is a major challenge for Odisha to achieve sustainable sanitation. In 2001, households not covered with toilets were 85.1 % (83.33 lakh HH). In census 2011, households in the State not having toilets, is 77.6 % (98.55 lakh HH). Though the households not having toilets in percentile terms shown as decreased from 85.1 % to 77.6 %, in

census 2011, in absolute numbers, this has increased from 83.33 lakhs HH to 98.55 lakhs, during 2001 to 2011 period. Over 28 lakh HH got added to total households in the State during the period from 2001 to 2011 as new households. Correspondingly, over 15 lakh households not having toilets also got added, during this period.

If one compares the growth rate of the toilets in households in Odisha, it is yet very dismal. In percentile terms, households not having toilet have decreased to 77.6 % in 2011 which indicated the rate of increase in toilet is only 7.5 % over 10 years time. This further indicates the annual growth rate of toilets in the State limited to 0.75 % only. If business as usual continues, then one can better imagine when can we meet the Millenium Development Goals in Odisha and ensure basic sanitation rights to all. Per year, based on the census figures, we find some 1,40,000 odd toilets gets constructed in the state for individual households. This means Odisha has to wait till 2080 to achieve the goals of basic sanitation rights to all. Not in 2015 as originally the goal set out by the UNMDG-2015 in the year 2000. This is despite of the fact that, India is having the world's largest toilet movement under the banner of Nirmal Bharat Aaviyan (NBA) / TSC on a subsidized mode. The State Government has undertaken a number of innovative steps like SANJOG, NGP and others to scale up the toilet coverage matching to the UNMDG year. But demand for the toilet – the most important life saving and economic household assets for the families, is not increasing. A crores of rupees earmarked by the Government as subsidies on this head as poor men's entitlements remain unreachable to common people. Now time has come to understand a basic fact that subsidies can not generate demands for toilet unless toilet solutions are innovated and marketed. While providing toilet solutions to

people as sanitation measures is important, the government and civil society and research institutes now need to think seriously on solutions for toilets from technical, economic, behavioral and cultural perspectives of people which can make toilets to effectively function and generate demands and in turn will definitely ensure sustainable sanitation in Odisha.

Saving Water from Waste is a Challenge:

Our primary health care continues to be a major challenges before the state government. While life style diseases have created havocs, yet new challenges are being increasingly felt by the people due to the effects of climate changes. Our water sources - the rivers, surface and ground water are increasingly getting depleted and polluted. The aquifers are getting dried up. The very occurrence of waterborne and vector borne diseases is more frequent than earlier. This has become universal in the state, not limited to few pockets of state as before. While our health care infrastructures are grossly inadequate in terms health care centers to cater to the needs of the people in urban and rural areas, for men and women and children, availability of the minimum doctors in hospitals.

Water security and food security is a bigger challenges before the government and civil society to deal with in coming years. Air pollution has serious effects on our lives. As all of us know, cleanliness is linked to sustainable waste management that envisages reduction of waste, recycle and reuse of waste. It is linked to toilet coverage by all. It is linked to environmental cleanness. It is about giving technical, financial and behavioral solutions to people. It is about protecting our natural resources from pollution with stringent laws and public actions. It requires massive sensitization of general public on how waste become hazardous and becomes

disastrous in our daily life if not timely treated. It is a fact that Odisha has 11 river basins and they are polluted by industries and others. Basins need to be protected. The State has 103 ULBs which pollute more than 80 major rivers and rivulets that flow nearby generating wastes and not treating them properly. Though it is stated by the Central Ground Water Board Authority (CGWB) that the State possesses 11 % of country's and only 18 % of this been utilized till date, the very methods of the ground water assessment is questioned by experts. On the top of this, increasing ground water pollution due to faster depletion is worrisome phenomena in the State today. Water is a state subject and Odisha State Pollution Control Board is to regulate the water conditions. But remain ineffective. Water consuming companies never felt the very concept of water positive and water neutrality when they use the water. Large number of studies has found how the untreated solid waste has become more dangerous to both surface and ground water pollution.

The Government both at center and at state level has shown greater concerns and experts are seriously engaged in debates over ideas on how to protect water form pollutants and wastes of all types. But all of them never translated into action as it lacks people's participation. To remain clean is a question of personal habit and that habits to form a culture and that culture should get transferred inter generationally at family and community level. Then only government efforts and policies can be implemented. Unfortunately in waste management the government has centralized the actions within its own structural matrix. There is no space for the public to participate except being a victim of the waste. Per capita waste is increasing in the state both in urban and rural areas and the state has not set up any treatment plants for the domestic solid waste

that gets generated by the people. However waste treatment is one of the enterprising fields can generate employment for the people.

One of the major problems that cleanness drives and waste management not taking place in Odisha is probably that most of the critical stakeholders need to understand that if we do not generate cleanness and manage the waste properly now, the climate change and spell of extreme weathers will become fatal to our daily lives and to question our very survival on this earth. We need to understand how our rivers are polluted, dried and dead due to massive industrial and urban waste that we generate. We need understand how our ground water is increasingly diminishing and polluting due to man made wastes in Odisha. We need to understand how our air is polluted and become fatal to our breathing and health. We need to understand the key factors of soils and land degradation and faster desertification that have questioned our very food and livelihood security. Cleanness has many connotations and need to be understood and internalized by the common people so that we can maintain the principle of "reduce, recycle and reuse" as part of the waste management.

Environment and Poverty:

To reduce poverty is one of the vital sustainable goals for the governments to achieve. Currently, the debate over poverty is now centered on its methodology to measure poverty properly and estimate and identify the real poor households in order to target them in government schemes. The most unfortunate part in this process is that in these two areas of poverty debate it is now looking like a never ending process due to political and economic condition so of the country today. On the other hand conception of poverty has got expanded from mere measurement of household income level to

meet two square meals a day to the study of households' consumption pattern and consumer choices and now moved to find out how people are lacked with their fundamental rights and of basic minimum needs for their survival. Poverty debate is now moved from hunger to deprivation areas. This is for the reason that inclusive growth and development is adopted by the Government so that everybody can get access to market and take part on the government programmes and be inclusive and developed. But new forms of exclusion have emerged in the processes. These exclusion needs to be stopped.

Poverty is squarely linked to environment degradation. The schemes adopted by the Government are proved both a hope and distress. In MGNREGS while water bodies are created and protected and environment concerns are addressed to some extent, it has brought new challenges for agriculture sectors and cottage industries and small enterprises due to rise of labour price and idle of human power. Sustainable agriculture now becomes a challenge.

Environment degradation has gone to a pick in the State and debate still continues whether we should go for industry or sustain our environment. People's protests are increasing in the state. Yet we do not have any clear cut direction to where to go and what to do. State's biodiversity lose is rampant which has brought newer challenges on livelihood system of people. Coastal livelihood and biodiversity and climate change are serious issues required to be understood and vital and rare species on earth like mangroves needs to be preserved. Agriculture sector still carries the burden of poverty as more than 70 % are still depending upon agriculture for survival and growth. Soil erosion, land degradation, desertification, soils acidity are issues besides majority of farming community are landless farmers, use of pesticides and fertilizers are

increasing day by day in spite of we propagate organic framing.

High Cost and Low Quality of Education:

In basic education, issues that were in years earlier are still continuing today. While schools and school buildings are increased in numbers, nutritional supports through the school channels are linked to children, gross enrollment has increased and drop-outs rate have decreased, yet accesses to education remains a biggest challenge due to new conditions are posed before the public. Education planners usually set norms of setting up schools to cater the needs of education. Now a new trend has emerged where more and more private schools in the name of quality of education are hugely set up in rural and urban areas. Government schools are suffering due to want of good quality teachers to teach in the schools. At one end the government school teachers are physically and mentally spend time in streets for getting their dues and payments. On the other hands the parents and guardians are protesting fee hikes by the private schools. Common to both the private and government schools a new teaching structures have permanently placed between the students and schools- the private tuition. This is the additional cost been met by the parents. Yet quality of education is not improving. Engineering colleges are being closed due to lack of students. Majority of the engineering and management colleges fails to fill up 50% of their seats. This year some 50000 seats are not filled up by the colleges. Similarly 50-60 % of the management and engineering passed out students who have joined industries are failed to perform and remain delinked to the requirements of the industries. Though the skill development programmes are devised and imparted to youths and a good programmes for the state, this should be very purposive and productive. External environment for the youths

and children of Odisha is hostile and conflict ridden and remain very insecure for them. Gender disparity in education is still persists. Youths should be oriented with new areas of professionalism and enterprises. For example, in 2011 India has received 6.29 million foreign tourists compared to USA 62.3 million and France 79.5 million. In Odisha it is limited to less than even 20000 despite of the state endowed with ecological and cultural and geographical diversities which is perfectly poised for travel industries and hospitality. Secondly, if one analyses experts in Odisha started declining which will have a negative impact of state GDP. This needs to be revived besides making Odisha self sufficient in many areas such as fishery, in agricultural and horticultural fields. Shortage of agricultural labours in Odisha is a cause of concern and can our youths be able to change this situation now. If not, the state will face huge economic problems in coming years.

Governance Deficit:

We have serious issues of governance deficit while instruments like PIL, RTI, and E-governance etc have empowered general citizens to ask for governmental accountability. Use of technology to deliver and monitor the public services at all levels is initiated. Identification of genuine poor, even after the Adhar Cards and NPR, still not been possible for which pilferages and diversion of entitlements take place in large scale. Most of our public policies are facing problems of interpretations by the executives those who implement them. The conceptual meaning and operational meaning of a public policy becoming different and separate for which desired results are failed to arrive in society. While last decades target led interventions has brought us to point we have now different types of statistics yet no one is correct in public perception and all are questionable. Inequality in wealth and inequality in opportunity are increasing at a time

when we are advocating incisive growth and society. Time has come we need to understand structural issues of poverty and work on them to solve with innovative approaches.

Defamed Civil Society Groups:

In 1980s, 1990s and early of 21st century, civil society groups were in fore front of the human development movement. Many progressive policies that the government has devised after 1990s are mainly due to the influence of the NGOs and civil society activists. But towards mid 1990s when the new economic policies are adopted and open market economy came to India, new conditions were set before the NGOs and civil society groups to undertake their activities where NGOs failed to give pace to the changing times and requirements. Many forms of civil society members surfaced under the guise of NGOs and claimed partnership in sustainable development before the government. In the process, NGOs failed to participate in PPP mode projects, tendering and consultancy areas due to lack of string institutional research base. More and more NGOs are blacklisted by the government and NGO movement has lost its ground completely. Now time has come where NGO's credibility has to be renewed and workable partnership with government and market forces need to be devised in the state.

Affordable Housing and Urban Poverty:

Urbanization has been proved to be a growth engine for any country or State. China's economic success is attributed to its high urbanization. In India states having more urban population are reporting less poverty compared to states having list urbanization. Rapid urbanization is a challenge for Odisha yet this is an opportunity to its development. Odisha is the least urbanized State in the country. Only 16.95 % of its population is the urban population

compared to national average of 31 % as per the 2011 Census. One of the bigger challenges is the urbanization and urban poverty in Odisha growing faster. Unplanned urbanization in the state is a serious concern, although recently government is very proactive for the planned urbanization. To provide the basic services like water and sanitation and dwelling units and affordable housing to urban poor is yet a biggest challenge. Only 15 Urban Local Bodies (ULB) are reporting slums in Odisha out of 103 ULBs and showing 30 % of Odisha's urban people are in slums. The cities and towns do not report slums in successive population censuses, are actually slum like towns and cities in comparison with national standards. By 2030 when over 40 % population will be residing in urban areas as projected by the government, the efficiency of our city managers and urban planners are very critical to meet the situation then. Government need to be prepared now to meet the urban requirements. Government's efforts to ensure affordable dwellings through property rights to slums dwellers, BSUP (JNNURM), IHSDP, Low cost

housing and EWS are laudable but it requires capacity of ULBs to implement. But ULBs in Odisha are grossly lacking their capacity to understand minimum reforms agenda and basics of city and urban management.

Conclusion:

History of state system has established a fact that it gives solution to people in pursuit of their happiness. But now state is more and more becoming a problem for people than solutions for the pursuit of happiness of few. Our democratic culture and norms are being threatened in multiparty political system. Both Opposition and Treasury Bench have patronized the state apparatus and remain far away from the real issues that people are facing. This is a biggest challenge for the state like Odisha.

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Biju Patnaik : “Builder of Modern Odisha”

Rabindra Kumar Behuria

Bijyananda Patnaik popularly known as Biju Patnaik was born in Cuttack, Odisha on March 5, 1916. His father was Laxminarayan Patnaik and mother was Ashalata Ray. Although his father was in Judicial Service, he was a great nationalist and prominent Leader of the Odia Movement. He was closely associated with two architects of Modern Odisha – Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das and Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das. Biju Babu having the imagination and vision of Viswakabi Rabindra Nath Tagore pledged to revive the glory of the days of emperor Kharavela. He recalled the days when Kalinga was the greatest empire of India extending from Ganga to Godavari. Its army had thrown the foes across the border of India. It was the largest maritime power ever known in the world whose merchant sons had to brave the rivers and seas to establish commercial trade link with Java, Sumatra, Bali, Borneo and many other South East Asian Countries and made Kalinga Empire affluent. The epoch also witnessed a galaxy of architectural marvels at Puri, Konark and Bhubaneswer. Besides, his father’s ideal, fearlessness and sense of nationalism and wisdom sharpened Biju’s personality to withstand the test of time.

From his school days, Biju Babu blossomed as a versatile genius. Biju had his early education in Mission Primary School (Christ Collegiate School) at Cuttack. In 1927 he joined the famous Ravenshaw Collegiate School, where

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was once a student. In 1932 he passed Matriculation with first division and got admitted into the intermediate Science Class of the famous Ravenshaw College. During his College days Biju first saw Mahatma Gandhi in 1927 during the ‘Khadi Tour’ to Odisha and came under his spell. He was assaulted by a British Police officer as he tried to get a glimpse of the Mahatma, who was visiting Cuttack. Biju discontinued his studies for B.Sc degree to undergo training as a pilot at the Aeronautic Training Institute of India Delhi flying club. In fact as a child Biju was fascinated by aeroplanes and from his school days, he had decided to make a career in flying. Maharaja Krushna Chandra Dev of Paralakhemundi came to his rescue by providing him financial assistance for his study. Biju completed his pilot training and carved out a permanent niche for himself as the most courageous and brave pilot of the country was popularly known as second Kharavela and hero of modern Kalinga. He joined the Indian National Airways and became its ace pilot. He also served as the head of the ‘Air Transport Command’ during the years of 1940-42.

In 1942, Biju decided to join the Quit India Movement to make India free. He became a leader of underground Congress Movement with Jaya Prakash Narain and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia and underwent imprisonment during 1942-45. Aruna Asaf Ali recalling Biju’s role during

this period mentions: ‘Among the thousands who came forward to take up challenge, Biju Patnaik, Chief Pilot of the Dalmia Jain Airways was one of the most fearless and veritable dare devil) who mobilised few pilots and inspired them to help the underground Directorate”...(ADYAPI, Paradip Port., 1987).

As a young Ulysses of Odisha, Biju paddled to Peshawar (4000 kms on road) from Cuttack on his bicycle with his friends Bhramarbar Sahoo and Amar Dey. The year 1947 brought special distinction to Biju. Hardly three weeks before India’s independence at the behest of Pandit Jawaharlal Nerhu, Biju startled the world by braving a perilous air voyage to Indonesia on 22.7.1947 in his post world war Vantage Dacota to rescue Sultan Sjaharir, the then Prime Minister of Indonesia and flew him back to Delhi on 24.07.1947. His unique adventure and commitment to Indonesia’s independence (from the Dutch Occupation) was greatly acknowledged and he was crowned with Indonesia's highest national honour i.e “Bhoomi Putra”.

Again hardly six weeks after India’s Independence, Biju was summoned by the Prime Minister Pandit Nehru to thwart Pakistan’s sinister design of occupying Kashmir. The king of Kashmir had already signed the instrument of Accession with India on 26.10.1947, but Pakistan had by then, forcibly occupied a major chunk and was advancing towards Srinagar. Even on hours delay would have lost India heavily. At this critical juncture, Biju landed in Srinagar Air Port with the first platoon of troop on 27.10.1947 at 10 a.m braving all possible hazard. Pakistan was forced to recede.

In the year 1946 Biju Babu was elected uncontested to the Orissa Legislative Assembly from North Cuttack Constituency. In 1952 and 1957 he won from Bhanjanager and Jagannath Prasad and Sorada respectively. On 13th February 1961 Biju Babu assumed the President

ship of the State Congress. The Congress party captured 82 seats out of 140 securing 45% of the total votes polled and he won from Choudwar Constituency. The poll verdict was astounding and as a reward for securing absolute majority for the Congress first time in the Legislature, Biju Babu took over as the Chief Minister on 23rd June, 1961. On 7th May 1971 he was nominated to the Rajya Sabha. Biju Babu was elected to Odisha Legislative Assembly in 1971 in a by-election from Rajanagar again and became the leader of the opposition. In 1977 he won from the Kendrapara Lok Sabha Constituency and became the Union Minister for Steel and Mines from 1977 to 1979 and Union Minister for Steel and Mines and Coal from July 1979 to January 1980. He was the member of the Lok Sabha from 1980-85. In 1985 he resigned his Lok Sabha seat to contest from Bhubaneswar Assembly Constituency and became the Leader of the Opposition in Orissa Legislative Assembly. In 1990 Assembly polls he steered his Party Janata Dal into victory and became the Chief Minister of Odisha for the second time. It is worth mentioning that his party could secure 123 seats out of 147 and reduced the main opposition party strength to 10 as against the required number of 15. Biju Babu contested the 11th Lok Sabha Election (1996) from Aska and Cuttack Constituencies and won both the seats. Later he resigned from Cuttack Parliamentary Seat.

Biju Babu’s first spell of Chief Minister ship lasted for only 15 months but during this short period he made a remarkable achievement in the history of Orissa by giving his people a powerful and efficient administration. The following were some of his outstanding contributions:

- The Choudwar and Barbil Industrial Belt,
- The Cuttack-Jagatpur Mahanadi High way Bridge,
- The Bhubaneswar Air- Port,
- Regional College of Education at Bhubaneswar,

- The Orissa Aviation Centre,
- Paradeep Port,
- The MIG factory at Sunabeda,
- Thermal Power Plant at Talcher,
- Hydroelectric Project at Balimela,
- The Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology,
- Engineering and Medical College at Burla,
- The Orissa State Planning Board,
- Reorganisation of districts,
- Ferro Silcon complex at Theruvali,
- Engineering College at Rourkela,
- Express Highway linking Daitari with Paradeep,
- Sainik School at Bhubaneswar,
- Regional Research Laboratory of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Orissa,
- Three-tier Panchayati Raj system.

Besides he was preoccupied with Orissa's heroic tradition and heritage. He floated the Kalinga card the enthuse the youth. In 1951, the UNESCO instituted the Kalinga Prize for popularisation of science with a generous grant from Biju Patnaik and eventually he became the Founder President of the Kalinga Foundation Trust. He even wanted the Utkal University to be named as the University of Kalinga. In his Kalinga Industrial empire he had set up the Orissa Textile Mills, the Kalinga Tubes, Kalinga Tiles, Kalinga Iron Works, Kalinga Airlines, Kalinga Refractories etc. with a view to highlighting the State potential.

During the second phase of his Chief Ministership i.e. from 5.3.1990 to 15.3.1995 his thought squarely lay on the upliftment of women, tribal development, participation of NRI's in furthering the state economy. He increased the number of districts from 13 to 30. He also fixed the minimum labour charges at Rs.25/-. He took a revolutionary step to reserve 33 percent of seats for women in the three-tier of the Panchayati Raj

system. A second Steel Plant in the State remained one of his unfulfilled dreams. During Emergency he was one of many leaders arrested and jailed by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. As a mark of his profound love for Panchayati Raj institution, the people of Orissa observe his Birth Day (March 5) as Panchayati Raj Divas.

The Legendary man of Orissa passed a way of Cardio-respiratory failure in New Delhi on April 17, 1997. With his departure, an era has ended in Orissa Politics. It is worth recapitulating the history of this magnetic personality. Biju Patnaik was a big man with a great mind and the country is yet to appreciate his thoughts and contributions that has shaped the thinking of generations here in the State and in the nation. The Biju Patnaik International Air Port renamed by Hon'ble Prime Minister on 17.04.1998, the Biju Patnaik National Steel Institute (BPNSI), and the Biju Patnaik University of Technology (BPUT) are some of the modern monuments which recall the spirit of Biju Babu. The Biju phenomenon continues unabated when regional outfit was constituted under the banner- Biju Janata Dal. In the words of Manoj Das, "perhaps Biju Patnaik was having a developed inner self which was known to a very few of his fellow beings. He seems to have achieved many things in one life which might be impossible to achieve in a number of lives."

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Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Grassroot Planning : Some Issues and Concerns

Dr. Dasarathi Bhuiyan

The ideas of 'decentralised planning', 'planning from below', 'peoples' participation in planning', 'multi-level planning', 'grass roots planning', 'Planning at Panchayat level', etc. have been emphasized and mentioned time and again in many Plan documents. But the Community Development Programme of 1950s and the establishment of the Panchayati Raj institutions on the recommendations of the Mehta Committee in 1959 are the most comprehensive attempts at putting the idea of grass roots planning into action keeping in mind the socio-economic and cultural milieu of India.

In a vast country like India, with considerable degree of diversity between regions, the policy of centralised planning for rural development has thrown up a number of problems. *First*, there are increasing inequalities especially between regions and 'between rural and urban areas. *Secondly*, centralisation in plan formulation has kept also outside large groups of people from the development process while at the same time there has been inadequate use of local resources and specialist manpower. *Third* problem is that of plan implementation, monitoring and project execution. Decentralisation and peoples' participation, it is now increasingly realised, are essential for planning to remove the deficiencies of iniquitous growth, unemployment and tardy implementation. Therefore, ever since Independence there has

been a strong trend in the country in support of democratic decentralisation of the developmental process through planning. Broadly, the concept of democratic decentralisation means the involvement of the people at various stages of plan formulation and implementation. Under such a scheme of things developmental planning would have to be done at the Central level, at the State level and at levels below the State, that is at the Block and the village levels. It is only then that planning can become truly a national endeavour.

Development functions at grass root level get highly fragmented among numerous departments and agencies. Generally, development activities are handled by various departments, each having their own hierarchies. Also, non-departmental public agencies like commercial banks, input corporations, marketing agencies, etc. also operate at the district and sub-district levels. Immense benefits can be reaped by integrating and coordinating these individual efforts into a consistent regional plan framework. This requires the setting up of planning agency which can benefit from the fact that most departments and agencies have their regional offices located at the district level. Grass root planning is therefore necessary for coordination, consistency and spatial planning.

Another reason in favour of Grass root planning for rural development arises from the need to allow for diversity and different levels of

development between regions. A single plan even, at the state level, it is argued, cannot account for the great diversity in natural resources, terrain, soil and water availability, skills and cultural factors. It is therefore desirable that planning is decentralised at least up to the district level so that effective use can be made of local resources after identifying local needs and problems. To plan at a centralised level would mean either the neglect of diversity or would involve costly collection of data and information from a large area and the processing of such voluminous amount of information to evolve a consistent and integrated plan. Decentralised planning would therefore reduce information costs and allow planning to be of manageable size while at the same time accounting for regional needs and resources. However, although these arguments related to spatial planning and decentralized planning are undoubtedly important, the emphasis on sub-state level planning in India has primarily been the outcome of political values. The influence of Gandhian ideals of self-managing small communities has underlined many of the efforts at decentralisation of planning. In fact the ideas of “planning from below” or “grass roots planning” have been stated time and again since the inception of planning process in India. People’s participation, from the stage of setting up of priorities to the stage of plan implementation, has been propagated not only as a means of effective planning but also as an end in itself. Planning at the district and lower levels has been seen as an input to the process of strengthening democracy in this country.

India is a country of villages. Small communities like the villages had limited technical, material and financial resources. This needed the establishment of an extension organisation which would give developmental support to the villagers. The initiatives of village people had to be supported by the State. Therefore the two key

elements of the Panchayati Raj system is people’s initiative and participation encouraged and aided by an extension organization like the Gram Panchayats at village level, Panchayat Samitis at Block level and Zilla Parishads at District level. This, it was felt, would enable the mobilisation of local resources, including manpower, and promote the percolation of modern technology and resources through the extension agencies.

To support the initiatives taken by the village community the extension organisation was set up under the Community Development Programme in 1950 created the Community Development block as the key unit of the structure. It was put under the administrative control of a Block Development Officer (BDO) and the BDO was assisted by a multi-disciplinary team of extension officers for different functional areas like agriculture, animal husbandry, irrigation and works, cooperation, social education, village industries etc. It was stressed that the block level set up was a “medium” through which the various developmental departments would function so as to synchronise their efforts and reach the people. To take an example from agriculture, what the block level meant in practice was that extension would be used to motivate farmers to adopt improved techniques and also to develop the necessary infrastructure through utilisation of rural manpower.

The justification behind block level structure was as follows: “The peasant’s life is not cut into segments, in the way the government’s activities are apt to be; the approach to the villager has, therefore, to be a co-ordinated one, and thus to comprehend his whole life. Such an approach has to be made, not through a multiplicity of departmental’ officials, but through an agent common at least to the principal departments engaged in rural work”. The block level administrative structure was created in order to achieve the village development.

The fundamental viewpoint underlying the block level strategy was the belief that “all aspects of rural life are interrelated and no lasting results can be achieved if individual aspects of it are dealt in isolation. It was always stressed that the economic aspects of village life cannot be detached from the broader social aspects and that agricultural development is inextricably linked up with a whole set of social problems. Therefore, social change to enable economic development was central to this Development strategy.

The Panchayati Raj system, as we have seen, has two pillars: people’s participation and governmental ‘extension’. Whereas the extension agencies—the Block, the VLWs, etc.—were organised fairly early and planned budgetary allocations were made, the important aspect of people’s participation was tackled only a little later. The most, important step in this direction was the question of popular participation in the developmental programmes. Therefore the Community Development Programme was replaced by Panchayati Raj Institutions in order to enable the people to participate in the developmental programmes.

The recommendations of the Mehta Committee, brought out under the title “Report of the Team for the Study of Community Projects and National Extension Service”, led to the establishment of a three tier structure for Panchayati Raj institutions with elected Panchayats at the village level, an executive body called the Panchayat Samiti at the block level and an advisory body called as Zilla Parishad at the district level. These local bodies were to be statutory and largely elected bodies with necessary resources, power and authority devolved on them and assisted by a decentralised administrative system working under their control. The team also recommended that the basic unit of democratic decentralisation should be located

at the Block/Samiti level. The Panchayat Samitis, with a jurisdiction co-extensive with a development block, were entrusted all these development tasks which the block was to undertake under the CDP.

It was expected that planning under the Panchayati Raj institutions will be an effective one. But it was not much of a success. Possibly this was not due to any innate weakness in the decentralisation process. The main cause seems to be that decentralisation did not go far enough. The Panchayati Raj institutions were never really given a chance to actively engage in local planning. Their operations were severely restricted on account of four principal factors: 1) lack of experience, skill and help in planning; 2) domination by the bureaucracy; 3) inadequate devolution of financial powers, and 4) the subordinate status of these institutions vis-a-vis the state government. We will now briefly discuss these factors.

Lack of Experience, Skill and Help in Planning: The district level officials lacked the requisite skills who were responsible for drawing the plans. In fact district plans wherever they existed were no more than a compilation of departmental schemes and outlays at the district level with the sum total of block plan providing a statistical summary. Although the post of the District Planning Officer or its equivalent existed in many cases, there were no clear procedures outlined for formulating the district plan. The so-called ‘district plan’ once prepared was presented before the Zilla Parishad almost as a formality and was then passed. The legislative process was rushed through giving little time for elected members to articulate the requirements, make modifications and suggest alternatives. Walter C Neale reported a case where the Five-Year Plan was placed before the Zilla Parishad at 10 O’clock in the morning and passed by the same

evening. All tasks required in the process i.e. formation of sub-committees, hearing, scrutiny of proposals etc. were rushed through in a matter of hours. People's participation was therefore reduced to a token with Zilla Parishads taking the role of mere rubber stamps of official plans.

Domination by the Bureaucracy: The role of the bureaucracy was a factor contributing to the erosion of the influence of the Zilla Parishads. The officials prepared their departmental plans and pooled these into a 'district plan' and their primary objective was to get these passed by the Parishad. Since they had more adequate information and were better educated they succeeded in obtaining the Zilla Parishad's approval for the proposed plan. The fact that the Zilla Parishad members knew little about technical details only helped in confusing issues. The role of the Zilla Parishads in planning was therefore only peripheral.

Inadequate Devolution of Financial Powers: Sufficient monetary powers are really necessary for planning. In this regard the Zilla Parishads had little financial powers. The concept of a district budget which was voted by the Zilla Parishad did exist but the Parishad did not have the right to alter most of the schematic budgets. For example, they could not alter the cost and other specifications of road construction proposals of the Public Works Departments. Estimates showed that the Parishad had powers to alter items accounting for about 10 to 15 per cent of the budget amount.

Subordinate Status of Panchayati Raj Institutions: In addition, in most *cases*, the District Magistrate had the power to veto the acts of the Zilla Parishads. Thus in matters of planning, the Parishads could not force their views on the administration. The interference by state level politicians (MLAs, etc.) also increased over Zilla Parishads reducing the role of local participation. With the introduction of Centrally Sponsored

Schemes the powers of the Zilla Parishads got further curtailed. The staff under the Parishads would execute the Schemes though the programmes were kept outside their purview. The staff spared by the state to the district also gradually came to consist of officers who were not wanted by the state governments. And finally there was a tapering off of plan allocations for Panchayati Raj institutions and a gradual curtailment of powers of the Parishads resulting from various enactments of the state legislatures. The decline of Zilla Parishads was completed with their supersession and the practice of not holding elections. Barring a few exceptions, the initial experiments with democratic decentralisation were not successful.

To rectify this defect and to improve the working of democratic institutions at the district and lower levels the Government of India appointed a Committee headed by Asoka Mehta in December, 1977. The Committee known as the Asoka Mehta Committee recommended a two-tier structure for Panchayati Raj with the district being the first point of decentralisation below the state. The district level was also to be the basic unit of planning. Unlike the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee, the Asoka Mehta Committee recommended direct elections to the Zilla Parishads with reservations for scheduled castes, tribes and women. For planning purposes, the recommendation was for setting up a Committee of the whole Zilla Parishad with MLAs (Members of Legislative Assembly), MLCs (Members of Legislative Council) and MPs (Members of Parliament) from the area as ex-officio members. The Zilla Parishad was to be the basic unit of decentralisation with a comprehensive range of developmental responsibilities. In fact the Committee went even further by recommending that all developmental functions related to the districts be transferred from the jurisdiction of state governments to the Zilla Parishads. The Zilla

Parishads, to be able to perform the developmental role, were to have all the staff under the supervision of the Parishad. The Parishad was also to have financial powers and earmarked devolution of funds for developmental purposes. In short, the Committee visualised a separate tier of development administration below the state with comprehensive and 'clearly defined developmental, administrative, financial and legislative functions. The recommendations of the Asoka Mehta Committee, although fairly radical, did not find much favour with the state governments. To discuss the Committee's report a Conference of Chief Ministers was held in 1979. The discussions led to the preparation of a model bill to ensure uniformity in the Panchayati Raj system. As things stand today only a few states, most notably Karnataka, has gone ahead and implemented the Panchayati Raj system on the lines recommended by the Asoka Mehta Committee. Perhaps greater involvements of the Centre in the process, including possibly an amendment to the Constitution to ensure democratic decentralisation up to at least the district level may be necessary. In fact, two Constitutional Amendment Bills (64th and 65th) were prepared one by the Congress and the other by the National Front Government with this broad objective in view. Till now no further action has been taken on these lines and the issue of effective decentralisation on an all-India basis below the state level appears to have been shelved for the time being.

District planning, despite the fact that its importance has been realised and its need has been stressed again and again, has yet to become a reality. Large number of Committees, Working Groups, Commissions, etc. have squarely faced the issue and made a large number of suggestions. However, very little concrete action has been taken. It is only then the Planning Commission decided to finance a scheme for strengthening the

technical side of district planning that most districts were able to have a District Planning Cell. However, these cells have done very little actual planning in most districts although it appears that their role is likely to increase in the near future.

There are various reasons for the relative failure of district planning in India. Some certain major problems need to be emphasised.

First, there is the basic problem that planning and authority must go hand in hand. Since the district level government is not recognised as a separate tier of government, like the State and the Centre, it becomes virtually impossible for it to set targets, decide on priorities, mobilise resources and decide on allocations. Planning at the district level is therefore reduced to a formality in the absence of adequate autonomy. The second, and a related obstacle, is the inadequacy of financial powers at the district level. If the districts are provided with adequate resources, they can decide on an optimum pattern of allocation. However, devolution of free resources to districts is small as most planned schemes are either Centrally sponsored or promoted by the state government. The districts have negligible revenue raising powers and no power to borrow resources. Therefore, in the absence of financial resources planning loses its meaning.

Second is the absence, in most states, of elected district level bodies to articulate the needs of the people. The process of decentralisation and Panchayati Raj has had only limited success. In the absence, of popular initiative planning reduces to a bureaucratic exercise of formulation, sanction and implementation of departmental schemes. Although in most of the states Zilla Parishads have been formed, District planning requires strong and enlightened Zilla Parishads.

Finally, district planning suffers from the inadequacy of trained and competent planning personnel at the district level. The officers of the

District Planning Cells are therefore normally engaged in-routine work and not in technical exercises. For district planning to be successful and of competent district planners and a popular and relatively autonomous district administration are being increasingly recognized as the basic prerequisites.

Though some efforts that have been made to make the concept of district planning a reality, these efforts have been on two parallel lines: (a) strengthening the process of people's participation in development at the district level, and (b) building up a competent district planning machinery. Though some progress has been made in recent years in building up District Planning Cells further steps towards their development have been retarded due to inadequate decentralisation. Grass roots planning in India, we have seen, have not been made operational though attempts have been made in this direction. The attempts, in their early - phase, concentrated on building representative institutions which would reflect the will of the people and would be the structures of local democratic government. At the same time the bureaucratic structure was brought to the level below the district and a significant part of this bureaucracy was entrusted developmental tasks. The aim of these efforts was to allow people to choose their representatives who, in co-operation with officials and experts, would draw up and implement development plans. This attempt had only a limited success due to the paucity of planning skills and the rigidity of the programme.

