

*Success Stories  
of  
Panchayati Raj*



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## Foreword

The local self-government/Panchayati Raj Institutions by their special ability to organize the people at lower levels have succeeded considerably in attracting the people to participate in the developmental activities. The rural environment can be conserved very successfully with the help of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

The Indian Environmental Society is compiling Success Stories of Panchayats and their role on Environmental Management from different Hindi and English newspapers and is publishing a book namely “**Success Stories of Panchayati Raj**”. This book is an effort to disseminate the success stories among the reader and users and hope this will help to motivate them for a better future. I am hopeful that Success Stories related to Environmental Management will definitely enrich the knowledge of the readers.

**Dr. Desh Bandhu**  
President

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# SUCCESS STORIES RELATED TO HEALTH AND HYGIENE

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- Clean Village award presented to 15 panchayat presidents
- Restore Nature's Work of Art
- India Can Find Inspiration from its Local Success Stories
- Pit Stop
- A unique movement for hygiene
- An Inspiring Tale of Keeping a Village Clean

## **CLEAN VILLAGE AWARD PRESENTED TO 15 PANCHAYAT PRESIDENTS.**

Chief Minister Jayalalitha on Monday said the principal duty of the people was to take on negative trends in society such as extremism, terrorism and separatism.

In her address from the ramparts of Fort St. George to mark the 59th Independence Day, Ms. Jayalalitha said though the country had to fight only against alien rule during the days of the freedom struggle, "we have to take on several inimical forces flow."

### **Revolution for progress**

The second duty before the administration was to immediately carry out a revolution for progress.

Development could be achieved only by extending the scope of existing opportunities to more people, even while creating new ones.

She handed over the Clean Village Awards for 2004-05 to the presidents of 15 panchayats :

Pylingulam in Kanyakumari district, Naganakulam in Madurai district, Muthugoundanpalayam in Erode district, Vaanapadi in Vellore district, Kalarampatti in Perambalur district, Lakshmipuram and Ramakrishnapuram in Theni district, Kattambur in Sivaganga district, Kurandi in Virudhunagar district, Muthur in Coimbatore district, Pulavanchi in Thanjavur district, Methalodai in Ramanathapuram district, S. Iravamangalam in Namakkal district, Melathirupalakudi in Tiruvarur district and Anaipatti in Dindigul district are the panchayats which bagged the award.

She also presented the Clean Village Campaign Award to 15 other panchayats including Mooduthurai in Salem district, Angamangalam in Tuticorin district, Belagondapalli in Krishnagiri district, Pagalmedu in Tiruvallur district and Nedungal in Kancheepuram district.

Ms. Jayalalitha gave away several other awards at the function. Among the recipients were the SCOPE of Tiruchi district (best non-Governmental organisation), M.K. Deivannaammal of Erode district (best School Teacher/Headmistress), A. Rajeswari of Ramanathapuram district (best Anganwadi worker) and S. Parameswari of Kanyakumari district (best village health nurse).

Awards for the best District Rehabilitation Officer, best institution and social worker for the welfare of the disabled, best institution and best social worker for women's welfare, best Doctor and best Private Employer were also given away

The Chief Minister distributed sweet packets to some physically challenged children at the function.

## **RESTORE NATURE'S WORK OF ART**

Sankat Mochan Foundation has presented a technically sound alternative for sewage collection and treatment at Varanasi. What is needed is the political will to implement the plan'

Varanasi Nagar Nigam (VNN) and the Mayor duly-elected by the people took charge in November 1995. In less than two years, they did a commendable job of forming an informal public-private-partnership with a local NGO, Sankat Mochan Foundation (SMF), with competence and commitment to clean Ganga.

By 1998, this partnership presented a Project Feasibility Report (PFR) to the Government of India to clean the river Ganga in Varanasi. This was done after the said partnership incorporated all the suggestion/criticism raised by people, municipal councillors and Government experts. The solution of Ganga pollution in Varanasi exists. We have to find ways to bring necessary resources to VNN for its implementation.

The general body of VNN unanimously passed this-PFR for implementation. Ganga in Varanasi would have been cleaned by now, had the Government released the money allocated under GAP-II for Varanasi. There was no dearth of funds.

The Ganga Project Directorate (GPD), and later its transformed body, National River Conservation Directorate (NRCD) of the Ministry of Environment & Forests, used the funds of GAP-II to clean Yamuna and Gomati rivers. It would have been proper if the necessary amount from the funds for GAP-II was used first to complete the unfinished task of solving the problem of Ganga pollution in Varanasi, the place from where Ganga Action Plan was launched in 1986. But it was not done. VNN's solution for cleaning Ganga in Varanasi under GAP-II was made to shuttle between the Centre and the State Government.

In a surprising move, in January 1999, Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam (UPJN), the nodal agency of the State Government, submitted, on behalf of the Government a heavy budget PFR for VNN's approval. It may be noted that the Government and the UPJN should have refrained from independently working on GAP-II from 1995, the year VNN became a local self-government and assumed powers to make plans to improve environment, urban sewerage, sanitation, etc.

This difficult situation was handled by VNN by referring its own PFR and the one prepared by UPJN in 1999 to a very renowned expert for making a techno-economic appraisal and making recommendations on the best choice out of the two PFRs. The expert recommended the VNN's PFR and not the UPJN's PFR. Incidentally, this was a second opinion in favour of VNN's PFR. In 2000, the

## Success Stories related to Health and Hygiene

House of VNN deliberated over the two PFRs and passed a resolution outlining five objections against the UPJN's.

VNN forwarded the two PFRs. along with the above opinion of the House to the Government for technical opinion. The Government did not pay any heed to VNN's request; instead, it chose to cancel VNN's resolution of 1998, thereby scrapping its PFR. This is an unprecedented example of usurpation of VNN's power by the Government. Certain corporators are seeking to remedy this heavy-handed action of the Government to crush VNN and cause suffering to people and Ganga. Even after six years in the court of law, the suffering continues.

A political and media intervention is needed to salvage the 74th Amendment to the Constitution, to save the river which is the source of fresh water for over 40 per cent of India's population and which is an object of faith and respect for one billion people.

In absence of political intervention, the previous Government, in the name of collecting resources from Japan (precisely JBIC), requested JICA to make a plan to improve the sewerage system of Varanasi in which cleaning Ganga would be a small part. JICA has submitted its study plan which sets its objective for Ganga cleaning (class-B river) and ignores the objectives of GAP Such absurdities must stop.

The designated best use of Ganga in, Varanasi, Allahabad, Haridwar, etc., has to be culturally consistent land palatable for million of believers. JICA's study plan was never produced before VNN. The Government has accepted it on its own. Again, a serious violation of the 74th constitutional amendment!

The Government of India has even got soft loan from JBIC to implement JICA's plan to clean the river, which is unacceptable to VNN. It will. bring heavy burden of tax on the people to meet its heavy cost and loan repayment burden. A PIL against this move of the Government to implement JICA's plan under GAP II in Varanasi is pending in the Allahabad High Court.

Political intervention is the only solution to solve the problem VNN and the people are facing in-the implementation of an appropriate economical solution to clean Ganga.

Meanwhile, SMF has decided to clean the ghats of Varanasi and remove all the floating debris in the shoreline waters of the river, as a part of its duty towards Ganga and to sensitise the people to come together to clean it. SMF is pursuing the officers for taking action to stop defecation along the ghats.

SMF organises many other activities within its resources to clean Ganga, and motivate people to come forward to persuade our decision-makers to implement appropriate solution for cleaning Ganga expeditiously. Ganga in Varanasi is not yet clean. We have to go a long way.



## **INDIA CAN FIND INSPIRATION FROM ITS LOCAL SUCEES STORIES**

India is a signatory to the Millenium Development Goal of halving the proportion of people without access to sanitation by 2015. As only less than a quarter of our citizens use sanitary facilities today, It does not look like we are going to keep this date.

Millions of Indians are forced to defecate in bags, buckets, fields, streams and roadside ditches. Although most of the people without sanitation coverage live in remote rural areas and urban slums that are the hardest to service, here we highlight successful models that when replicated can accelerate improved sanitation across the country.

The first block In the country to achieve 100 per cent sanitation was Nandigram-II in West Bengal. By 2003, all the households in the block had been furnished with toilets, which improved both the community surroundings and health. Ram Krishna Mission, with state government and UNICEF support, set up a local production and supply Infrastructure. This arrangement not only supplies inexpensive sanitary materials, It also props up local livelihoods. After following this example statewide, sanitation coverage in West Bengal has increased from almost zero to over eighty per cent.

Also in 2003, the Thandavampatti hamlet in Tamil Nadu became the first rural habitation to be declared open defecation free. Here the local administration collaborated with Gramalaya and women's groups, With Water Partners International chipping in as well, the Kangaanipatti village also pulled off a similar feat. In the countdown to 2006, the villagers constructed 117 toilets in 100 hours!

### **Global Role Models**

**TAJKISTAN** : More that 11,000 children are engaged in an outreach programme on sanitation

**PAKISTAN** : In the slums of Karachi, the sanitation programme Involves 90% of the population, and the infant mortality rate has dropped form 130 to 40.

**MOROCCO** : Since 1992, sanitation coverage for the poorest has expanded fourfold.

If the above examples involve different sections of civil society teaming up to improve sanitation, ground-breaking public private partnerships are also pursuing similar objectives. Tirupur, also in Tamil Nadu, which generates a billion dollars through knitwear exports every year offers a particularly promising example. While USAID provided Important technical support, the private sector raised Rs. 1,023 crore for a comprehensive urban project. This is intended to provide inexpensive sanitation for 80,000 slum

## Success Stories related to Health and Hygiene

residents, meet the growing demands of industrial users, and provide the town with its first sewerage system. Alandur and Chennai are also updating urban infrastructure on a commercially viable basis.

The female masons constructing, installing and maintaining sanitation blocks in Gujarat and Kerala would concur that improving sanitation is good business. Women can also be particularly potent triggers for improving sanitation services because they suffer worse indignities and insecurity when they relieve themselves in the open. In general, capacity-building across gender, class and caste lines is key to making sanitation socially and economically sustainable.

In Maharashtra, where over 2000 gram panchayats now have 100 per cent sanitation, the construction of public toilets for millions of slum residents has been carried out in consultation with the users. The social impact of this participatory approach cannot be overestimated.

In a peculiarly millennial update to caste-based scavenging, Chand Ram, the caretaker of a public toilet block in Dharavi, has said: "My family has cleaned toilets for generations. Here, I and three of my family provide 24 hour attendance in four shifts. Each of us earns Rs 1,500 a month. I had never dreamt of finding such a job, and with such accommodation in Mumbai."

It is no wonder that the now-famous Sulabh model has been delivering sanitation to poor and low-caste Indians on a commercial rather than charity basis. For a fee of about one rupee, 10 million petty traders, laborers, domestic workers and others use Sulabh facilities today.

Finally, it is important to invest in children as agents of change. Student brigades in Bangladesh and Tajikistan have effectively taken sanitation messages from their schools to their communities.

In India, Rajasthan's primary education councils have gotten together with UNICEF to promote sanitation. In more than half of the 4300 schools in the districts of Alwar and Tonk. It is planned that all the schools in the state will have sanitation facilities by 2007. In a salutary footnote on the spinoffs of sanitation, girls' enrolment has already risen by 78 per cent.

## **PIT STOP**

A community campaign helps relegate field squats to history in a Himachal village

Till a year ago, Sheel, nine km from Solan, was indistinguishable from any Indian village in its habits. Pre-dawn and twilight were the usual times for the members of the 40-odd families to hit the hillsides with their lotas. Though only about a dozen families are BPL, not one house had a hole in the ground, forget a pucca toilet. And talk of personal hygiene was completely taboo.

But today, Leela Sharma, an articulate, middle-aged woman, can speak at length about the downside of open defecation. What's more, she can convince her fellow villagers about the need to change an ancient practice.

On September 9, at least 100 women—some of them curious visitors from adjoining villages— assembled at the newly built community hall at the Mahila Mandal directed them to simply dig holes and cover the excreta with soil. Subsequently, some families dug shallow trenches a little distance away from their houses. Then someone had the brainwave of covering the trenches, and a temporary toilet was born. Now, every single residence in the village has its own 'toilet', which even the domestics use.

Launched in Kullu last year by the District Rural Development Agency, the ODF campaign already has 41 villages of two panchayats—Tegu Ber and Katrain—under its

Sheel to celebrate one year of 'liberation' from field squats. Sheel is the first village in the region to be officially declared ODF (open-defecation-free); now it's the role model for at least half-a-dozen villages in the Top ki tier panchayat, which is in the race for the certification, which will allow them to compete for a government sanitation reward.

Yet the beginning was so tough, recalls Sharma, pradhan of the local Mahila Mandal, which spearheaded the campaign. "Change happens when there is will, and it has to come spontaneously. So we began by informing everyone about the negative impact of open defecation. We told them that excreta could mix with water, contaminate drinking water and enter our bodies through food, thereby causing diseases."

When villages pleaded poverty to say they couldn't build toilets, belt. The community-led drive has also taken off in Kangra, Mandi, Hamirpur and Sirmour; a total of 160 villages are expected to get the certification in Kullu by March 2007.

"Our total sanitation campaign is gradually breaking the barriers," says Rakesh Kaushal, director of the HPRDA.

Part of the reason why the campaign has proved so successful is because the impact is often immediate. This monsoon, while most of the adjoining villages were struggling with diarrhoea and other seasonal ailments, Sheel was a shining exception.

“Not a single case of diarrhoea was reported from Sheel,” confirms Solari block development officer Bhawana Kashyap. “I’m delighted with the way women’s groups and mahila mandals are taking charge of the way they live.”

Sharma, however, is certain that the endeavour could not have been successful without the involvement of the entire community. But charged with the success in her own village, she has now volunteered to become a resource person to help the Solan development block become an ODF model.

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The Indian Express, 17.09.06

## A UNIQUE MOVEMENT FOR HYGIENE

Tucked away in the dusty environs of Rajasthan’s Shekhawati belt, three village panchayats have led an unusual movement for hygiene and sanitation by saturating all rural households, schools and anganwadi centres with sanitary toilets. The feat has brought to them the prestigious Nirmal Gram award instituted by the Union Ministry for Rural Development.

### **The Goal**

The Katrathal, Jajod and Khachariawas panchayats in Sikar district are among the 22 village panchayats in the State selected for the award to be given away by President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in New Delhi on May 4. The broader goal of the incentive scheme is to eradicate the practice of open defecation.

Clean lanes and by-lanes, rows of spotless houses and modest huts, covered drains and sparkling, well-maintained toilets in the three villages testify to high sanitation standards. The success was made possible by a participatory approach convincing the villagers of the efficacy of cleanliness.

The panchayats provided financial assistance of Rs. 1,200 each to selected families living below poverty line (BPL) for constructing toilets under the Total Sanitation Campaign. Social activist Ashfaq Kayamkhani pointed out that the three panchayats had dedicated themselves over the past year to the sanitation drive—launched with UNICEF support—aimed at bagging the coveted prize.

Chandri Devi, the proud Sarpanch of Katrathal with a population of 8,000, said she distributed 1,000 ladies in the village at her own expenses, formed teams of schoolchildren to generate awareness and installed a number of dustbins. The villagers were motivated to improve their surroundings and make the village open defecation-free.

Mahendra Sharma, a local resident owning a hardware shop in Sikar, pointed out that getting the award became the obsession for all the villagers a few months ago. “Open defecation was rejected as a dirty and outdated practice. Each household made a provision for a decent’ and hygienic toilet,” he said.

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When a group of the wandering Bhopa tribe decided to settle down on the outskirts of Katrathal last year, the Sarpanch took the initiative of getting their names added to voters' list. They were then dissuaded from defecating in open fields and encouraged to build small toilets near their huts.

The Muslim-dominated Jajod village, 45 km from Sikar, welcomes the pilgrims on way to the famous Salasar temple, situated nearby, with its clean ambience.

Sarpanch Liaqat Ali said 'the dust and litter-free roads and proper drainage were the outcome of a campaign launched by elderly village most of whom are ex-Army men.

### **Awareness**

Subedar Iqbal Khan, an elderly citizen of the village, said the panchayat's' Gram Sabhas and at least three rallies of schoolchildren and teachers taken out during the last six months were instrumental in generating awareness among the villagers about cleanliness. A "Kala Jattha" (group of performing artistes) of UNICEF pitched in to render support through cultural events motivating the people.

Megha Ram, another resident of the village, felt that the installation of hygienic toilets in the Dalit hutment where he lives had led to an improvement in the quality of life for womenfolk. The women in the household testified to this by pointing out they no longer had to step out to open fields in the dark injuring their privacy.

In Khachariawas village, famous for being the hometown of Vice-President Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, the residents actively help the sweepers in collecting the garbage and dumping it at an identified location. Sarpanch N.S. Shekhawat—the youngest in the State—pursued cleanliness as a passion and involved the Zila Parishad officials in the drive.

The three panchayats intend to use the cash prize of Rs. 4 lakh to be given along with the Nirmal Gram award as well as the incentive of Rs. 1 lakh sanctioned by the State Government for improving the sanitation facilities by evolving a model of self-sufficient hygiene system and focus on solid and liquid waste disposal.

## **AN INSPIRING TALE OF KEEPING A VILLAGE CLEAN**

A Mumbai man's initiative to maintain health and hygiene in his native land

**KATRATHAL (RAJASTHAN):** A Dalit family of the dusty Katrathal village in Sikar district found livelihood in an inspiring saga of cleanliness with a Muslim businessman of the village, settled in Mumbai, taking an unusual initiative to maintain health and hygiene in his native land.

Mirza Sarwar Beg, settled in Mumbai for the past 45 years, depicted his concern for sanitation of his hometown recently by offering a decent remuneration to an unemployed Dalit man, Chhitar Mal, for cleaning the lanes and by-lanes and drains of the village.

Thanks to these sustained efforts for hygiene, the village—situated 10 km from Sikar on the Pilani Road—has bagged the prestigious Nirmal Gram award of the Union Rural Development Ministry in recognition of cleanliness and elimination of open defecation.

Chhitar Mal, accompanied by his wife Sharda, sets out with his donkey-cart every morning to collect garbage from all roads and interior lanes. They sweep the roads with brooms and keep a watch to send back children trying to defecate on the roadside. Their 10-year-old son, Krishna, joins them at noon after returning from school.

The 35-year-old Dalit man was all praise for Mr. Beg when asked about his new responsibilities. "There was no permanent employment for me in the village with hardly any awareness about cleanliness. Beg Sahib sends me Rs. 3,000 every month for a job which is essentially a community service," he said.

As a committed worker, Chhitar Mal tries to generate awareness for keeping the village clean while doing all sorts of jobs, such as lifting animal carcasses, opening choked drains, cleaning toilets and collecting waste and throwing it on the outskirts at an earmarked spot.

Mr. Beg, speaking on phone from Mumbai, said he was indebted to the village where he was born and was making his little contribution for welfare of his own people regardless of their caste or creed. A few relatives of the 60-year-old businessman live in Katrathal and he visits the village once every, year.

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Mr. Beg engaged in the business of waterproofing of buildings in Mumbai—said he had also asked the villagers to grow trees and offered to give Rs. 1,000 for every tree planted alongside roads and on open land. “Besides, I want to hold regular health and eye operation camps in the village to show attachment to my birthplace,” he said.

While the businessman’s gesture has won hearts in the rural community, the village panchayat is yet to officially recognise his contribution.

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# SUCCESS STORIES RELATED TO CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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- Japanese Come Back to Green Rajasthan
- Water Conservation Movement Intensified
- Orissa Strengthens Pani Panchayats
- In Parched Kutch Village, They Claim Their Dew Share
- High Yielding Rice Variety for Coastal Saline Ecosystem
- Kannamali Mangroves a Model for Entire Kerala
- Haryana Plans to Check Illegal Cutting of Trees
- Leading by Example, Deogarh Villagers Save Forests
- Revive Sardar Patel Lake





## JAPANESE COME BACK TO GREEN RAJASTHAN

The Pokhran blues are over for hundreds of villages nestling in the lap of the Aravalli hills in Rajasthan with the return of the Japanese once again to green the much degraded hill system.

The second phase of the Aravalli Afforestation Project, funded by the Japan Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC), which had been held up for over four years after the country's nuclear test in 1998, has materialized at a time when the drought-ravaged Rajasthan needed it most.

Though the sanctions were lifted in September 2001, it took some more time for the Japanese authorities to decide on the current phase of the project. Finally an agreement was signed in March in Delhi this year. The five-year project (2003-2008), which offers a total assistance of Rs. 442.19 crores, will have an additional 1.24 lakh hectares of degraded forests and panchayat lands under plantation.

The 1.53 lakh hectares of plantation, carried out during the eight years of the first phase of the project (1992-2000) too will have renewed action plan ahead. Most of such plantations are managed by the VFPMCs (Village Forest Protection and Management Committees) and the Japanese are obviously happy with their performance. "it is an opportunity to upgrade what we have already done on the forestry and moisture conservation front. On the basis of the achievements made by the VFPMCs in the first phase we have to build up further on social development front," notes Hiroaki Yonesaka, the leader of an expert team which was here for a week to study the sustainability" of the project.

The modalities of the implementation of the project is yet to be worked out. "By the end of the year the exact nature of implementation would be clear. The overall structure of the project would be the same. All the VFPMCs created during the first phase are continuing though some of them are dormant," Mr. Yonesaka observes.

The first phase of the project covered three different areas—the Aravallis, the IGNP and the Vindhyan formation—in as many as 28 districts of Rajasthan.

The second phase has 16 districts—Ajmer, Bhilwara, Dausa, Bundi, Dungarpur, Rajsamand, Sawai Madhopur, Tonk, Alwar, Banswara, Chittorgarh, Jaipur, Pali, Sikar, Sirohi and Udaipur—under it. Besides the funds would be available for two more districts—Jaisalmer and Bikaner—which were formerly under the canal (IGNP) project.

"They have been successful in regenerating the forests. Now they have to maximize the benefits," Mr. Yonesaka observes even as the team members, who included the Finnish plantation expert, Goran Haldin, did not hide their feeling that the local communities, especially the tribals were yet to be trained to think "money-wise".

## ***Success Stories of Panchayati Raj***

“The concept of making economic gains from the plantations is still missing. That is an important part of sustainability of such programmes,” Mr. Yonesaka observes. The Japanese are happy of the involvement of the local communities through the VFPMCs and Self Help Groups and they plan to rope in NGOs also.

The Forest Department is the implementing agency for the project. “The Forest Department has done their bit in the first phase. In the second stage we will have more of community and NGO interventions,” Mr. Yonesaka affirms. Each NGO could take care of some 200 Committees. “We may keep aside some funds for the empowerment of NGOs,” he notes.

The project is expected to start sometime in July and the new plantation would be possible only next year. “First step is to prepare the ground. Fencing, stone walling and EPAs (entry point activities) will start soon,” explains D.P. Govil, former Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Rajasthan, who is now a consultant to the project.

“Over five years the project is expected to generate 386 lakh mandays. This financial year alone the generation of mandays would be to the tune of 99.42 lakh,” Mr. Govil points out.

Surely the project has come as a boon to the Adivasis as well as the Aravallis in South Rajasthan.

Over a period of 10 years, the grass has got greener this side of the Aravalli terrain. The teak, mahuwa, tendu, salar and the bamboo—typical trees of the Aravallis here—have started making a slow reappearance despite the severe drought conditions in the recent years.

## **WATER CONSERVATION MOVEMENT INTENSIFIED**

Coinciding with World Water Day today, the people's movement for water conservation has been intensified in Madhya Pradesh through the good old "Pani Bachao Abhiyan" (Save Water Campaign).

Under this campaign, people in every village and town would be encouraged to contribute voluntary labour for water conservation till March 28. The Chief Minister, Digvijay Singh, and other Ministers would join this campaign. The focus this week would be on voluntary public initiative in efforts aimed at water harvesting and conservation at the ground level.

This initiative of taking the message of water conservation to the villages coincides with the weeklong meeting of the Third World Water Forum, scheduled to end at Kyoto in Japan this Sunday.

The Chief Minister has directed that the week beginning March 22 be observed as "Shramdaan" week for water conservation. This would be in continuation of the Save Water Campaign which was launched started in 2001.

Under the Pani Bachao Abhiyan, over 15 lakh water harvesting structures are claimed have been built so far in the State through Government support and community participation. The Abhiyan, the State Government has emphasised, was the logical culmination of the Rajiv Gandhi Mission for Watershed Management that was launched on August 20, 1994, The Mission has already carried out water conservation works in 8,000 of the 51,000 villages across the State. Confronted with a severe drought in 2001, the Government had decided to take the techniques of water conservation to all villages through the Pani Bachao Abhiyan. Under this programme, "Do-it-yourself" methods were propagated for water conservation on farms and fields. The Abhiyan drew from the best practices across the country, which included the Ralegaon Shindi experiment of Anna Saheb Hazare and Shyam Antala's works in Gujarat.

The Watershed Management Mission catalysed the Statewide Pani Bachao Abhiyan in 2001 for turning the challenge of drought into an opportunity for water conservation by adopting simple methods developed for water harvesting by the Rajiv Gandhi Mission. In the first phase of the Pani Bachao Abhiyan, over seven lakh water-harvesting structures were constructed with an investment of Rs. 415 crores. Of this, Rs. 99 crores came as contribution from the community.

Keeping in view the initial success of the drive within a short period of six months, the Government decided to institutionalise the Pani Bachao Abhiyan, and Pani Bachao Committees have now been formed in all villages across the State.

Since July 2001, during the second phase of the Pani Bachao Abhiyan, over 11,000 new tanks, 8611 new dug-wells, 62,000 farm and dug-out ponds are claimed to have been constructed. Over 9,500 old tanks have been desilted and repaired. Arrangments for collecting rainwater from rooftops are claimed have also been made in over 16,000 houses.

## **ORISSA STRENGTHENS PANI PANCHAYATS**

With a view to strengthening the pani Panchayat system, the harbinger of an irrigation revolution in the State. The Government might soon empower the panchayat to collect water tax from the farmers in their respective areas. Sources said that while a provision in this regard has already been of import end in the Orissa Pani Panchayat Act, 2002 a formal decision on making it affective would be taken during the current session of Assembly.

To begin with the provision would be applicable only to the lift irrigation points. The Pani Panchayat formed by the farmers of a particular area would decide their own water rent to cover the cost of energy and the maintenance charges of the project. Even members not taking any advantage of the facility during a particular season would have to pay a minimum charge as decided by the general body of the Pani Panchayat. The new Provision would however make the Lift Irrigation Corporation redundant by handing over the responsibility of collecting the water tax to the farmers themselves.

The fact that the move would lead to mass retrenchments in the Lift irrigation Corporation has raised the hackles of many opposition as well as ruling coalition leaders. They argue that the Government's bid to empower the Pani Panchayats at the cost of the corporation's employees would prove counterproductive in the long run. This they fear, might even affect the middle class vote bank of the Biju Janata Dal-BIP combine with the Prospects of a employees almost certain.

The opposition Congress has also taken exception to the move on the ground that handing over rent collection job to the panchayats was likely to lead to chaos at the field level during the actual distribution of irrigation water. "The Government is deliberately laying the ground for chaos in the irrigation sector to facilitate privatisation of water bodies at a later date. That is their real agenda." Snapped a Congress veteran.

However unfazed the Government is going ahead with its plan of spreading the Pani panchayat network as wide as possible. While nearly 733 Panchatats are Providing lift irrigation to 75000 hectares currently, the number is likely to be doubled next year.

## IN PARCHED KUTCH VILLAGE, THEY CLAIM THEIR DEW SHARE

Ancient Chinese travellers who walked to India are fabled to have survived the Gobi desert by licking dew. Prof Girija Sharan of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, however, believes there's more to dew than just a few life-saving droplets-in fact, he says, there's enough of it to meet the drinking water needs of a desert village.

"By properly harvesting dew that collects on rooftops each house can get about 20 litres overnight," says Sharan who has tried out the idea in this village in the Kutch district.

Like most villages in the district, Kothara has little water. Lakes are dry, and borewells yield brackish water. Dew, which is nearly as clean as distilled water, is a boon.

Sharan's project won a World Bank award for innovation, and reaping its benefits are the 5,000odd residents of Kothara. "We are willing to change our roofs if it helps in collecting more dew," say-, Ashok Ponal, who now has to buy drinking water to meet his family's needs.

Sharan suggests that roofs be made of sloped tin or plastic sheets. Plastic pipes fitted to the edges gather the dew and run it to a container at ground level.

But the search for material that villagers will find cheap and durable continues. "Plastic and tin cool quickly and so will easily gather dew from the atmospheric water vapour," he says. "But they don't withstand the extreme weather of Kutch. Thatched roofs, tiled roofs, concrete roofs are of no help."

Sharan recalls how he realised there's enough of dew to meet a household's drinking water requirements.

"I'd set up a greenhouse in this village and one morning I saw the dew was so heavy that the run-off from the roof formed a little stream on the ground," he says. "I started collecting and measuring the dew. After a year of doing that daily, I concluded that a roof of 124 square metres yields nine litres daily and one of 200 square metres nearly 20 litres."

A residential school here has fitted itself for dew harvesting and serves as a model for villagers. "One of the biggest expenses for families here is getting drinking water," said Kalubha of Kothara panchayat "If this crisis is solved, life will have a different meaning for us."

It helps that Kothara is only some 20 km from the coast. Researchers working with Sharan found that dew formation occurs through nine months.

"In fact, we found that we could harvest the most dew during summer," say Ridhish Shah and Anand Samante, who worked on the project. "They get the most water when they need it the most."

Before declaring the project viable, Sharan had also had harvested dew samples tested at the Physical Research Laboratory and the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation's lab. They were declared potable and with hardly any dissolved salts.

Sharan's team is now gearing up to take dew-harvesting to all households in the village. It's also planning a bottling plant.

## **HIGH YIELDING RICE VARIETY FOR COASTAL SALINE ECOSYSTEM**

Scientists at the Rice Research Station (RRS) of the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) at Vyttila, Kochi, have developed a high yielding rice variety suited for cultivation in the coastal saline ecosystem. It has been released for commercial cultivation by KAU recently, according to Dr. K. V. Peter, Vice Chancellor, KAU.

### **Hybridisation Variety**

Named 'VTL-6', the new variety is developed through hybridisation and selection. It is semi-tall and non-lodging, and tolerant to abiotic stresses such as salinity, acidity and submergence.

A cross was made between the local Pokkali genotype Cheuvirippu and IR-5 to combine the high yield of IR-5 and the tolerance to salinity, acidity and submergence of Cheruvirippu. This was again crossed with a high yielding variety Jaya, which has wider adaptability to adverse environmental conditions.

### **Repeated Selection**

The new variety was evolved by repeated selection from the segregating generation of the above cross, according to the scientists, who developed this variety.

Rice cultivation in the low-lying waterlogged areas along the saline coastal belt of Kerala is known as Pokkali cultivation. The continuous tidal inflow and outflow has made these coastal belts very fertile.

The common practice in this area is to grow rice organically during the low saline phase (June-September) followed by prawn or fish farming during the high saline phase (November-April).

Many rice varieties grown in this tract are tall and lodging types and they resulted in 40 to 50 per cent reduction in yields.

The unproved rice variety VTL-6 will not only help in revitalising the Pokkali rice cultivation in the organic rice growing area, it will make rice cultivation more remunerative, according to scientists. Growing to a height of about 120 cm, the improved variety has a yield potential of 4.5 to 5.0 tonnes per hectare.