Recent attempts at reviving grass-roots planning have focused more on the creation of technical competence and has relatively underplayed the importance of people's participation. What this may lead to is that the lower levels of bureaucracy may be equipped with planning skills and provide greater autonomy to decide on the implementation and even the planning of a few projects and schemes. Both these are welcome

developments but are still not enough. Grass-roots planning, in its very essence, requires people's participation. As more and more of bureaucracy enters the villages for developing rural India, the people may lose their dignity and become mere 'beneficiaries' of development programmes and 'target-groups' for loan-subsidy schemes. The spirit of 'self-help', is central to the rural development concept. It is also the key to the process of decentralised planning.

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State Subsidised Rice for the Poor and Improvement in the Public Distribution System in Odisha

Manas Ranjan Mishra

India's Public Distribution System (PDS) is perhaps the largest of its kind anywhere in the world. The PDS began in an era of shortages and black-marketing as a mechanism to provide food grains at reasonable prices, especially to the urban consumers. But over time it has become critical to both ensuring reasonably priced food grains to consumers in both rural and urban areas as well as serving as the forward linkage for the procurement system established by the government to provide minimum support prices to farmers for their produce. The large variations in the prices of such necessities as are not part of the PDS (e.g. edible oil, potatoes, onions, pulses) clearly point out to the need for an effective Public Distribution System to ensure stable prices. On the other hand, distress sale by farmers of produce such as potato and onions for which there is neither a PDS nor a procurement system indicates to the necessity of a Procurement-cum-PDS mechanism in such produce. The lack of grains other than Rice and Wheat (broadly referred to by rather derogatory term coarse cereals / minor millets) in the PDS has more or less ensured that there is effectively no procurement system for such grains. Needless to say Procurement at MSP and Supply through the PDS are two sides of the same coin.

The last few years have seen a lot of thought and action on the PDS by governments, people's organisations as well as economic

thinkers and planners. There have been voices calling for improving the PDS through wider coverage while keeping prices low. There have been also voices seeking the replacement of the PDS with a cash transfer / food coupon kind of system. Unsurprisingly, the voices seeking Cash Transfers have also been the voices seeking dismantling of the FCI based procurement system (through privatisation of procurement) and also keeping the procurement prices low in the name of giving free play to market forces¹. It's apparently clear that the existence and strengthening of the procurement system led by FCI can be maintained only if there is a correspondingly strong and well organised public distribution system. India's Farmers and India's Poor have equal stakes in maintaining a strong procurement system coupled with a strong Public Distribution System².

The Government of Odisha has played a key role in this ongoing debate by the two key decisions it took in August 2008, thereby becoming part of the side seeking to "improve the PDS and improve the Procurement System". The first was to reduce the price of PDS Rice for all BPL and Antyodaya families to Rupees 2 per kilogram it has further reduced the price to 1 rupee per kilogram from February 2013. The second was to also extend the same entitlement to APL households in the KBK districts³. Recently published statistics from the National Sample

Survey Organisation⁴ provides information on the consumption of rice (as well as wheat, sugar and kerosene) of households in Odisha from the PDS in the year 2009-10 (July 2009 to June 2010). A comparison with the consumption statistics brought out by NSSO in its survey for the year 2004-05 (July 2004 to June 2005) points to the impact of the 2 rupee rice scheme. Before taking a look at what has been the change in Odisha between 2004-05 and 2009-10, it would be useful to take a look at what have been the general discussions around the PDS itself at an all India level.

After the Targeted Public Distribution System was launched in 1997, there was a continuous decline in the efficiency of the system. As per the Chapter on Nutrition and Social Safety Net in the 11th Plan document, the consumption estimates of NSSO as percentage of off-take from the PDS declined from 72.4% in 1993-94 to 71.8% in 1999-00 and then falling even more drastically to 45.6% in 2004-05⁵. This has been used by the Planning Commission to point out that there has been a large increase in the leakage from the PDS and has been used as a justification for suggesting a shift to a Cash Transfer based system. Under Chapter VII of the 2011 National Food Security Bill of the Government of India there is a provision that *“The Central and State Governments shall endeavour to progressively undertake necessary reforms in the Targeted*

Public Distribution System in consonance with the role envisaged for them in this Act”. It further states *“The reforms shall, inter alia, include introducing schemes, such as, cash transfer, food coupons, or other schemes, to the targeted beneficiaries in lieu of their food grain entitlements specified in Chapter II, in such area and manner as may be prescribed by the Central Government”*⁶. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Bill has, however, recommended that introduction of cash transfers at this juncture may not be desirable⁷. A large number of state governments have also opposed the clause with the Chief Minister of Odisha also opposed the move towards cash transfers⁸.

The move towards Cash Transfers has been condemned by various people’s organisations such as the Right to Food Campaign and economists such as Jean Dreze and Reetika Khera. While submitting their views to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Food Security Bill, Dreze and Khera point out to Odisha as one of the states that has ensured a much improved Public Distribution System⁹. Needless to say the launch of 2 rupee rice scheme as well as the near universalisation of the scheme in the KBK districts has played a key role in the improvement. A rough comparison between the consumption of rice by households and the offtake from the PDS underlines the fact that while

Table 1: Per Household Consumption of Rice from the Public Distribution System – KG (Kilograms) per month per Household

Households	Odisha			All India		
	2004-2005	2009-2010	Growth	2004-2005	2009-2010	Growth
Rural	4.249	13.554	219%	4.098	6.549	60%
Urban	1.374	5.163	276%	2.311	3.367	46%

consumption as percentage of offtake has indeed improved for the country as a whole, it has improved much more in case of Odisha.

As per the NSSO Survey for 2004-05, the per household Rice Consumption from PDS in Odisha was about 4.25 KG in rural areas and 1.37 KG in urban areas. In comparison, at the all India level, it was 4.10 KG in rural areas and 2.31 KG in urban areas. In 2009-10 the figures improved to 13.55 KG and 5.16 KG in rural and urban Odisha respectively.

India as a whole the figures improved to 6.55 KG and 3.37 KG respectively. Thus, the consumption from PDS improved by about 219% and 276% in rural and urban Odisha respectively. For India as a whole the figures were 60% for rural areas and 46% for urban areas.

One way of looking at the success of a PDS is to look at the comparative benefits from it received by the lowest income households with what is received by the higher income households. In this too Odisha's PDS scores over the all India figures. For instance, in rural Odisha, households in the poorest 5 MPCE¹⁰ categories consumed on an average about 18.9 KG of rice per month from the PDS while households in the 5 least poor MPCE categories consumed about 9.2 KG of rice from the PDS. Thus, the bottom half of the households got a little more than double of what the top half of the households received. At the all India level, the bottom half of the households received 8.1 KG of rice compared to the top half

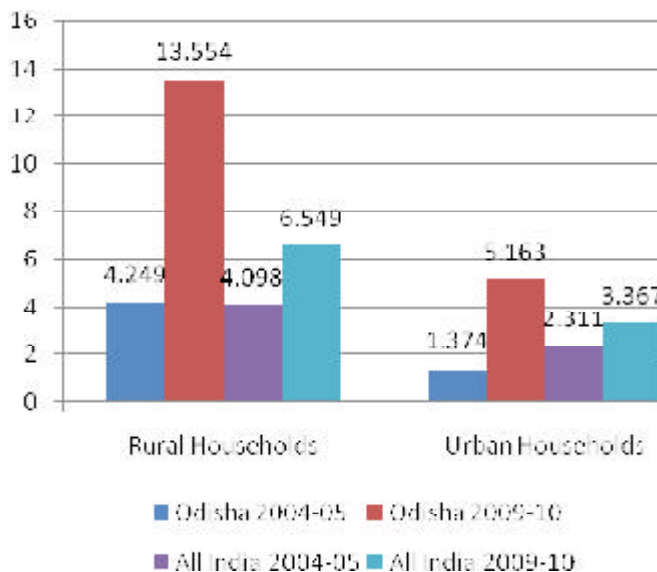


Figure 1: : Consumption from PDS (KG per Month per Household)

which received 5.3 KG. Thus the bottom half got only about 50% higher than the top half. A more pertinent comparison could be the PDS consumption of the bottom 3 MPCE categories with the PDS consumption of the top 3 MPCE categories. In case of Odisha the figures were 22.1 KG versus 7.4 KG, i.e. the bottom 3 categories received 3 times of what the top 3 categories received. At the all India level, the figures were 9.0 KG versus 4.8 KG, i.e. the bottom 3 categories received less than twice of the top 3 categories. These figures suggest that the targeting of the PDS Rice in Odisha, although there is a lot to improve still, is substantially better than what it is at the all India level.

Table 2: Consumption of Rice from the PDS among Rural Households belonging to different MPCE Categories

Average Monthly Consumption Levels (KG of Rice per Household)	Odisha	India
Average Consumption of all MPCE Categories	13.554	6.549
Average Consumption of Bottom 50% MPCE Categories	18.88	8.11

Average Consumption of Top 50% MPCE Categories	9.19	5.33
Consumption of Bottom 50% as percentage of Top 50%	205%	152%
Average Consumption of Bottom Three MPCE Categories	22.09	9.00
Average Consumption of Top Three MPCE Categories	7.39	4.76
Consumption of Bottom Three as percentage of Top Three	299%	189%

Table-3 :PDS Offtake versus Consumption as per NSSO Figures¹¹ (Metric Tons)

	2004-05	2009-10
Offtake	11,50,622	18,30,017
Consumption	3,64,744	12,77,717
	32%	70%

Has there been a reduction in leakage from the PDS due to the decision to provide 2 Rupee rice and the political commitment that it has generated towards curbing pilferage in the system¹¹? A comparison of the consumption figures estimated by the NSSO and the offtake figures available from the government should provide a reliable indicator of whether leakage and pilferage has reduced¹³.

In 2004-05 the total offtake by Households¹⁴ from the PDS in Odisha was 11.5 Lakh MTs while estimated consumption by Households¹⁵ from PDS, based on NSSO figures, was 3.6 Lakh MTs. In 2009-10, the figures were 18.3 and 12.8 Lakh MTs respectively. The estimated consumption, which was about 32% of the offtake figures in 2004-05, has increased to 70% in 2009-10. Even if there are errors in the estimates based on NSSO figures, assuming that the errors are similar in 2004-05 and 2009-10, leads to the conclusion that there has been substantial improvement in reducing leakages from the PDS Rice between 2004-05 and 2009-10. Consumption from PDS improved along with reduction in leakage.

To what extent was the improvement on account of the introduction of the 2 rupee rice

scheme? One way of ascertaining this would be to compare the figures for rice with the figures for wheat. While the 2 rupee rice was introduced by the government, there was no state government action on wheat, sugar and kerosene. Thus while the estimated consumption of Rice from the PDS as percentage of total rice offtake is 70% in 2009-10, that for wheat is only 12%. The comparable figures for sugar and kerosene are 31% and 49% respectively. However, it is interesting to note that in case of Sugar (typically its the same dealer providing rice, wheat and sugar) there has been significant improvement from the situation in 2004-05 when the proportion of NSSO based consumption to offtake from the PDS was 10%. Improvement in PDS of rice is indeed having a rub off effect, though slight, on the PDS of Wheat and Sugar.

In the last few years the states which have gone for lower prices and greater coverage under the PDS have shown tremendous improvement in making the system more effective and reducing leakages. Both Chhattisgarh and Odisha which have gone for lower prices have seen large declines in leakages. On the other hand states which have kept the PDS prices high have not been able to improve their system to a similar extent. For instance, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Odisha which reduced PDS prices to much below the market price (i.e. the of Market Price to PDS Price was higher), the consumption from PDS was quite high signifying greater effectiveness of the system and lower leakages.

Table 4: Ratio of Market Price to PDS Price and Impact on Consumption from PDS (KG per Household per Month) (Rural)

Some important Rice Consuming States	Ratio: Market Price to Price under PDS	% HHs consuming from PDS	Consumption in KG		
			From PDS	Total PDS	Share from
Bihar	2.5	12.2	1.7	31.9	5%
West Bengal	5.7	25.7	2.6	40.8	6%
Assam	2.3	29.8	6.8	61.0	11%
Jharkhand	3.3	26.4	5.7	40.4	14%
Odisha	6.5	51.6	13.6	54.6	25%
Andhra Pradesh	10.2	83.9	12.6	38.3	33%
Chhattisgarh	7.7	67.4	21.4	51.9	41%
Tamil Nadu	19.7	91	17.7	33.5	53%

A last point that seems to be quite pertinent while evaluating the impact of the State subsidised Rice Programme, is to get a rough estimated value to the consumers of the increased consumption from PDS. For making this comparison I have used the example of Rajasthan, a state which in 2004-05 had roughly similar per household PDS consumption level to Odisha, but one which had not reduced the Grain prices¹⁶ by 2009-10. Of course the principal grain for Rajasthan is wheat and here the change in PDS rice consumption in Odisha is compared to change in PDS wheat consumption in Rajasthan.

In 2004-05, the per household PDS consumption of Rice in Odisha was 4.25 KG per month while the comparable figure for wheat in Rajasthan was 4.84 KG. In 2009-10, the figure in Odisha had gone up to 13.55 KG while that in Rajasthan had gone down to 4.72 KG¹⁷. Thus, it's reasonable to assume, that but for a reduction in PDS price to 2 rupees (and other related steps taken by the Government) the average consumption in Odisha would also have remained the same. Then the additional consumption of 9.3 KG per household can be considered to be the impact of the reduction in price. The difference

between PDS price (2.03 as per NSSO) and other purchase price (13.60 as per NSSO) implies that for every KG of additional consumption from PDS a rural household saved 11.57 rupees. Thus for 9.3 KG it saved about 108/- rupees per month, and 1291/- rupees per year. Similarly an urban household the increase in consumption from PDS increased from 1.37 KG to 5.16 KG. The saving on this account is roughly 12.74 rupees per KG (PDS price 2.63 and other price 15.37 rupees) leading to monthly saving of 48/- rupees and annual saving of 579/- rupees per Household. For the State as a whole the total savings by all households (rural as well as urban) can be calculated from the number of rural and urban households estimated by NSSO. The total saving thus calculated is about 1025 crore rupees. The food subsidy borne by the Government of Odisha in the year 2009-10 was 847.87 crore rupees. Thus the expenditure on food subsidy actually led to a greater benefit to the consumers than what it cost the exchequer.

The 2 rupee rice scheme was a successful programme in terms of making the PDS more effective and efficient leading to substantial reduction in leakages from the system. In addition

to that, from being among the states lagging behind in PDS effectiveness and efficiency, Odisha has now become one of the front runners in improving the PDS. The improvement in the PDS for Rice has also influenced the PDS for Wheat and Sugar. However the improvements in both wheat as well as sugar is much less than what it is for Rice. In the coming years, an overall improvement of the PDS would hopefully lead to reducing leakages in the PDS to much lower and negligible levels like what has happened in Tamil Nadu.

A last word on the fear among certain sections (usually not from among the intended beneficiaries of the State subsidised rice programme) that 1 rupee rice makes the poor lazy and hampers progress. In 2009-10, 91% of all rural households in Tamil Nadu, 84% in Andhra Pradesh, 75% in Karnataka and 54% in Kerala were dependent on the PDS for their rice consumption. The same for Odisha was 52%. In 2009-10, 53% of all rice consumed by rural households in Tamil Nadu was from the PDS. The same figure was 45% in Karnataka, 33% in Andhra Pradesh, 34% in Maharashtra and 28% in Kerala. The figure for Odisha was 25%. These southern states have not only been among the more developed States of the country but also the ones with the lowest levels of malnutrition, Infant and Child Mortality and Maternal Mortality. Any fear that 2 rupee rice (and now 1 rupee rice) will have negative impact on the poor and the progress of the State is thus without any real basis. Rather one should hope that along with the subsidised rice, the Government of Odisha moves closer to the southern states towards improvement in many other important demographic indicators. Those looking for catchy slogans could call this a "Look South" approach for the State of Odisha. Indeed the idea that the poor will stop working if they have access to cheap rice insults the work ethic of the poor of Odisha who have proven themselves as some of the most in demand workers across India. As for the call for replacing

food subsidy with cash transfers, it's only perhaps those who have failed to improve the PDS system that are calling for such a move. Them, and perhaps those who want to leave the food security of the poor and remunerative prices for the farmers at the mercy of the market forces.

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2. Public Distribution System and other Sources of Household Consumption, Report No. 545, 66th Round, NSSO
3. Chapter VII, Clause 18 of National Food Security Bill as introduced in the Lok Sabha
4. Report of the Standing Committee presented to Hon'ble Speaker, Lok Sabha on 17.01.2013.
5. Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure (MPCE) category is used to categorise households in to poorer and less poor households. In 2009-10 NSSO Survey households have been divided in to 10 MPCE Categories.
6. Offtake figures from Food Supplies & Consumer Welfare Department.
7. It seems obvious that a State Government that puts large amounts from its own budget on the PDS and presents it as a flagship programme, is more likely to work towards ensuring that it reaches the intended beneficiary, than another which is merely transferring central allocations.
8. Includes BPL, APL, AAY and Annapurna. Excludes Rice received by SC & ST Hostels and Welfare Institutions.
9. Including both Rural and Urban households and calculated on the basis of estimated number of rural and urban households as per NSSO Survey for the year.
10. The Government of Rajasthan reduced its BPL Wheat price to 2 rupees per kilogramme in May 2010.
11. The estimated leakage in PDS Wheat in Rajasthan in 2009-10 was about 66% as per comparison of Rajasthan's PDS Offtake figures with the NSSO Consumption figures.

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Green Warriors: Women's Initiative towards Conserving Local Bio-diversity in Odisha

Sweta Mishra

The State of Odisha is one of the most resource-rich states in Eastern India, with diverse ecosystems that boast a wide variety of flora and fauna. In a way, Odisha symbolizes the contradictions in modern India between very high ecological and social diversity and extreme poverty and destructive processes of industrialization. Efforts by Government agencies to conserve wildlife in strictly protected national parks and sanctuaries often create conflicts with local communities who reside in and around these areas, because the physical presence of human is considered to be harmful. This exclusionary approach to protected areas inhibits the fair and equitable sharing of benefits of conservation with local communities and imposes the disproportionately costs of conservation upon them. Lack of recognition of or respect for their fundamental rights contributes to hostility towards Government conservation initiatives, which reduces the overall efficacy of conservation efforts and, ironically, further exacerbates degradation and local poverty.

Despite these complex challenges, local communities are driving their own initiatives to conserve wildlife and biodiversity in general and to generate sustained livelihoods (see Box)¹. Across community-owned lands, government-owned lands, and lands whose ownership is

Box

- CCIs play a crucial role in the conservation of vital ecosystems, critical wildlife habitats, and threatened species. Many CCIs function as wildlife corridors and establish linkages between official State protected areas.
- Some CCIs are responsible for the maintenance of essential ecological services, such as soil conservation, water security, and conservation of traditional crop varieties.
- They integrate links between traditional agricultural systems and forest ecosystems, thereby conserving at the landscape level.
- Some CCIs are crucial aspects of local economies; thousands of people depend upon them for survival and social and cultural values and uses.
- CCIs can be seen as community-based models of development built on local ecological knowledge systems that integrate traditional knowledge with current advancements in conservation science.

disputed, these initiatives are helping conserve a variety of ecosystems and habitats of wild flora and fauna through a wide range of institutional mechanisms, rules, and regulations. Eventhough these Community Conservation Initiatives (CCIs) are much older than the Government-managed

protected areas, they remain unrecognized in federal and state law. While they have been functioning effectively without legal recognition, there are arguably some instances in which recognition of CCIs would further enable them to support biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods.

The Social and Ecological Resilience of the Mouth of the Devi River

The mouth of the Devi River, located about 60 kilometers from Bhubaneswar, the capital city of Odisha, has great ecological, historical, and economic significance. The Devi River mouth is one of the three mass nesting sites of the Olive Ridley turtle in Odisha². It also provides habitat for the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*), the finless porpoise (*Neophocaena phocaenoides*), and the smooth-coated otter (*Lutra perspicillata*)³, as well as many species of residential and migratory birds. The surrounding forest area is also home to many wild animals such as chital, hyena, and jackal. This rich diversity in flora and fauna adds immeasurable value to local communities' livelihoods and well-being.

Around 15000 traditional fisher-folk from 36 fishing villages are directly dependent on the river mouth for their daily livelihoods⁴. The traditional fisher folks live in small 'tandas' or hamlets adjoining the main revenue village. They collect fishes and crabs from the river mouth and do the fishing within 5-10 kms from the shore. On an average a traditional fisher folk can earn around Rs.10,000 – 12,000/-month from the fishing activities. The traditional fishermen use fibre boats or motorized boats (kattamarams) and they usually do the fishing within 5-10 kms from the shore. They use monofilament nylon or plastic and make large meshed nets which do not strangle the turtles.

Apart from the fisher folks living in the tandas the villages located along the Devi River Mouth are also dependent on fishing activities for their livelihood. Agriculture and Fishing are the prime source of livelihood of these villages. Those who do not practice fishing or agriculture work as wage labourers for their living and for this they even have to migrate to places outside the State.

Survey conducted in this area shows that the average landholdings of each household is about 1 acres and the floods in 2003 and 2009 in Kadua and Devi river has seriously affected several hundreds of acres of crop in Gundalba⁵ as well as neighbouring villages. Fisher folk and other farmers have not received any compensation for their losses and many of their lands still lie inundated with water.

Further it is to be noted that during the turtle breeding season, ban on fishing is imposed by the Orissa State Government for a period of six months from 1st November to 31st May. Out of 240 fishing days in a year, 180 fishing days (1st Nov to 31st May) has been restricted for turtle conservation, which has been affecting the livelihoods of traditional fisher folks, who are directly dependent on the river mouth for their livelihood. The total amount of loss incurred by the marginalized communities in each year is around 40.37 crores. The ban is imposed during the turtle breeding season and during the ban period the fisher community are **provided with no alternate source of livelihood**.

Apart from being a mass nesting site for olive ridley turtles, the area has a good mangrove forest cover. The many species of mangrove vegetation⁶ play a vital role in the coastal ecosystem because of their role in the mitigation of coastal erosion, as nurseries for variety of fish and prawns, and as natural barriers to tidal and storm surges associated with tropical cyclones,

which cause considerable damage to the ecosystem and communities' livelihoods. Good mangrove cover thus increases the resilience of the surrounding and constituent social and ecological systems.

However, the situation was much different a mere ten years ago. In 1985, mangrove cover in the Devi estuary was 2.58 square kilometers (km²) (K.Kathiresan, 2005). In 1997, the mangrove forest cover was reduced to 1.999 km² (Kar and Chaddha, 1997) by one cyclone; the super cyclone of 1999 hardly left any trace of mangroves in the area. The super cyclone of 1999 almost destroyed the coastal casuarina and mangrove coverage, leading to high soil salinity (up to 15 parts per million) and reduced agricultural productivity. Villagers who were previously not very conscious of the need to protect the surrounding forests were driven to do so in order to prevent high salinity, minimize the intensity of future natural disasters, and ensure the ability to meet their daily livelihood requirements. The female residents of seven villages⁷ in particular have emerged resolutely from the destruction and have successfully managed to protect and conserve around 15 km² of casuarina forest and

5 km² of mangrove forest in and around the mouth of the Devi River.

The Development of Women's Committees for Ecosystem Conservation

In the face of these multiple challenges, women's groups from these seven villages have driven successful initiatives to conserve the forest and coastal biodiversity. This social revolution started in the year 2000 with many of the women coming forward and resolving to conserve their adjoining forest areas and other natural resources. Today, the positive impacts of the CCIs on the protection and conservation of the rich biodiversity of the area are quite evident. For example, the women of each village have formed Community Forest Protection Groups or Committees and have adopted the practice of *thengapalli* or regular patrolling to protect the nearby Astarang Forest. They have successfully protected and regenerated around 15 km² of casuarina forest. The regenerated casuarina forests have also helped provide a barrier against the saline wind and sand particles that enter the village from the beach.



The women of the village of Gundalba have pioneered the CCIs in the area by forming the *Pir Jahania Jungle Surakhya* (Pir Jahania Forest Protection Women's Committee) *Women's Committee in 2000*. The village has 60 households and one woman from each household is part of the *Pir Jahania Women's Committee*. With this strong foundation of 60 members, the Committee adopted the practice of rotational patrolling of two to four women at a time to protect the forest within their traditionally identified boundary. The extent of the forest boundary has been demarcated mutually between the villages and the boundaries are identified by physical landmarks of the forest. At their monthly meetings, the Committee formulated and passed resolutions for a set of regulations for the management of the forest. With the meetings presided over by the President or Secretary of the Women's Committee and attended by the local forest officers as special invitees, the resolutions were passed only when the decision was accepted by two-thirds of the Committee members. Once a resolution is passed, it is then shared with the rest of the villagers in a *palli sabha* (village meeting). For example, the Women's Committee has fixed one day each month during which all 60 households in the village are allowed to collect fuel wood from the forest. Similarly, a different day (usually after three or four days after the villagers of Gundalba have collected) has been fixed when the neighbouring villages dependent on the same patch of forest resources can collect fuel wood from the forest. There is no conflict between these villages over the shared resources, as the boundaries and forest protection rules and regulations have been defined by mutual agreement of all seven neighbouring villages, many of which also have women's committees. Those from outside Gundalba have been given this privilege on the promise that they refrain from

cutting or chopping any trees, which they used to do prior to the women-initiated forest protection system. During the remaining days in the month, the Women's Committee patrols the forest and nobody is allowed to collect additional firewood. The regulations established by the Committee are strictly adhered to and respected by the villagers. The Committee has also fixed different levels of fines, as a sort of localized compliance mechanism. For example, if a member of the Committee does not fulfill her patrolling duty, then she must be a fine of 50 Rupees. If anyone is found to be chopping trees or collecting firewood on any day other than the fixed one, the guilty party faces a fine of 200 Rupees. For minor offence, the defaulters are left with strict warning of not repeating the act.

The strong commitment of the community members has yielded rapid and positive ecological results. Since the widespread destruction in 1999 spurred their initiatives, newly regenerated mangrove vegetation and the forest cover (especially of mangroves) has gone up 63% from 2.58 km² in 1985 to 4.21 km² in 2004, even after the super cyclone decimated nearly all mangrove cover. This is due to natural regeneration within newly formed mudflats and the concerted efforts of the local communities to restore the forest. The mangrove vegetation has attracted a lot of residential and migratory birds, which are also a tourist attraction. Furthermore, the mangrove forest serves as a coastal buffer against natural disasters. Buoyed by these results, the Women's Committee plans to expand the mangrove cover in their area even further.

In addition to the effects of this well-organized social institution on the regeneration of the forest, the initiatives of the Women's Committee have also influenced the local youth and children of their village and adjoining villages.

The local youth have formed groups to help protect the Olive Ridley turtles (a Scheduled I species under the 1972 Wildlife Protection Act) during their breeding season. The Women's Committee has constructed an interpretation and learning centre and aims to earn some income through regulated tourism during the breeding season. The youth are also engaged in maintaining an eco-friendly ambience for the tourists and suitable habitat for the local wildlife by collecting garbage and segregating the degradable and non-degradable waste. The degradable waste is converted into organic manure and used in the agricultural fields, but due to lack of technical knowledge and support, the non-degradable waste is left as such. The villagers not only protect the turtles during the breeding season, but also have special fishing norms during the mating and nesting times to avoid contributing to sea turtles' already high mortality rates.

The youth groups and Women's Committee, in addition to elders and others from the community, have recently started thinking beyond environmental protection and have plans for the sustainable development of their village and conservation of the whole coastal ecosystem. They have come together to develop a People's Biodiversity Register of their area and have started devising their own community management plans. All of the above mentioned activities demonstrates the social resilience of the villagers around the mouth of the Devi River and the mobilizing effect that CCIs can have within and among villages towards collective aims of biodiversity conservation.

Lack of legal security threatens to undermine community conservation initiatives

Government initiatives⁸ for the regeneration and restoration of mangroves along

the entire coastline of India tend to involve huge financial investments and are arguably not sufficiently adapted to unique local contexts. In addition, the existing conservation efforts of communities such as the ones described above are unrecognized and may be undermined by large-scale Government initiatives.

The coastal communities around the mouth of the Devi River rightly claim that they had carried out the conservation activities on their own accord after surviving the 1999 cyclone disaster that left not a single tree in their area. After years of concerted efforts, the mangroves and casuarina have regenerated, but the communities now feel betrayed when the Forest Department claims it as Government property and restricts the mobility and access of the communities to the resources. Since the land is legally classified as forestland, it is under the control of the Forest Department but the people were protecting the stretches of casuarina forest. After the super cyclone of 1999, the Forest Department had done the casuarina plantation in 15 sq km stretch. At that time, realizing the need of casuarina forest in their area, the people had *suo motu* given apart some portions of their private land for the plantation purpose. Then the villagers, particularly the women groups of seven villages along the Devi River Mouth formed forest protection committees and started protecting the forest patch with all zeal and vigil. After 10 years of protection, their initiatives had led to growth of well stock casuarina forest, which the Forest Department claims as their forest and does not recognise the initiative of the communities.

In July 2010 the Forest Department started the coupe felling operation and leased out to Orissa Forest Development Corporation for felling of casuarina trees. The women groups who have been protecting the forest vehemently opposed this action of the Forest Department and

they snatched away the axe and embraced the trees, not allowing the Forest Department to chop away the trees which they considered priceless for their livelihood as well as a strong protection barrier against natural hazards, but the opposition of the women group was vain.

Frustrated with the move of the Forest Department, these communities now demand legal recognition of their self-driven conservation initiatives. The communities have now started applying for community rights under the recently enacted 'The Scheduled Tribes and Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act' 2006 (commonly known as Forest Rights Act) over the forestland and the forest resources over which they were depending since generations. They are also demanding for the recognition of their 'rights to protect, conserve and manage their own community forest resources which they have been traditionally protecting and conserving for sustainable use' as mentioned in Sec 3 (1) (i) of the Forest Rights Act. They firmly believe that such recognition would enable them to better manage and conserve the coastal resources and ecosystem⁹.

In addition, there is no law or policy in India that recognizes the customary rights of traditional fisher-folk and other coastal communities that depend upon the coastal land and water for their livelihoods and well-being. The communities demand that the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, 1991¹⁰ should be amended accordingly. Till date there are no guidelines indicated in the CRZ Notification for the preparation of Coastal Zone Management Plans. The communities demand that Coastal Zone Management plans should be prepared by the government in consultation and repeated discussions with the local communities depending upon the coastal waters. The management plans

thus prepared by the Government should be passed by the village councils or Gram Sabhas so that the plans of the communities are duly reflected in the national or state level management plans. Importantly, they also call for the enactment of a separate Act in line with the recently enacted Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006¹¹, which arguably set a legal precedent for the recognition of the customary rights of tribal and other traditional forest dwellers over their forest resources¹². There are other existing provisions in Indian law and policy that indicate a trend towards recognition of CCIs^{13,14}, but they arguably have limited scope in and of themselves. A separate Act that explicitly recognizes the CCIs of traditional fisher-folk and coastal communities would grant them the right to continue their livelihoods that contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. This would also assist India in fulfilling its obligations under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity¹⁵, particularly Articles 8(j) and 10(c), which call on Parties to protect and support indigenous peoples' and local communities' traditional knowledge and customary ways of life that contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. To implement such an Act, *Gram Sabhas* (village council) should be given the authority to develop, implement, and monitor and evaluate their own coastal management plans and the local authorities (*Panchayats*) should be given the power to take punitive action against activities deemed illegal by Federal and State law and by the local management plan.

The need for appropriate recognition and support

The conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity require the full and effective participation of local communities whose

livelihoods depend directly on these resources in decision-making and governance processes. The above example of the initiatives of the Women's Committee near the Devi River mouth illustrates the need for appropriate legal recognition and support of CCIs. In order to do so, the following points need to be addressed:

- CCIs must be legally recognized through elaboration and further amendments of existing laws, including recognition and support of local governing institutions and rights of the local communities over the resources upon which their livelihoods depend;
- Local communities should devise clear guidelines for external agencies who want to support and engage with them to ensure that any interactions are according to locally defined values and priorities;
- Technical and financial support must be provided to local communities contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, including through promotion of sustainable livelihood options (such as value addition and marketing of non-timber forest products and community based ecotourism), scientific monitoring and research, and capacity building to help local communities understand and engage with relevant laws and policies; and
- A holistic approach to development is required in order to take into consideration communities' rights over resources that they have been conserving for generations. Transparent and participatory planning processes would also enable communities to prevent and mitigate activities that are detrimental to their livelihoods and surrounding biodiversity.



It is worth mentioning here that the concerted and continuous efforts of the Pir Jahania women's forest protection committee has been recognized by the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India and very recently the Committee was felicitated by the **India Biodiversity Award** under the category of **Community Stewardship** by MoEF, GoI and UNDP. The Award was given by Ms. Jayanti Natarajan, Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Environment and Forest, GoI in the **11th Conference of Parties to CBD (Convention to Biological Diversity) held at Hyderabad in October 2012**. The Award ceremony was organised by UNDP and MoEF, GoI on 17th October 2012 which was participated by high level dignitaries from different countries. This recognition has instilled a lot of confidence within the women group and they have resolved to take forward the forest conservation initiative in a much more sustainable and scientific manner.

Community conservation initiatives at the mouth of the Devi River and elsewhere in Odisha illustrate clearly that traditional systems of resource management have conservation values and principles ingrained within them that officially recognized or managed areas often lack. Rather than imposing alternate models on the local communities and undermining their conservation

efforts, it is critical to better understand the values of these initiatives and provide locally appropriate legal recognition and support at the national and international levels.