### **Pest Tolerant**

However, under normal conditions it has recorded an average yield of 3.5 to 4.0 tonnes per hectare in 105 to 110-days. It is tolerant to most of the pests except stem borer, leaf roller and rice bugs. It is also tolerant to major diseases except bacterial leaf blight and sheath blight.

A seed rate of 100 kg is recommended per hectare, and the variety responded well to organic nutrition. It yielded well,—when planted closely. The attractive-medium sized grains are of good cooking quality and the farmers in the region have readily accepted this variety. It is recommended for cultivation in Pokkali area of Ernakulam district and other waterlogged saline areas.

## **KANNAMALI MANGROVES A MODEL FOR ENTIRE KERALA**

The Mangroves of Kannamali and Kumbalangi in Ernakulam district have attained great significance after the December 26 tsunami. Experts say that Kerala should develop mangroves at all possible spots along the coast as bio-shields against the fury of the sea. The man behind the efforts for the development, maintenance and conservation of the Kannamali mangroves, K Ittoop. is happy seeing the new-born interests of environmentalists and scientists in his mission.

The thick row of mangroves one sees in the Kandakkadavu area of Kannamali is the result of the untiring efforts of Mr Ittoop. He has not received any official financial assistance from the government or help from NGOs. Despite this, he has made conservation of mangroves his life's mission.

"I started to cultivate mangroves in 1997. As a layman my aim is to locate, identify and conserve the mangroves. I had got support from a group of local people and scientists like Dr M Sivadasan of Calicut University and Dr K Sajan of Cochin University of Science and Technology". says Mr Ittoop.

Developing mangroves as a natural shield against the sea is essential but there is one problem, says Dr Sajan. "That mangroves can be a substitute for a sea wall is not scientific or practical. Mangroves do not grow on sandy beaches. But in marshy coastal areas mangroves can serve as a natural resistance," he says.

"The destruction of mangroves will have serious ecological impacts including decline in marine fishery resources and coastal erosion," says Dr Sajan, adding that the thick mangroves between Kumbalangi and Kannamali are an example of the commitment shown by the natives towards conservation.

The area covered by mangroves in the state has reduced considerably over the last few years. Kerala now has only 1.400 hectare of mangroves from 70,000 hectare a few years back. "Mangroves play a significant role in the conservation of inland water and rivers. As the authorities failed to convince people about their significance, most mangroves have been destroyed for commercial purposes. The increasing number of shrimp farms along the Kerala coast is another reason for the shrinkage of mangroves", says TP Ramesh, lawyer and president of Mangalavanam. Samrakshana Samithi.

Efforts are on to conserve Mangalavanam, the only mangrove site left in Kochi. "As Kerala has a long coastal stretch prone to sea erosion, the need to cultivate mangroves is very significant. The other advantage of a coastal bio-shield is the fixing of nitrogen and carbon dioxide: carbon sequestration. This will also be very useful in addressing global warming," adds Mr. TP Ramesh.

"Every monsoon, thousands of natives of the coastal area bear the brunt of the furious sea. They lose their property and other valuable assets. According to authorities, construction of a sea wall is the



only way to resist high tides. But it is not the scientific way to resist waves. Not even a single study has proved that sea wall construction is the scientific method to resist high tides,” Mr. Ramesh points out. The mangroves can resist high tides more effectively. “Is the government willing to experiment to prove the efficacy of mangroves in coastal areas?” asks Mr Ramesh.

The dense mangroves are home to many rare species of animals and birds, especially migratory birds. All the bird sanctuaries in the state including Kumarakom. Kadalundi and Mangalavanam have mangroves.

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The Pioneer, 17.06.05

## **HARYANA PLANS TO CHECK ILLEGAL CUTTING OF TREES**

Strict legal action against offenders

CHANDIGARH: The Haryana Government has decided to formulate even more stringent laws for checking illegal cutting of woods in the forests of the State.

According to the Forest Minister, Venod Sharma, the responsibility of the officers of the Forest Department relating to the illegal cutting of woods would also be fixed.

Mr. Sharma said here on Sunday that the Bhupinder Singh Hooda Government was committed to the strict implementation of, the laws to check the illegal cutting of trees. Strict legal action would be taken against those officers who did not, adhere to the laws relating to conservation of forests.

He further said that the officers would be provided all facilities for protecting the wealth of forests.’ They would also be equipped with modern weapons and fully empowered to take action against the mafia engaged in the illegal felling of trees in the forests

### **Measures to boost solar energy use**

The Haryana Government on Sunday announced several measures for the conservation and efficient use of energy in the State.

The Financial Commissioner and Principal Secretary, Renewal Energy, S.C.Choudhary, said that the use of solar water heating systems had been made mandatory in the buildings and industries where hot water was required for processing, hospitals nursing homes, including government hospitals, hotels motels, banquet, halls, jail barracks, canteens, housing complexes set up by group housing societies or housing boards, all residential building built on a plot of size of 500 sq. yards and above falling within the limits of municipal committees, corporations and Haryana Urban Development Authority sectors.

## Success Stories related to Conservation of Natural Resources

These were also mandatory for, all government buildings residential schools, 'colleges, hostels, technical and vocational educational Institutes, tourism complexes and the universities.

It had also been decided to amend the existing building byelaws immediately for making use of solar water heating systems mandatory in the listed buildings. The Haryana Renewable Energy Development Agency had been declared as the approved source for supply and installation of solar water heating systems.

The Government had also decided to ban the use of incandescent lamps in all new government and governmentaided buildings to promote the use of compact fluorescent lamps (CFLS), which are energy efficient and save about 80 percent of the electricity as compared to incandescent lamps.

### **Quality education**

The Haryana Government has decided to appoint one teacher for a class of 40 students to promote quality education in the State, according to the Excise and Taxation Minister, Venod Sharma.

Addressing the students at the annual prize distribution function of the DAV High School, Kansapur in Yamunanagar district on Sunday, Mr. Sharma said that the Hooda Government would set up an education city on the lines of the Oxford University and a Law Institute,' would also be started at village Mirpur in Rewari district.'

Mr. Sharma said that the standard of education should be In accordance with the current trends which would later oil help the students in getting employment.

Forest officers would be provided all facilities for, protecting forest wealth. They would also be equipped with modern weapons and fully empowered to take action against the mafia engaged in the illegal felling of trees.

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The Hindu, 16.05.05

## **LEADING BY EXAMPLE, DEOGARH VILLAGERS SAVE FORESTS**

A number of villages in Deogarh district have come forward to conserve community-based forests actively involving of thousands of villagers, including women volunteers.

In Chandankhunti village under Barkote block, around 350 inhabitants including women, have successfully conserved 200 acres of forest cover through community forestry on the foothills of Chulia, the highest mountain range of Deogarh. They have also guarded more than 300 acres of the Badtaeil reserve forest.

The process of planting saplings and forest: protection was started in 1992. after the land oustees of Rengali Dam Project resettled in the village. They restored the barren foothills into dense forest, leading to further restoration dried out Bhandarkhol spring, which flows for about eight months a year and provides sufficient water for agricultural purposes.

The villagers have formed a village committee of 13 members and the committee has constituted many groups including women. Each group, comprising 11 villagers takes care of the forest for a week in rotation with day and night patrolling.

“We have affection for the village forest and we take care of the trees like our own children,” said Nilanchal Pradhan, former secretary of the village committee.

A board put up by the Deogarh Forest Division at a tourist spot (left) reads: “There is no rain without forest; There is no life without rain; when our huts burn, we flee to the forest. When the forest burn, where do we flee to?” Now, villagers have joined the campaign to save the forest

Similarly, women of Balinalli village in Dandasingha panchayat have taken up the cudgels for protection of the village forest on 130 acres of land without seeking help from any agency. They have formed the Bighneswari Mahila Samiti (BMS) and their members have successfully preserved the forest.

“We have caught many wood cutters red-handed and also imposed fine on them,” stated Bilasini Sahu, president of the BMS.

Interestingly, students of the Swastik-ME School of Goadbhanga. situated on the foothills of Panguli hill in Barkote, are also following in the footsteps of villagers and preserved more than 650 acres of forest area. Headmaster

Ramakanta Pradhan of the school has played important role in forest protection with the help of school children.

“We knelt before wood cutters and requested them not to cut trees. Fortunately, we have succeeded many times to convince them,” said Basanti Behera, a 7th class student of the school.

Ranjan Sahu, Secretary, Deogarh Zilla Jungle Manch (DZJM) said about 450 village committees have been formed in different villages of the district and the DZJM is co-operating for expansion and protection of the forest cover of the district.

## REVIVE SARDAR PATEL LAKE

This lake in Put Kalan Village was developed by DDA in 2003, now it languishes for want of care

There is no dearth of projects in the pipeline. The authorities gleefully announce a plan and the inauguration takes place with much fanfare, but things fail to move beyond that. Sardar Patel Lake, Put Kalan, is a case in point.

The lake that overlooks the Kanjhavala main road is an erstwhile *johad* (village water body) of put Kalan village. It was rechristened as Sardar Patel Lake after DDA developed the lake and a park around it and inaugurated it with much fanfare in the presence of a Union Minister, the area MP and other DDA officials and area bigwigs. They all took the credit for the new look of the lake and promised further development.

That was in October 2003. Since then no senior DDA official has visited the lake. Though an important link, the road to the lake is narrow, dusty and full of potholes. From far, the sight of the lake is no doubt quite pleasing, but a closer look reveals that all is not well.

The good things about the lake first. The setting is almost perfect. The lake is surrounded with a small garden and a cool shade of trees. There is an old Shiva temple, an akhara and a well. Two ghata provide an easy access to the lake.

Now for the damaging affects. Sewage flowing in the open drains of the neighbouring colonies finds its way into the lake. "I have reported the state of affairs to my superiors but nothing has happened so far," says a DDA official poste at the site. The lake has two floating contains, but only one works.

### **Water Bodies**

No guards have been deployed here to lake care of the complex. "Children from the neighbourhood have damaged the wiring of the now defunct fountain. Benches erected by DDA too have gone missing and two ton gates have been damaged," says an area DDA official. He feels that this place can be developed into a picnic spot.

The greenery around the lake is confined of the temple and the akhara nearby. "That portion of the complex is enticing. There is need for proper development all around the lake," says Azad Chand, a resident of Put Kalan.

Two water pumps that draw ground water feed the lake. However, the natural sopes that would carry the rain water are missing. Whatever little water does find its way into the lake brings along garbage.

The only visitors to the lake are the kids from the neighbouring colonies, who enjoy a dip here Since sewage flows into the lake, the water too is not clean. However, in the absence of a guard, the children cause a lot of damage to the complex.

## ***Success Stories of Panchayati Raj***

“There are no toilets for the visitors. Things can improve if the authority introduces boating facilities and sets up some snack shops,” says Ram Pal, a resident of Put Kalan village, who regularly visits the temple next to the lake.

DDA officials are not ready to buy these stories. “We are taking good care of the Put Kalan Lake. We will rectify the problems if any. The people living around the complex need to behave more responsibly,” says a senior DDA official.

He refused to divulge any further development plans for the lake.

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HT North Delhi Live, 09.05.06

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## SUCCESS STORIES RELATED TO WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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- पंचायत में औरतें
- Feats Unlimited : Woman Sarpanchs on Feet
- पंचायतों के जरिए स्त्री धन वापस पा रही हैं महिलाएं
- Women Sarpanchs Show Way in Rural Development
- Rural Women Demand Change
- Woman Power on Display in Bihar Panchayat Polls
- संघर्ष अभी जारी है
- Rural Women to Fund Their Welfare
- खेती की तरक्की में जुटी महिलाएं



## पंचायत में औरतें

मेरे पिताजी ने मुझे बचपन से ही राजनैतिक-सामाजिक कार्यों के लिए प्रेरित किया। शादी के बाद पति हरविन्दर सिंह ने भी वैसा ही किया। पहले वह खुद शामली से ब्लाक प्रमुख का चुनाव लड़ने वाले थे, पर जब यह पद महिला प्रत्याशी हेतु आरक्षित हो गया, तो उनकी रजामंदी से मैंने चुनाव लड़ा और विजयी हुई।

ब्लाक प्रमुख का चयन कई गांवों के पंचायत सदस्य करते हैं, लेकिन गांव कुडाना में इस पद पर मेरी उम्मीदवारी का विरोधी पार्टी ने तगड़ा विरोध किया। यहां तक कि मेरे पक्ष के सदस्यों को अपने पक्ष में करने के लिए तरह-तरह के हथकंडे अपनाये गये, लेकिन पिताजी और अपने पति की मदद से मैंने इनका सामना किया और मेरी दावेदारी जीत में बदल गयी। मेरा मानना है कि राजनीति सिर्फ पुरुषों की बपौती नहीं। यह बात सच है कि पुरुष अपने अधिकार को आसानी से नहीं छोड़ना चाहते, पर सरकार द्वारा प्रदत्त आरक्षण के बाद महिलाएं भी राजनीति में आकर समाज कल्याण का कार्य कर रही हैं। मेरा मानना है कि सरकार को महिलाओं को और आरक्षण देना चाहिए। इससे औरतों को वह आजादी भी मिलेगी, जो अब तक नहीं मिल रही थी। वैसे शहरों में महिलाओं को ज्यादा आजादी है। वहां सामाजिक संगठनों के माध्यम से महिलाएं कई तरह की गतिविधियों में संलग्न हैं, जबकि गांवों में चूंकि ऐसी संस्थाओं का अभाव है, इसीलिए अधिकतर महिलाएं घर व खेतों तक सीमित रह जाती हैं। मैं बालिकाओं को अच्छी शिक्षा देने के पक्ष में हूँ।

भले ही सरकार ग्राम पंचायत को ज्यादा अधिकार देने की बात कहकर, सत्ता के विकेन्द्रीकरण का दावा करती है, लेकिन यह सच नहीं है। जैसे ब्लाक प्रमुख का पद तो लगभग रबर स्टैम्प की तरह है। अब तो ब्लाक विकास अधिकारी (बीडीओ) में ही क्षेत्र पंचायत की सत्ता सिमटकर रह गयी है। केन्द्र व प्रदेश की तरह जिला ब्लाक व गांव स्तर के पंचायत प्रमुखों को पूरे अधिकार दिये जाने चाहिए। उत्तर प्रदेश में पूर्व मायावती सरकार ने केवल एक जाति विशेष का उद्धार करने का बीड़ा उठाया हुआ था। वर्तमान सरकार को सभी जाति वर्ग के लोगों का समान रूप से विकास करना चाहिए। अभी तक ग्राम व ब्लाक स्तर पर सही मायने में सत्ता का हस्तांतरण नहीं हुआ। मुलायम सिंह सरकार की नीति महिला आरक्षण के प्रति कुछ कठोर है। आशा करती हूँ कि वे अपने रवैये में बदलाव लाएंगे।

(30 वर्षीय पूनम देवी, ब्लाक प्रमुख, शामली, मुजपुरनगर)



मैं पेशे से अध्यापिका हूँ, पर ग्रामीण समाज की समस्याओं से दो-चार होने के बाद मैंने अपने इलाके के लोगों को उचित प्रतिनिधित्व देने के लिए प्रचायत चुनाव लड़ा और जीती भी। इस संबंध में मेरे परिवार ने मुझे बहुत सहयोग दिया, क्योंकि परिवार की मदद के बिना कोई भी कार्य पूरा होना मुश्किल है। मेरा मानना यह है कि राजनीति में महिलाओं की भागीदारी, समाज को एक सुदृढ़ आधार देती है। वह एक आदर्श स्थापित कर सकती है। वैसे हमारे देश में महिलाओं व पुरुषों को प्रत्येक क्षेत्र में समान अधिकार प्राप्त हैं। स्त्रियों को भी अपने कर्तव्यों का स्मरण करते हुए, भारतीय संस्कृति को ध्यान में रखते हुए आगे बढ़ना चाहिए। उसे पढ़ना जरूर चाहिए क्योंकि मां ही अपने बच्चे की पहली शिक्षिका होती है। वैसे भी निरक्षरता समूचे समाज पर कलंक है। शिक्षा व्यक्ति का बहुमुखी विकास करती है।

सरकार से मेरी यही अपेक्षा है कि वह सबसे पहले समाज को भ्रष्टाचार से मुक्त करे क्योंकि तभी देश का समुचित व सतत विकास होगा। दूसरी बात यह कि वह बेरोजगारी जैसी समस्याओं पर खास ध्यान दे, क्योंकि आज जो हर तरफ अपराध हो रहे हैं, उसका मूल कारण बेरोजगारी ही है।

(31 वर्षीय शशि वर्मा मुजफ्फरनगर में जिला पंचायत सदस्य हैं। वह एमए, बीएड, पीएचडी हैं और पेशे से अध्यापक हैं।)

मुझे न तो पंचायत के सदस्य का चुनाव लड़ना पड़ा और न ही ब्लाक समिति के सदस्य का। मुझे सर्वसम्मति से चुन लिया गया और यह सभी कुछ परिवार के लोगों के सहयोग के कारण ही संभव हुआ। मेरे किसी भी काम में मेरे परिजन अड़चन नहीं डालते। चूंकि मैंने आठवीं तक की शिक्षा प्राप्त की है, इसीलिए मैं पढ़ाई के महत्व को अच्छी तरह समझती हूँ। मैं गांव-गांव घूमकर लोगों को समझाती हूँ कि वे अपने बच्चों को स्कूल भेजें। सर्वशिक्षा अभियान में भी मैं पूरा सहयोग दे रही हूँ। मैं यह भी चाहती हूँ कि मेरी बहनें भी जागरूक हों, क्योंकि जिस परिवार की महिलाएं जागरूक होती हैं, उस परिवार का सदा कल्याण होता है। पर हमारे समाज में चूंकि महिलाएं पढ़ी-लिखी नहीं हैं, इसीलिए उनकी ओर से पूरा सहयोग नहीं मिलता।

खंड विकास एवं पंचायत अधिकारी व जिला परिषद से प्राप्त तीन लाख रुपये के अनुदान से हमने ग्राम विकास का कार्य किया। पशुओं का अस्पताल खुलवाया, स्कूल में मिट्टी भरवाई, व एक कुलिया का निर्माण किया। ब्लॉक समिति की हर बैठक में मैं भाग लेती हूँ और बैठक में अपने क्षेत्र की समस्याएं रखती हूँ। पीने के स्वच्छ पानी का हमारे इलाके में अभाव है, मैं चाहती हूँ कि मेरे इलाके में सभी को पीने का पानी मिले। वैसे मैंने गांव में हैंडपंप लगवाने के लिए फरीदाबाद के सांसद से 50 हजार रुपये का अनुदान भी लिया है।

(गांव कुराली की ब्लाक समिति सदस्य 30 वर्षीय शकुंतला देवी)

## FEATS UNLIMITED : WOMAN SARPANCHS ON FEET

She is in her mid-'30s, a mother of four and a Dalit woman sarpanch who has studied till Std. V.

Urmila Dhonde is proud of her background, proud of the administrative experience and insight she has gained as sarpanch over the last three years. And now she is all the more proud of her ability to plan her daily battle with tipper caste men, who cannot fathom why they would have to agree with her project proposals.

“Yes, they stall my proposals but I have learnt ways of circumventing their stonewalling tactics. I have learnt from NGOs how to deal with them. In Marhi village near Raipur, Chhattisgarh, from where I come, I have my own supporters now. And I can fight them by counter-blocking what they want to get done in the village. Yes, my village is too remote, has never seen much of development work and there is a lot to be done. I am still considered an untouchable by a few upper caste families. But things are changing.”

Urmila has been in Delhi as one of the 400 participants of the Mahila Sarpanch Sammelan, hosted by the Guild of Services with the help of the Public Affairs Department. The idea is to help set up a network of these sarpanchs from Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, UP, Uttaranchal, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Last evening, at the end of the second day of the three-day symposium, the women adopted a resolution for a countrywide sarpanch sangathan.

Last afternoon, there was a colourful dais brimming with women participants at the Vishwa Yuvak Kendra. Yes, there were a few in ghunghats. But most were demanding a right to share their individual experiences as a sarpanch. The mike was travelling from hand to hand. A woman in a brown and red lehenga from Rajasthan wanted to brag a little about what she had achieved. Another, in a black salwar kameez from Uttar Pradesh, had a few administrative problems and she wanted advice desperately.

The discussion veered around to whether women of rural India have as yet secured the right to decide on the size of the family. There were a brazen few who said “no”. A few on the dais saw a few men sneaking into the auditorium and clammed up. But when the discussion became more lively, they shed their inhibitions and joined in.

Sunehri Devi from Alwar in Rajasthan said she had no such right in her time and had no option but to be the mother of three. But her daughter-in-law had chosen to have a single child. It appeared that women in Rajasthan have gained immensely from the 73rd Amendment. They were the most candid of the lot. Suvidha, also from Rajasthan, said the ban on men seeking public office despite having more than two children should be enforced rigor.

## पंचायतों के जरिए स्त्री धन वापस पा रही हैं महिलाएं

नई दिल्ली : महिला अपराध शाखा की कार्यप्रणाली से निराश होकर पंचायत एवं स्वयंसेवी संस्थाओं की शरण में पहुंची बहुत सी महिलाएं अब इनकी मदद से अपना स्त्री धन लेने में कामयाब हो रही हैं। जहां महिला अपराध शाखा के जरिए सिर्फ स्त्री धन वापस मिलने में 8 महीने से तीन साल तक लग जाते हैं, वहीं पंचायतों द्वारा ये मामले 15 दिन से 2 महीने के भीतर हल किए जा रहे हैं। जहां पंच समझदार, पढ़े-लिखे हैं, वहां महिलाओं को जल्दी अपना सामान मिल जाता है। अगर पंच अड़ियल रवैया अपनाते हैं तो एन.जी.ओ. महिलाओं के हित में बने कानूनों का डंडा दिखाकर उन्हें सही रास्तों पर लाने का काम बखूबी निभा रही है।

छतरपुर में रहने वाली कांता (नाम बदला) का ही मामला ले लें। उनकी शादी तीन साल पहले फरीदाबाद के झूपा गांव के हरि (नाम बदला) से हुई थी। 8वीं पास कांता को शादी के दूसरे दिन से ही कम दहेज लाने के कारण पति ने मारना-पीटना शुरू कर दिया। मायके वाले गरीब थे, कुछ खास नहीं कर पाए। आखिरकार एक संस्था की मदद से कांता ने अमर कॉलोनी स्थित महिला अपराध शाखा में शिकायत दर्ज करवा दी। दो साल गुजरने के बाद सिर्फ चक्कर काटने व पुलिसवालों की अभद्र भाषा को झेलने के अलावा कुछ हासिल नहीं हुआ। हर तरफ से निराश संस्था ने झूपा गांव की पंचायत की शरण ली। पंचायत बैठी, लेकिन उसने हरि की गरीबी का वास्ता देकर घर में जो टूटा-फूटा स्त्री धन था, वही कांता को लौटाने की वकालत की। तब संस्था ने कानून का सहारा लेकर उन्हें समझाया कि यदि लड़के के खिलाफ केस दर्ज हो जाता है तो उसके हजारों रुपये अदालत में ही खर्च हो जाएंगे। सजा होगी, वो अलग। तब पंचों की समझ में बात आई और कांता को स्त्री धन के रूप में दी हुई छलनी तक पति से वापस मिल गई। सेंटर फॉर सोशल रिसर्च से जुड़ी काउंसलर रेखा दुबे के अनुसार उन्होंने सात-आठ मामलों में पंचायत के द्वारा ही महिलाओं को न्याय दिलाने में सफलता हासिल की हैं।

एक अन्य मामले का हवाला देते हुए उन्होंने बताया कि पति ने तीन बार पत्नी को बेचने की कोशिश की। इस मामले में 30 गांवों की पंचायत बैठी। शुरू में ससुराल वालों ने पत्नी को ही फूहड़ व कामचोर सिद्ध करने की कोशिश की। पंचायत भी उसके पक्ष में हो गई, लेकिन जब उसने भरी पंचायत में पति की करतूतें बताई तो पंचायत ने पति को भरी सभा में पत्नी के पांव पकड़ कर माफी मांगने के आदेश दिए। लड़की को पूरे सामान सहित मायके भेजा गया। जागृति महिला समिति की अध्यक्ष निर्मला शर्मा के अनुसार महिला अपराध शाखाओं में तो हाल यह है कि लड़की को स्त्री धन के रूप में टूटा-फूटा सामान दिलवाकर उसका मुंह बंद करवाया जा रहा है। महंगा सामान तो स्त्री धन की लिस्ट से गायब ही हो जाता है। अब दुखी महिलाएं हमारे पास आकर यही कहती हैं कि पंचायत के द्वारा ही कोशिश कीजिए, पुलिस के धक्के हमने खा लिए। यदि उन्हें व पंचायतों को थोड़ा-सा सरकार की सपोर्ट मिल जाए तो दुखी महिलाओं के घर दोबारा बस सकते हैं।

## **WOMEN SARPANCHS SHOW WAY IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

A silent revolution is on in the villages of India to strengthen the leadership potential of the elected women representatives in the panchayats, so that they can make hunger, -poverty and Injustice things of past In their villages and

Twenty such elected women representatives, symbols of women empowerment, from nine Indian states were felicitated by Mr Jon Westborg, Ambassador of Norway on Saturday.

At present women are heading 77,120 of the total 2,34,676 village panchayats. Grassroots leaders from Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Leh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Uttaranchal shared their experiences as heads 20 elected women representatives felicitated of their respective gram sabhas on the occasion. These women were brought on a common platform by an NGO, 'Hunger Project' that has been actively involved in, and supporting the learning needs of elected women representatives.

The most striking example of woman empowerment was Rajkumari Bai Yadav, Sarpanch, Gram Panchayat, from Madhya Pradesh. At 24, Rajkumari was one of the youngest Sarpanchs at the meeting. After being widowed at an early age, she was encouraged by her parents-in-law to contest the Panchayat elections, and was thus elected in January this year.

Enthusiastic about her new role as the head of gram sabha, she said, "I want to bring women to the mainstream of society. Health is an issue of concern. Another issue that needs to be addressed is the status of harijans in villages. I want to work for their uplift." After 22 years Panchayat elections were held in Bihar, in 2001, and a Tiliya Devi, a Dalit, was elected Panch for the first time. Known for her courage and leadership, Tiliya has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize 2005. The villagers have re-named their village, 'Tiliya Khera' after their Panch.

Also present on the occasion was former secretary of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Mr Wajahat Habibullah. "Only a woman can manage the household well, today they are working towards achieving that success even at the level of local governance, and I am confident, they will succeed. The way we manage our Government at grassroots level, is something that is catching the world's eye." he said.

"India's future is bright not only because of science and technology, but due to its people. Our future lies in the achievements of these people. They can guide and enlighten their own lives and that of the society," he added.

If you ask a woman what her dream is, she will at once say 'to somehow be able to change the destiny of my family and my community'. In a society where women are unable to voice their demands, it is the reservation of 33.3% seats in the Panchayats, for women, that have given them a critical mass to represent the issues that affect their lives, and those of their families.

## **RURAL WOMEN DEMAND CHANGE**

An evening in May gave me a new insight into the perceptions of rural women on development and especially on the panchayati raj. There have been many complaints about the lack of development of women but a different approach was visible that evening at the end of May this year in the Golaghat district of Assam. Mr John Conrad, the Ice president of an international organisation that, devoted itself to the, prevention of, poverty and to the uplift of Women and children, through the Hunger Project, talked to a group' of village 'women in Golaghat, a town with a rural setting in, Upper Assam,.. More than 600 women applauded him when he praised their work In the panchayati raj many of them were rural leaders and elected sarpanches and urged them to root out ignorance. The setting, we must remember, was rural in an urban setting Mr Conrad was received with the traditional Assamese gamosa or hand-woven towel and the ululating sound of the uruli, reserved for major religious events.

The programme was organised by the North East Social Trust (NEST), an organisation that has been training women in the Panchayati Raj in Assam to move forward and to assertively play a leadership role with a strong understanding of basic concerns. And when speakers from Delhi spoke in Hindi, to my surprise, I found that most of the Assamese women understood them and even tried to converse with them. in Hindi. This was unthinkable a few years back when rural women in the state were reluctant to interact with anyone who was not familiar with the local language. This is a major change.

Assam did not have an elected panchayati raj system between 1994 and 2001, For neatly a decade, the Assamese rural population was covered by the dark cloud of Ignorance. The, state governments which were in power blocked the panchayat election for years. As a result, the,rural population was blocked from accessing governance and.development in at least 29 subjects. It was not until May 2001 that the Congress under CM Tarun Gogoi-recently elected for a second successive term, a historic first in over 34 years in the state come to power and,organised the Panchayat election. And what was significant is that although a mimimum of 33 per cent of the seats are to be reserved for women, the number of women winners surpassed this "quota." Power devolved to the grassroots and women became increasingly conscious of their powers and rights.

The executive director of NEST Mr. Tassuduk Ariful Hussain, said: "The panchayati system is yet to be fully implemented. During the early days of government, the panchayat workers were not trained. But it was important for a region like Assam. In spite of that, we expect a change among Women due to their consciousness."

Ms Junu Bora and Ms Konika Dutta Baruah were others who attracted much attention as their interaction was peppered with references to, problems and developments at the international level as

## Success Stories related to Women Empowerment

well as in the administrative system. Ms Junu Bona was a leader of an Assam-based women's organisation while Ms Konika Dutta Baruah was the deputy director of panchayat and total development in the state.

The meeting was broken by the arrival of the evening and the lack of power. Women panchayat members and workers surrounded Mr Conrad and others, tossing questions at them. One even sought an autograph, but some workers were missing, I learned. And that brings me to the point at the start of this story. I asked Mr. Ariful Hussain of NEST where they had gone. "To meet the chief minister," I was told.

Where had they gone? All the way to Dispur, the state capital, hundreds of kilometres away. Golaghat is also the chief minister's constituency. Of course, he would meet them.

But why would they have left all important conference and gone to see the state's top elected figure? Was it a political event, I wondered. No, they had gone with a list of demands, a resolution to seek major changes in the Panchayati Raj Act for the state because they think that the existing Act is full of problems and difficult to implement. They wanted the CM to give a copy of their demands to the President of India.

Panchayati elections are due soon in Assam and the growth of consciousness and capacity among PR members, especially women, bodes well for governance, despite all the recent violence and complaints of corruption, nongovernance and the lack of development. The darkness of the evening was dispelled for I saw that even in such circumstances of backwardness, women were able to think about the need to bring about changes in specific terms in the system in not less than 18 subjects.

How do we measure change? How do we measure success? Surely, this story is an example of the changes that are coming despite the problems and politics in the state.

## **WOMAN POWER ON DISPLAY IN BIHAR PANCHAYAT POLLS**

Raghopur: Women hold up half the sky, Mao is said to have observed. In Bihar, it is not Maoists but Nitish Kumar, who seems to have caught on to truth here. What he has unleashed through 50% reservation for women in seats of panchayati raj institutions is a veritable revolution.

For the first time in states history, discussion on the elections is not only among men. Women are also taking an active part in it, both as candidates and voters. Indeed, the men in many cases are feeling rather left out.