References :

1. Pathak N, Bhatt S, Tasneem B, Kothari A and Feyerabend, G.B, *Community Conserved Areas; A Bold Frontier for Conservation*, briefing note 5, November'04, Pg.1, 2004.
2. Three mass nesting (*arribada*) sites in Orissa are the Gahirmatha Sanctuary, Rushikulya, and Devi River mouth.
3. The smooth-coated otter is listed in Schedule II, Part II, of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, Appendix II of CITES, and VU A2cd in the IUCN Red List.
4. Survey conducted by 'Sea Turtle Action Programme (STAP)', a local group working in and around Devi river mouth, in the year 2005.
5. Gundalba is one of the villages located along the Devi river mouth and it is from this village the initiative of community conservation of casuarina forest started in the area.
6. Examples include *Avicennia officinalis*, *Avicennia alba*, *Aegiceras corniculatum*, *Cerriops decandra*, *Acanthus illicifolius*, *Bruguiera gymnorrhiza*, and *Excoecaria agallocha*.
7. The villages include Daluakani, Anakana, Gundalba, Aisinia, Siddikeswar, Sohana and Sribantapur.
8. In May 2010, World Bank aided 'Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project' for Orissa has been approved for its implementation for two coastal stretches i.e. from Gopalpur to Chilika and from Paradeep to Dhamra. The Budget outlay of the project is Rs 227.63 crores (Rupees two hundred twenty-seven crores sixty-three lakhs only). The basic objective of the project is to promote sustainable management of coastal area on a long-term basis to balance environmental, economic, social, and cultural as well as address the livelihood issues of local communities.
9. The Preamble of the Forest Rights Act, 2006 clearly says that 'whereas the recognized rights of the Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers include the responsibility and authority for sustainable use, conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecological balance and thereby strengthening the conservation regime of the forests while ensuring livelihood and food security of the forest dwelling Schedule Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.'
10. Keeping in view the importance of the coastal environment and the need to protect the coastal ecosystems from the pressures of developmental activities, the Ministry of Environment and Forests had issued the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 1991 under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. This Notification, which is still in force, seeks to protect and regulate the use of the land within 500mts of the coast and 100mts along the tidal influenced water bodies. All developmental activities proposed to be located in this zone are regulated under the Notification. It classifies the coastal stretch of the country into CRZ-I (ecologically sensitive areas), CRZ-II (built up municipal areas), CRZ-III (rural areas) and CRZ-IV (Islands of Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar).
11. The Scheduled Tribes and Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006, was notified in 2006. The Act of the Parliament received the assent of the President on the 29th December 2006 and this Act recognizes and vest the forest rights and occupation in forest land in forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers who have been residing in such forests for generations but whose rights could not be recorded; to provide for a framework for recording the forest rights so vested and the nature of evidence required for such recognition and vesting in respect of forest land.
12. The Scheduled Tribes and Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 is considered to be one of the most revolutionary acts in the legislative history of India. This Act is intended to redress historical injustice faced by forest dwellers. In addition to the right of community over land and forest produces, in Section 3(1)(k), it also imparts upon communities the right to access biodiversity and the right over related traditional knowledge and intellectual

- property rights. For the first time in the legal history of India, the traditional rights of forest dwellers to conserve and nurture their forest resources are recognized.
13. Under Section 36 of the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act 2002, Conservation Reserves, which are Government-owned, biodiversity rich areas (particularly areas important as corridors), are recognized as protected areas. In this section, there is also a provision to recognize Community Reserves as protected areas, which includes private and community-owned areas (though most of the common land is taken over by Government) that are imbued with conservation values and/or areas in which the community has voluntarily conserved wildlife. Since most of the CCIs are located on Government-owned lands, these provision are not enough to provide them legal recognition. Furthermore, it is difficult to accommodate diverse, situation-specific institutional arrangements in a uniform configuration such as Community Reserves. The Ministry of Environment and Forest has yet to draft guidelines for implementation of Community Reserves, which would indicate the potential usefulness of the stated provisions.
 14. Driven by thousands of self-initiated forest-protecting groups in Orissa, the State government passed a resolution regarding the involvement of communities in forest protection in 1988, and national guidelines were followed under the National Forest Policy 1988 through JFM resolutions that came into practice in 1990. The National Forest Policy is the first national scheme wherein villagers are involved in protection of Reserved and Protected forest. Now thousands of *Vana Samrakshan Samitis* operating in Orissa enjoy recognition of their usufruct rights and share in the benefits of conservation, including through funds to support their efforts.
 15. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) entered into force on 29 December 1993. The objectives of this Convention, to be pursued in accordance with its relevant provisions, are the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies, taking into account all rights over those resources and to technologies, and by appropriate funding.
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Impact of MGNREGA in the Lives of Tribal People : A Study of Rayagada Block in Gajapati District

Prabeena Kumar Bebart

Abstract:

The paper assesses the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and its various impacts in the lives of tribal people in the district of Gajapati. As known the MGNREGA provides guarantee employment to the rural households. It empowers the marginalized through decentralized planning and ensures the livelihood security by creating durable assets. The study is based on a random sample of 50 tribal households from of Rayagada block in the Gajapati district of Odisha. This is a quantitative study with descriptive research design which gives an understanding about the level of awareness related to the different provisions of MGNREGA and its impact includes socio economic condition, livelihood security, sustainable asset creation, agricultural productivity, migration and social empowerment.

Keywords:- MGNREGA, Tribal, Impact, Employment and Empowerment

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005 which is a rights-based flagship scheme of the Government of India with effect from 2 February, 2006, guarantees at least 100 days of wage employment in a given Financial Year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Looking from the above context MGNREGA becomes an interesting subject to study because it is not only giving employment to the rural poor but also creating sustainable and durable assets in the village. The Act gives power to the daily wage labours to fight for their right to receive the wages that they must receive and not just a means of providing social security to its people but also an opportunity to promote over all community development and alter the balance of power in rural society. The Act mandates 33

per cent participation of women. It provides disincentive for underperforming states, as an unemployment allowance has to be paid by the state government if work is not provided within 15 days of demand. Also an accountability of the delivery system has been built in through social audit. However, the key question is whether various provisions of the Act are being implemented properly for the desired impact. The present study aims to understand the following objectives :-

Objectives

- To find out whether the tribal people are aware about the MGNREGA
- To understand the socio economic impact of MGNREGA in the lives of tribal people

- To assess the implementation and functioning of MGNREGA and to suggest the suitable policy measure to strengthen the scheme.

The study is the outcome of the analysis of primary data collected from 5 GPs such as Gangabada, Kerandi, Koinpur, Lailai and Laxmipur. The criterion for selection of GP was to have a minimum of 90% of ST households registered in MGNREGA. The 5 GPs were randomly selected from those GPs who fulfill this criterion as the prime objective of the study was to understand the impact of MGNREGA in the lives of tribal households. The sample size was 50 and ten ST households from each of the selected GPs were interviewed.

Table 1:- No. of Registered households in MGNREGA in the 5 GPs of Rayagada block

Sl. No	Panchayat	No. of households registered in MGNREGA			
		SC	ST	Others	Total
1	Gangabada	2 (0.29%)	680 (98.69%)	7 (1.02%)	689
2	Kerandi	0 (0%)	307 (100%)	0 (0%)	307
3	Koinpur	6 (0.58%)	943 (91.82%)	78 (7.59%)	1027
4	Lailai	7 (0.82%)	849 (99.07%)	1 (0.12%)	857
5	Laxmipur	5 (0.49%)	989 (96.3%)	33 (3.21%)	1027

Source : (retrieved from www.nrega.nic.in on 19th February, 2012)

Analysis and Findings

A questionnaire was developed having the components of demographic profile of the respondents, MGNREGA provisions, level of awareness and socio-economic impact. The data was coded and analyzed using the SPSS software version 15.

The study is limited to Rayagada block and the findings of this study cannot be generalized in a larger context as the sample size for this study was very small.

Demographic data

Table-2 : Age across sex

Age	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
18-25	6.0%	4.0%	10.0%
26-35	14.0%	12.0%	26.0%
36-45	26.0%	6.0%	32.0%
46-55	16.0%	12.0%	28.0%
More than 55	2.0%	2.0%	4.0%
Total :	64.0%	36.0%	100.0%

The table 2 shows the cross tabulation of age across sex of the respondents. It is clear from the above table that the majority of the respondents belong to male category which constitute of 64% whereas the majority of the age group of the respondents are from 36-45 years of age which is of 32% and it is followed by 46-55 years (28%) and 26-35 years (26%).

This study also found the following findings :-

- About 88% respondents belong to Hindu religion whereas remaining 12% respondents belong to Christian.

- Eighty per cent of the respondents belong to joint family and remaining belongs to nuclear family.
- Almost every respondent are involved in the *poddu* cultivation and in local language they call it *Bagada*.

Acknowledgement of demand receipt	-	100%
Timeline for issued of Job Cards and amount charged there of	8%	92%
Benefit of Social audit	4%	96%

Table-3 : Awareness about MGNREGA

Provisions	Aware	Unaware
No. of entitled days in a year	24%	76%
Minimum wages	100%	-
Time period for the payment of wages	12%	88%
Distance of workplace	8%	92%
Facilities at workplace	40%	60%
Quota of women workers	6%	94%
Unemployment allowances	-	100%
Compensations for delayed payment	-	100%

The above table explains that respondents are only aware about their minimum wages. It is also clear that the respondents are not completely aware about most of the provisions available under MGNREGA. This could mean lack of awareness shows down the demand for employment. This implies the need to make people aware of each and every component of MGNREGA.

Issues related to Job Card

When asked about the custodian of job card the study found that all the respondents (100%) keep their job cards with them. Job cards are returned to the households after the necessary information being entered into it.

Table-4 : Nature of work

Works taken up Under MGNREGA During the Financial Year 2012-2013

Panchayat	Rural Connectivity	Flood Control	Water Conservation & harvesting	Renovation of Traditional Water bodies	Irrigation Canals	Land Development	BNR GSK	Others	TOTAL
GANGABADA	6	0	26	1	0	0	1	0	34
KERANDI	6	0	6	0	0	0	1	0	13
KOINPUR	10	3	1	3	0	3	1	10	31
LAILAI	7	0	0	0	5	1	1	0	14
LAXMIPUR	7	0	3	0	0	0	1	1	12
TOTAL	36	3	36	4	5	4	5	11	104

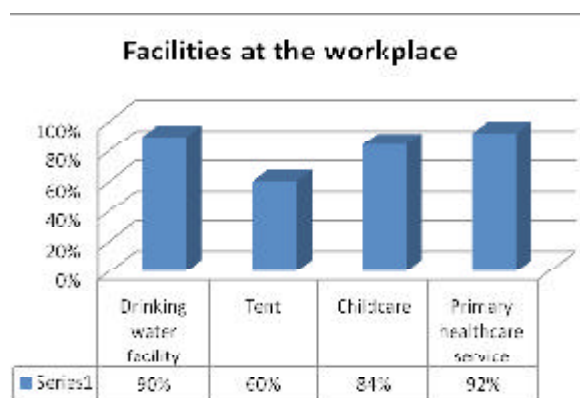
Source: (retrieved from www.nrega.nic.in on 20th February, 2012)

The above table explains the nature of works undertaken so far under MGNREGA. As found the majority of the works taken up are rural connectivity and work related to water conservation and harvesting. This is followed by Others that includes plantation.

It was borne out from the discussion with the households and block officials that almost every ST households have received *patta* under FRA. As found there have been minimal numbers of work taken under land development. This implies a great scope to expedite the land development

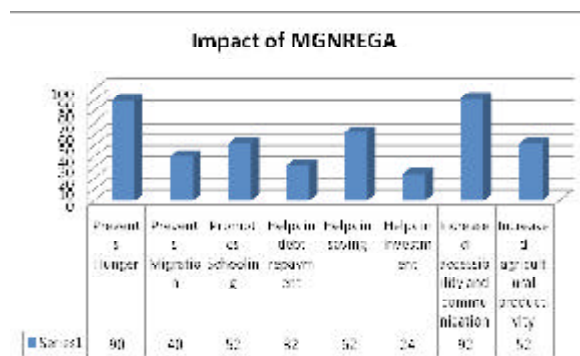
work under MGNREGA. There is also need to have convergence with minor irrigation and ITDA department to take more work related to land development, irrigation and plantation.

Chart-1 : Facilities at workplace



The chart shows that different facilities are available in the worksite of MGNREGA. On an average 90% of the respondents revealed that they have been provided drinking water, primary health service and childcare facility whereas 60% respondents have been provided the facility of tent. This implies a good practice in implementing the NREGA in this region, however there is still a minimal effort to be done to ensure all the workers are provided all the facilities that are being prescribed in the guidelines.

Chart-2: Impact on socio economic life



As seen in the chart-2, 92% of the respondents feel that NREGA work has increased the accessibility and communication facility by constructing roads. In fact the villagers from Kerandi GP used to come to Koinpur GP to receive their PDS and pensions as there was not a road by which a vehicle could reach their GP headquarter; however, after the construction of *Ghat* cutting road under MGNREGA, now PDS vehicle can connect their GP and villagers are getting their ration and pension in their Panchayat itself.

Further, 90% respondents feel that wage that they have received under NREGA has helped preventing hunger and it is followed by the responses such as helps in saving (62%), increased agricultural productivity (52%) promote schooling (52%), prevents migration (40%), helps in debt repayment (32%) and helps in investment (24%).

While discussing with the households it was understood that they are belong to Saoura tribe which is one of the 62 scheduled tribes in Odisha. In Odia and even in Saoura language they call “*Bagada*” (Poddu cultivation) which is known as the main occupation of all the households where both males and females are actively engaged in. It means through Poddu cultivation they harvest different food items such as pulses, fruits and vegetable. According to them it’s being 5 years they have been introduced to NREGA and since then most of the households have been engaged in NREGA as unskilled labourer. They feel that *Bagada* work is very tedious and not-profitable and NREGA provides good return (money) in compare to *Bagada*.

Suggestion and recommendation

Awareness: Awareness about the scheme entitlements among primary stakeholders is the key for success of any programme. MGNREGS is not an exception. The findings of this study indicate that majority of labourers are unaware of the basic entitlements of the scheme which deprives them from claiming their shares.

- People are unaware of the fact that dated receipt be issued against each demand received. Because of this, they are not in a position to claim for unemployment allowance and implementing agencies are not bothered of meeting their demand by providing work within 15 days of receipt of demand.
- The scheme is implemented more like target driven and less like demand driven which does not last in the long run. In order to increase the demand, substantial amount of funds are to be allocated for generating awareness using various media considering the local situation.

Delay Payment: MGNREGS has been launched with an objective to enhance the livelihood security which can be ensured only by making the payment of wages within 7 days from the date of work done and not more than 15 days in any case. But the scenario today reveals that, wages are paid by the implementing agencies with delays ranging from 15 days to 150 days. This discourages the labourers to come for work in future.

- Delay payment mainly takes place due to non tracking of e-Muster Rolls issued by the Programme Officer. A proper tracking like measurement, check measurement, payment (deposit / FTO) by the implementing agency within the stipulated period for each activity is essential to avoid delay payment.
- All the payments under MGNREGS are to be made through Banks and Post Offices. However, presence of banks in the district is limited to headquarters. In Post Offices, adequate funds are not made available. In payment of wages through Bank and Sub-Post Offices, huge delay is happening due to their procedures. In Post Offices, no timeline has been fixed for payment of wages because of which inordinate delay is taking place at their end.
- In this context, BC model was launched in pilot basis in three districts namely Gajapati,

Ganjam and Mayurbanj. But it became a failure and ended with effect from Sept'2012.

- In the IAP districts, where no. of bank branches is limited and uncontrolled postal network, a BC model is essential which can fix the responsibility on the Service provider for delay payment.

Information Communication Technology:

Each activity under MGNREGS is made online beginning from demand entry to generating wage list, FTO generation. In the districts, where ICT facilities like Internet connectivity are limited, it is hardly possible to make some data online timely. Further, NREG Soft is showing different kinds of problems everyday which needs to be resolved on time for proceeding further. Whereas, there is no proper technical support to the implementing agencies which is causing a great delay in making the data online. Therefore there is a need to provide the technical and human support for the implementing agencies in the GP and Block level.

Social Audit: The author feels that an independent organization should be given the responsibility of conducting the social audit so that transparency and accountability can be maintained.

Grievance: It was borne out from the discussion with the block and district level officials that there is a need to ensure a strong and time bound grievance redressal system at the GP and Block level.

Conclusion

It was understood that the tribal households in the Gajapati district have been benefited from MGNREGA in many ways as it has increased their income resulting multiple impacts in their social and economic life; however there is still a long way to fulfill the purpose and objectives of MGNREGA and ensure the livelihood security of the rural and tribal households.

Prabeena Kumar Bebarta, Prime Minister's Rural Development Fellow, Gajapati.

Strengthening Panchayati Raj System in Odisha : Initiatives and Concern

Dr. Priyanath Pattayat

Village or a group of village constituted as Village Panchayat or Village Council is the lowest unit of administration at different stages i.e Ancient, Medieval and pre-independent India but nothing much is known about their status, structure and functions. However, those institutions were dominated by the economically affluent and upper caste people and were mostly dealing with village level dispute resolution, organizing social, cultural and religious activities. The concept of community development, decentralized village level planning and participatory governance was not inherent in the system of village administration. The post independent India witnessed revolutionary changes in visioning the village Panchayat as core of decentralized democratic set up. Different State Governments introduced the Panchayati Raj System without giving much autonomy and provisioning for self regulatory mechanism to function as self government.

The concept of 'Gram Swaraj' (Self Government) as envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi found its expression in the drafting of the Constitution of India. Yet, the Panchayats were not given much Constitutional power and financial support to act as a catalyst to strengthen grass root democracy. The provisions made by different State Governments were marked by long delays in holding of Panchayat elections, dissolution of the Panchayat bodies, lack of functional and

financial autonomy, inadequate representation of marginalized and weaker sections and tied meager Government grants. This affected the functioning of Panchayats to function as institutions of local Self-Government as had been envisaged in the Constitution.

During mid 80s and early 90s several administrative reforms were made by the Government of India to accelerate the rural development process. However, due to irregular Panchayat election and dissolution of Panchayats, these reform measures were not successfully implemented. This underlined need to streamline the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions by making necessary Constitutional Amendment. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 ushered a new era in the federal democratic set up of the Country. It provided the much needed Constitutional sanction to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) for functioning as an organic and integral part of the participatory democratic process through giving power to the people.

Our democracy has reached the stage where the full participation of the people brooks no further delay. Those who decry Panchayati Raj as an election stunt are only those whose feudal interest will be overthrown by the power reaching the people. The late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi said, "We trust the people. We have faith in the people. It is the people who must determine their

own destinies and the destiny of the nation. To the people of India let us ensure maximum democracy and maximum devolution of power. Let there be an end to the power-brokers. Let us give power to the people.

The Act made provision for the states to endow the Panchayats with such powers as to enable them to prepare and implement plans for economic development and social justice. The Act has five main features: (a) a 3-tier system of Panchayati Raj for all States having population of over 20 lakh; (b) Panchayat elections regularly every 5 years; (c) reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women (not less than one-third of seats); (d) appointment of State Finance Commission to make recommendations as regards the financial powers of the Panchayats, and (e) constitution of District Planning Committees to prepare development plans for the district as a whole. The 11th schedule in the constitution listed 29 functional areas to be brought within the purview of the decentralized planning level, including agriculture and allied activities, irrigation, social forestry, village and small-scale industries, water supply, housing, roads, education and poverty alleviation programmes etc.

Panchayati Raj System in Odisha

The Orissa Gram Panchayat Act, 1948 is the first legislation prescribing constitution, power and functioning of Gram Panchayats in the State of Odisha which was revised in 1964. Yet, the Panchayats were not much vibrant and empowered to function as local self government. Regular conduct of election, financial autonomy and administrative power remained as the key factor affecting the effective functioning of the Panchayats. After the introduction of 3 tier Panchayati Raj system, regular elections are held in 1997, 2002, 2007 and 2012. The State Election Commission, State Finance Commission has been

set up and District Planning Committees have been constituted. Out of 29 subjects listed in the 11th Schedule of the Constitution of India, 21 subjects of 11 Departments have been transferred to the Panchayats. The State Government during the Panchayat election of 2012 has increased the reservation for women from 33 per cent to 50 per cent.

Panchayati Raj Institutions

PR institutions & P.R. Members	in the State as a whole	In scheduled area
No. of Dist./ZPs	30	07 (Fully) 06 (Partly)
No. of blocks/PSs	314	118 (Fully) 03 (Partly)
No. of GPs	6236	1966
Total Elected Representatives		
ZP Members	854	256
PS Members	6236	1965
Sarapanches	6236	1966
Ward Members	87542	24734
Total No. of Villages 51349		

The Government is committed for progressive devolution of funds, functions and functionaries to the Panchayat for effective planning and implementation of different rural development programmes sponsored by the Central and State Government. It has devised the mechanism to position the Gram Sabha at the core Panchayati Raj system for true self-governance & ensuring transparency & accountability of Gram Panchayat. Efforts have been made to build organizational capacity of the PRIs & Professional capacity of elected representatives & official functionaries to perform the mandated roles effectively. The centrally sponsored major flagship programmes of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS),

Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF), 13th Finance Commission Grants, Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) and National Rural Livelihood Mission is implemented by the Gram Panchayats. This apart, State government sponsored schemes like Gopabandhu Grameen Yojana (GGY) implemented in 11 coastal districts and Mo-Kudia is also implemented by the Gram Panchayats. The Panchayats also have the responsibility of distribution of PDS, Pensions, National Family Benefit Schemes etc. The programmes of other line Departments i.e Health & Family Welfare, Women & Child Development are also implemented by the Gram Panchayats.

New Initiatives

Several administrative and policy decision measures have been taken by the Panchayati Raj Department, Government of Odisha in the recent past to create an enabling environment, to make the Panchayats more vibrant for effective implementation of rural development programmes, to promote grass root leadership and participatory planning. These includes training and capacity building of the newly elected PRI members on a mission mode, conduct of Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha in a campaign mode, training of officials of Panchayat, Block and district level, devising Job Chart and orientation for the officials engaged in MGNREGS, Odisha Modernizing Economy, Governance & Administration (OMEGA), setting up of Panchayat Helpline, Grievance Redressal Cell, Odisha Livelihood Mission and Odisha State Social Audit, Accountability & Transparency (OSSAAT).

PRI CB & T-Resource Pool, e-monitoring, materials

Capacity building and Training of newly elected PRI members is one of the major initiatives to promote grass root leadership. The government took the policy decision to impart 3 days induction

training to over 1 lakh PRI members within 100 days of assuming the office. The State Institute for Rural Development is the Nodal agency for the conduct of the training programmes. Partnership was developed with 202 civil society organizations to conduct the field level training in different locations at the Block level. The organizations were selected on the basis of a set of capability parameter. They were physically verified by the concerned Block level officials and in some cases officials from the State level to ascertain the presence of the organization, training venue, infrastructure and suitability to conduct such training programme.

Over 700 Resource persons have been trained at the State level to impart the training programme to the PRI members. As of now over 60,000 PRI members including the Block Chairman, Sarapanch, Panchayat Samiti Member and Ward Member have been trained for 3 days on Induction Module. The training was very much needed and very useful owing to 50 per cent reservation for women most of whom were elected first time. For the first time web based monitoring system has been introduced to monitor the conduct of training programme across the State at different locations. This will help in generating a range of auto generated report which include the personal profile of the participants and training detail.

Gram Sabha Sashaktikaran Karyakram

Gram Sabha is an institutionalized people's platform to promote participatory democracy representing each and every section of the community and their needs. It is mandated to create an enabling environment for participatory decision making process and function as a mechanism to plan, monitor and evaluate the development activities carried on by the Panchayat. Gram Sabha endowed with the power to participate in preparing village level plan, implementation and monitor the process, asking

for accountability, transparency and information regarding planning and budgeting. However, over the last few decades, these institutions of public interest have lost some of their momentum, getting disconnected with the people they were meant for. Communities were oblivious of their significance and often, these meetings were held with limited attendance. Overall, a feeling of mistrust and doubt was created regarding their outcomes. While both were meant to serve basic interests of the community, namely to finalise and announce beneficiary list of schemes and list of projects in Annual Action Plans, these details remained obscure.

In view of the above, conceptualization and implementation of 45 days historical Gram Sabha Sashaktikaran Karjyakrama (GSSK) 2012 was launched through conduct of Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha from 2nd October-18th October 2012 across the State. With the twin approach of social mobilization in a campaign mode and build the institutional capacity of the PRIs through administrative and technical support has laid several milestones to strengthen local self governance.

An effort was made to bridge the gap between government provisions and their perception among the rural people. GSSK 2012 attempted to resurrect all the essentials of organizing a successful Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha through social mobilization, individual and collective awareness building, and information dissemination to involve the people in the process. The effort also consisted of facilitation for creation of leadership from among the marginalized section of the community. To provide real substance to grass root governance, special effort was put in ensuring participation of women and socially excluded communities in the Gram Sabha meeting.

The conduct of Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha in a phased manner across the State within a stipulated time frame has recorded over 99.44

per cent success in terms of the number of Palli Sabha conducted and 97.37 per cent with regard to the conduct of Gram Sabha. A total of 84 lakhs of projects have been planned under MGNREGS, IAY, BRGF, CC Road and GGY out of which 64 lakh projects are under MGNREGS. Each projects selected have been assigned an unique ID Code and the project documents have been uploaded for online monitoring, transparency and accountability.

Panchayat Helpline

Panchayat Help Line, a Toll Free number (18003456768) under the aegis of Grievance Redressal Cell was launched by the Hon'ble Minister of Panchayati Raj, Govt. of Odisha in the campus of State Institute for Rural Development (SIRD), PR Department on 1st November 2012. The objective of setting up of Panchayat Help Line is to reach out to 55,000 villages and 3.12 crore people across the State. This is a platform to listen to the people, solicit suggestions, receive grievances and address their grievances. This is based on 3 important principles of Transparency, Accountability and Accessibility. The people should know their rights and entitlement and access information as well as services. This will ensure transparency and accountability. Located in the campus of SIRD, the Help Line will function from 8 a.m to 8 p.m with a team of 9 professionals well trained to how to talk to people and how to register their suggestion and complain through the Help Line.

Grievance Redressal Cell

Grievance Redressal Cell (GRC) is headed by an Officer In-Charge in the rank of Joint Secretary to strengthen the existing grievance redressal system. Each complaint received will be recorded properly and a timeline will be given through SMS. In every 15 days, a review will be made on the number of complaint received and the status of complaint for speedy disposal. The

official procedure of inquiry and investigation will be made for appropriate action as per the statutory norms or the prima facie of complaint. For matters of important complaint or serious allegation, high level investigation may be made from the state level. The grievances received from office of Hon'ble Chief Minister and Hon'ble Minister of Panchayati Raj will be given priority for speedy disposal of complaint.

The GRC will remain open on all Monday from 10 a.m onwards and on the same day and time all BDOs will be present in their respective Offices and will attend to the grievances of the people. Grievance received from people will be sent to the BDOs, DRDA or the District Collector depending on the nature of complaint. It will take 3 months time to streamline the system and after 3 months a review will be made by SIRD to analyse the nature of complaint and its disposal.

Odisha State Social Audit, Accountability & Transparency (OSSAAT)

Social Audit at the grassroot level has become a cutting edge of introducing transparency into governing programmes by handing over the right to review the government programmes to the Gram Sabha. Initially Social Audit was a mandatory component in MGNREGA but now it will be extended to all the programmes implemented by the Gram Panchayat. Odisha is among the few States in the Country to establish an autonomous Social Audit Agency named 'Odisha State Social Audit, Accountability & Transparency (OSSAAT) under the aegis of Panchayati Raj Department. The objective of OSSAAT is to facilitate the Social Audit process by the Gram Sabha towards strengthening and deepening social Audit process as integral part of the governance system in the State. It will ensure impartial and effective Social Audit of the social sector development programmes for greater transparency and accountability.

Odisha Livelihood Mission (OLM)

The existing scheme of Swarna Jayanti Grama Sworozgar Yojana is renewed and renamed as 'National Rural Livelihood Mission. Odisha is the first State in the Country to launch Odisha Livelihood Mission. The objective of the mission is to address rural poverty through social, financial and economic inclusion. This will ensure enhancement of the livelihood of the poor people living in the rural village. The rural families and vulnerable families will be identified and included in the Self Help Groups on a priority basis. The rural poor women will be organized into groups and capacitated by way of extending financial and technical support for sustainable livelihood generation and women empowerment.

Odisha Modernizing Economy, Governance and Administration (OMEGA)

Odisha Modernizing Economy, Governance and Administration (OMEGA) Programme is a Government of Odisha initiative commissioned by DFID, UK. OMEGA assists the government to enhance a) private sector investments in industries and infrastructure with environmental and social safeguards b) enhance capacity to mobilise revenue and manage expenditure and c) improve implementation and delivery of selected poverty alleviation programmes that enhance access to employment and food, and build climate resilience. The objective is to provide management and high quality technical support to the Department of Finance (DoF), Planning and Coordination (DoPC), Industries (DoI), Panchayati Raj (DoPR) and Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare (DoFS&CW), Government of Orissa (GoO) for planning, implementing and monitoring of the programme. With Panchayati Raj Department the programme supports in strengthening the implementation of MGNREGS by exploring best possible options for streamlining processes, improving transparency and

accountability, building adequate institutional staff and systems capacity, encouraging IT reforms, integrated planning etc.

Special Drive for Employment Generation

Odisha is the first State in the Country to introduce e-FMS (electronic Fund Management System) for the payment of wages under MGNREGS. Payment is now being credited directly to the account of the beneficiaries through Bank Account and Post Office Account. This will help in addressing the delay of payment of wages and mis-appropriation in making payment to the beneficiaries. During the conduct of GSSK 2012, huge number of community development and individual projects (as many as 64 lakhs) has been finalized at the Gram Panchayat level for the year 2012-13. Implementation of such huge number of projects is a big challenge for the PR Department. However, in order to streamline the implementation process Job Charts have been developed for the PD-DRDA, BDO/PO, APO, GPTA/JE and GRS. One day each orientation programme have been organized to orient them about their roles and responsibility. A State Control Room has been set up to monitor the progress of the implementation process of the projects identified on weekly basis. Instead of the district, the Block has been considered as the unit of monitoring.

Cement Concrete Road

Quality construction of Cement Concrete Road is another special drive which will make communication easy and help the rural poor people living in remote area to reach out to mainstream development process. Specific guidelines have been developed to ensure the quality of CC Road. People will be educated about the quality parameter and will be encouraged to monitor the quality construction.

Conclusion

The initiatives undertaken by the PR Department, Government of Odisha shows tremendous commitment and political will to empower the Panchayat to function as self government. However, the challenge is how to streamline the functioning of the PRIs at the grassroot level with adequate manpower and technical support. One of the critical issues is access to and control over resources and generate revenues at the Panchayat level to make them financially stable. The geographic disparities and demographic settings in the Scheduled Area is the real challenge of how to bring equity and equality in the mainstream development process.

The real issue is how to disseminate knowledge and awareness of the needs of the people, legal rights, and availability and accessibility of social and economic resources. This underlines the need of restructuring relationships and power equation looking at gender issues at both the micro and macro level. There has to be a balance not only between male and female elected representatives but also between the officials and non-officials responsible for facilitating the decentralized planning and implementation of development programmes. Though the involvement of the people in the process of planning and identification of projects has been ensured through the conduct of GSSK 2012, the real challenge is to mobilize local resources, secure people's cooperation in acceptance and implementation of the projects. Necessary condition of restructuring the power equation of the PR institutions at the grassroot level and leadership development is required to expedite the rural development process through the PR institutions.

Dr. Priyanath Pattayat, TSO, MORP-CDLG Project, SIRD, Bhubaneswar.

A Study on Steps Taken by Government of Odisha on Women Empowerment”

Sudhir Kumar Halba

What is Empowerment ?

Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social and economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities. We see empowerment as a multi dimensional social process that helps people gain their own lives. It is a process that fosters power in people for use in their own lives, their communities, and their society by acting on issues that they define as important.

What is Women Empowerment or Gender Empowerment?

It is the process and the outcome of the process, by which women challenge gender discrimination against women/men in all the institutions and structures of the society.

What is perennial though is the fact that empowerment means different at different strata of the society. “For a woman, empowerment is not just the extra bucks; it’s not just the bank balance and not escapes from domestic drudgery. It’s all about self reliance, liberation, sense of pride and courage to fight social injustice.

For centuries women were not treated equal to men in many ways. They were not

allowed to own property, they did not have a share in the property of their parents, they had no voting rights, and they had no freedom to choose their work or job and so on. Now that we have come out of those dark days of oppression of women there is a need for strong movement to fight for the rights of women and to ensure that they get all the rights which men have or in other words a movement for the Empowerment of Women.

Historical Background of Women Empowerment

The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millinnia. In early Vedic period women enjoyed equal status with men. Rig Veda and Upanishads mention several names of woman sages and seers notably Gargi and Maitrei. However later the status of women began to deteriorate slowly.

After Independence the Constitution of India guarantees equality to women by introducing (Article 14, 15 (1) and 16) which ensure rights of women that is no discrimination by the State, equality of opportunity etc. Not only the above mentioned Articles but also during the 73rd and 74th Amendments(1993) to the Constitution of India provided for reservation of seats (at least

one-third) in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women. Another Constitutional Amendment (84th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1998) reserving 33 per cent seats in Parliament and State Legislatures is in the pipeline.

Women Empowerment in Odisha

The Government of Odisha has implemented all the welfare schemes framed by Government of India as well as the State has been giving all the priority to the women as per the Constitution of India, but still it has been observed that women are not able to reach to the mainstream of the society so the state felt the need that is empowering women is not enough, they should take the initiative to justify the empowerment. The time is right to take on leadership role in different fields and more responsibilities and make changes wherever they are. There is a need for active citizen leaders as they need to take authority.

Political Empowerment

So to justify their rights, Government of Odisha has given more emphasis by providing reservation to women in political arena. Today we can find that the Zilla Parishad Members, Samiti Members, Sarpanches (under Department of Panchayati Raj ZP Section), Members of Legislative etc, are from women stream which will involve them in policy and decision making.

Economic Empowerment

The Government has formulated thousands of women self help groups and providing them loan through Bank linkage with sufficient subsidy to make them financially sound through different schemes such as Mission Shakti, WEP (women's Economic Programme) and

swayamsiddha etc (by different Departments such as Department of Panchayati Raj and Department of Women and Child Welfare); also providing seasonal training for their capacity building, marketing support etc.

Educational Empowerment

Education is a powerful tool of social transformation. Hence, education for women has to be paid special attention. The Southern part of Odisha where the population of SC/ST people are more and the literacy rate among the women are very less so State Govt has opened many tribal schools under department of ST/SC Development, ITDA and special schools for girls such as KGBV (Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya).