Sania Khatun, who is contesting to become the mukhiya of the Amba panchayat in Begusarai, approaches the house of Bajju Mahto, accompanied by six women. Barely giving a passing glance at Mahto, who is standing at the door, the women enter the house to canvass support—among the women folk of the family directly, Mahto is, perturbed and makes it a point to tell the group that he too should be also asked for his opinion. After all, he is the head of the family. Pat comes the answer from one of the group members, that is correct, but every individual has his or her vote and should be approached.

What follows must have hurt Mahto even more. As the group leaves his house, it now has one extra member—Mahto's wife. This is a common scene in Bihar. Particularly in villages, one can see groups of women going house to house seeking support. That's quite a change from the earlier situation, when women were not even consulted to find out their preference. It was taken for granted that women would vote for whichever candidate the head of the family voted. The fact that they are now being approached has given them a great sense of self-respect. The sense of empowerment stemming from the realisation that their opinion matters also means that fewer candidates are now willing to settle for being a dummy for their menfolk.

Talk of mahila raj is rife. A woman from a backward caste family, firmly believes that new revolution would bring in mahila raj in country. What's more, she is convinced that mahila raj will be better than mardon ka raj as women mukhiyas and panchayat members will be more accessible than men.

Ram Pratap Choudhary of Raghopur, after finishing his graduation in the early 1940s stayed back in the village to do social work, says the 50% reservation for women in local bodies has revolutionised electioneering in the state.

Ram Binod Choudhary, a postgraduate who runs a small business in Raghopur, was less sure about how much empowerment of women will happen because of this. But he too admitted that women have finally joined the mainstream in local politics.

The change has also meant that the arena of local politics has shifted. So far, in Bihar, politics used to be dealt with at the small village market where all the men used to congregate in the evening. But, the

large participation of women has brought politics to the household, Not that men have been relegated to playing bit roles. Some women candidates are dummies in these polls too. But there is a growing realisation that process itself would make many or them candidates think independently.

But, can women deliver? When a women candidate was asked whether she understands intricacies of bureaucracy at, block and district level, she countered with a pertinent question: how many men understand it?

The Times of India, 08.05.06

## संघर्ष अभी जारी है

बिहार के मोतिहारी जिले के गांव भिरिखिया छिपुलिया की 59 वर्षीया गिरिजा देवी को संयुक्त राष्ट्रसंघ ने न्यूयार्क में आयोजित अंतरराष्ट्रीय संगोष्ठी में भाषण देने के लिए चुना है। मुसहर जाति के लिए 40 वर्षों से संघर्ष कर रही अनपढ़ गिरिजा देवी बिहार की पहली और देश की पांचवीं ऐसी महिला होंगी, जो बच्चों, महिलाओं के और गरीबों के उत्थान के लिए सक्रिय विश्व भर के प्रतिनिधियों के भोजपुरी में संबोधित करेंगी।

समाज के सबसे दबेकुचले मुसहर समाज के लोगों को सलीके से जीना सिखाने और उन्हें सुधार कर विकास की मुख्यधारा से जोड़ने के लिए मैंने अपने घर से संघर्ष की पहल की, रिश्ते-नातों को भी ताक पर रखकर जीवन के कीमती चालीस साल संघर्ष में झोंक दिए। आज जब अमरीका से भाषण देने के लिए बुलाया गया है तो जीवन के अंतिम पड़ाव पर हूँ, पर मेरी संघर्ष यात्रा आखिरी सांस तक जारी रहेगी।

मैं आज तक हाट-बाजार, शहर को भी ठीक से नहीं देख सकी, अमरीका जाने की बात सुनकर ही मन घबरा गया। न किसी से जान पहचान, भोजपुरी और हिन्दी को छोड़कर विदेशी भाषा की मुझे समझ कहां! समाज-टोले का दबाव है कि विदेश जरूर जाऊँ प्रशासन भी अमरीका भेजने की तैयारी कर रहा है। इसलिए जाने का मन बना ही लिया। सोचती हूँ कि जिस लड़ाई की शुरुआत घर से की और सफल रही, वह संदेश दुनिया के लोगों तक भी पहुंचे, इसलिए जाना ही पड़ेगा। थोड़ी बेचैनी तो है, लेकिन अपनी बात कहने की खुशी भी कम नहीं।

मैंने नाम-शोहरत के लिए नहीं, अपने समाज की खुशहाली के लिए सब किया है। हमने सपने में भी नहीं सोचा था कि अपने टोला के बाहर के लोग भी जानेंगे, लेकिन अब अखबार वालों, टीवी वालों और हाकिम लोगों ने बेचैन कर दिया है। अपने घर से जो लड़ाई शुरू की थी वह इसलिए कि मुसहरों का विकास हो और गरीबी दूर हो। अचानक अमरीका से कैसे बुलावा आ गया, पूरे जिलाभर में हल्ला कैसे हो गया, इसके बारे में हमें कुछ जानकारी नहीं। जहां तक आगे की योजना का सवाल है तो मैं विदेश न जाकर अपने गांव



में ही रहकर लोगों की सेवा करना चाहती हूँ। अपनी शोहरत देखना नहीं चाहती, अपने मुसहर समाज को खुशहाल और समृद्ध देखना चाहती हूँ।

40 साल से मेरा संघर्ष जारी है और इसकी प्रेरणा के लिए मेरा अतीत और मुसहर समाज की कुरीतियां मुख्य कारण हैं। मुजफ्फरपुर जिले के साहेबगंज प्रखंड अंतर्गत मकरी मुसहर टोला में 1946 में जन्मीं। गरीबी और अभावों की बीच ही बड़ी हुई। शादी के बाद 1962 में भिरिखिया आई तो यहां भी गरीबी और अभाव ही मिला। ससुराल पक्ष के समाज में नशाखोरी चरम पर थी। रोटी के लिए मजदूरी, पर मजदूरी के पैसे शराब और ताड़ी में उड़ाकर परिवार समेत भूखे पेट सो जाना, यह रोज का क्रम मुझे कभी पसंद नहीं था। इसी झुंझलाहट में मैंने शादी के चंद महीने बाद ही अपने शराबी पति को पीट डाला। सो, इस तरह नशाखोरों को सुधारने की लड़ाई घर से ही शुरू की। इस अभियान में टोले की धनमंती देवी, सुनरपति देवी ने भी साथ दिया। शराबी पतियों पर पत्नियों के आक्रमण का असर हुआ और टोले के 72 परिवार नशाखोरी से मुक्त हो गए। फिर तो मुसहर महिलाओं ने मेरे साथ संघर्ष की राह पकड़ ली।

मुसहरों को गरीबी से मुक्त कर उन्हें आर्थिकरूप से संबल बनाने और उनमें शिक्षा की अलख जगाने के लिए टोले की अन्य महिलाओं को साथ लेकर मुझे लंबी लड़ाई लड़नी पड़ी। भिरिखिया वार्ड नंबर 3 की सदस्या चुने जाने के बाद हमने मुसहर विकास मंच का बनाया और गांव के 'सामाजिक शोध एवं विकास केंद्र' के मार्गदर्शन में मुसहरों को अधिकार दिलाने के लिए व्यवस्था के खिलाफ धरना, प्रदर्शन और आमरण अनशन किए। अभावों ने ही मुझे संघर्ष करना सिखाया और अब तो जीवन के अंतिम पड़ाव तक लड़ाई जारी रहेगीं 40 साल में बहुत कुछ खोया, लेकिन आज जितना कुछ पा रही हूँ, उस खुशी ने खोने के दुखों को मिटा दिया है। भिरिखिया और छिपुलिया मुसहर टोली की खुशहाली मेरे संघर्ष की सफलता का पहला पड़ाव है। विदेश जाने का अवसर भी इसी सफलता का हिस्सा है। इच्छा है कि हमारे घर से शुरू हुआ यह संघर्ष पूरे मुसहर समाज का संघर्ष बने, ताकि वे जीने का सलीका सीख सकें। संघर्ष और उसके सुफल ने हमें पूरा विश्वास दिलाया है कि पुरुष समाज का विरोध झेलकर अपना सुख-चैन त्यागकर मैंने जिस आंदोलन की शुरुआत की है, यह आंदोलन अभी और सुखद क्षण लेकर आएगा।

न्यूयार्क के सम्मेलन में बोलने के लिए क्या तैयारी करनी है। दुनिया के बड़े-बड़े लोगों को क्या संदेश देना चाहूंगी? पहले तो जाने, रहने और वहां बोलने की चिंता लगी है। भोजपुरी और हिन्दी के अलावा कुछ समझ में नहीं आता, लेकिन अपने संघर्ष का अनुभव विदेश के लोगों को जरूर बताऊंगी। उनसे यह अपील भी करूंगी कि मुसहरों के उत्थान के लिए वे भी कुछ करें, ताकि हमारा दबा-कुचला समाज ऊपर उठ सके और विकास की गति से अपने को जोड़े। विदेश वालों ने हमारे काम को सराहा इसकी खुशी है, पर यह मलाल साल रहा है कि बिहार सरकार ने मुसहरों या उनके परिवार के लिए कुछ नहीं किया, जबकि विदेश वाले हमें भाषण देने के लिए बुला रहे हैं। इस गुत्थी को समझ नहीं पा रही हूँ इसलिए जो लोग अमरीका ले जाने की तैयारी कर रहे हैं, उन पर कुछ शंका भी है। विदेश में क्या होगा इस बात को लेकर काफी अशांत हूँ।

## RURAL WOMEN TO FUND THEIR WELFARE

Rural Women of Andhra Pradesh's West Godavari district, who made history by collecting Rs. 60,000 by contributing 50 paise, each last year to save the life of a helpless woman, have now decided to create a permanent welfare fund to help women of their ilk.

The West Godavari district federation of women's self-help groups (SHGs), with 4 lakh members in 40,500 groups has decided that each member will contribute Rs 1 per month to create a social security fund.

This way the SHGs will save Rs. 48 lakh a year And utilise the fund to help the women members and their families In case of health and other emergencies.

The SHGs In this district hit the headlines In December last, when they collected Rs 60,000 by contributing 50 paise each to help 36-year-old Basavani Hymavathi In Vemuladeevi village to undergo a complicated cardiac operation. Basavani has, now, fully recovered after the surgery,

This success story spurred the district collector Luv Agarwal to suggest that these groups find a permanent solution to their, problems by having their own system of insurance as well as organised entrepreneurial and business network.

The setting up of social security fund is being seen as a first step In this direction. Ms Raghupati, who heads the Federation of such groups in the district said that the fund will go it long way ill meeting the Immediate needs of the members. The fund will provide Rs. 10,000 to a woman member or spouse for a major medical treatment and another Rs. 3,000 to travel to a big city to go to a super speciality hospital. In a case of death of member also the fund will provide an immediate assistance of Rs 10,000 to the bereaved family.

Significantly the women have also chosen a major social cause for the fund. In a move to protect the girl child and discourage female foeticide and Infanticide, the fund will provide an assistance of Rs 1,000 to a mother who gives birth to a female child. If a couple decides to go In for sterilisation after having a girl, the fond will give them Rs 2,000.

The move, to come, to the rescue or the girl child by these poor rural women is significant as the falling sex ratio and decline in the female population has become a major reason of social concern in the country.

## खेती की तरक्की में जुटी महिलाएं

एक देहाती होटल में महिलाओं का मजमा लगा हुआ है। यह न तो कोई महिला मंडल है, न ही ये महिलाएं किसी किटी पार्टी में जुटी हैं। ये उस किसान क्लब की सदस्य हैं, जो देश में अपनी तरह का पहला प्रयोग है। ये महिलाएं यहां खेती-किसानी की समस्याओं पर चर्चा कर रही हैं। ध्यान दें, तो पाएंगे कि उनकी बातचीत उन्नत बीज कहां से पाएं, बुवाई कब हो या ऐसी फसलें कौन सी जिनसे आमदनी बढ़े? जैसे मसलों के इर्द-गिर्द घूम रही है। महिला किसानों का यह क्लब बस्तर के जिला मुख्यालय जगदलपुर से 22 किलोमीटर दूर नानगुर गाँव में है। क्लब की कर्ता-धर्ता हैं फूलन देवी। बेहद हँसोड़ किस्म की भारी बदन वाली यह धाकड़ जाति की महिला सचमुच धाकड़ हैं। सिर्फ पाँच जमात पढ़ी फूलन समझदारी में शहरी महिलाओं की बराबरी कर सकती हैं। किसान क्लब से पहले फूलन और उनकी साथिनों ने न कभी शहर का मुँह देखा था, न ही किसी सार्वजनिक कार्यक्रम में शिरकत की थी। अब यही महिलाएं कलक्टर से लेकर मंत्री तक से न केवल बेहिचक बात करती हैं, बल्कि अपने तर्कों से कई बार उन्हें हैरान तक कर देती हैं। बस्तर के कलक्टर रह चुके दिनेश श्रीवास्तव का इन महिलाओं से तब से साबका है, जब किसान क्लब की बुनियाद रखी गई थी। वह बताते हैं कि इन महिलाओं में गजब का आत्मविश्वास पनपा है। ये न सिर्फ आर्थिक तौर पर सबल हुई हैं बल्कि गाँव के समग्र विकास में भी अहम भूमिका निभा रही हैं। वैसे भी नानगुर गाँव की महिलाएं अपने कामकाज से पूरे प्रदेश के सामने मिसाल पेश कर रही हैं। वे मिल-जुलकर होटल, फैंसी स्टोर और एसटीडी बूथ तक चला रही हैं। गाँव में बूढ़ों की मदद कर रही हैं। अनाथ बच्चों का पालन-पोषण कर रही हैं।

फूलन बताती हैं, 'नाबार्ड के साहब लोग मेरे होटल में चहा (चाय) पी रहे थे। नानगुर में जो भी साहब आता है, यहीं खाना-पीना करता है। मैं उनकी सारी बात ध्यान से सुन रही थी। मैं साहब से बोली कि मेरे को किसान क्लब के बारे में बताओ। तो नाबार्ड के कमलराम साहब ने हमारी बड़ी मदद की। हमको कलक्टर दिनेश जी के पास ले गए। वो हमको सरल बोली में समझाए।' बस तभी से फूलन को किसान क्लब से धुन सवार हो गई। उसने गाँव की परिचित महिलाओं से चर्चा की। फूलन पहले से शाकंबरी स्व सहायता समूह चला रही थी। इसकी सदस्य रही दस महिलाओं से उसने बात की। उन्हें किसान क्लब का महत्व बताया। उन्हें बताया कि खेती के लिए नाबार्ड से डेढ़ लाख रुपए की मदद मिलेगी। बीच इत्यादि भी मिलते रहेंगे, तो यह महिलाएं उसके साथ होलीं और 20 जुलाई 2005 को नानगुर की 12 महिलाओं ने मिलकर देश के पहले महिला किसान क्लब की बुनियाद रखकर इतिहास रचा।

क्लब में उन्हीं महिलाओं को रखा गया है, जिनके पास पाँच एकड़ तक खेती की जमीन है। इस जमीन में वे समय-समय पर सरकार और नाबार्ड द्वारा आयोजित होने वाली कार्यशालाओं में सीखे खेती के गुर आजमाती हैं। फूलन बताती हैं कि इस बार धान का वेरायटी बीज बोया था। फसल बढ़िया हुई है पर (आसमान की तरफ इशारा करके) कहीं सब बर्बाद न कर दें। फूलन कह रहीं हैं, हम नकदी फसल के बारे में जान गए हैं। उन्नत बीज कैसे मिले, कौन सी खाद बिढ़या है, यह समझ गए हैं। इनका सपना नाबार्ड से मिली आर्थिक मदद से पूरा हो रहा है। नाबार्ड के पैसे चुकाने के लिए ये महिलाएं एक अखबार समूह की सहयोगी फाइनेंस कंपनी के पास 20 रुपए रोज जमा करती हैं। इन महिलाओं को मुख्यमंत्री ने घर पर बाड़ी में सब्जी उगाने के प्रयोग के लिए एक लाख रुपए के पुरस्कार से नवाजा था। अपनी तस्वीर दिखाकर वे फूली नहीं समाती। वैसे भी पूरा गाँव अब इनकी मेहनत और लगन का कायल है। क्लब में शामिल किरण, मनीता सेठिया, धार्मिका, सोनमनी, पार्वती, धनवती और सावित्री बताती हैं कि किसान क्लब ने तो उनकी जिन्दगी पलट दी है। इस मुकाम तक पहुँचने के लिए उन्होंने गाँव के मद्रों के कितने उलाहने संहें हैं। जब राज्य के मुख्यमंत्री तक से उन्हें सम्मान मिला तब जाकर गाँव के मद्रों ने उनका महत्व समझा। और अब जब साइकिलों में सवार हरी साड़ी पहनी इन महिला किसानों से जत्था शहर जाने के लिए गाँव से गुजरता है, तो पूरा गाँव खुद को गौरवान्वित महसूस करता है।

Hindustan, 17.11.06



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## **SUCCESS STORIES RELATED TO ENERGY**

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- Fuel from bio-mass in remote MP village
- Rajasthan Wakes upto Wonder Plant Jatropha
- For First Time, biofuel to. keep. mobiles ringing in rural areas



## **FUEL FROM BIO-MASS IN REMOTE MP VILLAGE**

The remote tribal village of Kasai in Madhya Pradesh's Betul district is no longer looking to Central and state government agencies for meeting their water, power and cooking gas requirements.

All these requirements have now been successfully met with the assistance of the ministry of non-conventional energy resources, which recently installed bio-mass gasifiers and engine gensets to meet their energy requirements.

This project, the first of its kind in the country, is part of a series of test projects taken up under a programme developed by the ministry to create energy security in villages through bio-mass.

The programme aims at going beyond electrification by meeting the total energy requirements of villages, including cooking, lighting and motive power with full participation of the local communities, including women.

After the success of this test project, similar micro power plants would be installed throughout the country where supplying power through the grid is not possible till 2012. As per the project, the villagers will produce high yield bio-mass to fuel its bio-mass power plants and other energy requirements. The biomass plant will energise television sets, street lights, water pumps, village flour mills and other electronic and electrical gadgets of the 55 families living in the village. The project was taken up by the MNES, as connecting the village with the power grid was not feasible before 2012 as it falls in the Satpura range.

To start with, lights for each household, school, engine room and streets have been provided. A flour mill is being energised and a water pump and milk chilling unit are also proposed to be run soon. The village panchayat has planted fast growing species in 10 hectares of land around the village to ensure sustained supply of wood for the gasifiers. Besides this, an expeller unit will also be installed to produce bio-oil from oilseeds of Jatropha plants, which will be used for running pump sets.

The village energy committee, set up by the Panchayat, will look after the operation and maintenance, fixation and collection of user charges and overall management of the project. Eleven test projects have so far been taken up in eight districts of Madhya Pradesh. These projects are being implemented by the forest department of the state.



## **RAJASTHAN WAKES UPTO WONDER PLANT JATROPHA**

In a step that aims at encouraging production of bio-diesel, Rajasthan government has unveiled a plan for promoting cultivation of a plant that can provide a viable alternative to diesel oil. *Jatropha Curcas*, also known as “Van arand,” or “Ratanjyot” is said to lend itself the best to extraction of bio-diesel because of its advantage over other species. It can be, grown as. a quick yielding plant even on barren lands and in a desert state such as Rajasthan.

In a Cabinet meeting, the Rajasthan government decided to promote the cultivation and processing of *Jatropha Curcas* by allotting nearly 57 lakh-hectare wasteland at subsidised rates or free to private companies and groups.

The land allotment policy approved by the Cabinet is expected to generate employment opportunity for nearly 58 lakh people, a government spokesperson said. Committees headed by the chief secretary or district collectors will select potential private groups for land allocation and not more than 30 per cent of the available land will be allotted to companies.

It will be mandatory for them to set-up their refineries or processing units and buy Ratanjyot or Karanj at the minimum support price fixed by state government. The allotment will be made for a period of 20 years.

*Jatropha curcas* physicochemical characteristics makes it a promising and commercially-viable-alternative to diesel oil.

*Jatropha* oil cake is rich in nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium and can be used as organic manure its well. *Jatropha* can also be used as an illuminant which gives clear smoke free flame and also for making soaps as it has a very high saponification value.

This apart, it's believed that its medicinal properties can be exploited by the anti-cancer drug manufacturing sector and external application of the plant's oil is recommended for the cure. of skin diseases and rheumatism.

People in rural and backward areas also use the tender twigs of the plants for cleaning teeth and juice of the leaf is used to cure piles.

Jatropha curcus or Ratanjyot can really prove a miracle plant like Jojoba for Rajasthan as it's going to help increase rural income and, self-sustainability.

Eight other states in the country are already working on Jatropha cultivation, the parliamentary affairs minister, Mr. Rajinder Singh Rathore, said.

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The Statesman, 12.01.07

## **FOR FIRST TIME, BIOFUEL TO KEEP MOBILES RINGING IN RURAL AREAS**

Alternative fuel to power 20 base stations in Pune region, pilot project to be implemented by middle of this year

Perhaps for the first time in the country, a pilot project using biofuels to power mobile network will be implemented in Pune region. The first of the project that began months back, is expected to stream by middle of this. and at least 20 base stations be powered by biofuel.

A Joint project between mobile service provider Idea Cellular, cell manufacturer Ericsson and global trade association for operators, GSM Association, it aims to increase mobile outreach to rural India that has seen low penetration due to power shortage.

“We are in talks with some local biofuel producers and trying to establish a supply chain with local farmers producing crops for the fuel,” Ericsson India vice-president (Marketing and Strategy) P Balaji said. Currently, areas having no electrical grids are being powered by diesel

“We have found an economically viable solution. Cost is not the main project driver and costs may vary considerably by crop and region. Cottonseed, pongamia, jatropha and neem are all being researched as a potential source for biofuel.” GSMA Development Fund manager Dawn Hartley said in an email reply from Barcelona.

However, sources said in all probability jatropha would be used as the raw material. “Ericsson is going to provide the technology for making biofuel to the local farmers,” they said. Biofuel has several

### ***Success Stories of Panchayati Raj***

advantages over conventional diesel as a power source like creating employment for local people, cutting cost and generating eco-friendly energy. It also reduces carbon dioxide emission by 80 per cent and extends the life of the base station generators.

Further, unlike diesel it is much cheaper and not dependent on fluctuating market prices. "In future, the cost of diesel might shoot up even more," Balaji said.

Apart from India, Ericsson along with GSMA Development Fund and African telecom giant MTN has developed an alternative fuel in Nigeria. the research for which had started in October 2006.

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The Indian Express, 10.02.07

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# SUCCESS STORIES RELATED TO AGRICULTURE

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- Eco-friendly technologies for rice cultivation
- खेती भी बने विकास में सहभागी
- Maharashtra comes closer to Nature
- Haryana brings in contract farming, with safeguards
- Organic rice Farming in Kuttanad belt
- Going green house: Himachal packs a crunch
- United Colours of Punjab
- Organic Practices for increasing mango yield
- Three-year course to an organic certificate
- More Than Just A Problem...
- High-yielding Bengal gram variety developed
- Comrades stretch out to pvt sector for rubber production
- Ground Control : Organic Manure is NE's New Buzz
- Ash to Cash : Power Waste Doubles as Manure
- In dry Vidarbha, village reaps a rich harvest
- Organic Sugarcane : Profitable Through Innovative Initiative



## ECO-FRIENDLY TECHNOLOGIES FOR RICE CULTIVATION

A sound package of eco-friendly technologies to grow rice is being successfully adopted by a few progressive farmers in Puliangudi village in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu. “The technologies work well with indigenous rice varieties such as Kitchili Samba. The cost of cultivation is substantially reduced and the organic rice fetches a premium price in the market,” says Mr. P. Gomathinayagam, a pioneer in organic farming in Puliangudi.

“I grew a medium-duration (140 days) Kitchili Samba rice in about 1.6 hectares. The seeds were treated with Panchakavya, and the nursery was treated with plenty of tank silt and a host of organic amendments.

Liberal quantities of tank silt were applied and green leaf manure was incorporated a few days ahead of the final ploughing. Biogas slurry was applied through irrigation when the seedlings were just establishing in the main field,” he explained.

One round of spray with 3 per cent solution of Panchakavya was given 20 days after transplanting. On the 30th day, a combination of coconut milk and butter milk, mixed in equal volume, in ten times their volume of water was sprayed on the crop to promote active plant growth and tillering.

On the 40th day, another round of spray with Panchakavya (3 per cent solution in high volume spray) was given. A bio-insect repellent was sprayed on the 45th day of transplantation.

The crop was regularly irrigated, and a grain yield of about 6 tonnes was expected from the 1.6 hectare plot. He also was assured of high quality straw for his cattle.

The cost of cultivation worked out to Rs. 14,000 for 1.6 hectares. I sell the output as organic rice at a rate of Rs. 30 per kg, and it makes organic rice cultivation more rewarding economically as well environmentally,” pointed out Mr. Gomathinayagam., He is championing the cause of organic farming in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu. Several farmers, are following his advice.

I adopted the organic rice farming technologies and harvested about 9.25 tonnes of paddy a hectare from the bold grained Trichi-1 variety. I dumped liberal quantities of daincha in the field and allowed it to decompose well in the field ahead of planting.

There was no need for any plant protection also. The cost of cultivation worked out to Rs. 12,500 per, hectare. I also harvested plenty of healthy straw for our animals,” said Mr. V. Antonysamy, a progressive farmer of Puliangudi village.

## खेती भी बने विकास में सहभागी

एक जून 2006 से शुरू होने वाला कृषि वर्ष दक्षिण पश्चिम मानसून के साथ आया है। आजादी के तुरंत बाद अगस्त 1947 में 'नियति के साथ भारत के वादे' वाले अपने प्रसिद्ध भाषण में पं. जवाहरलाल नेहरू ने देश को याद दिलाया था कि जो काम अब किए जाने बाकी हैं, उनमें गरीबी, उपेक्षा, रोग और अवसरों की असमानता का अंत करना शामिल है।

बेशक सामान्य क्षेत्रों में कुछ उपलब्धियां हासिल हुई हैं जिनमें किसी हद तक अकाल का खात्मका, बहुदलील लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था का सफलतापूर्वक संचालन और बड़े स्तर पर और काफी हद तक सफल वैज्ञानिक समुदाय का निर्माण शामिल है। हालांकि परिदृश्य में इसकी प्रक्रिया बहुत धीमी है और वह केवल कारपोरेट क्षेत्रों तक ही सीमित है।

परिणामस्वरूप यह जरूरी हो जाता है कि कृषि सुधार इस तरह हो कि समाजिक न्याय और उच्च आर्थिक विकास आदि दोनों लक्ष्यों को पाया जा सके। इस उद्देश्य के लिए शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, घर और रोजगार आदि के रूप में सामाजिक क्षेत्रों में विकास की जरूरत है। इसके अलावा इसके लिए कृषि सुधार के क्षेत्र में कठोर कदम उठाने की जरूरत है। अर्थव्यवस्था के भूमंडलीकरण ने जिसमें कृषि भी शामिल है, भारतीय राजनीति में 1950 से चले आ रहे कृषि विरोध को सुधारने का एक मौका दिया है। आर्थिक विकास और समृद्धि के साथ कृषि को नहीं जोड़ा गया। भूमि सुधार का काम अब तक अधूरा है और विभिन्न समूहों के हित इसमें आड़े आ रहे हैं। इसी कारण न केवल ग्रामीणों का जीवन स्तर खराब हुआ बल्कि राष्ट्र की कृषि उत्पादकता और समृद्धि को भी क्षति पहुंची।

इस स्थिति से निपटने के लिए बहुआयामी प्रयासों की जरूरत है जिसमें न केवल सरकारी तंत्र बल्कि राजनीतिक दलों, गैर सरकारी संस्थाओं, पंचायती राज संस्थाओं के साथ-साथ आम आदमी को भी जुटना होगा। भूमि सुधार और न्यूनतम मजदूरी अधिनियम अनिवार्यतः लागू करना चाहिए। लैंड सीलिंग एक्ट को अनिच्छापूर्वक लागू करने, कानून में छेद होने, अतिरिक्त भूमि के पुनर्वितरण और गरीब लाभान्वितों की मदद का आधारभूत ढांचा, भूमि रिकार्ड को ठीक से देखरेख और शरणार्थियों द्वारा अधिकार हासिल करने का विधान और उनसे किराया हासिल करने के नियमों के साथ-साथ ग्रामीण विकास कार्यक्रमों पर ज्यादा जोर दिया जाना चाहिए।

स्वयंसेवी संगठनों, राजनीतिक दलों और राज्य के शासन तंत्र को भी एक मंच पर आकर प्रयास करने चाहिए ताकि संवाद और तर्क-वितर्क के जरिए समस्या का शांतिपूर्ण हल पाया जा सके। चूंकि भारत कृषि प्रधान देश है इसलिए कृषि में इस तरह से सुधार करने की जरूरत है कि उदारीकरण के लाभ हासिल किए जा सकें। इसके लिए सिंचाई सुविधाएं, शोध और संस्थागत विकास किया जाना चाहिए। सिंचाई क्षेत्र में सब्सिडीज में कटौती पर ज्यादा से ज्यादा सार्वजनिक निवेश को प्राथमिकता दी जानी चाहिए।

कृषि क्षेत्र को मिलने वाली अपर्याप्त बिजली और सिंचाई में सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के महंगे निवेश जैसी कृषि विकास में आने वाली बाधाओं को दूर करने के लिए संस्थागत सुधार जरूरी है। इसके अलावा इस क्षेत्र में निवेश के ज्यादा अवसर और सुरक्षा पाने के लिए पेशेवराना रवैए को भी जरूरत है। इस बात को ध्यान में रखते हुए कि ज्यादातर खेतिहर जमीन बिखरी हुई हैं। ये लक्षण संपत्ति के अधिकार और भूमि सुधार और कृषि उद्योग के आधुनिकीकरण, बाजारीकरण आदि के लिए ध्यान उलपद्य कराने में सार्वजनिक और निजी क्षेत्र को सहभागिता और सहयोग की मांग करते हैं।

दूसरा बड़ा प्रयास रोजगार पैदा करने और ग्रामीण विकास का आधारभूत ढांचा खड़ा करने का होना चाहिए जिसमें सड़कों, नहरों, बावड़ियों, सामुदायिक शौचालयों, गरीबों के लिए घर और स्वास्थ्य केंद्रों का निर्माण आदि शामिल हैं। इसके साथ कृषि पर लगने वाले अप्रत्यक्ष करों को भी कम करना होगा और कृषि क्षेत्र को यह अवसर देना होगा कि वह इन सब पर सकारात्मक प्रतिक्रिया दे। अगर ऐसा हो सका तो कृषि को विकास के रास्ते पर लाया जा सकता है।

इस तरह, कृषि क्षेत्र में सुधार को प्राथमिकता दिए जाने की जरूरत है। इसके लिए आधारभूत ढांचे को विकसित करने, उत्प्रेरित करने और संस्थागत करने आपस में घन की तार्किक उगाही, बाजारीकरण और वैकल्पिक जीविका बनाने की जरूरत है।

किसानों की भूखमरी और आत्महत्या की घटनाएं इस मसले पर तत्काल प्रभावशाली ढंग से सार्वजनिक कार्रवाई की जरूरत को दर्शाती हैं। कृषि क्षेत्र का परिदृश्य फिलहाल बहुत निराशाजनक दिखाई देता है। इसलिए तेजी से सामाजिक-आर्थिक और राजनीतिक बदलाव और सुधार जरूरी है ताकि औद्योगिक विकास के साथ-साथ कृषि विकास भी हाथोंहाथ लिया जाए।