Social Empowerment

Social empowerment of women refers to the steps to be taken to improve the health status of women, reduce maternal mortality especially in the areas which do not have good medical facilities. So Odisha Government has introduced "Mamata" Scheme which is specially designed for the pregnant women and schemes like "Kisori Balika Yojana" for adult girls to provide them a healthy life. But still a programme for checking the spread of sexually transmitted diseases like HIV / AIDS and infectious / communicable diseases like T.B. need to be launched.

Empowerment through skill development and vocational training programmes

From last few years Government of Odisha is emphasising on skill development and vocational training programmes, different Companies are being tied-up with the Government of Odisha. Those Companies are giving training to girls those who are drop out,

10th pass, 10th + 2 pass or Graduate in different fields such as hospitality, banking, tailoring etc. These programmes are helping the girls to become financially independent and empowered.

Why still we speak about women Empowerment

It is a well acknowledged fact to one and all that Government of India has taken up various measures for women empowerment and has formulated many laws, articles, welfare schemes to empower the women socially, economically, politically etc. But still we witness dowry deaths, domestic violence, exploitation of women and it has been found that the women are getting divest from their rights and they are not able to come to the mainstream of men dominated society.

Conclusion

The liberation of women is not a simple matter, it is one of the most important concerns of today's scenario not only at the state level but also at the national level. Efforts by the Government are on to ensure gender equality but Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal. It requires the attitudinal change of the husband, father, brother, other family members and society as a whole to the women.

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Empowerment of Women Through MGNREGS : Issues and Challenges

Dr. Spandita Kar

ABSTRACT

There is inequality and vulnerability of women in all sphere of life. They need to be empowered in all walks of life. Without the active participation of women, establishment of a new social order may not be a successful one, because women constitute half of the population. Women should realize that they have constitutional rights to quality health care, economic security, and access to education and political power. Mahatma Gandhi firmly states that the status of women would not change merely by bringing legislations; it must be supported by change in the women's social circumstances and situations and also man's sexist attitude to women. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which entitles rural households to 100 days of casual employment on public works at the statutory minimum wage, contains special provisions to ensure full participation of women. The paper discusses status of women participation in Odisha in comparison to other States and issues and challenges for women's participation in MGNREGS.

1. INTRODUCTION

Empowerment is a process aimed at changing the nature and direction of systematic forces, which marginalize women and other disadvantaged sections in a given context. A large segment of Indian womanhood still suffers deprivation and discriminatory attitudes. It is necessary to mobilize the vast women power, if the country has to progress in all sphere of development. Empowerment of women is a long and difficult process which is to be promoted with full public support and this could be successful only when those women living at the lower strata who have been suppressed by the male dominated society taking undue advantage of their lack of education and poverty can rise up to claim their

rightful place in their own society. In spite of the drawbacks in the implementation of the legislation, significant benefits have already started accruing to women through better access to local employment, at minimum wages, with relatively decent and safe work conditions.

Gender is the inevitable push factor for growth and development of a nation like India. In India women constitute a major share of chronically poor population. The Government has framed different programmes/schemes to uplift the women from poverty and vulnerability of life. One such women friendly programme is Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) which was enacted in 2005. MGNREGA has provided a unique opportunity

to people from rural India to earn their own income without any discrimination of caste or gender. Most remarkable feature of NREGA is that it pays women the same as men, something that was virtually unimaginable in rural India. However, some States have registered high percentage of women workers getting enrolled in the scheme whereas others have registered a very low percentage of women availing benefit under MGNREGA.

2. Women Through MGNREGA

MGNREGA plays a significant role to meet the practical as well as strategic needs of women's participation. It has become a beacon of light in the empowerment of the rural women and contributed substantially for the increased living and economic conditions by creating equal wages to male and female workers. The role of MGNREGA on women's participation can be examined through the following parameters:

- i. Income-Consumption Effects:** By income-consumption effects we mean an increase in income of women workers and as a result, their ability to choose their consumption baskets. MGNREGA empowers women by giving them a scope of independent earning and spend some amount for their own needs.
- ii. Intra-Household Effects:** Women play a major role in raising the economic resources for their family but their contribution remains uncounted because of they perform a significant amount of unpaid work. In rural areas, the dominance of males in intra-household decisions has been seen. MGNREGA has significant impact in converting some unpaid work into paid work and widen the scope of decision making role of women in household matters.

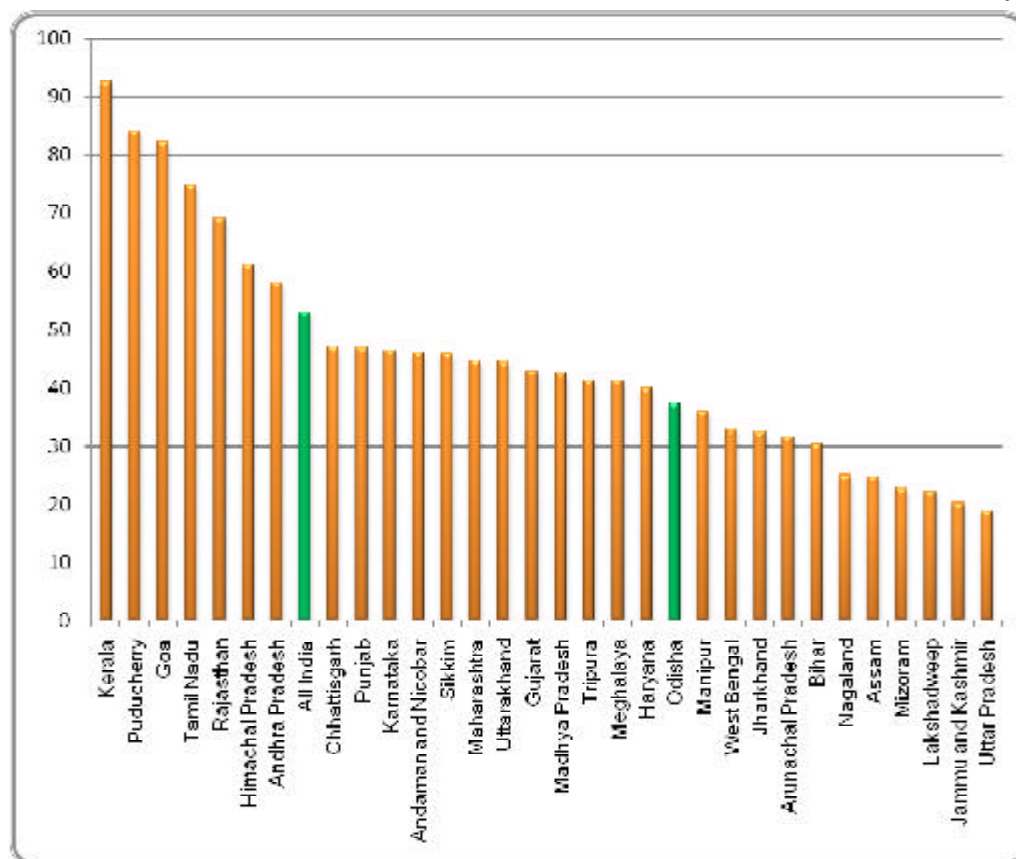
- iii. Community-Level Effects:** Women's participation at the local and district level of governance process is low in spite of 73rd Amendments of the Constitution. But women participation has increased after the implementation of MGNREGA in many areas. A large number of women workers attended the Gram Sabha meeting held in connection with MGNREGA. Community level empowerment of women is one of the great achievements of this Act.

3. Women's Participation under MGNREGS in Odisha

There are various factors which encourage the women worker's participation under this scheme include nature of work, which do not need skilled worker, the limited hours of work, availability of work locally, reduction of migration of male member, substantial jump in the wage rate etc. Participation of women varies widely across States. Women participation under MGNREGS is measured in person days.

At the national level women participation has increased significantly to 53.01% in 2012-13 (till January, 2013). Highest participation is seen in states like Kerala(92.66%) followed by Poducherry (83.96%). In comparison to these States Odisha ranked 20 with women participation rate of 37.39%. Although, women workforce participation under the Scheme has surpassed the statutory minimum requirement of 33 per cent, the Act stipulates that priority shall be given to women. In terms of implementation it mandates that a minimum of one-third of the beneficiaries are women who have registered and have requested for work. However, ideally, there should be gender equality in participation in MGNREGS. That means, women proportion should be around 50% both in terms participation and person-days of work. There are some issues which hinder women participation in MGNREGS in the State.

GRAPH-1: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN PERSON DAYS GENERATED IN COMPARISON TO MEN IN ALL STATES OF INDIA- 2012-2013 (Till January 2013)



4. Issues Related to Women Participation in MGNREGS

- i. **Non-availability of Child Care Facilities:** One of the major shortcomings of the Act is non-availability of proper crèche facilities at the work site even though the Act includes this provision. Different studies show that women remained worried about their children while they are working at MGNREGA worksite even some women do not accept the job facilities of MGNREGA because of non-availability of proper child care facilities.
- ii. **Low level of Awareness:** In many states women participation is low because of low

level of awareness about the process and entitlements of the programme.

- iii. **Nature of Work:** Most of the studies reveal that nature of work is also not helpful for women workers. In most of the projects selected being related to rural connectivity and renovation of local water bodies involving earth work requiring application of physical force, male workers were preferred to women workers (Hazarika, 2009).
- iv. **Poor Worksite Facilities:** MGNREGA funds have been allocated for the provision of safe drinking water, resting place and first aid. But most of the studies reported that

except drinking water facility all other facilities are generally absent.

- v. **Delay in Payments:** Delay in payments is also responsible for poor participation of women particularly in case of single women if they are the main earners in the family. Because the Banks are far from the village, it becomes difficult for the women to open Bank Account and draw cash which discourage women participation.

5. Policy Issues

The effectiveness of MGNREGA crucially depends on what type of schemes it gives priority to lack of focus of social, gender inequality in creation of productive assets has been a major reason for limited success of wage employment programme. Compared to men, the proportion of unskilled, subsidiary workers among women is much larger under MGNREGA. Given poor health and literacy as well as the predominant responsibility of house work and caring, women have recourse only to work that is available.

Generally, women lack any productive assets other than their own labour. Often they do not even possess a homestead within which they could raise livestock or set up a shop to meet daily food requirement. There is thus the need to maintain to inform and assist public policy to institute implementation of programmes for a gender responsive political economy, with adequate measures for building women's ownership and control rights to productive assets. Needless to say such measures are compatible with development needs of the country. That equal rights to productive assets of women with those of men, can lead to greater economic activity, change in the perception of dependence on men, and thus results in substantially reducing exclusion of women from social processes and promote development of diverse capabilities, thereby enhancing productivity and reducing inequality.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

MGNREGA has positive impact on employment pattern of women. Women have benefited both as individual and community. Women are benefited individually because they are able to earn independently, spend some money for their own needs, contribute in family expenditure etc. The gained benefits of women as community can be understood by increased presence in the Gram Sabha, increasing number of women in speaking out in the meetings, increasing capacity of interaction etc. But the poor implementation across the nation (such as lack of child care facility, worksite facility and illegal presence of contractors) accrued the gender sensitiveness of this act mainly in north-eastern state. Certain initiatives and changes should be taken to remove these barriers. The valuable gains should not be derailed for poor implementation.

Recommendations for policy and programme design

Suggestions for policy and programme design emerging from the study include the following.

a. Strengthening active citizenship

Women's participation in Gram Sabhas is likely to be increased as they become more aware of their citizenship rights and duties. Investing in informal groups is one way of doing this – policy has prioritised investment in training of elected leaders, which needs to continue, but democratic processes require active citizenship by all and this fact needs to find a place in resource allocations too.

b. Broadening the understanding of poverty to include needs of women

The programme could have a greater impact on poverty reduction and on development if

there were a broader understanding of the nature of poverty, and especially the constraints faced by women. The programme needs to find ways of improving its relevance to the daily lives of people (especially women) and addressing ecological poverty, not just income poverty, through suitable modifications to programme design. This will not happen through ad hoc creation of small and isolated tanks or wells. It requires an explicit framing of the development discourse within which MGNREGA is located.

c. Systems of wage payment

Women are employed as unskilled labour on MGNREGS worksites. Over a longer period, enhancement of skills and productivity will be one way of increasing earnings. To overcome the difficulties faced by the women in drawing cash from bank, provision can be made to provide door step delivery of the wages.

d. Complementing the NREGS for different needs of women

The programme design is perceived to be inclusive, as it is open to all irrespective of age or any other consideration. As a social protection system, NREGS reaches out to the able-bodied; to reach out to meet the needs of women who are at different stages in their lifecycle, a cash transfer or other kind of intervention may be better and more efficient.

e. Improving quality of childcare

The programme design includes a recommendation that mobile crèches need to be available at workplaces. From a policy stand point, the issue of quality needs to be brought to the forefront and not treated as something to be addressed at a later stage after issues of access or infrastructure have been dealt with.

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‘Promoting Women’s Political Leadership and Governance in India and South Asia’ : Government of India – UN Women Programme

Shibabrata Kar

India has pioneered the world’s biggest experiment in grassroots local democracy initiated by the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution, which paved the way for the creation of the three tier of governance – the Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies. These institutions have been designed with the spirit to capture the issues and challenges pertaining to the people belonging to the lowest rung of the society. These are elected bodies and cannot be dissolved by any administrative order. These Constitutional Amendment Acts guarantee that-

- All local elected bodies reserve one-third of their seats for women
- Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every panchayat [and Municipalities] shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat (Article 243D(3) & 243T(3)).
- Not less than one-third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women (Article 243D(4) & 243T(3))

But owing to limited and uncoordinated institutional mechanism for gender mainstreaming

at various programme implementing levels, development of strategies were encouraged to foster gender responsive governance through women’s political empowerment.

Gender Responsive Governance (GRG) is defined as ‘a process that embodies measures, attitudes and practices of different stakeholders, both men and women, at different levels of governance with a clear purpose to impact issues that foster women’s empowerment and promote gender equity and social justice. It is a process that promotes and sustains the ability of women to fully participate in the governance and development process, enhances their ability to raise critical questions about inequity and collectivise without fear and pressure, and ensures gains from services.’

In the socio economic development arena, there is a growing momentum among programmes to foster and ensure women’s participation and leadership in governance structures. Women’s political leadership is increasingly finding place on the development agenda of governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies, and non-governmental organizations, including women’s rights groups. Evidence from programmes and research demonstrates the important role women play as key actors and decision makers in the development process across a wide range of sectors (Gill et al., 2009).

Positive orientation to ensure women's political representation is of prime importance today in democratizing and engendering local governance. However, mere representation does not pledge effective participation or ensure that issues concerning women will generally be addressed by local governance structures. There are many such issues that reflect women's practical as well as strategic gender needs. Practical gender needs are immediate needs that focus on development concerns like water, healthcare, sanitation, transportation and eligibility for social welfare schemes. Though the importance of these issues cannot be undermined, still attention to only these issues will not be able to challenge women's status in society, transform power and gender relations to enable gender equity and social justice. It is very common that little attention is paid to addressing women's strategic gender issues. Though women privately raise gender issues, especially domestic violence with their GP representatives, these are seldom floored in the panchayat meetings.

There is a need to strategize how PRIs can become more engaged and proactive around strategic gender issues and provide spaces to promote gender equity within an overall framework of gender responsive governance. Given the huge expectation and need of the community for attention on these issues, elected bodies and members must play a central role to ensure that responses are in keeping with rights and justice frameworks and denounce biased and patriarchal efforts.

It is a matter of rejoice that more and more women are moving into leadership positions through both reserved and unreserved seats in the past elections. This has led to their increased self confidence and improved status in the family and community. Still women face a lot of challenges that include low literacy, inadequate training, high household work burden and negative attitude towards women in public office. As a

consequence of these, their ability to deliver in the capacity of the governance roles get reduced and making them very unlikely to re-contest.

Prevailing traditional attitudes among both women and men elected leaders regarding domestic violence contribute to it being perceived as outside the realm of public and political dialogue. Still, there is committed space and ownership for the discussion on these issues, as a small proportion of elected representatives raise these issues within meetings. The grassroots leadership is in the making.

There is now a felt need to build the capacities of the PRIs to be an effective mechanism for gender responsive governance incorporating some changes. Firstly, there is an immediate need for all the stakeholders committed to gender responsive governance to conduct a systematic review of the mandate of the local governance bodies and mechanisms for social justice within the local governance framework.

This will pave the way for incorporating changes needed to transform the local governance structures into spaces and platforms for addressing gender and social inequalities. Secondly, the capacity building initiatives for the elected PRI representatives need to be strategized as a continuous process starting with a training on their roles and responsibilities. Subsequently, it should focus on the concepts of gender equity, social justice and equitable development as well as leadership and decision making for effective Panchayat functioning. This will promote the adoption of gender just attitudes among all the elected PRI representatives as well as their response to strategic gender issues like violence against women and deprivation.

The connection between gender and violence is multifaceted. The different roles and behaviours of females and males, children as well as adults, are shaped and reinforced by gender norms within the society. There are social

expectations that define appropriate behaviour for women and men. Differences in gender roles and behaviours often create inequalities, whereby one gender becomes empowered to the disadvantage of the other. Hence, in many instances, women are viewed as subordinate to men and have a lower social status, allowing men control over, and greater decision-making power than, women. Gender inequalities have a large and wide-ranging impact on society.

For ages, therefore, promoting gender equality has been a critical part of violence prevention and empowerment of women. This has led to designing of interventions that support efforts to empower the decision taking capabilities with women.

In 2009, UN Women and the Royal Norwegian Embassy in India signed an agreement with the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India to launch a three-year programme entitled **‘Promoting Women’s Political Leadership and Governance in India and South Asia’**. This programme is being implemented by UN Women in 16 selected districts in five states of India (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan). In Odisha the programme is implemented in 4 districts namely, Gajapati, Dhenkanal, Bhadrak and Sambalpur.

UN Women is the United Nations Organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The vision of the programme is to aspire for-

- A world where girls and boys have equal opportunity and can reach their potential.
- A world where women and men share leadership and decision-making and share responsibilities at home—including the three Cs—cooking, cleaning and childcare.
- A world where human rights and dignity are for all, and where women and girls can finally live free of violence and discrimination.

The aim of the programme is to empower elected women representatives in local governance to make public policy and resource allocation patterns responsive to women’s human rights and strengthen gender responsive governance at the local levels as well as the state. This is a demand driven programme that seeks to understand and address issues of women’s participation in local governance from the grassroots perspective.

Social indicators of gender equality are of prime importance, as any development bereft of equality and justice is unjustified for which engagement of PRIs on strategic gender issues needs to be carefully structured. Both male and

female PRI members believe that women are less effective than men at holding public office or at taking decisions related to Panchayat matters. The programme emphasizes that gender equitable platforms does not confine itself to issues of women

alone, rather the whole community needs to make a collective effort as well. This will strengthen the efforts directed towards effective participation of elected women representatives with increased impact of their participation in Panchayat functioning. As a consequence, the elected women representatives shall thrive to perform along the stratified patterns of power, authority and functioning in an effort to justify their presence in the governance structure. Thus an increase in the skill and capacities among the elected women members will become a force majeure to transform priorities set by patriarchal frameworks.

The GoI-UN Women initiative in Odisha focuses primarily on the impact of gender related discriminations and disparities encompassing capacity building strategies to enable elected women representatives to participate effectively in the governance process and reinforce political aspirations. The platforms are being developed

wherein discussion with families, communities and service providers on the issues of gender division of labour and attitudes towards women in public roles can be institutionalized.

In the process of intra community interaction in the exclusive mahila sabhas, paths open up for engendered dialogue around expectation from the elected representatives and community participation in the development process. The process can lead to build a support structure for elected women representatives so that they can exercise their leadership effectively. Concepts of citizenship and peoples' participation in local governance many a time gets limited by the perception of *benefits* that a Panchayat is able to provide within the framework of specific practical needs. The divide between individual and public issues at the community level perpetrates exclusion, inequities and loss of opportunities. Specific probes around women-related issues reveal that most of the issues prioritised in the village meetings are either in the context of available schemes for women, or around their practical gender needs. Domestic violence and substance abuse are important concerns of community women which seldom get any attention in these meetings.

The GoI-UN Women programme focuses on building the capacities of elected women representatives in PRIs and advocating with key policy makers to strengthen gender responsive governance at the local levels as well as the state. Capacity building initiatives through training programmes have been designed with relevance for members with minimal literacy skills to build perceptions of self worth and confidence to undo the impact of historic gender disparities. Discussions around rationale and content of laws, acts and provisions related to such issues as domestic violence, child marriage and education have also been incorporated. This will generate awareness for creating spaces for women and girl's voices in the design and implementation of

all the development projects. The voices of the unheard can lead to advocating for interventions to promote the rights of women and girls to safety, freedom of movement, dignity, sexual autonomy, bodily integrity, non-discrimination, education and equal participation in decision-making.

The programmes has incorporated conduction of exclusive mahila sabhas at the village and gram sabha levels to provide a common platform for elected women representatives and women citizens in Gram Panchayats. The meetings will facilitate advocating for good governance and accountability in their Panchayats; and ensure that their Panchayats are sensitive to issues of social justice and gender justice. This will also pave the way to engage women citizens in Gram Panchayats with issues of governance and build their political understanding of rights, roles, responsibilities and duties of citizens, elected representatives, local bureaucracy and the State.

To conclude with the words of *Michelle Bachelet, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women*, "In our work to promote women's political leadership and governance, we take a two-pronged approach. We focus on making institutions of governance, planning, and social services responsive to issues that concern women, including sensitive issues such as domestic violence, and sexual harassment and abuse. Therefore, we concentrate both on training and enhancing the capacities of women and also on reaching out to male leaders, and local governance institutions".

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MGNREGS in Odisha : Moving towards a New Era

Nabaghan Ojha

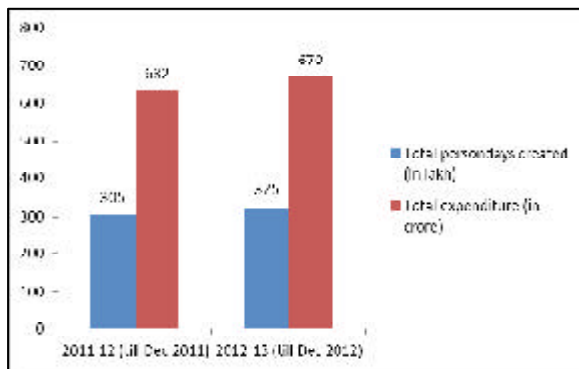
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the Centre’s flagship scheme, initiated in the year 2006, has delivered the largest employment programme in human history. It is a path breaking, demand driven wage employment scheme that guarantees 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. It also mandates payment of unemployment allowance in case the state fails to provide work to the applicant within 15 days. MGNREGS not only empowers rural people with right to work, but also aims at creation of durable assets that can provide environmental services and sustainable livelihood and reduction in distress rural migration. Hailed as a historic initiative, the scheme has attracted wide attention across the globe and across cross sections of society, particularly, the



Civil Society Organizations, academics, development workers and thinkers. Over the last six years, MGNREGS has generated more than 1,100 crore person-days of work at a total expenditure of over Rs.150,000 crores (MGNREGS Sameekshya 2012). As per reports, there has been significant change in livelihood of rural poor for whom the scheme has been designed.

Performance of MGNREGS in Odisha

In Odisha, MGNREGS was introduced in three phases. Nineteen districts were taken up in the first phase, five districts in the second phase and the remaining six districts were covered as third phase districts in April 2008. Since the inception of the Scheme in the State, the State has been taking ardent efforts and enabling actions



to improve the performance of the Scheme. However despite such initiatives, the Scheme has made only a partial dent in the poverty levels. Recently Panchayati Raj Department, Government of Odisha has taken many innovative measures to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Scheme. In November 2012, Panchayati Raj Department has come out with a robust monitoring system by introducing “Panchayat Helpline” to record the grievances and address those in a stipulated time period. State government in October 2012 has taken an initiative to organize Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha in a campaign mode, called as Gram Sabha Sashaktikaran Abhiyan (GSSK). This is probably a historical initiative of the State by which the participation of the rural communities were ensured and large number of projects identified to be undertaken under various schemes and programmes in the next 5 years. To address the issue of delay in wage disbursement, Department has rolled out eFMS across the State after successful pilots. Two dedicated institutions called MGNREGS Odisha Society and Odisha Society for Social Audit Accountability and Transparency (OSSAAT) have been constituted to exclusively deal with MGNREGS. Again for focused interventions, the Department has identified about 3600 high potential pockets in the State where saturation approach will be followed for completion of projects. Probably these are some of the reasons for which the off-take of the Scheme in 2012-13 (till December 2012) is in increasing trend in comparison to last year performance. More number of households have been provided employment, more person days have been created and also more expenditure.

Key features of the Social Audit Model

- Village based social audit- a decentralized approach

- Introduced toolkits for record verification, household survey, asset verification etc.
- Introduced Village Resource Persons to facilitate social audit.
- Introduced social audit committee and citizen juries to facilitate decision making process.
- Introduced wall painting, a powerful tool towards transparency and accountability.
- Introduced Independent Observer to record the proceedings of social audit.
- Introduced NGOs to assist in community mobilization, institution strengthening etc.

Again to introduce sustainable reforms under MGNREGS in the State, a government of Odisha initiative called **Odisha Modernizing Economy, Government and Administration (OMEGA) programme** has been introduced with the support of DFID, UK. The programme seeks to support Panchayati Raj Department, Government of Odisha ensuring strengthening support for the implementation of MGNREGS by exploring best possible options for streamlining processes, improving transparency and accountability, building adequate institutional staff and systems capacity, encouraging IT reforms, integrated planning, etc. For improved governance, transparency and accountability of the Scheme in the State, OMEGA has developed a unique social audit model and piloted it successfully. Similarly a high quality IT based monitoring tool called dashboard monitoring has been introduced based on which the Department has been monitoring the performance of the Scheme across the districts. In the following sections some successful initiatives have been discussed which have shown proven results in enhancing the effectiveness of the scheme in the State.

Introducing Innovative Social Audit Model

To make the MGNREGS social audit more tangible and people centric, Panchayati Raj Department with the support of OMEGA has come out with an innovative model by introducing many firsts in the history of social audit in Odisha. The model has been developed following the best practices of social audits within the country and beyond with specific focus of the provisions outlined in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Audit of Schemes Rules 2011. The model was piloted during May, June and July 2012 and it covered over 4000 households across 75 villages in 12 Gram Panchayats (GP) of six districts namely Koraput, Kandhamal, Balangir, Keonjhar, Cuttack and Ganjam.

The model introduced the concept of Palli Sabha based social audit in MGNREGS through engagement of independent resource persons at State, District, Block and Village level. For piloting MGNREGS Coordinator (MC) at district level and Additional Programme Officer (APO) at Block level were designated as District Resource Person (DRP) and Block Resource Person (BRP) respectively to facilitate the social audit piloting in their respective districts. The district administration in piloting districts identified NGOs to assist in the smooth conduct of social audit. Social Audit Committee (SAC) were constituted at village level to conduct social audit. 5-7 numbers of Village Resource Persons (VRPs) from MGNREGS labour families were engaged for a period of 15 days from a particular GP to facilitate social audit in the other GP. Dedicated toolkits were introduced in this model for collection of information by the VRPs at different level. After 3 days rigorous training, the VRPs were engaged for record verification, household survey and asset verification etc and presented

the findings in the social audit forum. A special meeting (Palli Sabha) known as social audit forum was convened by the SAC in each piloting village to conduct social audit. The forum was chaired by the President/Vice-President of SAC. At the beginning SAC identified an independent observer to record the proceedings of social audit. VRPs, then, presented the facts and figures gathered during record verification, household survey, asset verification etc. Each forum was attended by the implementing agencies with relevant records, PRI members and local media people. The issues emerged at the forum were thoroughly verified with records and a collective decision was made against the irregularities emerged. About 700 cases across various issues emerged across the piloting districts. The reports of social audit were uploaded to Panchayati Raj website www.nregsodisha.org

Impact of Social Audit piloting

The social audit at village level instead of the Gram Panchayat level augured well for ensuring greater participation of the local communities in the process, and also facilitated introducing greater transparency in the process of the social audit, and as a consequence of it, in the functioning of MGNREGS. This is possible because the rural communities find it easier to participate in the social audit at the village level, and to gather courage to voice their opinion. Importantly, the social audit at village level, are historic in the sense that for the first time, despite the presence of people from higher echelons of administration and social strata, the forums were chaired by SAC members, who were drawn from MGNREGS labour families. Again the entire processes were carried out engaging independent resource persons. This is a path-breaking feature of the social audit process which broke down social stereotypes and brought a sense of faith in

the social audit process among the rural communities.

The process followed during the piloting put the district administration on its toe to organize the entire information on MGNREGS for public display. The involvement of variety of stakeholders and use of variety of strategies lined up certain complaints which were in place since long. Directly or indirectly many issues which were under the control of field level functionaries like GRS, GS, JE etc were resolved overnight. The information displayed in wall painting empowered the communities to question the concerned authorities on the relevance of the information displayed. In most of the social audit forums people tried to know on what basis 100 days employment were provided to certain families and why other families were excluded from the list.

Now the Department is planning to upscale the model across the State. In long run the model would ensure high level of transparency and accountability in the scheme.

Dashboard monitoring

The Dashboard Monitoring System is a quick and effective way to review performance of any Scheme at a glance. It is a simple visual representation tool, which uses a colour band ranging from dark red (poor performance) to dark green (excellent performance) to identify performance of various indicators, grouped into broad sections. The tool helps to get overall performance status, identifies broad areas of concerns, pinpoints sub-issues within the broad area which needs to be addressed and encourages performance by using relative measure among districts.

The Dashboard designed and developed by OMEGA for Panchayati Raj Department, Government of Odisha is a web based monitoring

system which is fully developed on the open source software in Linux Platform with PHP & MYSQL Database. This Dashboard analyses the data received from the field and add meaning to this data. It presents the data in the form of ranking a district on its performance on individual indicator or group of indicators. It also colour code, the districts on the map of Odisha and helps the Department to monitor the performance of districts. The online application is available on <http://odishaprd.dashboardmonitoring.com>

Dashboard monitoring covers all Schemes of Panchayati Raj Department and specific indicators have been identified for each Scheme. Each indicator has been given a score based on which the performance is measured. The annual target for each indicator has been fixed based on which the districts have been asked to upload the performance data every month. After validation at State level the final data are uploaded to dashboard. The multi-layer mapping facility provides the district wise status in the colour coded format which helps to examine which district performs well and which not. The dashboard monitoring tool is being used by the Department every month to review the performance of the districts.

Addressing distress migration

In Balangir district, distress migration is prevalent since long mostly in Blocks like Bangomunda, Belpara, Tureikela, Khaprakhol and Muribahal. The areas are mainly inhabited by poorest of the poor, a highly drought prone region featured by regular droughts, large-scale migration every year. The poor performance of MGNREGS in the area is reflected in a high level of migration to other rural areas in the State and beyond. Delays in wage payment are one of the major reasons for people to consider migration as an alternative to MGNREGS. To check

migration through increased access to MGNREGS, OMEGA has come out with a strategy which has been implemented at selected pockets. The key parts of the strategy are;

- Experiment RozgarDiwas to enroll potential labours, provide job cards, record demand, address payment issues etc.
- Promoting Shram Shakti Groups among MGNREGS labourers to ensure demand through group and engage those groups in small scale entrepreneurship activities in the long run.
- Engage NGOs to assist in developing need based plans in the piloting GPs.
- To ensure timely employment to the families prone to distress migration a policy level decision has been made by Panchayati Raj Department to provide 100 days of advance work order to those families. Those families could demand for 100 days of employment in one go and accordingly work orders have to be provided by the administration.
- Introduced the concept of decentralized measurement and engage barefoot engineers to accelerate the works measurement process.
- Facilitate the Capacity Building of the unemployed youths through training on skill development such as SREI Sahaj e-Village Limited and ORMAS.
- Develop livelihood strategies to link with NRLM and other livelihood initiatives.

Impact

2100 families prone to distress migration in 8 GPs of Belpara and Bangomunda Blocks of Balangir district have been able to productively engage under MGNREGS of which more than

100 families have been completed 100 days of work till January 2013. The administration has ensured at least 2 works (at least one community asset) in each revenue village. On a campaign mode Job Cards have been provided to each family those who have been registered under the Scheme. The pilot project has been able to retain more than 60 per cent families and engage them in MGNREGS and other livelihood works. With the success of the pilot project, Hon'ble Chief Minister, during the SEGC meeting, declared 150 days of employment for Households in migration prone areas of Nuapada and Balangir districts.

The way forward

Given the policy level decisions taken by Panchayati Raj Department on sustainable reforms, it is expected that MGNREGS in Odisha would address the poverty scenario to a larger extent through increased coverage which leads to increased off-take of the Scheme. The projects identified during GSSK would act as a catalyst to ensure more works and more participation at the ground. Panchayat helpline, grievance redressal system and village based social audit would ensure improved transparency and accountability of the scheme. With all these innovations the ground is set now to ensure enhanced off-take of the Scheme in days to come.

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Leaning Temple of Huma

Nikunja Bihari Sahu

Bordered by the dusty villages and open countryside, Huma village is located on the bank of the river Mahanadi, 23 km south of the city of Sambalpur. Here, Mahanadi is seen to be hurrying on a rocky bed with grace and grandeur. Huma is a famous Shiva temple in the district of Sambalpur and the abode of Lord Vimala Swara. Hundreds of devotees flock the shrine everyday for visiting the deity and fulfilling of their cherished dreams. However, the prime attraction of the place is a strange leaning temple that makes the shrine so unique. Nobody knows whether this structure is leaning by design or by default. One interesting fact is that while the edifice leans, the pinnacle of the temple is perpendicular to the ground. Amazingly, all other structures in the premises like the Bhairabi temple, Bhubaneswar temple, Aruna Stambha, Kapileswar temple and newly constructed Jagannath temple and Hanuman temple are also leaned. In fact, almost everything within the temple complex is slanting!