अगर कृषि सुधार नहीं किया गया, तो यह औद्योगिक विकास के रास्ते में भी बाधा खड़ी करेगा क्योंकि उद्योग कच्चे माल के रूप में कृषि और मजदूरी पर ही निर्भर होते हैं। हालांकि देश में कृषि का विकास असंतुलित है जिससे छोटे किसान कम उत्पादन कर पाते हैं और फिर बाद में इससे पलायन कर जाते हैं। इन समस्याओं में गरीब ग्रामीण में तेजी से बढ़ती जनसंख्या की समस्या भी अलग से जुड़ जाती है। इससे कृषि मजदूरी में पलायन की दर तेज हो जाती है। कृषि क्षेत्र में इन सारी बातों का परिणाम यह होता है कि किसानों और कारपोरेट पेशेवरों के बीच का अंतर काफी बढ़ जाता है।

इसके अलावा कृषि सुधार उन क्षेत्रीय असमानताओं को भी कम करेगा जो ब्रिटिश राज की नीतियों के कारण पैदा हुई हैं। ताजा भारतीय सूचकांक (2001) बढ़ती क्षेत्रीय असमानता को लेकर एक तरह की चेतावनी है। हिंदी पट्टी में भारत की कुल जनसंख्या का 45 प्रतिशत निवास करती है। यहां जनसंख्या की वार्षिक वृद्धि दर राष्ट्रीय औसत 1.9 प्रतिशत के मुकाबले 3 प्रतिशत है जबकि प्रति व्यक्ति जीडीपी विकास दर यहां राष्ट्रीय औसत 3.8 प्रतिशत के मुकाबले सिर्फ 1.3 प्रतिशत ही है। यह सुनिश्चित है कि कम क्षेत्र विकसित क्षेत्रों के रास्ते को बाधा बनेंगे। आर्थिक सुधारों के लिए व्यापक रूप से कृषि विकास पर आधारित होना जरूरी है ताकि वह संपूर्ण अर्थव्यवस्था में आय, रोजगार और निर्यात में अपनी महती भूमिका निभा सके। ग्रामीण आय के बढ़ने से सरकारी राजस्व खुद ब खुद बढ़ जाएगा और वस्तुओं और सेवाओं का एक घरेलू बाजार बनेगा।

इसके अलावा भूमंडलीकरण से मिलने वाले नए अवसर व्यापक रूप से जनसंख्या के बड़े हिस्से को मिलें, इसके लिए राज्य को कृषि सुधारों के मददेनजर सक्रिय भूमिका निभाने की जरूरत है। इससे अलग-थलग पड़ने का भाव और सामाजिक असमानता भी कम होगी और आधुनिक उत्पादक समाज के निर्माण में मदद मिलेगी इस तरह तीव्र आर्थिक विकास करने और उसे बनाए रखने के लिए दमित किसानों और कारपोरेट पेशेवरों के बीच संवाद आज की जरूरत है। दमित किसानों के अमानवीय जीवन से तीव्र आर्थिक विकास में कोई मदद नहीं मिल सकती। उनके दमन के अंत से ही कृषि और औद्योगिक विकास के बीच की खाई कम हो सकती है और तभी दुगुना विकास संभव हो सकता है।

इस तरह 'कृषि सुधार' समाज का बुनियादी ढांचा बनना चाहिए जिसमें किसानों का सशक्तीकरण और अर्थव्यवस्था का विकास एक ही सिक्के के दो पहलू हों, तभी वह भारत निर्माण संभव है जो कि संप्रग सरकार के उस न्यूनतम साझा कार्यक्रम में भी शामिल है जिसे गठबंधन सरकार का 'मैग्नाकर्ता' माना जाता है।



## **MAHARASHTRA COMES CLOSER TO NATURE**

Uttaranchal has done it, Himachal, UP Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Andhra and Madhya Pradesh are following suit. So why should Maharashtra be left behind? The state has adopted organic farming as one of the seven main pillars of its plans for agriculture in the future.

Under the Krishi Saptak plan, the state has set aside 1 lakh hectares as the target area for organic farming in the current financial year itself. A circular of guidelines has already been despatched to the officials concerned, and the project is supposed to be implemented from the coming kharif season.

The main reasons for the state's focus on organic farming, says State Agriculture Commissioner Sudhir Goyal, be in the need to increase yield from dry fanning and sod fertility, and stop environmental degradation.

This is probably as close as the department will ever get to admitting the ill effects of pesticides, which it has supported all these years.

But not all the inspiration for the project comes from high up the pecking order. Says N B Nagrale, Nagpur District Superintendent Agriculture Officer: "With a lot of farmers adopting natural ways of farming, pesticide use has fallen drastically in the last 3-4 years. This, has provided a good launching pad for the project."

At the first state-level meeting of officials, NGOs and four agricultural universities in Pune last month, representatives feted 20 organic farmers and five activists for their work. Besides its 15,000 strong workforce, the Agriculture department has involved NGOs and individuals-not to mention the universities in the programme.

Farmers and officials at the divisional, district and tehsil levels are already being imparted training on organic farming. The department also plans to keep in touch with farmers through activists and through workshops and symposia in every district. A detailed curriculum has been drafted for such programmes.

One thousand groups, comprising 100 farmers and covering 100 hectares each, are being established in areas that already have some experience with organic farming. Knowledgeable NGOs, individuals and government agencies will, in tandem, co-ordinate with farmers to help implement the project effectively. The government will partly fund the proposed 1,000 wormiculture projects and also help erect organic manure units in each division.

## Success Stories related to Agriculture

Notwithstanding villages like Ashta and Seldoh, which have gone in for organic farming entirely on their own, lack of government patronage so far kept the total number of Organic farmers in the state to about one lakh from a total of three crore farmers. Three thousand of them are certified.

“The total quantum of land under organic cultivation currently could be something like five lakh hectares,” says Manoharrao Parchure, one of the activists feted at Pune. “But I think the state will far exceed the 1 lakh hectare official target as the campaign could have a cascading effect.”

Parchure’s 40-acre organic farm, located about 60 kms from here, is certified by Switzerland’s Institute of Marketing, and was even graced by a visit by Masanobu Fukoka, the father of natural farming, in 1997.

In recognition of Parchure’s influence, the state government has adopted the slogan of the NGO he founded and has prescribed a book written by him as reference material.

According to Parchure, organic farming pays dividends from the very first year. “The gains could be anything between Rs 2,000-10,000 per acre, he says.

To help other farmers get to Parchure’s enviable level, the government has promised to provide them information about international registration; this will allow them to export their produce and even sell it in the domestic market for a handsome price.

The government will also aid centres and NGOs providing information for marketing of organic produce as also those with integrated facility for sale and purchase. There is also a proposal to sell all organic produce under one brand name in the state.

Well begun is half done, but the main problem is the deep-rooted pro-NPK (nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium) psyche. “The farmer needs to be convinced he can do without NPK,” Parchure says. And that may be easier said than done.

## **HARYANA BRINGS IN CONTRACT FARMING, WITH SAFEGUARDS**

Contract farming was formalised in Haryana last week with the Assembly passing the much-awaited amendment to the Agriculture Produce Marketing Act. This spells good news for Haryana farmers as the Bill keeps in mind all the problems that informal contract farming in Punjab had thrown up.

The amendment to the Punjab Agriculture Produce Markets Act, 2004, showed that the Om Prakash Chautala government in Haryana has learnt a number of lessons from neighbouring Punjab, where contract farming was introduced earlier.

However, while the practice was largely successful there-with some enterprising farmers inking deals with MNCs like Pepsi, Indomint etc-there were cases where farmers were not paid the price promised, or their produce was not lifted at all. With most agreements being in English, a company got enough leeway to exploit the farmers if it wished.

The amended legislation introduced by the Haryana government, called the Punjab Agriculture Produce Markets (Haryana Amendment) Bill, 2004, seeks to correct this anti-farmer bias inherent in contract farming.

It would also be a move away from the system of regulated markets, reducing the burden on them, and promote agro-based industries.

Under the provisions of the amended Bill, the companies would not only have to commit to a settled price of an agriculture produce but also to its definite purchase. The companies would also need to register with the government prior to signing an agreement with the farmers.

### **Highlights**

- Contract farming sponsor has to commit to a price for the produce and to purchasing it.
- Companies have to register with govt.
- Takes purchases away from the system of regulated markets.
- No title, rights of land can be transferred to the sponsor or his agent as a result of the contract farming agreement.
- A competent appellate authority to hear disputes, settle within 30 days.

“The new legislation provides that the contract farming sponsor will be the buyer of the agriculture produce covered under the contract. The business premises of the sponsor would be the private market

## Success Stories related to Agriculture

yard for the purpose of conducting business, unless denotified by the state government by notification in the official gazette,” says a senior officer.

Besides, no title, rights, ownership or possession of land can be transferred or alienated or vested in the contract farming a sponsor or his successor or his agent as a result of the contract farming agreement.

Aware that the agreements could lead to disputes between-the companies and farmers, the Haryana government also plans to constitute an appellate authority. To ensure that there are no unnecessary delays, all disputes will need to be resolved and a decision taken within 30 days. “The provision has been made to facilitate the farmers, as they have to decide on the next crop to sow. The period of 30 days gives both the parties ample opportunity to present their case. The decision of the appellate authority would be final,” said an officer.

Carrying the decree of the civil court, the decision would be enforceable as such. In fact, disputes relating to and arising out of contract farming cannot be called into question in any civil court.

## **ORGANIC RICE FARMING IN KUTTANAD BELT**

Kuttanad once hailed as the rice bowl of Kerala, is witnessing a quiet “green revolution.”

A committed group of 32 farmers has successfully adopted organic rice cultivation in 32.8 hectares in Ayyanadu Padasekharam.

They were mobilized and fully supported with technical back up of three organizations—Ayyanadu Padasekhara Samiti, Kuttanadu Vikasana Samiti and Poabs Envirotech Private Limited, according to Mr. R. Hall, former Director of Agriculture, Kerala, who was part of the active advisory committee that closely monitored this group farming exercise.

A detailed calendar of operations of the integrated organic farming package was prepared by drawing the best scientific knowledge of scientists and technologists and rich practical variety ‘Uma’, developed by the experience of seasoned farm-scientists at the Monkombuers. A proven high yielding va Rice Research Station, was raised with all the organic inputs.

Prior to sowing de-watering and weeding was done in time, and soil and water samples were analysed to determine the right dose of nutrients required to raise a healthy crop.

### **Organic manure**

A basal dose of 875 kg of organic manure ‘Green Paddy Special was applied per hectare, and biofertilizers such as Azospirillum and phosphorus solubilising microbial cultures were added to further enrich the soil. The sowing was over by October 18, 2004.

After the first manual weeding, the luxuriant crop was top dressed with 375 kg of the organic manure per hectare. Trichograma predator egg cards were, placed to protect the crop against, stem borer pest.

Enthusiastic farmers and technologists took up regula pest-surveillance, sorties, and the expert advisory-committee carefully monitored the crop.

### **Grand Success**

The programme was a grand success, and it belied the expectations of in rice farmers in the region. The organically grown rice and poison-free straw are sold at premium price. The farmers have already taken up test sowing of a short-duration pulse crop following the harvest of the rice crop.

### **Soil Fertility**

One of the key objectives of this programme is to revive and sustain the soil fertility in this rich rice belt, and bring back its clean environment to its original glory. The farmers were assured of all technical support, credit and quality inputs were supplied in time.

The price for the produce was fixed well ahead of sowing and farmers were assured of a ready market.

There have been continuous consultations with the farmers all through the programme, and full cooperation of the farmers led to its successful implementation.

“The Ayyanadu experiment will be an eye-opener for the entire Kuttanad region, and it should spread like a social movement to regain the status of organic rice belt for Kuttanad region from this International Year of Rice, said Mr. Hall.

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The Hindu, 17.02.05

## **GOING GREEN HOUSE: HIMACHAL PACKS A CRUNCH**

With irrigation schemes taking off, off-season vegetables are the new cash crop for the state

After years of focusing on horticulture, Himachal Pradesh is recasting its agro-identity. With the apple industry largely on its feet, the emphasis is now shifting to off-season vegetables.

Four districts—Solan, Sirmaur, Shimla and Bilaspur—are in the lead for off-season vegetable production. With the Kandaghat block in Solan, Mashobra and Theog in Shimla and Paonta in Sirmaur winning accolades for their tomatoes, french beans, garden peas, cauliflower and broccoli, the cash-rich farmers of the lower Himachal belt (Kangra, Una, Hamirpur and Chamba) are taking advantage of expanded irrigation facilities to grow new vegetable varieties. Earlier, these areas, like most of Himachal Pradesh, were dependent on rainfed irrigation or minor water bodies.

According to official estimates, the state area under vegetables is increasing by 5-10 per cent every year. In the foreseeable future, it could well challenge areas under fruits or traditional crops like wheat, rice or maize.

“All that farmers need are quality seeds, access to in-demand-vegetables in demand, irrigation facilities and standardisation of production technologies,” says N K Pathania, head of the vegetables department at the Agriculture University, Palampur.

For one aspect at least, state farmers can seek support from the university. Scientists released seven new varieties of broccoli, cauliflower, radish and brinjal in the last year and half; half-a-dozen other vegetable varieties suitable for different climactic zones are in the pipeline.

Next on the agenda is standardisation of production techniques. To this end, the university has two ongoing research projects, one of which is under the National Horticulture Technology Mission.

The government, on its part is pitching in to help small and marginal farmers through aid individual and community-related irrigation structures like tanks, ponds and water channels. Farmers can get upto Rs 8,000 for the construction of individual water tanks of a size of at least nine cubic meters. Last year, 1,476 tanks were constructed under the scheme, while another 175 small farmers got help to install water-lifting devices.

## ***Success Stories of Panchayati Raj***

“NABARD helped fund the development of 37 watersheds in the vegetable growing districts under its Rs 110-crore project for small irrigation facilities. This will help irrigate an additional 24,821 hectares in those areas,” says J C Rana, state Director, Agriculture.

For bigger irrigation projects, the state government asked the Planning Commission last month to fast-track four major irrigation projects. These projects, in the works for 10-15 years, are aimed at expanding the reach of irrigation in Kangra, Bilaspur and Mandi districts. They include the Rs 231 crore Shah canal, the Rs 74-crore Balh project, the Rs 70-crore Changer scheme and the Rs 55-crore Sidhata medium irrigation scheme.

To keep pace with this trend, the new state agriculture policy (approved in July) also targets bringing an additional 50,000 hectares of land under the crop diversification plan. Offseason vegetables play a major role in the plan.

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The Indian Express, 14.10.05

## **UNITED COLOURS OF PUNJAB**

A recent migrant to the state, turmeric has launched Punjab’s first agricultural cooperative with 300 farmers on board.

At first sight, it looks like a field of ornamental plants—a little wild and unkempt with fat yellow-green leaves but undoubtedly beautiful. “These are great for health as well,” says Iqbal Singh Randhawa, a leading progressive farmer of Hoshiarpur on his resplendent turmeric crop.

A relatively new addition to the repertoire of the Punjab farmer, this pretty crop has launched the state’s first-ever cooperative with 300 farmers on board. That, is not all, it’s also inspired a retired Brigadier to invent the first mechanised turmeric processing unit of the country.

Farmers’ Produce Promotional Society (FAPRO) wouldn’t have been born had turmeric not caught the fancy of a handful of middle-aged agri-technocrats and farmers. Set up at the fag end of 2001 with 174 members and no processing plant, this society now has 300 members (85 per cent of them small farmers) growing turmeric on 600 acres.

You can’t miss the celebratory mood as you step into the red-bricked Kisan Bhavan at Hoshiarpur, a district known for its large tracts of kandi (sandy and infertile) area. FAPRO is celebrating its maiden grant of Rs 40 lakh from the government for setting up a turmeric processing plant under the Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana.