Legend

Lord Vimala Swara is considered as the prime deity of a chain of 8 Shiva-Lingas (Astasambhu) of the region. The other Shiva Lingas are : Kedarnath of Ambhavana, Biswanath of Deogaon, Balunkeswar of Gaisama, Maneswar of Maneswar, Swapneswar of Sorna, Bisweswara of Soranda and Nilakantheswar of



Nilji. The Shiva Linga (a cylindrical stone considered as emblem of Lord Shiva) of Huma is believed to have a natural origin cropped from the under-ground. The legend has it that a cow from a nearby village was regularly visiting the place and secreting milk over the Linga. The owner of the cow, finding the cow's udder dry and milk-less, followed the cow secretly into the jungle and found to his great surprise that the cow's milk was pouring on a mysterious stone that consumed it quietly. He propagated this miraculous incident and everybody came to understand the glory of the Linga. This heralded the worship of Lord Shiva.

Construction Period

The account of the founder and the founding period of the shrine are debatable and shrouded



in mystery. According to the popular belief, the shrine is built by the 5th king of the Chauhan dynasty of Sambalpur named Baliar Singhdeo during the period 1660 to 1690; that means, the shrine dates back to 17th century A.D. and is around 300 years old. There are some evidences to contradict the theory. According to an order issued by a British Settlement Officer A. M. Russel dated 5th November, 1872 the first king of the royal dynasty of Sambalpur Balaram Deo had dedicated 6 villages including Huma for the construction of the temple and carrying out of different religious practices and rituals of the deity. A court order issued by a contemporary British judge also supports this view. Hence, it is natural to believe that the first king of Sambalpur, Balaram Deo or some of his immediate successors might have initiated the construction of the shrine instead of the 5th king of Sambalpur who probably completed the structure. Going by this fact, the period of construction will be considered little older dating back from 1545 A.D. to 1560 A.D.

Despite the controversies as described above, the temple of Lord Vimalaeswara of Huma stands elegantly leaning reminding us of the glorious past of the royal dynasty of Sambalpur.

Leaning Wonder

The shrine is built over a rectangular platform of 200 ft length and 120 ft width. The main temple of Lord Vimalaeswar is clearly inclined

towards the North-east side i.e. the river side. Due to the strange inclination, it is often compared with the Leaning Tower of Pisa of Italy which was constructed in the 12th century A.D. The surprising thing is that while the main temple is tilted to one direction, remaining small temples are tilted to other directions. Within the temple complex everything is found to be in tilted condition including the boundaries. According to the popular belief, the angle of inclination has remained constant over last 50 years.

The reason for having a leaning structure of the shrine is again shrouded in mystery. Some scholars believe that the architect has deliberately made a leaning design from the beginning in order to safe-guard the temple from the violent currents of the two rivers i.e. Mahanadi and Dhulijore during the flood in monsoon. This is why different structures are made leaning to different sides. This theory also explains why the degree of tilting remains unchanged all these years, and does not grow as in case of the other renowned tilting structures including the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Others hold the view that the temple gradually inclined over the years due to the depression of the foundation towards the riverside because of the impact of flood waters. Given these controversies surrounding the cause of inclination, one often wonders how the temple stands stable in spite of its inclination.

This is based on a simple principle in science called the 'center of gravity' (c.g.). The 'center of gravity' of a body is an imaginary point where its entire mass is assumed to have been concentrated. The force of gravity acts through this point that creates its weight. Stability of bodies depends on the position of this point. As long as the vertical line passing through this point remains confined within the base area of the body, the body stands stable. If this line goes beyond the



base area, the body becomes unstable. For this line to remain within the base area, and hence, for the stability of the body following two conditions are to be satisfied :

- i) The 'center of gravity' should lie as low as possible.
- ii) The base area should be broader.

These two criteria for stability of bodies appear to have been taken into account in the design of the temple to achieve the inclination. Heavy stones brought from nearby quarries possibly in rafts in the river Mahanadi during the floods might have been stacked on the lower side of the temple that accounts for the lowering of c.g. (the temple is not quite high). The broad base

area of the temple (200 ft x 120 ft) adds to its further stability. However, the exact degree of inclination of the temple is to be measured precisely from time to time and any change over time is to be carefully ascertained to ensure appropriate conservation measures.

Other Attractions

Apart from the leaning temple, a kind of reddish fish (popularly called Kudo) in the river is another attraction for tourists. One can also feed the fishes which have become very good pets over the years. Feeding these fishes is considered very sacred. Besides, one can also have a boat ride in the river Mahanadi to many small islands in it.

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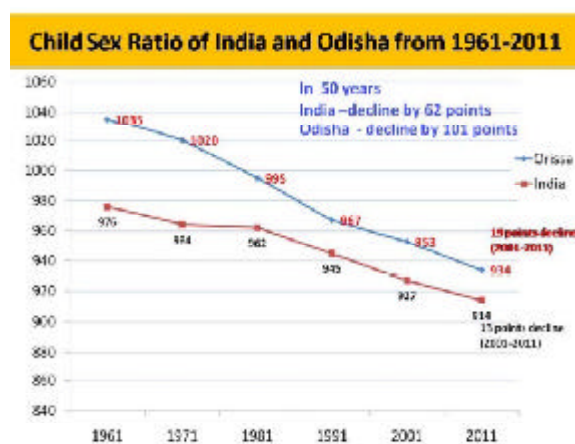
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Role of Panchayat Addressing Issues and Challenges of Child Sex Ratio

Amita Patra

India is ranked very low in the Human Development Index. The priority of human development would be defeated without the promotion and empowerment of women and girls who constitute nearly 48.46 per cent of total population as per 2011 census. Constitution of India provides equal rights to both men and women as a fundamental right. But in reality, the prevailing patriarchy social structure of India is predominantly responsible for the secondary and subjugated status of women in the society. They are subject to discrimination from womb to tomb. These disparities are reflected in the various indicators of human development such as health, education, nutrition etc. Violence against women remains one of the most pervasive, yet normal manifestations of gender inequality. Violence against women takes a variety of forms from female foeticide, infanticide, child marriage, malnutrition, sex abuse, trafficking and dowry harassment etc. A pernicious form of violence against women is “elimination of girl child”-Fall in child sex ratio.

One of the demographic features of India, Child sex ratio for the 0-6 age group has diminished from 927 in 2001 to 914 in last census. Decline of girl child ratio is continuous for last five decades. The below graph illustrates the number of girls in India and Odisha for every 1000 boys from the year 1961 to 2011. CSR in India has declined by 62 points (976-914) while the CSR in Odisha has fallen by 101 points (from 1035 to 934). Child sex ratio seemed normal till



Source : UNFPA

1981; afterwards there has been steady decline both at national level as well as in the individual states. The standard of sex ratio at birth is biologically stable. Ideally the child sex ratio should be around 950 girls per 1000 boys in the absence of social and behavioral interference. This clearly points to the fact that economic growth and human development seldom moves together, when it comes to improving gender relation. The picture of Odisha is better up in comparison to the national scenario. But an analysis of the trend of Child sex ratio of Odisha in last three census reports reveals wide variation across the districts and a distinct geographical pattern. As per 1991 census, only six districts had CSR less than 950. Within a decade of time it declined to the range of less than 935 in five districts and in eight districts the range is between

935-950. 2011 census report shows out of 30 districts in 13 districts the range of CSR is less than 934 and it is within the range of 935-950 in six districts which is a matter of great concern. Not only in a backward State like Odisha but the same dismal sex ratio is also found in developed states like Maharashtra (883:1000), Haryana (830:1000), Jammu Kashmir (859:1000), Punjab (846:1000) as per 2011 Census.

Where have all these missing girls gone ? Why the girls are being dejected ? Several reasons attributed to the decline on the number of girls- strong preference of son, neglect of the girl child, female foeticide and female infanticide etc. Sex selective abortions have greatly facilitated by the misuse of diagnostic procedures such as amniocentesis that can determine the sex of foetus. Daughters are considered liability. It is largely derived from the evils of dowry which fetches no return from investment in them to parents as well from terms of the socially prescribed norms regarding the obligations of married daughters towards their natal family.

The increasing deficit of girls is creating a social imbalance within the society. In one district of west Rajasthan in 1997 the 1st *Barat* was welcomed after 110 years as there were only 2 female surviving children compared to 400 male children. There are villages in Haryana, Rajasthan and Punjab, where there are no brides for their sons. So they are buying brides from other poor regions. This lead to further exploitation, abuse of women, increased trafficking, sex trade and reemergence of practices like polyandry.

Many people have different myths regarding sex selection. Some have a notion that going for sex determination is justified, if one has two or more daughters. Similarly many people believe it is better to eliminate a female foetus than to let her suffer an unjust existence. Some believe sex selection helps to control population. In fact, many study reports indicated that there is preference for a male child for the first born and

this trend is even more noticeable where the first born is a girl. Sex selection is not a solution to other problems of discrimination like dowry, violence and trafficking etc. The girl child is not the problem. The factors that lead to women being perceived as economic liability can be changed with proper education and skills. Women and girls can very much be as independent as men given the opportunity and support by their families in a number of ways. Another misleading notion is that a mother has the right to choose the sex of the child. Despite a slew of laws to prevent female foeticide and schemes to encourage families to have girl child the ratio has declined. Unlike several social legislations directed at changing social behaviour and practices, the pre-conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act 1994 demands ethical medical practices. Unfortunately it has not been able to prevent determination of pre natal sex and female foeticide. In fact, both for the effective implementation of the law as well as for creating collective consciousness to discourage this rampant discrimination against the girl child a person to person social movement need to be initiated at Panchayat level.

The passage of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 has given a new life to Panchayati Raj Institutions. In Odisha more than one lakh grass root leaders get elected in each tenure and have become agents of change for planning and execution of different development programmes in a participatory approach. The most significant amendment of Odisha Gram Panchayat Act is the reservation of fifty per cent seats for women giving scope to them in the electoral and decision making process. As per the 11th schedule of the Amendment Act, powers and responsibilities to manage 29 subjects have been devolved to Panchayats including monitoring and supervision of health centers and AWC. Thus the elected representatives especially women are expected to extend their hands in creating a gender just society by dissemination of right kind of

information, minimizing the impact of stigma and ensuring livelihood.

Generally the agenda of discussion in Gram Sabha and Palli Sabha meeting is on infrastructure, IAY house and pension scheme. They seldom discuss on issues of social development such as ensuring attendance of doctors in primary health centers or teachers in schools. They never take up other retrograde trends such as trafficking, malnutrition or female foeticide. There is a significant gap between the issues raised for discussion in the Gram Panchayat and the issues that are important to women. So it is the need of the hour for Panchayat to develop strategies to address the issues and challenges of child sex ratio.

Strategies to address the issue of Child Sex Ratio

- Gram Panchayat can take initiative to call for special Gram Sabha to discuss about CSR over last few years, the impact of having larger men than women. It is also important to demystify the myths about sex determination of foetus and increase the value of girl through advocacy.
- There is a need of overall transformation of social attitude, where girls are seen as ASSET than LIABILITY. Regular holding of Mahila Sabha, discussion, deliberation on the impact of CSR on Society and illegality of sex determination test would definitely help in changing the mindset of parents.
- Sex determination is possible only after three months of pregnancy. Under the scheme of Mamata, the pregnant women have to register themselves at Anganwadi Centre. Those who register after three months are likely to have gone for sex determination of foetus. These cases should be brought to the notice of Gram Panchayat. Since Ward Member (female) is the Chairperson of the Anganwadi Centre Monitoring Committee,

it would be easier on her part to closely monitor the registration of pregnant woman and persuade her to register at Anganwadi Centre after the first month of conception. The name of women who register during or after fourth month of pregnancy shall be announced in Gram Sabha, Palli Sabha and Mahila Sabha. This platform can put pressure to change mindset and create collective consciousness among the people.

- NGOs which work for women empowerment should take this serious issue on their agenda and undertake sustained IEC interventions in Gram Sabha and Mahila Sabha with the support of Panchayat.
- Panchayat can also select some volunteers of SHGs who can take active lead in educating their members and others in the society through organizing the social campaign.
- GPs are the only bodies accessible to almost each / every individual in the village. It is the responsibility of elected Panchayat representatives and volunteers as concerned citizens, to see that neighbours, relatives do not indulge in sex selection. They should keep a watch on the agents or touts who facilitate the family of pregnant woman in sex determination test, female foeticides and should immediately report to the police.
- It is the responsibility of the Panchayat Institutions to be vigilant to ensure that no clinic/medical professional engaged in this activity.

The Panchayati Raj Institutions can become a critical catalyst for creating an enabling environment for women and girls by moulding attitude and behaviour of people. While the problem won't be solved immediately, it must be addressed urgently.

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Education and Biju Babu

Dr. Tushar Kanta Pattnaik

“Our educational system has not changed very much since the British days. The system as it now is only equal the youth for clerical, academic or some administrative jobs. If we want to equip our youth for creative nation building and make them look forward to the future with hope, we should quickly reorient our education system”.

-Biju Pattnaik.

Education is the edifice of social life and aims at the perfection of the human elements in an individual. It brings out the best in man. It is the key parameter in the growth strategy of any developing nation. All free nations of the world have moved to higher levels of prosperity and happiness through education. It is verily recognized as the lever of development as well as the strongest tool of social change. It in fact provides the individual with the major means of personal enrichment as well as for social and economic advancement.

The state of Odisha was born on the 1st April 1936 with a relatively poor economic and social condition compared to the rest of the country. Although the qualitative aspect of the education was in good shape, the quantitative growth was far from satisfactory. Odisha in fact was sadly neglected in modern education by the British rulers for a long time. They dismembered

the vast Odia speaking territories and tagged these areas to neighbouring provinces. The Orissa Division consisting of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore districts was under the Bengal University till 1912 and then Patna University till 1943. The neighbouring states to which the Odia speaking territories were annexed, neglected it in all aspects of modern development including education. Instead of extending modern education in Odia speaking area these state governments sought to abolish Odia from the school and courts. It was only after the persistent struggle this evil intention against the Odia language was foiled.

When the separate province of Orissa was created in 1936, there were only 5 colleges including degree and intermediate, 36 high schools, 180 middle schools in the entire province and only about 3 lakh students were reading in those schools and colleges. The Orissa School of Engineering at Cuttack and Cuttack Medical

School were the only technical institutions in the State. The first task of the popular ministry formed in 1937 was to bring all the educational institutions under one educational authority and one education code. The State Government wanted to have a separate authority as soon as possible and therefore appointed Nilakantha Das to prepare a scheme for a separate university.

But significant progress was made however in all stages of education only after independence, particularly after the implementation of the five year plans in the state. After independence and merger of ex-state areas there were 9801 primary schools with about 4.5 lakh students in the entire state by 1950. Similarly in the wake of independence the state had only 106 high schools and 286 middle schools with 61136 students. Even after the establishment of Utkal University in 1943 there were only 11 Arts and Science colleges with an enrolment of 3885 students. The first five year plan was implemented in this background.

Plan and Biju Babu :

In the two plan periods, there was perceptible increase in the overall various sectors of education. Despite of it, the deficiency was still alarming as according to the 1961 census percentage of literate persons in Odisha was 21.7% as against 24% for India as a whole. When Biju Patnaik took over reins of state administration, in the sixties, all was not well in the overall educational scenario of our state. There were severe dearth of primary school teachers and trained personnel to man the primary schools. Biju was vociferously critical of British system of education, which we have inherited. While inaugurating, the Orissa Planning Board on June 15, 1961, he made a scathing attack on our inherited educational system from Britishers, as

he said “The British system of education stands in our way squarely because it does not teach the vital method of learning through our hands. It has encouraged class distinction between a white-collared officer and the man who works in the field and factories. All these have been impounded on us by 200 years of slavery and it is we, indeed alone, who have to do original thinking to breakaway from all this to build our nation as prosperous and powerful as our erstwhile masters-the British”

Primary And Higher Education :

Concerted efforts had been made by his government to refurbish the sagging morale of primary education in the State. Arrangements have been made for providing Mid Day meals for children reading in Primary schools. The programme for training for a teachers was stepped up. Steps had been taken to introduce vocational and technological bias in primary school and middle school teaching. Increasing emphasis was laid on the study of Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry in secondary schools. To meet the shortage of secondary trained teacher, an integrated B.Ed. syllabus was devised. A new pay scale was announced for the aided primary school. Govt. laid down that the minimum qualification for a primary school teacher in future shall be at least middle English trained or class IX passed.

During the third plan period, particularly during the year 1962, a bold step was taken to nationalize textbooks of the primary classes. Books upto class V were prepared by the government through the Press Preparation and Publication Committee consisting of eminent authors of children’s books. A separate press was established to print these books at Bhubaneswar.

Biju Patnaik’s regime also witnessed growth of general colleges which helped

democratization of higher education. Through his encouragement, many private colleges were established making it possible for the poor and middle class students to have the benefit of higher education at their door step. Biju also raised a number of government scholarships for meritorious students and personnel and that had helped many students to carry out their studies in India and abroad.

The very name of Technical Education fascinated Biju. In fact he was the zealous admirer for technical education, which he wanted to disseminate throughout length and breadth of Odisha. Realizing the importance of technical education, he was of the view that message of science and technology had to be taken to the very heart of rural Odisha. The young men and women should be put through purposeful and intensive courses of education not merely with a technical bias but with a large measure of technical content and stress that had to begin at the very beginning, i.e at the primary level and built up through the secondary and higher secondary stages to the tertiary level.

With the arrival of Biju Patnaik in the third plan period, things began to be started in a propitious note. With his impulsive propensity and electric alacrity, Biju had provided the fresh stimulant for augmentation of technical education in Odisha. He exhorted the students to imbibe and inculcate the spirit of excellence and self reliance while pursuing technical education. While inaugurating the new building at I.T.I Berhampur he once said "He had come to see the boys who were the future of the country. Odisha must be made the best developed state in India. Now they are lagged behind by a century, we shall have to push it up by all means. The buildings were not matters of their pride. Their real pride was the young men. If they proved their merit then only

such buildings could be justified. Our mechanics and engineers should be the best in the country".

Biju Patnaik founded the University of Agriculture and Technology at Bhubaneswar in 1961. Burla Engineering College and Regional College of Education at Bhubaneswar were also established during his first spell of chief ministership in the state. With the personal endeavour of Biju, the Sainik School was established in 1962. The primary aim of the school was to prepare boys academically, physically and mentally fit for training for appointment of commissioned officer.

Another eventful step taken by Mr. Biju Patnaik was opening up the Regional Engineering College at Roukela on August 15, 1961. Biju visualized this will be a technical university on German pattern for which seven hundred acres of the best land in Rourkela was diverted for the purpose. The college would be a regional one in which students from different states would receive their training together. This will help emotional integration of the engineers. The Engineering College with the background of the steel plant would provide opportunity for the students to learn engineering first hand.

A Department of Culture Affairs was created to look after the Sahitya Academy, Sangeet Akademi, Lalitkala Akademi, Orissa Sports Council and the State Museum. N.C.C. training was made compulsory in all the colleges of the state. A training centre in Cost and Work Accountancy was opened in Ravenshaw College, Cuttack to impart training to students to qualify them for diploma examination conducted by the Indian Institute of Cost and Work Accountancy.

The National Industries Schools :

Prior to the post-war period the Industries Department controlled two industries school at

Phulbani and Angul. The standard of instruction in these two schools was very elementary in nature. During the post-war planning period it was decided to improve their scope and to establish new schools during the subsequent plan periods. Accordingly two new industries schools at Berhampur and Sambalpur were set up during the first plan period and the two existing schools at Phulbani and Angul were recognized.

When Biju Patnaik came to power in state politics, fresh impetus was given to industrial school. It was proposed to modernize the four industries schools at Angul, Nayagarh, Berhampur and Sambalpur with three trades in each school. In addition to this it was proposed to introduce the third trade in the existing industries schools modernized during the second plan period. The third plan ceiling for this scheme was estimated at Rs. 24 lakhs. During this period the total intake and total production item of candidate under the scheme in modernization of industries was proposed to be 1344 and 442 respectively.

Craftsman Training :

With the first plan period ending in 1955-56, Odisha had only one Industrial Training Institute at Cuttack with an admission capacity of 382 trainees per annum and one Vocational Training Center with an admission capacity of 48. If Orissa were to catch up with rest of the country, it was felt necessary for her to expand her facilities for craftsmen training as much possible during the second plan. Accordingly steps were taken to redouble the effort in this direction and the plan was accordingly drawn up, with the result that at the end of second plan, Odisha had seven Industrial Training Institutes and one Vocational Training Institute and one Vocational Training Center with a total capacity of 1620 seats recording an increase of 353 per cent over the

first plan performance. In the second five year plan there had been mushrooming of Industrial Training Institute.

The third five year plan coincides with the arrival of Biju Patnaik who was a fervent admirer of technical education and urged masses to be self reliant. His Government laid stress on the planned expansion of the craftsmen training facilities. It was contemplated to provide 1066 extra seats during the third plan period both by expansion of existing I.T.Is, and starting three new I.T.Is and one Vocational Training Institute. In addition to the 1066 seats, it was also proposed to introduce 200 seats under the scheme of evening classes for industrial workers and 100 under the National Apprenticeship Training scheme. Besides, other following miscellaneous schemes had also been proposed to be implemented during the third plan period according to the pattern laid down by the Directorate General of Employment and Training , Govt. of India.

- I. Training of Craft Instructors
- II. Leave Reserve and Training Reserve Instructors.
- III. Headquarters Staff for Craftsmen Training Scheme.
- IV. Award of Prizes.
- V. State Council for Training Vocational Trades.

Popularization of Science :

Popularisation of science through general education was also accorded top priority and in this respect Biju Patnaik played a conspicuous role. Like Nehru he had immense faith in and commitment to science. He believed in the modernization of society on a scientific foundation

and he was for inculcating a scientific temper in people. One of the epoch making step he took for popularizing science, was the award of Kalinga Prize for the dissemination and popularization of science. This award it may noted has accorded respectability and status to the state of Odisha in the international community.

At the invitation of Biju Patnaik , Internationally known Biologist, Scientist and Philosopher Prof J.B.S. Haldane accepted the post of the Directorate of Biometry and Genetics Laboratory at Bhubaneswar, which was set up by the Government of Orissa. Prof Haldane, who imparted to the Indian scientific scene a certain colour and character, became an Indian citizen in 1960 and devoted himself to assisting development of science in this rapidly developing country. He accepted Biju Patnaik's offer but unfortunately this genius died in Bhubaneswar on 1st December 1964.

Women Education :

Women Education was sadly neglected in Orissa before Independence. There were only women's college, 7 high schools, 21 middle schools, 129 primary schools and 4 special schools in Orissa for girls in 1947-48. After independence steps were taken for expansion of women's education by the state government following the recommendations of Durgabai Deshmukh Committee, Hansa Meheta Committee and Bhakta Bastalam Committee.

During his short stint as Chief Minister of Orissa during sixties, Biju gave priority to women education at all levels. His Government decided to step up all facilities which enable girl students to come in large number and continue their education effectively. Attendance scholarship were being provided and hostel facilities were being expanded. The school mother system had

been increased so the parents willingly send their girls to the schools. Hundred sets of quarters for women teachers in primary schools were being provided. Special provision for sanitary blocks in primary schools for girl students was provided. Merit-cum-poverty scholarships were also given in much larger number to girl students.

Condensed Course Training for Adult Women :

With view to expanding girls education in the state, condensed courses for adult women on the middle school standard was started in 10 centers in the state. Adult women taking the condensed course were required to appear at the common examination at end of the middle school stage. The duration of the course is one year commencing in May each year. The trainees were awarded stipends at the rate of Rs. 25/- per head per month. Besides this, they were provided with free residential accommodation, free coaching and free medical help. They were also provided with reading and writing materials. After passing the common examination, the adult women taking the condensed course are appointed as primary school teacher.

Biju's Second tenure as CM :

When Biju Patnaik took over the state administration in 1990, two years latter, the National Policy on Education and Programme of Action 1992 was formulated by the Govt. of India with the spirit of the world declaration on " Education for All" by 2000 A.D. The Govt. of Orissa under the Leadership of Biju Patnaik appointed a task force for preparation and strengthening of the education system. The task force put emphasis on universalisation of elementary education, achievement of total literacy, equal access to education opportunities, women's education, vocalization of higher education and

modernization of technical education along with improvement of the quality and content of education at all levels.

In order to give proper impetus to the above objectives, Orissa govt. in collaboration with the UNICEF, UNDP and other International Agencies had taken some good initiatives in this direction. Besides keeping in view the state's persistent economic and educational backwardness with the literacy rate of 49% in 1991, Govt. had initiated action for strengthening resource support to education, decentralizing the management of education as also the monitoring process. A cell for "Education For All" was created to implement the project by 2000 A.D.

Pre-Primary Education :

The all-round development of the child as a vital input in the process of human resource development had been the basic thrust of educational policy of the state govt. Under the leadership of Biju Patnaik, nearly 20 thousand Anganwadi centres, early childhood education centers, crèches, Balwadis, pre-school sections attached to primary schools were spread over both rural and urban areas under ICDS, Education and P.R.Dept., State Council for Child Welfare and State Social Welfare Advisory Board.

Primary Education :

The elementary stage of education in Orissa comprises primary school (Class I to V), M.E. School (Class VI and VII). Universalisation of elementary education was an avowed objective of Biju Patnaik government. For this creation of a separate Department of School and Mass Education and strengthening of the Directorate of Elementary Education and SCERT and sustained efforts to revitalize the structure and quality down from the village level with mass

involvement reflects fulfillment of govt's commitment in the right direction. In addition to all out efforts by the govt., three UNICEF assisted projects namely 'Early Childhood Education (ECE), Project integrated Education of Disabled (PIED) and Area Intensive Education Project (AIEP) were functioning in the specific areas of state to give an effective stimulant for universalisation of elementary education.

Under the "Operation Black Board" programme, 20137 Schools covered in 1st and 2nd phases and in the 3rd phase 10342 schools were being covered. A "Siksha Sevak Scheme" was introduced for providing elementary education in unserved habitations. Service conditions of primary school teachers had improved. The minimum pension had been increased from Rs.100 to Rs.300 P.M and it was decided to count their services under the local boards for pension. With a view to tackle the problem of drop-out at the primary stage, 1344 non-formal education centers had been established and were functioning. A special project called the South Orissa Education Project covering eight districts Viz, Koraput, Rayagada, Nawarangpur, Malkangiri, Gajapati, Ganjam, Phulbani and Kalahandi was launched in collaboration with the UNDP, German Agency for technical cooperation and the central government. The project was implemented in 16 blocks during the first phase starting from 1993-94. Apart from universalisation of access to early childhood education and elementary education, the project oriented to problems of local environment and tailored to the distinctive characteristic of the local population who in many cases had their own spoken languages.

Secondary Education :

Biju Patnaik's government decided to enlarge the ambit of secondary education with

stipulation of opening at least one high school in each G.P. Besides the process of up-gradation of UGME schools to high schools continued in 1994-95 in order to meet the growing need. The govt. had also formulated specific guidelines for extending the scope of recognition and grant-in-aid to high schools from 1994-95. The scheme for improvement of science education had received adequate coverage for promoting scientific attitude and temper as also environmental awareness in the younger generation.

Higher Education and General Education :

The strategies of National Education Policy (N.E.P.) had been adopted for imparting necessary dynamism to higher education by way of increasing the number of autonomous colleges, redesigning the courses and expansion of research facilities.

Till 1993-94, the state had 677 colleges, with 3.49 lakh students and 13,749 teachers. Of the total colleges, 58 are govt. colleges, 3 autonomous colleges, 21 lead colleges and one college of accountancy and management studies. 254 degree colleges received grant-in-aid from the Govt., 17 Govt. colleges and 11 non-govt. colleges were proposed to be restructured into autonomous colleges. The govt. suitably amended the relevant rules to extend recognition to two degree colleges and three junior colleges in each block. Despite scale of pay, research scholarship, construction and maintenance of classrooms, hostels and laboratories P.G. courses in different subjects opened in some colleges and new subjects offered in others. The Jagannath Sanskrit University, Puri accorded full recognition by U.G.C.

Technical Education :

Qualitative improvement in technical education is vital for the success of entire planning process. This is an important tool of human resource development. Adequate no. of technically qualified and trained persons are required for effective tapping of state's vast natural resources. Biju Babu was an ardent admirer of technical education, which according to him make a person self reliant without running after a govt. job. Orissa had 5 Engineering colleges, 15 Engineering schools/poly-technics with in-take capacity of 1037, 1865 and 1520 respectively. The up grading of technical education was implemented under the World Bank Assistance Programme which commenced from 1990-91 for a period of five years. 17 Diploma courses and 13 post Diploma courses introduced in different institutions. Proposals were made to upgrade the Institute of Textile Technology to the degree level during 1994-95.

The govt. had emphasized the need for enlarging the scope of teaching and research in the indigenous system of medical care and treatment. Govt. also implemented programme on Integrated education for the disabled with the opening of 399 centers.

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Strengthening Local Self Governance in Odisha through Empowerment of Palli Sabha/Gram Sabha

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N.T. Sahu*

Gandhiji often pointed out that India lives in villages and unless village life can be revitalized the nation as a whole can hardly come alive. When India became independent in 1947, perhaps one-third of the villages of India had traditional Panchayats and many of them were far from flourishing conditions. It has, however, always been a problem as to how this concept can be practiced effectively in such a way that people could be closely associated in the decision making process at the grassroot level. It is in this context that Mahatma Gandhi had stated that ‘True democracy could not be worked out by some men sitting at the top. It had to be worked out from below by the people of every village’. Article 40 of the Constitution clearly declares ‘The State shall take necessary actions to organize village Panchayats and to endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government. The aim was to foster democratic participation, to involve villagers in the development of the community and to reduce the burden of higher level of administration. With a view to involve people in grassroot governance, various solutions have been considered from time to time. The Constitution of India, therefore, gave specific importance to the institution of Village Panchayat by enjoining that it shall be the endeavour of the state to take steps to strengthen the village Panchayats.

The 73rd Amendment Act has added a new Part in the constitution- **Part Nine** – consisting of 16 Articles and the 11th Schedule. The functions of the Panchayati Raj institutions have been clearly spelt out in Article 243G of the Constitution, read with Article 243 ZD and the 11th Schedule. The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are supposed to be genuine institutions of local self-government, not adjuncts to the implementing agencies of State Governments. The constitution, which describes them as institutions of local self-government, says that this status is given to them for two specific purposes: planning for economic development and social justice and implementing these plans. Moreover, it says that this process of empowering them through devolution in order to enable them to plan and implement their own programmes of neighbourhood, economic development and social justice will be governed by the laws of the legislatures of the States. The Constitution says in the 11th Schedule that this empowerment shall relate or could relate to the 29 subjects listed in the Schedule. Any form of Panchayati Raj that falls short of this cannot be described as genuine Panchayati Raj.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act envisages **Gram Sabha** as the foundation of grassroots democracy that provided a

constitutional sanction to the institution which has ensured the independent status of Village Panchayat. Article 243(A) of the Constitution reads “A Gram Sabha may exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the legislature of a State may by law provide”. This simple provision in the Constitution has enabled the state legislatures to empower Gram Sabha by assigning the statutory powers to it. This means if the State Legislature desires, the Gram Sabha can only be strengthened. Similarly, according to Article 243(B) “Gram Sabha consists of all persons registered as voters in the electoral roll relating to the village comprised within the area of the Panchayat at the village level. The concept behind giving primacy to this body is that this should work like General Body of the village and the Village Panchayat / Gram Panchayat should function as its Executive Body. In other words, Gram Sabha is a constitutional body of democracy and is the main source of authority and powers that are enjoyed by the institution constituted by the elected representatives that is the Gram Panchayat. Hence, the Gram Sabha is the centre of democratic power in the local governance system and the centre of village development and planning activity. The basic philosophy of the concept of Gram Sabha is that ‘let people plan and decide about the development of their own village’. Article 243(G) of the Constitution of India enabled the state governments to empower the Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs) to function as institutions of local self-government and ask to plan and implement schemes/ programmes for economic development and social justice.

Thus, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act provides a unique opportunity to promote local self governance in rural areas. This is not governance carried out through elected representative, not merely representative

democracy, but this is governance carried out by direct, active and full participation of people. Hence, the Gram Sabha in the village is the final form of governance of village affairs that includes the definition of public good for all people of the village and creation of the mechanism for managing the resources, both natural and human available in the village. It is not a system where individuals elected as representatives of the village take decision on behalf of the villagers, rather, it is a system where all the villagers are involved in a process of face to face interaction, dialogue and decision making in order to collectively govern their own affairs.

The enormous literature on Panchayati Raj Institutions variously labeled the Gram Sabha. According to Jain (1997), it is the gateway to grassroots democracy, base of Panchayati Raj (Dutta, 1994), one of the most important three basic institutions of new, direct democracy of village level (Narayanaswamy, 1995). It is devised to ensure greater participation of people and for more effective implementation of village development programmes. Gram Sabha is a participatory decision making process, functions as a mechanism to plan, monitors and evaluates the development activities carried on by the Panchayat. Thus, all the activities carried out by Gram Panchayat have to get approval of Gram Sabha and as such it takes up the responsibility of introducing direct accountability of Panchayat Raj Institutions to people. The Gram Sabha, is therefore, expected to accord approval for different activities relating to schemes, programs, plans and also selection of beneficiaries of different programmes of government.

Statutory Role of Palli Sabha/ Gram Sabha in Local Governance:

The Odisha Gram Panchayat Act, 1964 empowered the Gram Sabha by assigning the following statutory role:

- a) Approve the plans, programmes and projects for social and economic development before such plans, programmes and projects are taken up for implementation by the Gram Panchayat.
- b) Identify and select persons as beneficiaries under the poverty alleviation or similar other programmes.
Provided that every Gram Panchayat shall be required to obtain from the Gram Sabha a certificate of utilization of funds by that Panchayat for the plans and projects referred to in clauses (a) and (b);
- c) Consider and approve the annual budget of the Gram Panchayat including the supplementary or revised budget;
- d) Consider levy of all taxes, rates and fees and enhancement of rates thereof;
- e) Organize community service and drawing up and implementation of agricultural production plans.
- f) Consider all such matters as may be referred to it by the Gram Panchayat for its decision.
- g) Call for information and data from the Gram Panchayat as it may consider necessary, and
- h) Consider such other matters as may be prescribed.

Similarly, the said Act states that subject to the provisions of Sub-Section(1) the meetings of the Gram Sabha shall be convened by such authority, in such manner and at such time and intervals as may be prescribed.

Section (5) mentions that the business of the Gram Sabha shall be conducted and the record

of the proceeding thereof shall be maintained in the prescribed manner.

The Act further states that in scheduled areas, the Gram Sabha shall be competent to safeguard and preserve the traditions and customs of the people, their cultural identity, community resources and customary mode of dispute resolution consistent with the relevant laws in force and in harmony with basic tenets of the Constitution and Human Rights.

As per Section 6(1) of the Odisha Gram Panchayat Act, 1964 “for every village within the Gram there shall be constituted by the state government, a Palli Sabha, provided that where the area comprised within a ward constituted for the Gram under Section -8 consists of more than one village, there shall be only one Palli Sabha for such Ward.

The Sub-Clause (2) further states that “Each Palli Sabha shall consist of all persons registered by virtue of the Representation of People Act, 1950 in so much of the electoral roll for any Assembly Constituency of the time being in force as relates to the area in respect of the Palli Sabha and the said portion of the roll shall be deemed to be electoral roll of the Palli Sabha.

The Act also states that “the Palli Sabha shall meet annually in February every year and may also meet at other times in the manner prescribed.

Sub-Section (4) of Section -6 of Odisha Gram Panchayat Act, 1964 states that “the person representing the Palli Sabha area in the Gram Panchayat or if there be more than one such person, one from the list of all such persons in order of preference to be determined by the Gram Panchayat shall preside over the meeting of the Palli Sabha and in the absence of all such person

at the meeting, at the appointed time, those present in the meeting may elect one from among themselves to preside over the meeting.

It is stated in Act that the quorum for the meeting of the Palli Sabha shall be one-tenth of the members of Palli Sabha. In the event of there being no quorum at any Palli Sabha it shall stand adjourned to future day for which notice shall be given in the prescribed manner and no quorum shall be necessary for any such adjourned meeting.

Provided that if any member of Palli Sabha files a complaint either in writing or in person in the next meeting of the Gram Panchayat challenging that the proceedings have not been correctly recorded by the President, the Gram Panchayat may in its discretion, summon another meeting of Palli Sabha, to consider the same issue or issues, to be held in the presence of a member of the Panchayat non-connected with the Palli Sabha, duly authorized by the Panchayat shall be taken to be final.

It shall be the duty of the Palli Sabha at its annual meeting in February each year to give its recommendation to the Gram Panchayat in respect of the following matters in so far as such matters relate to the Palli Sabha areas namely-

- a) The development works and programmes that may be taken up during the ensuing year, and
- b) The annual budget estimate submitted by the Gram Panchayat under Sub-Section (1) of Section 98.

Section -7 states that nothing in this Section shall apply in respect of a Gram comprised of one village only.

Hence, Gram Sabha is the only forum for the participation of people in the decision making

process of local governance system. The Gram Sabha should, therefore, have the central place in the system. Panchayats as the basic units of self governance at village level are expected to bring about an element of transparency between the people and the government system. Accordingly all the activities carried out by village Panchayats have to get approval of the Gram Sabha and as such it takes up the responsibility of introducing direct accountability of Panchayati Raj Institutions to the people. The Gram Sabha is expected to accord approval for different activities related to the schemes and plans and selection of beneficiaries for different government programmes and that affect the lives of the people in the village.

Experience of the working of Gram Sabha shows that except during the current year, all previous years, the working of Gram Sabha was not encouraging. The reasons may be due to lack of awareness among the majority of people about the importance of Gram Sabha and their role in it. In some cases the Sarpanches were not interested to convene the meetings and in some cases the failure of Gram Sabha may be assigned to distant factor. Lack of publicity, communication and information are also responsible for non-vibrant functioning of Gram Sabha. But the most important factor is that the Gram Sabha has not been endowed with powers and sometimes the decisions of Gram Sabhas are changed at higher levels. The Gram Panchayats also do not respect the decision of Gram Sabha. The Gram Sabha meetings are convened at such time when the people are busy in their agriculture and other works. Therefore, there should be awareness among the people about the effectiveness of Panchayat system of governance and special emphasis is required to highlight the role of Gram Sabha in providing good governance through the system of local self governance.

Odisha Government's Initiative for Empowerment of Palli Sabha/ Gram Sabha:

Over the last few decades, Gram Sabha has lost its importance due to lack of public participation and a feeling of doubt and mistrust created in the minds of people regarding its outcomes. The present government in the State realized the need of the conduct of Gram Sabha across the State for successful implementation of government schemes, plans and programmes. Though Gram Sabha is a constitutional body, but due to lack of awareness among the general public, it was not conducted successfully. In view of the above, conceptualization and implementation of Gram Sabha empowerment programme was launched on 2nd October 2012 across the State by the Department of Panchayati Raj, Government of Odisha. The programme lasted for 45 days driving community mobilization and enhancing institutional capacity of Panchayati Raj Institutions through administrative and technical support. This is a major step towards strengthening the local self governance system in Odisha. The Palli Sabha/Gram Sabha was conducted in the State with the following objectives:

- To generate awareness and social mobilization for people's participatory planning.
- To strengthen capacity building of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and elected representatives of PRIs for conduct of Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha for planning and implementation of different govt. schemes.
- To facilitate effective conduct of Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha.
- To ensure increased people's participation in village level planning.

- To build convergence of line inter-departments at village level.
- To maintain the database of the Annual Action Plan, beneficiary list and project list and to share these with the public.
- To ensure transparency and accountability through web-based data management.

Methods Adopted for Strengthening of Palli Sabha/Gram Sabha:

A multi-pronged communication strategy was adopted to persuade the people to participate in the conduct of Palli Sabha / Gram Sabha. An extensive range of communication materials were developed keeping in mind the local needs and awareness level.

As part of the Gram Sabha empowerment programme, a host of IEC activities was implemented at village / Gram Panchayat / Block and district level including distribution of invitation cards to each households, putting hoardings and banners in public places, distributing leaflets, announcing the event through mike, promoted the event through appeal letters by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Odisha to inform and mobilize the people for effective conduct of Gram Sabha. This was enabled preparation and timely submission of village level plans for better fund flow and effective utilization of funds. The conduct of Palli Sabha / Gram Sabha in a phased manner across the State within a stipulated time frame has recorded over 99.44% success in terms of Palli Sabha and 97.37% with regard to Gram Sabha conducted. Media played a proactive role to generate public awareness and make best possible coverage of the news across the State from Panchayat level to State level. The technical support provided by a dedicated team at the State

level and the proactiveness of the district /block administration with the cooperation of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and its members made the campaign more effective. The Panchayati Raj Department, Government of Odisha was the nodal agency for the programme which reached out to 6236 Gram Panchayats across 30 districts that includes 314 Blocks with a population of more than 3.5 crores. In the programme the other departments of Government of Odisha like Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes (SC & ST), Women & Child Development, Rural Development, Agriculture, Health & Family Welfare, School and Mass Education, Tourism & Culture etc were also involved in the campaign. It was attempted to resurrect all the essentials of organizing a successful Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha through community mobilization, individual and collective awareness building and dissemination of information to involve the people in the process. It also made an attempt to create leadership from among the marginalized sections of the community. To provide real substance to the grassroots governance, special effort was made in ensuring participation of women and other communities like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and persons from Other Backward Classes (OBC) in the Gram Sabha meeting. The day long IEC Mela on the first day of Gram Sabha helped the people to know the background information and the walk through exhibition, cultural event and interaction with officials from the Departments. For the first time in Odisha, all the Gram Sabhas conducted during the campaign period have been video recorded. This is with an aim to ensure transparency and to strengthen the Gram Sabha with the active participation of the people. Another feature of the campaign was capturing the data generated in the Gram Sabha, analysis and utilizing the data meaningfully for planning and

implementation in the rural areas of the State. In a never before effort, information technology was used in the process to create greater efficiency and transparency.

Suggestions for strengthening Palli Sabhas/ Gram Sabhas:

- Creating public/mass awareness in the community regarding importance of conduct of Palli Sabha/Gram Sabha in local governance system.
- Proactive involvement of members of three-tier Panchayati Raj Institutions.
- Community mobilization in campaign mode to participate in the proceeding of Palli Sabha/ Gram Sabha meetings.
- Avoid duplication of works/projects.
- Prioritize the projects for proper implementation at village level.
- Making videography of Palli Sabha/Gram Sabha so as to avoid any kind of manipulation at any level.
- Ensuring active support from local administration for smooth conduct of Palli Sabha/Gram Sabha.
- Adequate publicity for conduct of Palli Sabha/ Gram Sabha meetings.
- Topics of Agenda for Palli Sabha /Gram Sabha meeting should be concerning the lives of people of the village.

Conclusion:

To ensure good governance in the rural areas of the State through local self government system, we need to strengthen the people's

institutions like Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha. The State Government should take steps to strengthen these institutions by devolving ample power to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) as envisaged in the Constitution. The Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha can only be empowered by ensuring active participation of each and every section of the community, especially the larger participation of Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and women community. The local self governance system can work effectively only when people realize the importance of Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha in village development. The government, civil society, media and members of the three-tier Panchayati Raj Institutions should work together for ensuring better participation of people in Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha so as to strengthen the local self governance system in Odisha.

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Bhoodan Movement in Odisha with Special Reference to Koraput

Santosh Kumar Pati

"On 18 April 1951, a fragile old man, dressed in traditional costumes of Indian sages, set out on his first round of begging. It is not for food he begged, but for land, not for himself, but for the countless farmers that raised crops on lands that never belonged to them, farmers that toiled day in and day out, but remained forever poor and hungry. That fragile old man was Vinoba Bhave, a staunch follower of Gandhiji and firm believer in the Gandhian principles of peace and non-violence, and the project he launched was the Bhoodan Movement."¹

The Bhoodan or the land gift movement was a voluntary land reform movement of India which was initiated by Acharya Vinoba Bhave in 1951 at Panchampali village, Nalgonda, Andhra Pradesh.² Bhoodan was an attempt at land reform, in order to bring about institutional changes in agriculture, like land redistribution through a movement and not simply through general legislation.³

In response to the nation-wide call for Bhoodan Movement by Vinoba, Gopabandhu Choudhury one of the top Gandhian leaders of Odisha along with his wife Rama Devi started collecting land for the landless in Odisha from 7 January 1952. On the same day, a meeting was conducted in Ramachandrapur village near Bari

of Jajpur Sub-division of the erstwhile Cuttack district. It was attended by Gopabandhu Choudhury, Rama Devi, Acharya Harihar Das, Pandit Krupasindhu Hota, Radharatan Das, Sakti Sekhar Das and a number of such other constructive activists. It marked the inauguration of the Bhoodan Movement in Odisha.⁴ One Harapriya Devi of Anandpur village became the first donor of the Bhoodan Movement in Odisha by donating twelve *gunthas* (0.48 acres) of land for the landless.⁵ She was followed by two others who declared to donate lands. They were Rambha Devi a lady constructive activist from Gujarat who stayed at Bari Ashram and Surendra Pati, an inhabitant of village Balibil, who vowed to donate three acres of land.⁶ Starting from 7 January 1952, the first Bhoodan *Padayatra* continued for four months and twenty two days ending on 28 May 1952. The marchers covered Cuttack, Puri, Ganjam, Koraput, Kalahandi, Balangir, Sambalpur and Dhenkanal districts on their way and collected 1626 acres of land from 233 donors. A non-official Bhoodan Yagna Samiti was constituted under the chairmanship of Gopabandhu Choudhury with its headquarters at Cuttack.⁷

The marchers reached Gunupur in Koraput on 5 March 1952; a warm welcome was accorded to the *padayatris*. They met the

constructive workers, tribal people, the businessmen and the landlords of the locality. Led by Gopabandhu Choudhury, the *padyatris* mobilized the people to donate their lands for the sacred cause of Bhoodan.⁸ They continued with their march and reached Kujendri on 8 March. The region was experiencing an acute food shortage in view of prevailing drought condition. Taking advantage of the situation, the money lenders and land owners had heightened the oppression of the tribal people.⁹ A Bhoosatyagraha Samaj was formed in order to protect the tribal people from the exploitation of money lenders and land owners. Biswanath Patnaik was the chief architect of that Bhoosatyagraha Samaj. Ratan Das, Nimai Charan Sahu and Baya Subudhi were his co-associates. Tribal activists mostly from Saura as well as Kandha communities were the members of this Bhoosamaj. Some of these activists were Baire Gomango, Gobardhan Gamango and Jogendra Gamango of Kujendri, Aga Soura of Godia Bandha, Nilakantha Gamango of Dibirsingh, Purnachandra Gamango of Khamapadar, Madhusudan Sabar, Sania Sabar and Sarang Soura of Mitukhingirai, Gogeranga Indu Majhi from Budhubelir, Budumuru Kalia Dora of Murti, Siba Kandha and Arjun Kandha from Dumbirguda.¹⁰ Naba Krushna Choudhury, the-then Chief Minister of Odisha, sought to address the issue of the tribal people by initiating dialogue with the activists of the Samaj. Under governmental initiative, fair price shops were opened in the area. The government took every possible step for solving the issue of water scarcity by digging wells and ponds. Sevashrams were also opened to work for spreading education amongst the tribal people.¹¹

The impact of Bhoodan Movement in Gunupur region was truly impressive. The Gram Seva Centre at Gunupur mobilized villagers for the cause of Bhoodan. Accordingly a large

number of villagers donated land to the movement. The following villagers who donated land for the cause of Bhoodan movement in 1953, were, Basyaraju Nagaraju one acre of land, Prahalad Sahu-5 acres, Koluna Somana Dora-1 acre, Toika Nukana-2 acres, Patika Badaaiya-3 acres, Toika Jagir-1 acre, Toika Jogulu-2 acres, Patika Pentaya-1 acre, Toika Bodaya-2 acres, Mandangi Gomage and Raichha Gomage-3 acres, Patika Machana-1 acre, Toika Lachhana 1-acre, Soura Dengngu- 4 acres, Padaka Appana-1 acre, Padaka Melema-0.5 acre, Patika Singharadit and Satyasu Narayan-5 acres, Mandigi Pentana-1.5 acres, Patika Pentaya-1 acre, Patika Pachena- 40 acres, Ku Soura and Narasingh Gomango-0.5 acre and Dharmaraju donated 3.5 acres of land.¹² Mandinga Barick, Mandiga Acana, Mandinga Krushnamurty and Palika Gindiri of Bada Sulagaon donated, 4, 3, 4 and 3 acres of land respectively. Nilamani Dora, Patika Banamali, Kandagore Suri, Agadhu Dora, Kandagore Babaji, Padaka Babaji and Kastagore Suri of Tumbakata village donated 2 acres, 2, 1.5, 1, 1, 1, 1.5 and 6 acres of land respectively. Bidicha Gopinath Dora, Mandiga Narayan, Mandiga Singana, Palak Ghasan, Maninga Gurumurty and Mandinga Bandu of Saludi village donated 8 acres, 6, 8, 3, 4 and 2 acres respectively. Mandinga Ekatswami, Mandinga Krushnamurty and Mandinga Ayodhi of Sana Sulagaon donated, 1, 2, and 1 acres of land respectively. Nimala Chelesa and Palaka Kamana, Tandinga Bairagi, Mandinga Sitana and Mandinga Narasinghanlu of Gangapafa village donated 1, 5, 5 and 4 acres of land respectively. Kumar Apana and Patika Saranga of Dharma Khunti donated 8 acres and 2 acres of land respectively. Badika Sundar Narayan of Tankubadi donated 50 decimal lands. Krushna Chandra Mahapatra, Korad Benugopal and Magana Patra of Gudari donated 5, 5 and 3.5

acres of land. Krushna Chandra Sahu, Brundaban Sahu, Simadri Surinarayan and Sariamani Sahu of Naira village donated 15, 15, 4.60 and 6 acres of land respectively. Goura Chandra Choudhury, Gabara Adinarayan and Agadhu Mishra of Karanpadu donated 2.5 acres, 50 decimal and 1 acre of land. Kora Sahu and L.N.Sahu of Rilingarai donated seven and five acres of land respectively. Apana Ratha, Arjun Nayak and Magata Ratha of Sorama village donated 3.5, 3 and 2.5 acres of land Gudari of same village donated a bullock.¹³

The Bhoodan workers of Gunupur region under the leadership of Biswanath Das, collected land gift from different villages such as from Padmapur, Narasingha Panigrahi donated 75.5 acres of land, Krupasindhu Panigrahi 25 and Niladri Sahu donated 20 acres land. They collected the donations from Satyanarayan Sahu 50.5 acres, Apana Sahu -11, Chandramani Sahu- 7 acres, and Bhikari Sahu - 5 acres of land of village Khilingrai. Arjun Dalapati of Kenduguda donated two acres and Balhab Das of Karani Sasan donated 1.3 acres of land.¹⁴

Vinobaji visited Odisha in 1955 and first reached a small village known as Deula, Balasore. He was greeted by many of the top Gandhian leaders of the province namely Gopabandhu Choudhury, Acharya Harihara, Naba Krushna Choudhury, Nanda Kishore Das, Biswanath Das, Surendra Dwibedy, Nishamani Khuntia, Manmohan Choudhury along with a large number of Bhoodan activists. In the meeting at Laxmannath, (Balasore), Vinoba dwelt on the idea and implications of Bhoodan movement.¹⁵

Bhoodan means, voluntary donation of land by the wealthy landowners for equitable distribution among the landless. Gramdan was the gift of entire village to the village community. The

villagers had surrendered their ownership right of their land to the village community, which were distributed among the landless families in the village. Like ownership, the social and economic responsibility would be looked after by the village community.¹⁶

A Gramdan meeting was held in Bhairabguda, Koraput, attended by villagers of thirty villages. Gopinath Nayak, Sarat Das, Badrinath Malik, the president of Dalit Caste Union and Arjun Khara were present in the meeting. In Koraput district, nearly fifteen thousand one hundred and fifty donors had donated 93,000 acres of land. Besides, 240 Gramdan villages were received by the Bhoodan Committee of Koraput.¹⁷

Mahtab criticized, Bhoodan Movement as the movement for the 'distribution of poverty'. According to him, Bhoodan Movement could not solve the problems of poverty of landless poor. Shriman Narayan, the Congress General Secretary and the editor of the series of Books "The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi," visited Koraput to meet Vinoba Bhave and said that, "he was astonished by the criticism of Hare Krushna Mahtab, the Lat of Mumbai about the Bhoodan Movement." Narayan further said that, "Mahtab had freedom to express his opinion, but the movement inspired and impressed the people of India as well as the world. It had paved the way, for the economic equality and justice instead of social and economic exploitation. Under this situation, the movement became fruitful, attracted mass population and spread widely in India and abroad. But a poor country like India, there was no loss if poverty was being distributed or shared among the people. It was seen in India that, when millions people were unable to survive, few people were maintaining their life gorgeously."¹⁸

Vinoba remained at Koraput for two months. Bhoodan Yagna Committee had received 181 Gramdan and 78,000 acres of land from 13,000 donors in Koraput. More than hundreds of workers from Cuttack, Balasore, and Sambalpur worked at Koraput. Bhoodan evoked a great deal of popular response in Koraput.¹⁹

In an interview with journalists Vinoba Bhave in August 1955 observed that a new society would be created by the gift of all and pointed out to a 'great change' in the country after four years of Bhoodan Movement. He further noted that there would be no class struggle where the people donated their land and ownership rights to the village community.²⁰

The Bhoodan Movement at Koraput inspired the whole country. Vinoba remarked in a meeting held at Damuripadar that the villagers of two hundred villages in Koraput had donated all their land to Bhoodan with the resolve that there would be no landless in their villages. Addressing the meeting Vinoba held that the primary objective of Bhoodan Movement was to abolish individual ownership from the land. In a prayer meeting at Katirguma, Vinoba maintained that he would like to see the Grama-Rajya in Koraput and expected the world to watch it and that all would follow it.²¹

Vinoba stressed that the idea of Gram Swaraj could only be a reality through *Gramdan* area. He would exhort the activists working for Khadimandal, Basic Education, Tribal and Harijan Welfare, Kasturba Trust and Hindi Prachar Samiti to help the Movement. Explaining the need for of Bhoodan *padyatra* in small villages, Vinoba pointed out, 'We are happy by our *padyatra* in small villages. The people, who prefer to move by train or bus, cannot go to such small villages. We began *padyatra* only to move in small villages.'²²

In a prayer meeting at Bandha Gaon, Vinoba said that Gramdan had ensured welfare of all. He would further explain, 'After India attained Swaraj, the people thought that their leaders would keep their eyes on poor. But the poor became poorer. Due to Bhoodan Movement, the poor and landless believed that it was the beginning of their progress. If a village is converted to a family then there is no loss for anyone but profit for all. People can help each other. If there is the need of more labour in any field, then all should unite to finish the work. Sarvodaya as an ideology implies that there is neither landlord nor the poor. All are like brothers and tied in a chain of love. There is no quarrel; no ego among the people or no one should fear any one or nobody can threaten the other.'²³

The Odisha Bhoodan Committee had received land gifts to the tune of 95,000 acres of land from 15,330 donors and 254 Gramdan till about 5 August 1955.²⁴ Vinoba however expected to achieve four lakh acres of land from one lakh donors from Koraput.²⁵

Gopabandhu Choudhury once spelt out the causes of the conspiracy against Bhoodan Movement in response to the criticism leveled by the opposition parties that the lands obtained as gifts were of very low grade land and hence the Movement lacked any real value. Pointing out that such allegations have been made from the beginning of the Movement, Choudhury noted that the Bhoodan Movement had taken a new shape in Koraput and peoples' understanding of the concept had seen a marked rise and hence the Movement didn't have any relation between low or high grade lands. He added that as the movement sought to attack the individual ownership of land, political parties had united to oppose the Movement.²⁶

The Bhoodan Committee had received twenty five Gramdan villages from Kalyansinghpur. Most of the lands of those villages were distributed among the poor. The Bhoodan Committee also issued them land distribution certificates (*pradan patta*).²⁷

By the time Vinoba Bhave left Odisha in Oct. 1955, the province had as many as 812 Gramdan villages out of which 605 were from Koraput district only. In total, 2,57,277 acres of land had been collected from 94,757 donors of the province. The collection of Gramdans from Koraput district were 605, Balasore-123, Ganjam-37, Mayurbhanj-37, Dhenkanal-5, Kalahandi-3, Puri-1 and from Cuttack district only one Gramdan was received.²⁸

Within five years the Movement registered a huge success by obtaining 41 lakh acres of land from 5 lakh donors and received 1000 Gramdan villages from eight provinces.²⁹ Manmohan Choudhury proposed to observe 18 April 1951, the day when Vinobaji received first land gift from Panchampali as Land Revolution Day.

Following the departure of Vinoba, the constructive workers of Odisha under the leadership of Acharya Harihara Das and Gopabandhu Choudhury, made untiring efforts to make the Gramdan Movement a great success in Odisha. By the end of 1956, the number of Gramdan villages had gone up to 1573 and the total collection of land was about 3 lakhs of acres.

In fact, the death of Gopabandhu Choudhury on 29 April 1958, was a great setback for the Movement as a sense of inactivity overshadowed the workers everywhere. To fill the void, Acharya Harihara Das undertook an extensive *padyatra* from 15 August 1958 to 31 June 1960 for about 17 months in all the thirteen districts of Odisha covering 2825 miles. This gave wonderful impetus

to the workers to resume the Gramdan movement zealously with strong commitment as before.³⁰

In the year 1957, the Gramdan Movement which was hitherto working under non-official initiatives, became more popular and got nation-wide support. At the invitation of All India Sarva Seva Sangha, a Gramdan Parishad was held on 21 and 22 September 1957, at Yehwal in Mysore. It was pointed out in the Conference that the Gramdan Movement would usher in a fuller development of cooperative life in the villages concerned including economic betterment, all round progress and development of the people. It would further create the psychological climate all over India for the solution of the land problem and furtherance of co-operative life. Such a Movement, it was stressed, deserved all kinds of help and encouragement.³¹

Despite legislative measures, the Movement lost its momentum after the Fourth Five Year Plan, when the ceiling surplus provisions came in to force. On 18 April 1976, the Bhoodan Movement completed twenty five years of its launch in the country; and though by March 1976, the Silver Jubilee year of the Movement, 10,611 villages were gifted in Gramdan in Odisha, yet the Movement had failed to actualize the dream of Vinoba, who had hoped to see the whole of India reconstituted into Gramdan villages by the birth centenary of Gandhiji. It is noteworthy that most of the villages gifted in the Movement, were located in the Tribal area.

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Empowerment of Women in Panchayatiraj System : A Study in Odisha

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Decentralization has assumed a vital role in matters of governance in almost all the developing countries of the world. In their efforts to democratize the governing structure and to involve people in the process of governance and decision-making, most of the developing countries around the world are carrying out measures to decentralize governance. Thus, decentralized democratic governance is being regarded as “both a right in itself and a means of ensuring basic human rights observance” (*Gloppen et. Al 2003:1*). The major promise of democratic decentralization is that it brings more popular participation without discrimination between men and women. But, inspite of many conventions and time bound measurable goals, world statistics speak of deplorable state of women, and they are marginalized from enjoying the fruits and benefits of equality and independence status. Women in both socio-economic and political levels have been inferior to men in the context of Indian Society.

The Constitution of India has provided equality of men and women but family status in Indian context is judged on account of male superiority. Rural development is the main pillar of state development. But, while the half of the population, the women are neglected and away from the active participation in the development process of country, it is difficult to attain the goal

of the state. Hence, the half of the population i.e. the women section necessitates to attain their socio-economic and political empowerment through Panchayati Raj System which has provide the broadbase participation for men and women. Therefore, the Government of India, through its constitutional provisions has undertaken endeavour to uplift the women as per men through Panchayatiraj System. This paper is intended to focus on the empowerment of women in Odisha, through the Panchayatiraj System, specifically through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment which has opened up process of what actually our policy makers wanted. The makers of Panchayati Raj System desired rural women should not only become a beneficiary of development, but more importantly contribute to it. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act involves the participation of women as voter, women as members of political parties, women as candidates, women as elected members of PRIs taking part in decision-making, planning implementation and evaluation.

Panchayatiraj in Odisha : An Overview:

Odisha became a separate province in 1936. It is one of the few States in the post-independent period to take up the Panchayatitraj as its main fulcrum of rural administration. The significant step in the decentralization process

came after independence in 1948 when the Gram Panchayat Act was enacted. During the Chief Ministership of Nabakrushna Choudhury, a further attempt was made through constitution of Anchal Sasan and creation of Anchal Fund under the Orissa Estate Abolition Act of 1951. The Anchal Sasan Act (1955) was intended to accord full power to Anchal, a local authority which was at the higher level than the Gram Panchayat. It was designed to be a body corporate having fund rising out of land revenue, fees, tolls, cesses and taxes. Besides, Education Fund was made to finance educational programmes of the Sasan. The officers of the institution were to be paid out of the Anchal fund. But, the Anchal Sasan Act was not implemented which prevented Odisha pioneering role in the democratic decentralization process much earlier to the Balwantraji Mehta Committee Report. The fate of Gram Panchayat during 1950s and early 1960s was under the mercy of several departments like Board of Revenue Department, Department of Agriculture and Community Development and then moved to the Political and Services Department. In December 1959, it was placed under the Department of Planning and Coordination with a Secretary to head the Department.

The B.R. Mehta recommendations were given effect in the year 1961 and the three-tier system of PRIs was introduced in Odisha. Both Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad Acts were enacted. In July 1962, a new Department of Community Development and Panchayatiraj was created. The Panchayats, Samiti, Parishads and former District Boards came under its purview. Thus, the three-tier Panchayatiraj System introduced in Odisha took few years to get established. In 1967, Odisha came under Swatantra-Jana Congress coalition government. As a part of poll promise, the State Legislature abolished the Parishad in 1968 and a two-tier

system was in operation. This enhanced the role and responsibility of the Panchayat Samities.

After the abolition of Upper tier of PRS, the District Advisory Committee of which the Collector was the Member-Convener started functioning. A non-official member was elected to preside over DAC as and when it met. Besides the DAC, there was District Development Committee presided over by the Collector. Both these bodies were attended by the district officers. In Odisha, there were violation of the B.R. Mehta Study Team observations. However, the PR bodies in the State were criticized as inefficient and centre of nasty politics. They were replaced by the bureaucratic wing of the government, which suppressed the initiative of local people, in decision-making process on implementation of developmental programmes in rural areas. The elections to the Panchayatiraj bodies became irregular. Odisha, who introduced legislation on grass-root democratic bodies ahead of many states in India, could not retain its tempo. The Five Year Plan was dormant and there was visible stagnation. It remained relegated for two decades including the second generation PR bodies recommended by Ashok Mehta Committee.

By 1990 the attempts had been made at the national level to form a grassroot body so that planning can operate from below. Ultimately, it was agreed that none other than the age-old Panchayat System with a new face and constitutional recognition can help twin objectives of equity and social justice to eradicate poverty and cause growth. The P.K. Thungon Committee recommended for such type of PR bodies. The Union Government under Rajiv Gandhi and V.P.Singh tried but ultimately P.V.Narasimha Rao's government which could initiate 72nd Constitutional Amendment Bill which became 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act with effect from

24th April 1993. But, in 1990 Odisha under Biju Patnaik acted ahead of the Central Government's initiative. 27 years ago, when he was Chief Minister of Odisha, he could create a pro-active government for democratic decentralization. He had also introduced the concept of Panchayat industry and award to Samiti for visible industrial development. His short tenure prevented Panchayat System to get his dynamic vision and wisdom being translated into action.

In the year 1991, three landmark legislations were enacted to facilitate devolution of power to the PR bodies to bring about rural development through people's participation and co-operation. The elections for PR bodies were held in 1992. A new social, revolution in rural Odisha ushered and one-third seats were reserved for women in all the tiers of PR bodies.

Women in Odisha PR System:

Biju Patnaik, the most dynamic Chief Minister of Odisha was most emphatic about participation of women in the Panchayatiraj System. He announced that for the first time in the history of Independent India those women will be given 33 percent reservation in the three-tier Panchayat Raj Institutions. And true to his word, he saw to it that the Odisha Zilla Parishad Act of 1991 and the Gram Panchayat Samiti Amendment Act of 1992 were passed by the Odisha Assembly that provided for 33 per cent of reservation for women including Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe women. For the first time more than 25 thousand women were elected to various Gram Panchayats, Panchayat Samities and Zilla Parishads. It was further provided that one-third of Zilla Parishads would have exclusively women Chairpersons. In the case of the Panchayat Samities and the Gram Panchayats, one of the two office-bearers, i.e., Chairpersons

or Vice-Chairpersons must be women. Chief Minister Biju Patnaik also emphasized that all the elected representatives of the PRIs should receive adequate political and administrative training. It must be pointed out that Odisha Government's policies on reservation of women were followed by many other state governments in India that culminated in the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts to the Constitution. It also adds to the credit of Mr. Patnaik that after a lapse of eight years, it conducted elections to Gram Panchayats in the year 1992 for 5264 Gram Panchayats in the state. When the devolution of powers envisaged in the 73rd Amendment Act and the women empowerment scheme implemented, these were already incorporated in the vision of the then Chief Minister of Odisha Biju Patnaik. In Odisha, the 73rd Amendment Act and its important provisions were incorporated through confirmatory legislation and fresh elections were held in 1997. The 73rd Amendment of the Constitution has conferred constitutional status to PRIs. Over the past five decades, PRIs have emerged as the powerful institutions in bringing about rapid and sustainable development and socio-economic transformation in rural Odisha.

Overlooking some of the empirical works on empowerment of women in Panchayatiraj System in Odisha, specially works of Snehalata Panda (1996, 1999), Bidyut Mohanty (2002), Sachidananda Satpathy (2002), Dayanidhi Parida (2010), it is revealed that:

- The women who reluctantly entered into politics showed great maturity in outlook, enthusiasm, increasing political consciousness and increasing perception of their role and responsibility.
- Due to strong caste feelings women belonging to upper caste have not come forward to

represent the Panchayat which provided an opportunity to the women from the labour and lower caste to emerge as a potential force in village politics.

- About 80-90 percent of women attend the Panchayat meetings regularly. Given the sure number, one might conclude that the democracy has become participatory than before at least at the grassroot level.
- The socio-economic background of these women showed that majority of them came from the lower income group particularly at the village Panchayat level.
- The working culture of the Panchayat has changed because of the presence of the women.
- A part of the increase of the female literacy rate can attribute to the presence of the women in Panchayat and their willingness of get educated.
- The standard of political institution at the grassroot level has not been lower because of women reservation.
- Women are not only working for women's development but also really putting their interest in general matters and getting success also. So, the concept that women can not lead in developmental process is found wrong.
- With great effort the women leaders did the development works and the files were maintained perfectly and the government institutions were followed with greatest care.
- The involvement of women leaders in different developmental works definitely increased their awareness and confidence in themselves.

The role of women leaders in developmental process is a mixture of some sort of harassing and meaningful. It is found that, due to illiteracy and poor socio-economic status, the women leaders could not assert their influence on the decision-making process. Though reservation has made women able to participate in the electoral process of the local-self governance system in a large way, women leadership has come under immense pressure due to the criminalizing Panchayat elections including harassment and murder. For instance, Dalimba Sahu was elected ward member uncontested in her village in Kalahandi district. But she faced an unimaginable pressure to cast her vote for the election of Naib Sarpanch. When Dalimba refused to buckle under pressure, she was kidnapped and kept captive for five days away from her family. Second instance, Anjana Dehury was a popular candidate in her Gram Panchayat in Keonjhar district. When she stood for the post of Sarpanch in the Panchayat election of 2007, it was not acceptable by her husband that she should enter the election fray. The consequence was that Anjana was killed by her spouse.

Due to social tradition of male superiority, women leaders are not getting any chances to defend their voice before elderly male persons. They are feeling shy while talking in a meeting. Women leadership faced tremendous pressure in their normal functioning as power-hungry male members did not accept them at par.

The percentage of women at various levels of political activities increased dramatically, but it is found that women were still not able to exercise their power, in many cases they were just rubber stamps either in the hands of their family members or in the hands of their senior party members.

However, the above instances do not mean that women leaders in Panchayatiraj System in Odisha became failed. In Odisha, women made the Panchayat different. The 73rd Amendment of 1993, providing reservation for women at grassroot level, has gone long way in the empowerment of Indian Women. While Odisha's wonder women explain more about the social transformation and the difference it had made in rural Odisha. Some instances are there:

As Litali Das, a social activist works with women's issues, cites some instances.

1. In 2009, in Nuapada District of Odisha, some women Panches in Boden Block wanted to convene a Gram Sabha. But the Block Development Officer was not convinced. The ladies then showed him the Odisha Panchayatiraj manual that stipulates the mandatory holding of Gram Sabhas at least four times a year. The BDO capitulated.
2. In another instance, Sangeeta Nayak, Sarpanch of Borda Gram Panchayat in Kalahandi District mobilized around 3000 people to block the Collector's path. They got a doctor appointed in the village primary health centre that had not seen a doctor for years.
3. Similarly Nayana Patra, a lady ward officer in Baruan Gram Panchayat in Dhenkanal District has set an example in improving the educational system in her village (the School drop-out rate has since declined considerably) and in protesting local forests.
4. In Koraput District, when Smt. Aparajita Sarangi, the District Collector started a movement in the district called "Jagan Abhiyan" where the women took true

leadership in empowering themselves along with others in the district. The women leaders from the villages were given a special power of police by administration. The illiterate women fruitfully led the campaign for total literacy and anti-addiction movement in the district.

The Orissa Nari Samaj (ONS), a state level federation of 55 block level tribal women's organizations has made its presence felt during the last Panchayat elections, as 1,226 of its nominees selected through ONS has not only succeeded electorally, it has also trained these women on the PR System and equipped them to make their Panchayat a model of development. Sources of the ONS claimed that candidates picked by Nari Samaja had contested as independents. They have own 89 Sapranch posts, 78 Samiti Sabhya posts, and 1,065 ward member posts. Thread, the Odisha based training institutes which initiated these organizations 12 years ago had trained over 1100 tribal women intensively in three phases and exposed another 1500 men and women to a number of workshops on Panchayatiraj. The 55 block level tribal women's organizations selected these tribal women and some men for contesting 2007 Panchayat Elections, supported their social and development activities in the villages for last two years. Thus, the grass-root level tribal women's organizations also involved in the process of social development in their respective communities have now come out successful to be actively involved in the political process ensuring active participation in the decision-making through Panchayatiraj (Achievement News, March 21, 2007).

It is reported by the then State Election Commission Mr. Sanjiv Chandra Hota, that in the last Panchayatiraj elections (2007) in Odisha, 32,100 ward members, and 101 Sarpanches have

been elected uncontested which was a very good sign of communities reposing faith on community leadership without differences. Portraying the Gram Sabha as the “heart” and Gram Panchayat as the ‘brain’ of the PRS, he said that “Gram Swarajya” can be realized through this PRIs and Odisha Nari Samaj. Tribal women organizations in the state are sufficiently prepared through various experimental training and political parties need to be kept out and this can be done if organizations and service minded outfits as well as individuals take position at the grass-root level.

A nationwide study on Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) commissioned by Ministry of Panchayatiraj in 2007-08 had concluded that the earlier notions of women being mere proxies for male relative have gradually ceded space to the recognition that given the opportunity to participate in the political system, women are as capable as their male counterparts. EWRs have used their office not only to mainstream gender issues but also address the developmental needs of the community as a whole and also issues such as health, sanitation, early childhood care, drinking water etc., that have a special impact of the lives of women (Information given by the Minister PR Sri V. Kishore Chandra Deo in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha).

In a bold move with far reaching impact on electoral politics at the grass-root, the Odisha Government has made 50 percent reservation for women in Panchayatiraj institution to achieve gender equality in the representation in Panchayatiraj bodies. The state legislature unanimously gave its nod to the Odisha Panchayat Laws (Amendment) Bill 2011, by amending the Odisha Gram Panchayat Act, 1964, Odisha Panchayat Samiti Act and the Zilla Parishad Act enhancing the quota for women from existing 33% to 50% in February 2011 in the three-tier

Panchayat bodies (The Economic Times, 8.4.2011). By amending the Panchayat laws, the Bill also provided reservation of the seats and office of the Chairpersons for two terms as it was felt that the operation of single term did not attract more candidates. The experience of first term would be useful in the second term for the women to prove themselves as the true representative of women as well as the entire community. It was implemented in the PR elections in February-March 2012. This was being done in view of the efficiency, abilities and success shown by women in various spheres and in order to take forward and empower the women in decision-making process at local self government. However, those examples of women’s empowerment in Odisha are very scanty. It requires a lot for their empowerment. The Odisha PR Department and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women) have signed an agreement for promoting women’s political leadership and empowering the elected representatives in the local government. At present the programme is being implemented in six states, i.e. Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Rajasthan. The main objectives of the programme are capacity building of the elected women representatives at the Gram Sabha level, research and policy advocacy to address the legal and political issues pertaining to local-self governance and evolution of a centre of excellence. (The Telegraphs, 17.7.2011)

Suggestions:

- An important requirement for bringing about empowerment of rural women is to bring about attitudinal change in both men and women. Therefore, they should be imparted education for bringing about social and political awareness among both.

- There should be increased emphasis on ensuring the participation of women in the meetings of Panchayats at all the levels. It will help them to promote and enhance their leadership qualities and confidence so that they can perform in a better way.
- The Government should provide financial support and infrastructure to successful women organizations to take up the responsibility encouraging the women elected representatives. This could be taken up by the leaders of women's movement in the state. They can also provide support to sensitize the rural women.
- The Government should provide security to women candidates from criminals, during and after elections, till they are in office.

However, a sincere will of the Government, co-operation of the people as a whole would encourage and increase the empowerment of women in turn, would lead in true sense, the development of a society.

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Democracy, Development and Decentralisation : Rural Development Through Institutional Intervention

Prof. Surya Narayan Misra

Democracy presupposes that collective decisions are made by the people who are most affected by them. Decentralisation is a prime mechanism, through which democracy becomes truly representative and responsive, further democracy is a way of life and also a political process. Among the established democracies in the world India has the largest and also the most vibrant democracy in the world. At the same time, India also figures among those who have failed to address the basic issues of their people. It is evident from the fact that in India there is co-existence of mass democracy and mass poverty.

Development administration is today's trump card. It intends a holistic approach with broad-based vision. Its effectiveness is dependent upon two inter-related factors. They are the capacity of the administrative system to bring about, sustain, and strengthen goal-oriented changes in the Socio-economic institutions; and the level and quality of people's participation, in the formulation and implementation of development policies and programmes. According to R.K. Arora (2001): The strength of participation in turn, depends on the ability of the people to participate, the willingness to improve themselves in the change process and the opportunities provided to them to participate in the process of self-governance.

Development is a hydra-headed concept. It is perceived differently by different people subscribing to various professions, prophecies and persuasions. It was the industrial revolution which taught us that nature is a commodity and the society is constituted of human beings only. This confusion determined the policies for development. Since the pace of development is based on production, it has affected climate, environment, soil, forests and the whole of the human habitation. The disastrous gifts of development are – pollution, depletion of land and forest, rivers with industrial effluents, poverty and hunger. It is to be noted here that Government of all kinds have failed to solve – Threat of war, Poverty and Hunger.

The unbridled development has many consequences – (a) there is material abundance but not for survival requirements, (b) developed is further developing and also redefining development and (c) it has led to competition which has caused heavy ecological cost, social disruption and psychological damage.

Decentralisation is one of the most popular and popularised terms in the contemporary development discourse. As a concept it is very broad and it covers many aspects. As per an analyst, during early 1960s, the concept of decentralisation was advocated

for supplementing the theory and practice of development administration. Further, this was also in tune with the western ideology of containing the spread of Communism.

'Democratic Decentralisation' refers to (a) transfer of authority to plan, make decisions and manage public functions from the national to sub-national level, (b) decentralisation is a structure of government where bodies are created at the local level separated by law from national to local, (c) a political issue which moves around the distribution of power, (d) it is transfer, planning, decision-making authority from central to field, local etc.

The intellectual discourse on decentralisation reveals two broad theories – NORMATIVE and DESCRIPTIVE. The classical liberal democratic theorists, like de Tocqueville, J.S. Mill, H.J. Laski and Woodrow Wilson were the first to make a strong case for decentralisation considering the possible benefit to be percolated to the lower levels.

Theoretically, decentralisation assumes that all those who are governed ought to take part in government process.

Structurally, decentralisation brings the governing structures, institutions and process nearer to the governed.

Functionally, it makes the process of decision making and implementation functional in the sense that the people who know their problems better are entrusted with the task of solving those problems.

Operationally, when people that they govern themselves instead of being governed; and initiative, motivation and participation become spontaneous and effective'. Decentralisation is a twin process of 'deconcentration' and 'Devolution'. Deconcentration involves

'Delegation of power' for smooth functioning. But it is far away from the concept of transfer of authority. 'Devolution' believes in disbursement of authority. It is a process wherein power is transferred from one organ to another by means of legislation.

It was observed that for quite some years unnecessary importance was accorded to both deconcentration and delegation. Because of this rural development instead of occupying the centre-stage turned into a periphery matter. B.R. Mehta (1956), the then chairperson of Estimates Committee of the Indian Parliament was appointed as Chairman of a Committee to examine the working of the community development wherein he found Community Development Programmes could not sensitise people because of over bureaucratisation. The three-tier grass root organisation below the State recommended by Mehta could not yield result due to lack of Statutory protection. Thus for two decades from the dawn of independence people living at the village level could not get scope either to participate in decision making or the benefit of democratic governance and its development initiatives.

The B.R. Mehta Committee Report intended to shift the decision-making centre from a distance to a point closer to people. It wished a three-tier body below the State from district to village with genuine transfer of power and also adequate resources. All development Schemes at the rural level, were suggested, to be channelized through these grassroot bodies.

Thus the significance of Panchayati Raj needs to be appreciated from the positive contribution that such institutions make in – (a) developing healthy democratic traditions in the country, (b) inculcating leadership qualities among the rural people, (c) making planning for

development more realistic, (d) encouraging participation of people in planning and programming for goal-oriented change, (e) reviving among the rural people a spirit of responsible citizenship and self-confidence, (f) ensuring a more effective implementation of development plans, (g) relieving the administrative burden of the upper layers of government, and (h) increasing the legitimacy of the system of governance. As has been mentioned earlier it was a sad story that such a beautiful and workable scheme could not be implemented in both letter and spirit.

In 1977 the then Janata Government with the hope to revive and to strengthen the PR bodies appointed a Committee under Ashok Mehta to suggest the way out. The Ashok Mehta Committee recommended- (a) creation of two-tier body (Zilla Parishad and Mandal Panchayat) the lower tier will have a population between 15000 to 20000 (b) Nyaya Panchayat under the Chairperson of a qualified Judge to be kept as a separate body, (c) open participation of political parties in PRIs through elections conducted on party basis, (d) PRI elections to be conducted by Chief Electoral Officer (e) Zilla Parishad to be made responsible for planning at the district level, (f) reducing the dependence of PRIs on state funds and, instead, endowing them with powers of taxation, (g) development functions to be transferred to Zilla Parishads, (h) State governments not to suspend the PRIs on partisan grounds, and (i) appointing in the State Council of ministers, a minister for Panchayatiraj to look after the affairs of the PRIs. The collapse of the Janata Government in July 1979 stood as a road block to the progress in institutionalising process to have a visible as well as durable rural development for which the Janata Government had decided to ensure 50% of the development funds to the rural sector.

In 1985 another Committee known as Administrative Arrangements for Rural Development under the Chairmanship of GVK Rao was appointed by Rajiv's Government. The Rao Committee recommended that – (a) PRIs at the district and lower levels be given greater power in relation to planning, implementation and monitoring of rural development plans., (b) elections to PRIs be held regularly, (c) a post of District Development Commissioner who should act as in charge of all development departments at the district level and be the Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Parishad be created and (d) the post of BDO should be revamped.

The Rao Committee Report was found to be different from the report of the working group on District Planning set up under the Chairmanship of CH Hanumantha Rao in 1984. This Committee had recommended for the setting up of a separate district planning body under a Minister/Collector with a major role for the latter in the decentralised planning through PR bodies.

In 1986 a Committee under the Chairmanship of eminent Jurist L.M. Shingvi was constituted by the Department of Rural Development which recommended constitutional status for PR bodies. The Committee emphasised the importance of Gram Sabha with a reorganisation of villages and suggested the creation of Nyaya Panchayats. To give credence to the above recommendations and observations a Parliamentary Committee headed by P.K. Thungon was put on the job to provide basis for the grass root organisation by making them statutory bodies. Once this was done the 64th Constitution Amendment Bill was moved and in the Rajya Sabha it was killed by one vote. What happened after that is now part of history.

Rajiv's Government was unseated by vote in 1989 and a hung parliament could become

active when Janata Dal was supported by BJP and Left from outside and V.P. Singh was the Prime Minister. In July, 1990 Singh's Government moved the new amendment bill and before it was considered Singh's government was defeated on the floor.

In 1991 a Congress Government came to power and P.V. Narasimha Rao became the Prime Minister. He developed an all party consensus and the 72nd Constitution Amendment Bill was adopted in December, 1992. It received Presidential assent on 24th April, 1993 and was named as 73rd Constitution Amendment Act. This Act was a visible improvement. It made PRIs Statutory. The six features were- tenure, qualification Power Responsibility Authority (PRA), Finance Commission, Election Commission and Audit provision as definite improvement over previous laws.

It is to be remembered that though Panchayats or any form of village administration in India had ancient roots and even the observation of Charles Metcalfe in 1832 is self-explanatory – 'India is a Republic of Village Republics.' Yet village India suffered most during the colonial era. The plight of the villagers could be internalised by Gandhi and he through his communication system advocated for 'Gram Swaraj'. He meant by that both participatory democracy and decentralised development. If villages develop then India can develop and not the other way round. There is no doubt that by administrative decentralisation we may get efficient system. But democratic decentralisation is something more than that. It advocates participation. No amount of efficiency is acceptable, if there is no participation of the people. Only a participatory democracy can identify, prioritise and initiate development because it involves and indoctrinates the local population

who can own the development design, process and end result.

Rural development in India is a much debated affair as everyone had contributed his installment for the evolution and growth of the concept of development. PRIs were taken as vehicle for promoting development through popular participation. From the inception the idea of development came to be identified with the PRIs. The CDP was the precursor of PRI whose thrust was on securing socio-economic transformation of villages through people's own democratic cooperative organisation with the government providing technical services, supply and credit. National Extension Service (1953) was an amplified version of CDP. It aimed at transferring scientific and technical knowledge to agriculture, animal husbandry and rural craft sectors. It was entrusted with the sole objective of developing villages with the active participation and involvement of local people. However, it failed to achieve its objectives. Instead of ensuring peoples visible participation it caused the creation of a bureaucratic super-structure. Despite good intention of the Government it failed to ensure people's participation. This was identified by B.R. Mehta (1956) and the three-tier PRI System was introduced without providing proper statutory recognition. The deficiencies of the past legislations and administrative actions were made good through the 73rd Amendment Act. This generated a newly created statutorily sanctified PRIs to revamp the institutional arrangement at the grassroot level so that the old objective of seeing developed India through developed villages can be achieved.

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Address of His Excellency Shri Murlidhar Chandrakant Bhandare, Governor of Odisha to the Odisha Legislative Assembly on February 14, 2013

Mr. Speaker and Hon'ble Members,

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome you to the 12th Session of this 14th Odisha Legislative Assembly. I convey my heartiest greetings to all of you and to the people of Odisha.

2. This August House has expressed its deep condolence on the sad demise of Late Inder Kumar Gujral, Former Prime Minister of India, Late B. Satyanarayan Reddy, Former Governor, Late Nityananda Mohapatra, Nalinikanta Mohanty, Bhagirathi Gomango and Harihar Swain, all former Ministers, Late Radha Mohan Nayak, Chandramadhaba Mishra, Satyasundar Mishra, Keshab Chandra Sahoo, Ajit Hembram, Bira Keshari Deo, Sarangadhar Pradhan, Manas Ranjan Mallick, Jagamohan Nayak and Kuliean Bage, all former Members of this August House who have made significant contribution to the development of the State. This House has also expressed its condolence on the sad demise of Late Krushna Chandra Ratha, Ex-Sub-Inspector, Late Kruparam Majhi and Narendra Kumar Patel, Ex-Assistant Sub-Inspectors of Odisha Police, Late R.N. Mahakud, Ex-Assistant Sub-Inspector and Late Biswajit Barik, Ex-Jawan, C.R.P.F., Late Kumud Chandra Swain, Ex-Jawan and Xavier Kindo, Ex-Constable, B.S.F., Late Lambodar Sahoo, Ex-Lance Naik and Basanta Kumar Behera, Ex-Guard, Defence Force, Late Sasi Bhusan Rout, Sunil Dutt Singh and Ajaya Kumar Sahoo, all Ex-Constables, Late Ranjan Kumar Sarangi, Ex-Havildar, Ajit Sodi, Ex-S.P.O., Narayan Suna, Ex-Home Guard, Late Manik Khilla, Jabandhu Khemudu, Goura Chandra Dalai and Bhagaban Nayak, all Ex-Grama Rakhi of Odisha Police who have rendered exemplary and selfless service and laid down their lives for the cause of the Nation. I request Hon'ble Members to join me in paying tribute to Late Baishnab Charan Patnaik, Kumar Majhi and Satyanarayan Pradhan, all former Members of this House, Late Ramachandra Sethi, Ex-Naik, 19 Infantry, Divisional Signal Regiment, Late Ghasiram Majhi, Ex-Head Constable, BSF, Late Deepak Kumar Rout, 82 Armoured Regiment and Late Purna Chandra Nayak, Ex-Gnr Operator, 1880 Rocket Regiment who are no more with us. The House may convey our heartfelt condolence to the bereaved families of the departed souls.

3. My Government has consistently and continuously endeavoured to achieve a sustainable and inclusive higher economic growth, accelerated overall development, reduction of regional, social and gender disparities and faster rate of poverty reduction. The State's 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17) envisages an average annual growth rate of 9% with a projected outlay of Rs.1,24,373 crore. Sustained

efforts have been made by the State Government to allocate increasingly higher resources for planned development of the State.

4. Odisha has made impressive achievements in terms of economic growth and poverty reduction. An average real annual growth rate of 8.23% has been achieved during the 11th Plan at 2004-05 prices. The real per capita income in Odisha at 2004-05 prices has increased from Rs.14,862 in 1999-2000 to Rs.26,900 in 2011-12. Poverty in Odisha has declined from 57.2% in 2004-05 to 37% in 2009-10.

5. With a view to reducing regional imbalances and accelerating the pace of development in the Western Odisha, focused initiatives are being taken up through the Western Odisha Development Council (WODC). 2729 new projects with an estimated cost of Rs.96.47 crore have been taken up during 2012-13.

6. The Scheme "Special Development Programme" has been introduced in the State during the year 2012-13. The scheme aims at taking up implementation of infrastructure development projects up to Rs.50 lakh per Assembly Constituency. During 2012-13, Rs.73.50 crore has been provided in the budget. Integrated Action Plan (IAP) is being implemented in 18 districts with an allocation @ of Rs.30 crore per district.

7. The Action Plan 2012-13 under the Special Plan (RLTAP) for the KBK districts has been formulated with an outlay of Rs.250 crore. Need based schemes / programmes in the field of Agriculture, Irrigation, Electrification, Urban Drinking Water Supply, Welfare of ST & SC, Social Safety Net and Rural Connectivity have been incorporated in the Action Plan and are implemented by the concerned Administrative Departments.

8. The Biju KBK Plan for the year 2012-13 is implemented with an outlay of Rs.120 crore under State Plan. Biju Kandhamal 'O' Gajapati Yojana is being implemented since 2009-10 in Kandhamal and Gajapati districts under State Plan out of State's own resources. During 2012-13, a sum of Rs.18 crore and Rs.10.50 crore have been sanctioned in favour of Kandhamal and Gajapati districts respectively. The projects under these programmes relate to Bijli, Sadak and Pani, i.e., village electrification including street lighting, construction of concrete roads within the village or any other form of connectivity, and creation of irrigation / drinking water sources.

9. Fiscal reforms undertaken by my Government which included expenditure rationalization and revenue generation measures has resulted in a major turnaround of the State's Finances. I am happy to mention that the State's Finances are now robust enough to provide adequate resource support to various developmental activities of the State. Perceptible improvement in the fiscal condition of the State during the last few years has created opportunities for higher Capital and Plan investment. Our dependence on borrowing has consequently declined.

10. Capital investment has increased from Rs.1038.06 crore in 2005-06 to Rs.4496.09 crore in 2011-12. This substantial increase in Capital Outlay has been possible because of generation of surpluses on the Revenue account and full utilization of the borrowed fund for Capital asset creation. No diversion of borrowed funds for revenue expenditure since 2005-06 is an indication of prudent fiscal management

in past few years. Similarly, the annual plan size of the State has increased from Rs.3500 crore in 2006-07 to Rs.17,250 crore in 2012-13.

11. My Government has made substantial strides on the Management of Public Debt. We have been able to reduce the net debt stock from 46.48% of GSDP in 2001-02 to 17.87% of GSDP in 2011-12. Thereby we have achieved the desired level of Debt-GSDP ratio of 25% recommended by the 13th Finance Commission. The ratio of interest to Revenue Receipts which should be within the prudential level of 15% has already been achieved by 2007-08 being 14.43%. This ratio stands at 6.40% in 2011-12. Through buy back / prepayment of high cost loans and debt swap, it has been possible to reduce the debt stock and interest burden. With improvement in fiscal situation, the State Government has not resorted to Open Market Borrowing since 2005-06, as a result of which the State Government has been able to achieve debt sustainability parameters recommended by successive Finance Commissions.

12. With improved fiscal condition, now the focus of my Government is efficiency and quality of public spending. Our emphasis is on outcome and efficiency of expenditure rather than simply making budget provision. My Government has taken following institutional reform measures to improve efficiency, transparency and productivity in public spending:

i. Outcome Budget has been introduced for 13 major Departments in order to link outlays to measurable outcomes.

ii. Cash Management System has been introduced in fifteen Departments of the Government for ensuring timely spending of the budgeted outlays.

iii. Formulation of Annual Maintenance Plans has been put in place for ensuring effective and productive utilization of the budgeted provision for Operation & Maintenance of capital assets.

13. In order to facilitate growth in trade and business in the State, the Commercial Taxes Organisation has launched Payment of taxes and filing of returns through the electronic mode. Facility has also been provided to the prospective dealers to apply for registration electronically. Presently, more than 80% of Commercial Taxes are received electronically. More such business centric electronic services are proposed to be rolled out in near future for enhancing efficiency and transparency of our tax administration.

14. The Pension Administration System of the State Government has been completely revamped. In the new system, monthly pension of all State Government pensioners is automatically transferred to their Bank Account. No pensioner is required to come to the Treasury anymore for receiving his monthly pension. SMS alert is sent to the mobile of each pensioner on transfer of his monthly pension to his account.

15. In order to put in place a system for Complete Expenditure Control through Integrated Odisha Treasury Management System (IOTMS), the 40 year long practice of Letter of Credit (LC) system has been abolished and expenditure of all Administrative Departments have been brought under the fold of IOTMS. The system now enables monitoring of both receipt & expenditure position with real time data. The system facilitates Electronic distribution / redistribution/ re-appropriation without manual intervention. As all the expenditure through the system is against availability of allotment, incidence of excess expenditure has been minimized.

16. The State Government have introduced the Online Budget Compilation System for preparation of State Budget. The entire process of budget preparation is now done through “Online Budget Compilation System”. Besides, all the re-appropriation proposals are processed and approved online. This is a green initiative through which we are saving about 5000 man-hours and 500 reams of paper annually.

17. My Government is giving top priority for the development of Agriculture Sector as this sector continues to be the backbone of Odisha’s economy and more than 60% population of the state is dependent on it. Our state envisages a growth rate of 4% in Agriculture and allied sector during 12th Plan period.

18. Seed is the most important input for boosting productivity of crops. Government has taken effective steps to increase Seed Replacement Rate (SRR) of various crops. The SRR of paddy, which was only 6.35% by end of 10th Plan period increased to 21.64% by the end of 11th Plan period which has further gone up to 27% at the end of 2012. It is programmed to enhance the SRR to 30.56% by 2013-14. All out efforts are being made to make available enough quality seeds to the farmers. Besides, 4 static and 6 mobile soil testing labs have been established during 11th plan and 6 more static soil testing labs are being established. About 5 Lakh hectares of land have been treated for soil acidity during the 11th Plan period and such endeavour is continuing during 2012-13 in 25,000 hectares. This intervention shall be intensified during 2013-14 to enhance crop productivity. Fertilizer consumption has increased from 52Kg./ Ha. during 2007-08 to 60.4 Kg./Ha. by the end of the 11th plan period. During 2012-13, the fertilizer consumption is estimated to go upto 66 Kg./Ha. It is programmed to further promote fertilizer consumption to touch 97 Kg during 2013-14. With a view to mechanise the farming operations it is programmed to support procurement of 6,600 Tractors, 17,000 Power Tillers, 2,000 Reapers, 180 Transplanters, 900 Rotavators, 4,000 Power Threshers, 300 Combine Harvesters, 3,000 Hydraulic Trailers, 4,200 Power Operated Implements and 14,000 Manual / Bullock drawn implements during 2013-14.

19. Watershed Development under various Centrally Sponsored Schemes such as Integrated Wasteland Development Programme (IWDP), Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP) and Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) are currently being implemented in the State. Watershed Development Programmes are also implemented under the scheme Special Plan (RLTAP) in eight KBK districts. 0.876 lakh hectares of land has been treated through watershed management programme under the above schemes by the end of December, 2012. 713 Self Help Groups have been formed in course of watershed development programme for improving the livelihoods of 8,472 landless and asset less households. 23,344 water bodies, and 47,532 small soil & water conservation structures have been created and 55,728 hectares of plantation have been created under Watershed Development Programme in the State.

20. Odisha Rural Livelihoods Programme (JEEBIKA) is an initiative for providing additional livelihoods component to 460 on going watershed projects under IWDP & DPAP schemes covering six districts such as Koraput, Nawarangpur, Rayagada, Malkangiri, Kandhamal and Mayurbhanj.

21. Irrigation is the most critical input for agriculture. Private lift irrigation points (PLIP) under Jananidhi scheme are being promoted with 50% subsidy to farmers. Under “Jalanidhi” during 11th Plan,

1,00,524 PLIPs have been established bringing about 1,93,946 hectares under assured irrigation. During 2012-13, 9,513 such PLIPs have been established till December, 2012 bringing around 16,400 hectares under assured irrigation. It is programmed to establish 37,009 such PLIPs during 2013-14.

22. My Government has been successful in providing irrigation facilities to more than 50% of the cultivable land in order to boost agricultural production in the State. Out of total cultivable land of 61.65 lakh hectare, irrigation potential in 30.89 lakh hectare of land have been created by the end of 2011-12. In order to expand the scope of irrigation in the State, different schemes such as Externally aided, Central and State Government funded irrigation projects have been taken up. Asian Development Bank funded Odisha Integrated Irrigated Agriculture and Water Management Investment Program (OIAWMIP), worth Rs.1084.19 crore is being executed in phased manner with a target to stabilize 2.18 lakh hectare of irrigation potential and to create additional irrigation potential of 6000 hectare in the State. Under Repair, Restoration and Renovation (RR&R) scheme, renovation of 462 Water Bodies have been completed with revival of irrigation potential of 17,612 hectare by end of March, 2012. Various Farmers Welfare Oriented schemes like Biju Krushak Vikash Yojana (BKVY), Deep Bore wells, Check Dams, Mega Lifts are also being executed in the State. During financial year 2012-13, 1723 Check Dams, 267 Lift Irrigation Projects have been completed. 3652 Deep Bore Wells have been energised by end of December, 2012. Additional irrigation potential of 9.66 thousand hectare have been created by end of December, 2012 through Major-Medium, Minor (flow and lift) irrigation projects. Efforts are being taken for timely completion of on-going irrigation projects. It has been programmed for construction of 3000 Check Dams, 20,000 Deep Bore Wells & 1200 Lift irrigation projects in 2013-14 to create additional irrigation potential of 1.084 lakh hectare of land.

23. In the meanwhile, 14.63 lakh hectare land have been handed over to 20,418 Pani Panchayats by end of December, 2012. Under Command Area Development and Water Management (CAD&WM) programme, Field Channels covering 24,340 hectare and Field Drains Covering 7279 hectare land have been completed ending December, 2012. It has been programmed to construct Field Channel in 40,498 hectare of irrigated land for efficient management of irrigation water. Similarly, it has been programmed for construction of Field Drains in 14,963 hectare land during 2013-14.

24. In Odisha, the Short Term Cooperative Credit Structure provides 65% of the total crop loan disbursed to the farmers in the State. During 2012-13, Crop Loan to the extent of Rs.3800.34 crore has been advanced to 17.87 lakh farmers. It has been targeted to finance crop loan to the extent of Rs.5,500 Crore in 2013-14.

25. In order to meet the credit needs of the rural poor and to provide banking services at their door steps, Central Cooperative Banks have organized 76,358 Self Help Groups (SHGs) and have credit linked 58,295 Groups. Besides there are 9459 Tenant Farmers Groups (TFGs) and 44,877 Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) have been formed of which 7,683 TFGs and JLGs have been credit linked. A target for organising 11,000 new Self Help Groups has been fixed for 2013-14.

26. In order to create adequate scientific Warehousing facilities for storage of agricultural produce and to implement the warehousing receipts system under the provisions of warehousing (Development and Regulation) Act, the OSWC has taken up construction of 1,12,000 MT capacity of godown

facilities from their own resources. The PACS have been provided with financial assistance of over Rs.44 Crore to create godown facilities of 89,400 MT capacities while the Regulated Market Committees (RMCs) have undertaken construction of godowns of 33,000 MT capacity.

27. Massive afforestation activities have been taken up by my Government under various schemes such as National Afforestation Programme, Mangrove Action Plan, Economic Plantation, Plantation under Bamboo Mission, Industrial Plantation, Compensatory Afforestation, MGNREGS etc. A total area of 2 lakh hectare of degraded forest area has been targeted under afforestation which includes plantation in 52,000 hectares land and silvicultural operations in 1.48 lakh hectares of forest land. Avenue plantation has been made in 3068 row kilometres. 212 lakh saplings have been distributed to public for plantation. Massive afforestation is planned to be continued in the year 2013-14. Protection of forest is continuing with deployment of 9 APR units and 276 Forest Protection Squads besides the involvement of community level institutions such as Vana Suraksha Samities.

28. My Government has substantially increased the purchase price of Kendu leaves for the 2013 crop which will benefit about 8 lakh kendu leaf pluckers.

29. My Government is implementing a “Elephant Corridor Development Management Plan” in 14 identified elephant corridors. The Action Plan involves improvement of elephant habitat, plantation of fodder species, solar electric fencing, elephant-proof trenches, and construction of water bodies/water harvesting structures, restoration of elephant corridors and constitution of anti-poaching and anti-depredation squads, early payment of compassionate grant and creating public awareness. To mitigate human sufferings due to man-animal conflicts, an amount of Rs.736 lakh has been provided as compassionate grant for human injury, human kill, crop damage, cattle kill, house damage etc. during 2012-13.

30. Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project for protection and conservation of two coastal stretches namely – Gopalpur to Chilika and Paradeep to Dhamara of Odisha is being implemented with the assistance of World Bank. This scheme aims at overall development of coastal area including mitigation of coastal erosion, conservation and improvement of archaeological and cultural assets and ensuring livelihood of the coastal community. A “Regional Coastal Process Study” has been commissioned at the estimated cost of Rs.16.50 crore which will help in formulation of a scientific shoreline management plan.

31. The Chilika Lake has drawn the attention of international community as a success story of wetland management. The eco-restoration of the Chilika Lake has resulted in increase in the fish production in the lake to an all time high of 14,200 metric tonnes. As many as 80 Primary Fishermen’s Cooperative Societies have been strengthened by providing them financial and infrastructural assistance. For strengthening the monitoring of water quality of Chilika Lake, sensors have been deployed at 10 strategic locations which are providing real-time data on the water quality.

32. Integrated Livestock Development Programme (ILD) “KALYANI” has been taken up in 14 districts of the State in collaboration with BAIF. During the last one year 628 nos. of Block Level Infertility Camps and Farmers Training Camps have been organized. The Livestock Insurance Programme of CB cows and buffaloes have been taken up in 9 districts of the State.

- 33.** The Cattle Breeding Farm at Khapuria is strengthened for CB bull production. The Livestock breeding farm Keonjhar and Chipilima are being upgraded under RKVY with a view to produce high productive bull calves for production of better quality semen straws. Under Dairy Entrepreneurship Development Scheme (DEDS) 37,538 entrepreneurs have been identified and steps have been taken to provide loan through banks.
- 34.** 4680 Broiler Poultry farms have been established with a total bird capacity of 72.56 lakh & daily poultry meat production capacity of 242.42MT. Similarly 81 layer poultry farms in the State with total bird capacity of 72.56 lakh & daily egg production of 34.87 lakh have been established. For boosting rural backyard poultry development programme, 4,73,624 Chicks & 33,284 ducklings of improved variety have been produced during the year. It is targeted to establish 6000 dairy units in the state under Dairy Entrepreneurs Development Scheme (DEDS) with an objective to enhance productivity as well as develop entrepreneur skill among the dairy farmers of the State.
- 35.** State has received National award “Golden Peacock” continuously for the last three years for coverage of highest number of fishermen in Group Accident Insurance Scheme. 10 lakh fishermen were covered in 2012-13 and 11 lakh fishermen are planned to be covered during 2013-14.
- 36.** The Government of Odisha has adopted a holistic and integrated approach for development of the ST & SC population. Apart from opening new educational institutions such as Sevashrams, Ashram Schools, High Schools, Higher Secondary Schools (Science & Commerce), Secondary Training Schools and B.Ed. training college, emphasis has been given to improve the retention rate and to check drop outs. To make SC/ ST Students computer literate, computer education in ST & SC High Schools has been started. Special merit scholarship is also being given to ST/ SC students for studying in Sainik Schools.
- 37.** 30 New Ashram Schools would be opened and 14 Higher Secondary Schools shall also be made functional during 2013-14. 5 B.Ed. Colleges are to be established in a phased manner one each in Malkangiri, Nawarangpur, Rayagada, Sundargarh & Mayurbhanj District. Under “Babu Jagajiban Ram Chhatravas Yojana”, 44 SC girls Hostels and 12 SC boys hostels are under construction which are likely to be completed by March, 2013.
- 38.** Government has decided to open urban hostel complex for SC/ST boys & girls at Bhubaneswar, Berhampur and Rourkela with an intake capacity of 1000 in Bhubaneswar and 300 each in Berhampur and Rourkela. Construction work of these Urban Hostels at Pokhariput, Ghatikia & Chandrasekharapur in Bhubaneswar is going on. Construction of hostels is under process for ST boys and girls in 5 Naxal Affected Districts such as Malkangiri, Rayagada, Gajapati, Deogarh and Sambalpur. 478 Hostels have been sanctioned for the above 5 districts.
- 39.** As part of economic empowerment, steps have been taken by the Odisha Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe Finance Development Co-operative Corporation (OSFDC) for self-employment of the ST & SC youths. So far 6,400 SC beneficiaries and 2,319 ST beneficiaries have been financed through banks under bankable income generating scheme for self employment. For this purpose OSFDC has released Rs. 871.96 lakh towards subsidy during the year 2012-13.

- 40.** For skill development and placement linked Employability, 2,590 SC candidates have been trained in reputed training institutes out of which 431 candidates have got employment.
- 41.** Government of Odisha achieved the distinction of distributing land rights to maximum number of tribal families under the Forest Rights Act, 2006. So far 3,24,737 Individual Claims have been finalised including 17,229 Claims from particularly vulnerable Tribal Groups.
- 42.** During 2012-13, a sum of Rs.160.95 crore has been proposed under the Odisha Tribal Empowerment and Livelihood Programme (OTELP) with a target of 96,528 Scheduled Tribe families under B.P.L category. Focused attention has been given on placement linked employability schemes like Apparel designing, mobile phone repairing, computer software and hardware training, driving, fitter, mechanic of electrical and electronics appliances, welding & fabrication, plumber, hospital management, medical technician, housekeeping, food & beverages processing, plastic engineering, wood carving etc.
- 43.** My Government is implementing “Mamata”, a conditional cash transfer scheme operational in all the rural as well as urban areas with an objective of providing partial wage compensation for pregnant and nursing mothers to enable them to rest adequately during their pregnancy and after delivery. The beneficiaries receive total incentive of Rs.5000/- in four instalments by electronic transfer system subject to fulfillment of specific conditions. 5,87,745 beneficiaries have received Rs.157.317 crore under this scheme during 2012.
- 44.** Empowerment of women through Mission Shakti has been taken up since 2001. It has covered nearly 58 lakhs Women in the rural and urban Odisha by forming 4.5 Lakh Women Self Help Groups by end of October, 2012.
- 45.** In order to curb atrocities on women, Protection Officers have been appointed at district level to address the issues of Domestic Violence under Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDV Act, 2005). Bell Bajao Campaign (A Campaign against Domestic Violence) has been launched in Odia for better understanding of the rural people. Support Centre for Women are functioning in six districts like Rayagada, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Dhenkanal, Bhadrak & Cuttack with the help of Oxfam India to prevent and counter crime against women. To reach every woman in distress and in need of care & protection in Bhubaneswar City, a dedicated Women Helpline 10920 (24 x 7) is functioning by Ruchika Social Service Organisation. This is being extended to the entire State of Odisha.
- 46.** For Welfare and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, the pension amount for all categories of pension holders, has been increased to Rs.300/- per month. One-time winter allowance of Rs.200/- was distributed on Jan Seva divas to all pension holders. Bhima Bhoi Samarth Abhijan has been conducted in each Block benefiting persons with disability.
- 47.** Government has also taken various measures to safeguard the interest of children in the state. The Odisha State Council for Protection of Child Rights and Odisha State Child Protection Society have already become operational in order to provide safe and secure environment to the children in need of care and protection.
- 48.** My Government has devolved powers and responsibilities upon the 3-tier Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) as mandated in the 73rd Amendment of the constitution so as to enable them to

function as Institutions of Self-Governance. Accordingly, 21 subjects relating to 11 Departments have been devolved to the control of 3-tier PRIs. Provisions of Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA) have been implemented in the matter of strengthening Palli Sabhas and Gram Sabhas, reservations for Scheduled Tribes in the PRI structure. Election to the 3-tier Panchayati Raj institution was conducted smoothly during 2012.

49. My Government has launched successfully an innovative programme named Gram Sabha Shasaktikaran Karyakrama- 2012 from 2nd to 18th October, 2012 for effective participation of the people in deciding the works & beneficiaries under various programmes in a transparent manner. This was a major step in strengthening local self government. In order to hear the grievances and suggestions of the people from every nook and corner of the state, a toll free Help Line has been made operational from 8.00 A.M to 8.00 P.M on every working day.

50. The flag-ship programmes of Govt. of India such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Backward Region Grant Fund Scheme (BRGF) are being implemented effectively. All the 30 districts of the state are now covered under MGNREGS and during this financial year up to December, 2012, a sum of Rs.618.57 crore have been utilized generating 313.69 lakh man days. In the said period 13.49 lakh households have demanded employment and out of which 13.42 lakh households have been provided with employment & amongst them 16,948 families have completed 100 days of work.

51. Up-to December, 2012, construction of 5966 Bharat Nirman Rajiv Gandhi Seva Kendra (BNRGSK) at the G.P. head quarters and 309 BNRGSK buildings at the Block Head Quarters have been taken up out of which 2802 at G.P. level and 119 building at Block level are completed.

52. Electronically generated muster roll (e-muster roll) with pre-printed name of the Job seekers who demanded employment has been introduced to prevent entry of ghost wage earners in the muster roll. e-FMS has been launched to transfer the wages to the account of Job seeker directly to avoid delay in wage payment. An independent society in the name of Odisha Society for Social Audit, Accountability and Transparency (OSSAAT) has been established to conduct social audit to ensure public accountability in implementation of projects under MGNREGS in the State.

53. Under 'Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana', a flagship programme where BPL families are provided with Health Insurance upto Rs.30,000 per annum, over thirty three lakh BPL families have been covered under the scheme during the current financial year.

54. My Government has also revised the minimum wages of all categories of workers. For the first time, a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with neighbouring Andhra Pradesh to track migrants to and from the two states. The MOU, besides other things, provides for housing, education for children of migrant labourers, health and other security measures as was available to them while in Odisha.

55. My Government's priority has been to provide food security to the poor & vulnerable sections of the society through an efficient and transparent Public Distribution System (PDS). Private storage agency system has been abolished in the State from 1st April, 2012 and Departmental Storage Agency has been introduced along with delivery of food grains and sugar at Fair Price Shop (FPS) locations.

Institutions like Gram Panchayats, Women SHGs and Cooperatives are being encouraged to take up FPS dealership so as to reduce private involvement in the Supply Chain of the PDS. Till date, 4009 Gram Panchayats, 6767 Women SHGs and 734 cooperatives are engaged in PDS.

56. My Government has reduced the issue price of rice to Re.1 per Kg. for 36.90 lakh BPL families, 12.52 lakh Antodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) families and 5.35 lakh APL families of 8 KBK districts with effect from February, 2013. This benefit is also being made available to 4.15 lakh students residing in the hostels belonging to SC & ST Category and 75,000 severely disabled people. This will go a long way in ensuring food security for the poor and vulnerable sections of the State.

57. In order to ensure quality education, a dedicated cell has been created to track performance of the Primary Schools across the State. For engagement of qualified and quality teachers at elementary stage, Odisha Teachers Eligibility Test (OTET) has been conducted in conformity with the provisions under Right to Education Act. In order to improve the minimum qualification of the teachers as provided under RTE Act., agreement has been made with National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), New Delhi to conduct short term course. To ensure quality education and keep the Pupil Teacher Ratio as per RTE-SSA norm at elementary level, 14,547 Sikshya Sahayaks have been engaged in primary and upper primary schools during 2012.

58. A State Project Management Unit has been set up to monitor the Mid Day Meal (MDM) Programme in the State. At District level, Project Management Units have been set up with adequate manpower in all the 30 districts of the State.

59. To streamline the administration of schools, Govt. has created 11 more Education Circles in the State so that each revenue district is having one Education Circle. To ensure quality education for improvement of percentage of result in HSC Examination, retired qualified teachers in Science, Mathematics and English have been engaged as Resource Teachers. As a measure towards reforms in High School Certificate Examination, it has been decided to provide question paper-cum-answer sheet to the students. This will assist the students to organize the answers better. In order to reduce dropout rate, especially among girls, steps have been taken to conduct supplementary High School Certificate Examination immediately after the publication of the Annual Examination result so that students will not lose a year.

60. Free Bi-cycle scheme has been introduced in the State to encourage the girl students studying in Class-X in Government, Aided and Block Grant High Schools & SC & ST boy students, boy students of BPL families studying in Class X and to the students of Sanskrit Tols & Madrasas of above categories. Account Payee Cheque amounting to Rs.2600/- is provided to each beneficiary. The aim is to check the dropout rate and encourage the beneficiaries to complete secondary education. Under the scheme so far 4,75,874 students have been benefited.

61. To identify the meritorious children belonging to socially and economically backward sections of the society and to facilitate their competence enhancement, Pathani Samant Mathematics Talent Scholarship Scheme has been introduced. Scholarships will be awarded annually to the 7500 talented students in Mathematics. For recognition of talents among students at a very early stage as early as at

Class-VI in the School, INSPIRE award has been introduced. Each INSPIRE awardee will receive a one-time award of Rs.5000/- .

62. Establishing institutes of National repute like IIT, NIT and NISER in the State has made the State of Odisha an educational hub.

With a view to making the process of admission into colleges more efficient and transparent, Government has introduced e-Admission from 2009-10. All the +2 Colleges & 675 Degree Colleges have been brought under this scheme during 2012-13. It is targeted to bring all the Degree Colleges under this Scheme during 2013-14.

63. The number of State Government merit Scholarship for +2, +3 & P.G. Students has been increased to 10,000, 3,000 & 1500 respectively. The rate of such scholarship for +2, +3 & P.G. Students has been enhanced to Rs.3000, 5000 & 10000 per annum. The income ceiling of parents has been enhanced from Rs.4.5 lakh to 6.00 lakh per annum benefiting 24,500 students. For girl students the qualifying percentage of applying for scholarship has been reduced from 70% to 60%. Similarly, 10,000 brilliant students pursuing higher studies in the field of Professional education are provided with Scholarship of Rs.10,000 per annum. Government in collaboration with BSNL-MTNL combine has extended Broad band connectivity to 700 Degree Colleges and all State Universities. The remaining colleges will be brought under NME-ICT Project by end of 2012-13.

64. A number of measures have been taken by my Government during the year 2012-13 to promote mass participation in sports, excellence in sports and mainstream the youth in the development process. Steps have been taken to make sports and physical education an integral part of school curriculum. A policy decision has been taken to locate all PYKKA playfields in High Schools and so far around 2,000 playfields have been covered under this arrangement. Steps are also underway to engage part time Physical Education Instructors in all RTE Schools with 100 or more students.

65. On the sports for excellence front, steps have been taken to establish a Football Academy and a Hockey Academy at Kalinga Stadium Sports Complex, Bhubaneswar, a Weight Lifting Academy at Gopalpur, an Archery Academy at Sundergarh, a Swimming Academy at Sambalpur and feeder centres for Archery at Keonjhar, Football at Baripada and Weight Lifting Academy at Koraput. A new scheme has been introduced for promoting mini-stadium at Block level with a funding of Rs.25 lakh per Block. Initially 50 such stadiums are being developed with special emphasis on IAP districts. The strength of students under sports hostel scheme has been doubled from 750 to 1500 and steps are underway to induct additional trainees.

66. A new scheme has been introduced for promoting youth clubs in urban areas with financial assistance upto Rs.10,000/- per club. A project has been sanctioned for formulation of State Youth Policy for which consultations are on with the related departments in the Government, nongovernmental organizations, experts, eminent persons, youth groups and other stakeholders. The Policy will look at issues such as mainstreaming of youth in the development process, skill development, gender priority, livelihood, etc.

67. My Government has been making constant and concerted effort to formulate and implement schemes to ensure quality health care services to the people of the State in line with the National Health

Policy. As a result of this the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) has substantially reduced from 358 (SRS,2003) to 258(SRS,2009). Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) has drastically reduced from 75 (SRS 2005) to 57 (SRS 2011)- i.e. maximum decline in the country in the last 7 years and consistent decline in both IMR and Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR). Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR) has also reduced from 53 (SRS 2005) to 42 (SRS 2010) which has kept pace with decline in IMR. There is an overall decline of Malaria case load. As a result State API has been reduced from 10 to 8.8. Institutional delivery has increased from 36% in 2005 to 85% (HMIS-2010-2011) against reported delivery. Full immunization coverage has increased from 53% to 81%. Total fertility rate is better than National average.

68. All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) with intake capacity of fifty students has started functioning in Bhubaneswar from August, 2012. My Government has decided to launch “Emergency Medical Ambulance Service” shortly for providing faster emergency service to patients. Odisha State Treatment Fund (OSTF), has been created to provide financial assistance upto Rs.3 lakhs to Patients living below poverty line who are suffering from major life threatening diseases. CMRF funds amounting to Rs.10 crores have been provided to the OSTF.

69. My Government is implementing different schemes for providing better road connectivity and institutional support in rural areas. During 2012-13, 100 bridges are targeted for completion under different schemes such as Biju Setu Yojana, R.I.D.F. and Pradhana Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana. Under Biju Setu Yojana alone, 600 new bridges have been programmed for construction over a period of 3 years. During the current financial year, 3000 KM of rural roads have been programmed for completion under PMGSY. During 2013-14, 5000 KM of rural roads are programmed for completion under the above scheme. Similarly there is a target to complete 225 rural buildings and to take up 1766 new buildings for hospital during 2013-14.

70. In order to provide potable drinking water and sanitation facility to the rural people 3,30,543 Spot sources and 7946 piped water supply projects have been installed so far. Action is being taken to provide safe drinking water to the Fluoride affected districts. Priority is being given to cover Uncovered G.Ps through Piped Water Supply Schemes.

71. Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of roads of economic importance, 10 road projects have been sanctioned by Government of India till date on 50:50 cost share basis, out of which 8 projects have been completed. Out of the rest 2 projects, a major project namely “Improvement to Naranpur-Pandapara-Harichandanpur-Brahmanipal-Duburi Road” at an estimated cost to Rs.302.09 crore is in progress which is targeted to be completed during 2013-14. Under Inter State Connectivity Scheme all the 7 Sanctioned road projects have been completed with an expenditure of Rs.57.94 crore.

72. A major project for construction of South-North Corridor Connecting Motu-Malkangiri to Jashipur-Rairangpur (Part of Vijayawada-Ranchi Corridor) in the State of Odisha passing through tribal and left wing extremism prone areas covering a total length of 1219 Kms has been taken up. For the said corridor, the Planning Commission, Government of India have approved 4 projects for improvement of 51.700 Km. with an estimated cost of Rs.100 crore as Special Grant. All the projects have been completed.

Further, the road portion of Vijayawada-Ranchi Corridor from Koraput-Rayagada with a length of 38.250 Km. and Jeypore-Malkangiri with a length of 18.200 Km. has been taken up for improvement with Special Assistance of Rs.120 crore out of SARCA fund, made available by the State Government. Under this Scheme, a total road length of 45.75 Km. out of 56.45 Km. has been completed.

73. Road Over Bridges (RoBs) at Lanjipalli at Berhampur, Punamagate at Bhubaneswar and Rendia at Bhadrak have been completed. Besides above, 8 ROBs at Basanti Colony, Rourkela, at Haladipadar, Ganjam, at Titilagarh, Kantabanji, at Managovindapur, Jajpur, at Simulia, Dhenkanal, at Saheed Nagar, Bhubaneswar, at Lingaraj Temple Road, Bhubaneswar and at Mancheswar level Crossing, Bhubaneswar are in progress. Flyover at Rajmahal Square at Bhubaneswar has been completed and flyover at Nayabazar in Cuttack City is in progress.

74. My Government has taken several proactive initiatives to create a vibrant industrial sector with the enactment of important policies such as Industrial Policy Resolution – 2007 and Industries (facilitation) Act, 2004. The aim is to broad base industrial growth, Investment promotion, enhancing the share of industrial production in State Gross Domestic Product and generate large scale and sustainable employment to achieve inclusive growth. Development of 9 SEZs has been approved by Government of India for our State, out of which 5 projects have been notified.

75. To promote industries in Plastic & Polymer sector, a Plastic Park is proposed to be developed in PCPIR Complex at Paradip under the Plastic Park scheme of Government of India. Under the Scheme of Mega Food Park of GOI, one Mega Food Park is under establishment at Rayagada by M/s. MITS Mega Food Park Ltd., (MMFPL) under PPP mode with IDCO as an equity partner in the project. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between IDCO and NALCO to develop an ancillary and downstream Aluminum Park at Angul over an area of 450 acres of land close to NALCO Smelter Plant. A JV Company namely, M/s Angul Aluminum Park Ltd. (AAPL) has been constituted with 50.5:49.5 equity shareholdings of IDCO & NALCO respectively.

76. My Government has decided to develop Angul-Chhendipada Rail Corridor with an investment of Rs.6000 crore with infrastructure such as Railway Tracks, Four lane roads, water supply to facilitate the coal blocks to evacuate coal to the tune of 187 million tons per annum.

77. Considering the crucial role played by Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the economic and social development of a country, the Government of Odisha created a new Department of MSME last year and has taken up various important measures to boost the sector. To provide hassle free service to the prospective entrepreneurs, On-line filing of Entrepreneur Memorandum has been started. To provide marketing support to the MSMEs, the 1st Odisha MSME International Trade Fair was conducted from 1st January to 5th January, 2013 which eventually turned out to be a one stop shop for all entrepreneurial activities. 200 MSEs participated and showcased their products in the above Trade Fair. 1.4 lakhs visitors with Rs.20 crore trade enquiries which could be converted to business and with 2 crore firm business orders have been made during the above Trade Fair. 40,000 youth were exposed to various technology displayed in the fair to promote self employment. Seminars on various aspects of MSME development and Business meetings between mother plants and MSMEs were also held.

78. Marketing assistance has been rendered to MSMEs by way of concluding rate contract with the local MSEs for purchase by various Government Departments, CPSUs etc. At present, 814 MSEs have rate contract for 63 Nos. of store items. The time lag for issue of registration certificate has been reduced from one month to 15 days. To boost export, Odisha State Export Policy has been drafted and is in the process of finalization. During the year 2013-14, it has been planned to promote 6300 MSMEs with investment of Rs.630 crore, generating 37,800 employment opportunities. It has been Proposed to promote 31,170 KVI units annually to create self and wage employment avenues for 62,340 artisans and 3,11,700 persons respectively with a subsidy of Rs.107.35 crore during the 12th Five Year Plan.

79. 5317 Common Service Centres (CSC) have been opened under National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) scheme to function as front-end delivery points for providing Government, private and social sector services to rural citizens in an integrated manner and at affordable cost.

The e-District Project which is implemented on pilot basis in two districts such as Ganjam & Mayurbhanj providing five services like Income, Caste, Residence, Solvency & Legal Heir Certificates, is to be extended to other districts of the state from the year 2013-14.

e-Municipality Project for Urban Local Bodies which is one of the Mission Mode Projects under National e-Governance is under implementation. The objective of this Project is to develop an integrated system for delivery of municipal service to the citizens at anytime, anywhere basis with efficiency and effectiveness.

Project “e-Dharani” (e-Registration) is a major e-Governance initiative to bring in transparency and reliability into delivery of property registration-related services (like registration of deeds, valuation of properties, capturing and preserving copies of the documents, conducting searches and maintaining back office records) in a hassle free environment. This project has been implemented throughout the state in all the 177 registration offices in PPP mode by Odisha e-Governance Services Limited (a SPV of OCAC &IL&FS). The Registration Process has been re-engineered to make it faster, simpler, accurate and error-free, reducing the long waiting time for obtaining the Registered Deed.

80. Under the Village Energy Security Programme (VESP), 12 projects have been commissioned in 12 villages situated in fringes or inside the forest area.

The Remote Village Electrification Programme (RVEP) is implemented to electrify un-electrified remote habitations & villages through non-conventional sources of energy where grid connectivity is neither feasible nor cost effective. The Programme is being implemented in 18 districts of the State. So far 893 remote villages have been covered under this programme.

Under Solar Photo Voltaic (SPV) Programme 650 watt SPV power plant has been installed at Badatemera Sevashram and 2 K.Watt SPV power plant has been installed in Palia Sevashram of Nowrangpur district. Apart from the above, 650 Watt SPV power plant has been installed at Gunupur High School of Kalahandi district. During the current year SPV power plants of 2 K.Watt each have been installed in four Ashram Schools, i.e. two in Gajapati and two in Sundargarh District. Besides, Maa Kalijai Temple has been illuminated by installation of 2 K.Watt SPV power plant.

81. My Government has undertaken various initiatives for reforming Public Enterprises like Financial Restructuring, Human Resource Restructuring for better management of the State owned Enterprises as well as to achieve maximum growth in this Sector. My Government has introduced a Corporate Governance Manual to institute a system of good governance practices in the State Public Sector Enterprises for better transparency and accountability in their functioning. As in case of Central Government PSUs, the State Government has initiated pioneering step to categorize the State PSUs basing on their performance under the category of Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze and delegated substantial functional autonomy in certain selective areas of their operation. The Department of Public Enterprises is providing training to the willing redundant employees for value addition and up gradation of their skills under Social Safety Net Programme to enable those employees for wage employment as well as self-employment.

82. My Government has enacted the Odisha Right to Public Services Act, 2012 and commenced its implementation from January, 2013. In the 1st phase 34 public services relating to 7 Departments have been rolled out to provide services in time bound manner.

83. My Government has taken a number of initiatives to promote inclusive urbanization in the State. The major initiatives taken during 2012-13 include the formulation of an Affordable Housing Scheme, introduction of Odisha Property Rights to Slum Dwellers and Prevention of New Slum Bill, promotion of Public Private Partnership projects in the areas of street lighting, solid waste disposal and city bus services, introduction of placement linked skill training programmes for urban youth, introduction of Odisha Urban Street Vendor Policy, preparation of slum free city plans for Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Rourkela and Puri, and preparation of urban city sanitation plans for 8 cities.

84. GIS based Comprehensive Development Plans are under preparation for the urban areas coming under the seven Development Authorities of Puri-Konark, Berhampur, Rourkela, Sambalpur, Paradeep, Talcher-Angul, Kalinga Nagar and Jharsuguda; similarly, building standard regulations of Puri- Konark Development Authority, Berhampur Development Authority, Sambalpur Development Authority and Talcher-Angul-Meramundali Development Authority have been finalized.

85. A special drive has been taken up for construction of night shelters and community and public toilets. New projects worth Rs.268 crore have been sanctioned under Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) for the Cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, which are under different stages of implementation. 18 major drinking water projects and 434 small projects involving a total project cost of Rs.363 crore have been taken up during 2012-13, which are expected to benefit nearly 1,18,000 households. Funds have also been sanctioned for sinking 2,000 hand pump tube wells in the water deficient Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). A major drive has also been taken up for providing financial support to Urban Local Bodies for construction of cement concrete roads, Kalyan Mandaps, Bus Stands, Community Halls etc. A policy decision has been taken to provide piped water supply to all schools and Anganwadis located in urban areas and to set up sewerage treatment plants in all the district headquarter hospitals.

86. In the area of urban transport, the fleet of Bhubaneswar Puri Transport Services Limited (BPTSL) is being expanded to cover Cuttack City as well and funds have been sanctioned for inducting 60 additional buses in order to augment services in existing routes and take up new viable routes. Funds

have also been sanctioned for starting city bus services at Berhampur alongwith intra city bus service between Berhampur, Gopalpur, Chhatrapur and Hinjilicut.

87. In order to make the ULBs more responsive, a number of municipal services have been included under the Odisha Public Services Delivery Act such as birth and death certificate, marriage certificate, trade license, building plan approval, occupancy certificate, water supply connection, repair of tube wells, etc.

88. Providing quality & reliable power to all consumers and electrification of all villages & habitations are the priorities of my Government. Under Biju Gram Jyoti (BGJ), 10,778 habitations & 1,30,064 BPL Households have been electrified so far. Under Biju Saharanchal Vidyutikaran Yojana (BSVY) 1058 habitations & 8636 BPL Households have been electrified. Under Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana (RGGVY) 14,303 un-electrified & De-electrified villages & 24,044 partially electrified villages have been completed, 27,94,278 BPL kits have been installed and 16,20,569 BPL houses have been electrified. Capacities in respect of 192 nos. of 33/11 KV Substations have been augmented, 13 new 33/11 KV Substations added, 347 circuit Km. of 33 KV feeder lines & 2840 circuit Km. of 11 KV feeder lines completed.

89. In order to strengthen electricity supply in KBK Districts an action plan under RLTAAP has been prepared to provide electricity in the remote, hilly and marooned areas of the districts. State Govt. has decided to give equity support of total Rs.300 Crore for a period of 5 years to OPTCL to take up construction of 132/33 KV Grid sub-station and associated transmission lines which are non-remunerative. A proposal has been initiated for shifting of transformers from schools, colleges and Anganbadi premises to prevent accidents.

90. Green Energy Development Corporation (GEDCO) a subsidiary of OHPC have been formed for developing nonconventional sources of energy in the State. This year, due to sufficient rain and judicious management of water, State is in a comfortable position as regards to hydro power generation.

91. With 100 Grid Substations, 10,897 MVA transformation capacity and 11,344 Circuit Kms. of EHT lines, the OPTCL achieved a system availability of 99.84%. To evacuate and receive State share of power from the proposed power plants coming up in the state, massive expansion involving addition of transformation capacity and EHT Lines at different voltage levels and 400 KV new Substations with interlinking lines are planned to be taken up under PPP mode. Kalinga Vidyut Prasarana Nigam Pvt Ltd, a JV between OPTCL & PGCIL and Nilachal Power Transmission Company Pvt Ltd, a JV between OPTCL & MCL have been formed for developing Intrastate Transmission in the State during 12th plan period. New project about 1360 MVA transformation capacity & 646 Kms of EHT lines and capacity augmentation of 355 MVA in 14 Grid Substation are planned for 2013-14. 550 new 33/11 KV Sub-stations will be created in two years time period.

92. With a view to identifying the un-electrified habitations for taking up rural electrification works on a Saturation mode, a State wide habitation survey has been carried out so that the left out habitations could be identified and covered under electrification programmes. Govt. also for the 1st time decided to take up separate feeder for Agriculture / Fishing clusters having substantial electricity demand.

- 93.** In Order to bring transparency in the mining operations, an Integrated Mines and Mineral Management System (i-3MS) which was launched on pilot basis in the last year has now been made full-fledged covering the entire State. This online e-transit permit and pass system has hastened the process of issue of permits for transportation of minerals eliminating the possibility of use of fake permit for such transportation.
- 94.** These measures have not only improved the mineral administration but have also led to revenue generation of over Rs.3,800 crore by the end of December, 2012. It is expected that mining revenue by the end of financial year 2012-13 would exceed the revenue of Rs.4,586 crore realized during last fiscal year. This mining revenue is likely to increase further once the Central Government approves the State Government's proposal to impose mineral resource rent tax @ 50% of the surplus rent.
- 95.** Under the Project Odisha Cell (POC), funds have been provided for preservation of Monuments and Buddhist Heritage of the State. Out of 295 such sites, preservation of 97 monuments by POC (Archaeology) and 33 monuments by the POC (OIMSEAS) have been taken up during 2012-13. Under the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project (ICZMP) 8 monuments have been selected out of which the work in respect of Bhabakundaleswar Temple, Manikpatna, Puri and Ganjam Fort, Ganjam are under progress.
- 96.** My Government is actively working on strengthening livelihood support to traditional folk artists, presentation & promotion of the traditional art forms by integrating them with the welfare schemes of various Departments.
- 97.** A new Tourism Policy aimed at strengthening the tourist prospects of Odisha, increasing private sector participation, augmenting tourism infrastructure and improving marketing and promotion of Odisha Tourism is under active consideration of my Government.
- 98.** My Government has decided to constitute Odisha Maritime Board through enactment to control, manage and administer all the non-major Ports. Government is taking steps to develop and modernise all weather deep sea ports at the notified port sites. This will not only give impetus to maritime trade but also give rise to many port based industries and attract investment in large scale. Dhamra Port, which has been developed in PPP mode, has started its commercial operation from 06-05-2011. Till November, 2012 about 11.6 million Metric Tonne cargo have been handled through 160 ships and Rs.424.83 crore revenue has been earned by the port authority out of which Government revenue share is Rs.21.24 crore. The development of Gopalpur, Subarnarekha and Astaranga Ports are in various stages.
- 99.** In addition to E-Vahan (vehicle registration), E-Sarathi (issue of Driving license), and E-Disha (on line tax payment) programmes, introduction of Dealer Point Registration for Non- Transport vehicles and issue of on line permit in Permit Issue Management System has enhanced efficiency and transparency of the Transport Service Delivery System.
- 100.** It has been decided to purchase 100 new buses for OSRTC during the current Financial Year 2012-13 with an investment of Rs.23.40 crore to improve the transport connectivity to the inaccessible and backward areas of the State.
- 101.** My Government is committed to preserve and promote the rich tradition of Odisha handloom and accordingly initiated programmes for comprehensive development of the sector. During the 2012-

13, my Government has provided Rs.675 lakh for construction of 1500 worksheds of weavers. Similarly Rs.86.69 lakh has been provided for skill up-gradation training of 700 beneficiaries under Self Employment Programme. Work for establishment of one museum for handloom and handicrafts at Bhubaneswar has been initiated. To protect the interests of weavers 5 handloom products have been registered during 2012-13 under Geographical Indication Act. The 2nd phase of Special Package has been announced for the benefit of the weavers. Under the package i) total share of weavers premium towards enrollment of weavers under “Health Insurance Scheme” and “Mahatma Gandhi Bunakar Bima Yojana” will be provided from State Plan ii) more weavers will be covered under “Mo-Kudia” and “Madhu Babu Pension yojana” iii) 20 clusters will be covered for providing assistance under National Rural Livelihood Mission iv) Solar lantern will be provided to each weaver family through OREDA in phases.

For development of handicraft, 257 Craft Clusters have been formed in different districts covering 12,471 artisans. Marketing Support and Design Support have also been provided to artisans for better marketing of their products.

102. The State Government promptly responded to the flash flood situation in Khordha, Kandhamal, Nayagarh, Kalahandi and Ganjam during 2012 and took all necessary measures to ameliorate the sufferings of the people. Adequate funds were provided to the Collectors for immediate relief and rescue operation. Besides Rs.100.03 lakh towards House Building Assistance and Rs.73.92 lakh towards sand cast assistance have been provided to the concerned Collectors. Rs.176.05 lakh have been provided to the Panchayati Raj Department for repair/ restoration of the damaged infrastructure.

103. Out of 1,69,116 families found homestead less in the State as on 01.04.2012, 82,591 families out of which 43,898 STs, 18,098 SCs and 20,595 others have been distributed with 3090.106 acres of homestead land by 15th December, 2012. Similarly, Out of 1,98,763 families found landless in the State as on 01.04.2012, 22,634 families out of which 18,745 STs, 2023 SCs and 1866 others have been distributed with 27,989.77 acres of Government waste land for agricultural purpose by 15th December, 2012. Concerned Collectors have been instructed to provide homestead land and Government waste land to the rest homestead less and landless families respectively in a time bound manner.

104. The overall Law and Order situation in the State has remained by and large peaceful. Communal amity has been maintained in the State. There has been a progressive improvement in Left Wing Extremist problem in the State during 2012. The pro-active security response has resulted in the death of 10 maoists, arrest of 167 and surrender of as many as 35 cadres. Besides, a total number of 83 firearms, 125 landmines & Improvised Explosive Devices and huge quantity of explosives and ammunition have been recovered during 2012. Due to sustained anti-maoist action, no violence has been reported from Jajpur, Dhenkanal, Nayagarh, Deogarh, Mayurbhanj and Sambalpur Districts last year.

105. During 2012, Government has appointed 273 Sub-Inspectors, 94 Dy. Subedars and 37 Sergeants by way of Direct Recruitment. Government has appointed 1521 Tribal Youths (Special Police Officers) as Constables in newly created Odisha Auxiliary Police Force (OAPF). The Odisha Industrial Security Force (OISF) Act has been enacted to provide adequate and fool proof security to

industries, sensitive projects and vital installations. Further, 1704 number of posts for raising Specialized IR Batallions, 165 posts for traffic police, 105 police personnel for Economic Offence Wing and Special Task Force Units have been sanctioned. To revamp and strengthen the State Forensic Laboratory 218 numbers of posts have been created in different ranks.

106. To make the police people friendly, Reception Centres are being constructed with provision of basic amenities in the Police Stations in a phased manner. Funds have been provided during 2012-13 in the first phase, to start the construction work of Reception Centres in 140 Police Stations of the State. For the year 2013-14, there is a proposal to take up construction of the Reception Centres in 135 more Police Stations.

107. Victim Compensation Scheme has been notified. Under the scheme provision of compensation has been made for loss of life, rape, loss of any limb, loss or injury causing severe mental agony and simple injury to child victims ranging from Rs.10,000/- to Rs.1,50,000/-.

108. In our effort to provide one Fire Station in each block, 41 new Fire Stations have been sanctioned during 2012-13. The left out 39 Blocks are proposed to be covered during 2013-14 and with that all the Blocks of the State would be covered.

109. Security in the Prison has been upgraded by raising the Perimeter Wall of Jails and fortification of Jails. CCTV facility has been installed in 18 Jails, Cell-Phone Jammers have been installed in 7 Jails and Baggage Scanners have been installed in 3 Jails. Steps have been taken to install these systems in more Prisons. Video Conferencing System in 8 Jails is functioning to facilitate trial of hardcore criminals without physically producing them in Courts. Funds have been provided to extend this facility to 23 more Jails. A 100 capacity hostel for the prisoner's children is under construction at Bhubaneswar to facilitate their education. Two more open air jails are proposed to be constructed one in the district of Sambalpur and another in Balasore to facilitate easy and smooth integration of convict prisoners in to the society.

110. I have taken this opportunity to outline the policies and programmes of my Government as also to highlight the significant achievements made in the important sectors. My Government will continue to work diligently and assiduously in order to create an enabling environment where every citizen of the State is liberated from the bondage of poverty and illiteracy, hunger and destitution. It is our firm determination to enable all of them to lead a life with all the rights envisioned in our Constitution.

I now leave you to your deliberations and wish you all success.

Jai Hind.

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