“It’s a shot in the arm for the turmeric growers,” smiles Dr Kulbir Singh Deol, chief agriculture officer showing you the Planning Commission noting at the bottom of a file, saying if successful, this experiment will be replicated all over the country.

## Success Stories related to Agriculture

Dr C L Vashishth, technical director and one of the executive members of FAPRO, says the grant is also a recognition of their dogged efforts over the last four years.

It was in 2000 that the agriculture department thought of introducing turmeric. The agriculture officials approached Punjab Agro for help in marketing but it refused to play ball. It was then that they decided to set up a cooperative. "We went from door to door to convince farmers to enroll with us and buy a share of Rs 1,000," recalls Gurbachan Chand Singh Saini, the portly former sarpanch of Bhunga village and general secretary of FAPRO.

Their pitch was simple: "Grow turmeric, we will sell you seeds for Rs 6 a kg as compared to the market price of Rs 25, and then, we will buy it from you."

Today they admit it was quite an audacious promise, given that they didn't have a processing machine. "We were going by simple demand and supply," explains Randhawa. "Until now, Punjab used to get all its turmeric from Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. We reckoned that if we grew it here, we could market it at cheaper rates." Having spent a couple of years in England, he was confident of exporting it as well.

High on hope, four of its government members tried to get it a helping hand from the Ministry of Food and Processing but to no avail. "After four rounds to Delhi, and one meeting with a tout, we knew nothing would come out of it," shrugs Vashishth.

Ever since, the co-op has been running on its own steam until the recent grant. Processing they picked up from Brig R S Dhillon, a retired gunner from Sanaura village, who set up his own mechanised unit, the first-of-its kind in India, after Agri Tech Management Agency (ATMA) got him to grow turmeric but refused to buy it. Today Randhawa has also set up one in his backyard and the new plant too will be fabricated on the same lines.

Marketing wasn't a problem after a few ads in Doordarshan and print media. Today the cheerful sunlight yellow packs of 'Shuddh Haldi' by FAPRO-designed by the Brigadier-are synonymous with quality in the market.



## ORGANIC PRACTICES FOR INCREASING MANGO YIELD

Spraying *Panchagavya* increases size and improves taste of the fruits.

Mango trees respond well to organic manure applications. Organic manures such as vermicompost, *Panchagavya* and vermi wash are used for promoting healthy tree growth and fruit formation.

### **Essential nutrients**

From the initial planting stages to caring of full-grown trees, *Panchagavya* and vermicompost can be effectively used to supply essential nutrients to the trees and prevent pest infestations, according to Dr. S. Sundaravadivel, Vermitechnologist and Environmentalist based in Chennai.

Vermicompost is prepared by using earthworms. Vermi wash is the liquid collected after the passage of water through a column of activated earthworms. It is very useful as an organic spray for all crops.

### **Pest repellent**

*Panchagavya* is an organic growth promoter, which is prepared by mixing cow dung, cow urine, cow's milk, cured and ghee in suitable proportions, and is sprayed on the plants. It contains several macro micronutrients, beneficial bacteria and fungi, which aid in growth promotion and act as effective pest repellents.

It can be prepared by thoroughly mixing five kilos of fresh cow dung and one litre of cow's ghee in a plastic or cement tank or earthen pot. The mixture is stirred daily for three to four days.

“About three litres of cow's milk, two litres of cow's cured, three litres of sugar cane juice, three litres of tender coconut water and 10 to 12 bananas are mixed well and added to the mixture. The entire concoction is allowed to ferment for fifteen days,” said Dr. S. Sundaravadivel.

The container should be covered with a net (or) cotton cloth to allow aeration of the fermenting unit, according to him. The concoction is stirred two or three times a day for about fifteen days and then used. For mango trees of about 6-7 years age, vermicompost may be applied at the rate of 10 kilograms per tree and one litre of *panchagavya* diluted 30 litres of water may be sprayed over the foliage (crown) and at the base of the tree. Spraying *panchagavya* over the crown and at the base of the tree must be done four to five times, according to Dr. Sundaravadivel. The first spraying must be done before the flowering season (January-March) to increase flower formation.

A second spraying must be done after 15-20 days. The process must be repeated till the flowers turn into small sized buds. Once the buds start forming then the application can be done once a month, according to him.

Use of *panchagavya* and vermicompost has been found to increase the size, number and enhance the colour of the fruits.

### **Recommended practice**

The recommended practice for one hectare of mango trees is about 25 litres of *panchagavya* (mixed in 750-800 litres of water) and four to five tonnes of vermicompost.

Spraying *panchagavya* has been found effective in the control of fruit fly menace, a common infestation in all fruit bearing trees, according to Dr. Sundaravadivel.

According to him, trees treated with organic manures bore large sized leaves and formed a dense canopy with profuse rooting systems. The taste and shelf life of the fruits were also found to be more satisfactory.

### **Nitrogen-fixing bacteria**

“The interaction of the root hairs of these trees with the organic manures also increased the activity of the nitrogen-fixing bacteria in the soil.

“The organic manures also act as a carrier medium for the development of several beneficial micro organisms such as *azospirillum*, *azotobacter*, *rhizobium* and *phosphobacteria*,” he said. Dr. S. Sundaravadivel can be reached by mobile at 98843-90104 and email: [sundaravadive166@hotmail.com](mailto:sundaravadive166@hotmail.com)

## **THREE-YEAR COURSE TO AN ORGANIC CERTIFICATE**

On the banks of the Satluj a little village has finally- or rid of an old habit. A three-year spirited campaign has made Khakhrola in Shimla district free of pesticides and fertilisers the end of July, all 15 farmers, each with a land holding between 60 and 100 bighas, will become eligible for an One Cert Asia's Agri-certification for organic produce. And this village will find a place on the country's organic map.

The farmers here—some of whom are government officials, others retired have not used any pesticide or chemical fertiliser in the last three years. Women of the village were at the forefront of this campaign to shun pesticides and fertilisers and switch to organic farming. Except for some weather- or soil-related problems which have affected their produce, villagers say there hasn't been any pest attack in these three years where they have felt the need to use pesticides. The herbal sprays have been as effective as pest-repellants, they say.

Using only vermicompost and herbal sprays, the farmers' rich haul of capsicum, okra, tomato, cabbage and cauliflower have a ready market in Delhi.

With the organic label near their reach, villagers are already thinking ahead. "Once we get the certification, the market demand of the village produced vegetables and fruits in the outside market will grow. But we need a linkage to market and the buyers," says Sulochan Singh, a retired Dy. SP and local farmer.

Upbeat over being part of the organic movement that's taken root in Shimla district, farmers at village Khakhrola are among 5,657 others who have been registered in this model. project being implemented in nine blocks of Shimla. About 2 farmers in the district are eligible for the OneCert Asia certification given by a Jaipur-based agency which has done pre-audits of these farmers.

Giving farmers technical inputs is the M R. Morarka Foundation. a Rajasthan based NGO that is working with the state's Agriculture Department to implement the Rs 1.5-crore model project. Three years ago they out in place a procedure to identify farmers willing to switch over to organic farming.

A cluster approach was adopted keeping in view factors like soil conditions and uniform geographical locations with similar cropping patterns." says Divender Chaudhry, director.-Morarka Foundation.

Among the nine blocks. Rampur leads the show with 1,533 farmers registered in the project. Theog, the gateway to Himachal's apple belt. comes next. Chirgaon, a backward block and Chopal are also treading the organic path.

## Success Stories related to Agriculture

In Jubbal and Kotkhai area, more than 200 apple growers have shown a willingness to switch over to organic mainly because the cost of pesticides and sprays is becoming too steep and hasn't always been-effective in controlling diseases. Second productivity is already down.

The proof of the change, say the state's Agriculture Department officials, lies in the falling sale of pesticides in Shimla district—from Rs 74 crore to Rs 14 crore in four years. "We are keeping a watch on the sale figures of these chemicals in the areas where the farmers are switching to organic farming. The sale trend will be enough to gauge the impact, says H R Sharma, Deputy Director, Agriculture Department.

The coming months should be exciting. The Morarka Foundation plans to arrange market tie-ups for farmers for their organic produce the surrounding hamlets had remained poor. The villagers practised primitive methods of cultivation. Traders and middlemen got fat on the yield while the farmers starved.

Education and healthcare facilities were almost non-existent. Officialdom stayed away.

"Several pregnant women died for lack of timely medical attention and so did some people bitten by snakes. We were helpless," recalls Aravinda Kumar, a villager.

Then came the road. Now people can drive down to the village in jeeps or use the twice-daily bus service. The road is an example of development ushered in by a proactive government agency, in this case the district police.

Gangapur and the nine hamlets, mostly inhabited by Gonds, Kolams, and Lambadas, were once strongholds of the Maoists. Not anymore.

In May 2003, the villagers turned against the Maoists. In a bloody clash that ensued, naxals had to beat a hasty retreat, but not before the villagers seized a pistol from a dalam commander. The next day, they trekked over 60 km to a police station to hand over the pistol and reiterate their resolve not to entertain Maoists anymore.

For the police, it was a godsend—a chance to implement the WHAM (winning hearts and minds) strategy to wean away the villagers from the naxalites. Pooling donations and funds from different schemes, they began laying the road. For more than two months, more than 30 policemen stood guard as 100 villagers a day toiled on the road. Two hillocks were cut through and 37 culverts constructed across the rivulets to connect the village to the main road running between Kadam and Utnoor towns. The bus service started on January 18, 2004. Just days before that, on January 13, the villagers repulsed another attack by the naxalites.

The road has saved the villagers from the middlemen, who had till then dictated the price of paddy, turmeric, cotton, and maize. "We used to- Uek our way to Pembri to borrow money from traders for buying seeds, pesticides, and fertilizer. We had to sell the farm yield to the same trader, who used to offer low prices and then deduct the loan amount with three per cent interest rate," says Madhu, a tenth class dropout and a former member of the Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency.

## ***Success Stories of Panchayati Raj***

The tribals were never paid cash immediately, but only after a fortnight. If money was to be paid immediately, the trader would deduct another two per cent. And so innocent were the tribals that none questioned the practices.

The villagers are a transformed lot today. Some of them go to Kadam town just to know the prevailing market prices. "The other day we sold 2,000 bags of paddy in our village to a trader. We got some Rs. 300 extra per quintal. If we had to sell that in Pembri we would have to bear the transport expenses, spend two days for transport. Life is comfortable now," says CIL Rajeshwar Reddy. Vedama Laxman is more adventurous. He hired a lorry and took sunflower seeds to Bokhar in Maharashtra to sell. "I got a price of Rs. 1,600 per quintal. whereas the prevailing rate here is Rs. 1,200."

Frequent visits to Kadam, where they interact with others, have taught the villagers new farming techniques. Some have begun hiring tractors to till the lands and the area under cultivation has increased. They now sell mahua flowers and beedi leaves collected from the forest at a Girijan Cooperative Corporation outlet in Kadam.

An attitudinal change among the villagers, thanks to the police's proactive approach, is also evident. They feel an armed struggle is irrelevant when government agencies are ready to solve the problems. "The ITDA [Integrated Tribal Development Agency] sends mechanics to repair the hand operated borewells. The ITDA officials helped us start Self-Help Groups," says Dosanla Laxmi. At present there are 29 active SHGs, which have borrowed Rs 3.55 lakh for buying agricultural inputs.

Other "goodies" too have come in. Along with development activity the road has ushered in the habits of modern world. There is a great demand for tikiis (plastic bindis), soft drinks, beer, and gutkha. at the three kirana stores that have sprung up in Gangapur. An enterprising tribal installed a dish antenna and wired up the entire village bringing it the soap operas. Three others followed suit.

There are now more than 100 colour TVs in the village. The residents mostly watch Telugu soap operas and movies on pirated VCDs bought in Kadam. 'We have about 70 VCD players in the village,' the tribals say.

The Maoists, however, have not taken kindly to the joint road-laying effort. Months after it was thrown open, an action team shot dead a resident, Damodar Rao accusing him of playing a pivotal role in laying the road. But the villagers have not lost their nerve. They now want the Government to convert the kutchra road into a pucca road, since during the rains the bus cannot be run.

"If there is a pucca road, we need not depend on the RTC bus. We will buy some autorickshaws so that we can go to Kadam anytime we want," say the villagers.

## MORE THAN JUST A PROBLEM...

Water shortage is something we all love to hate, but beyond lip service, little seems to have been done. The need of the hour is to work out solutions before. it is too late, says Kamlesh Pandya

When discussion veers around to the issue of water shortage, most Indians tend to think in terms of alternate water supply options, says Mumbai-based activist Rudolf D'sou-“It works till you have so many more rivers that can be tapped or lakes from where water can be sourced. When the water table itself dips to a record low, that is when the solution which should have been taken up in the first place-regeneration of the water table-is thought of,” he adds.

In India's fastest-growing city Thane, Ashok Kumar is a resident with an active interest in the water table. He also is an environment engineer with a petroleum major, and has a professional as also a personal interest in the abuse of water resources.

“The process of abusing water resources begins with excessive use, doing nothing to regenerate over used water resources, degradation of water through discharge of untreated effluent as also percolation of sewage through the earth to the water table under ground. Urban water distribution systems leave a lot to be desired as there is a large percentage of wastage while distributing water. Finally leaking taps and lack of treatment make up the rest of the picture he explains.

The solution. feels Rajesh Sharma. Managing Director, Ion Exchange (India) Ltd, is good water management. which is crucial to overcome the water crisis that threatens our country. “It is the need of the hour, if we wish to avoid starvation and political strife, protect the environment and make industrial and human activity sustainable,” he says.

“Top priority should be to conserve fresh water through increased seepage and storage through extensive watershed development and rainwater harvesting, implemented as a coordinated effort by the local people with the help of NGOs, jointly with government and the corporate sector,” he explains. Giving a simple fiscal quotient to the issue. he points out that it would cost billions of crores to construct water storage equivalent to what even existing forests store.

In terms of water storage, flood control, reduced soil erosion and loss of nutrients, additional agricultural crops, fuel timber and other produce, the value of India's forests is immense. Many millions of jobs could be created in nurturing watershed forests to protect rivers, the arteries of agriculture.

Micro irrigation methods such as drip and sprinkler irrigation can tremendously increase area under cultivation, yields and water saving, feels Rajesh Sharma. Creation of small reservoirs. check dam sand

## ***Success Stories of Panchayati Raj***

percolation ponds do not require long lead time, complex technology or large amount of capital; will provide employment for many millions who need not be displaced and can utilise local skills, initiatives and materials, he adds.

From natural water the large rural areas to urban Conservation of water through recycle of industrial effluent and domestic sewage will reduce use of fresh water by 50%. In semi urban areas still under development it should be mandatory to incorporate water recycle to conserve fresh water.

In Mumbai's garden suburb of Powai, Niranjan Hiranandani, MD, Hiranandani Constructions says the emphasis should be on water recycling and through that extra water generated, further greening. "Water sourced from primary resources. such as bore-wells on the premises and piped water supplies usually go down the drain, so it makes sense to have rainwater harvesting to recharge bore wells, while recycling sewage creates more water for washing and gardens, which is the way to go," he adds.

"In a metropolis like Mumbai, as indeed all over the country piped water supply is subsidized, so it always seems a better alternative to add more resources rather than manage water usage," he explains.

Rajesh Sharma says creating the infrastructure to assure water availability and its sustainable supply for agricultural, industrial and domestic use is a gigantic task. The key ingredients for successful countrywide implementation of water management programmes and projects are awareness, appropriate technology, training in operation & maintenance, approval mechanisms, finance availability, transparency, and accountability. "No single organisation can ensure all of these, especially given the vast scale of the problem and its urgent solution. Only collaborative efforts between public, private and voluntary sectors and particularly community participation, whether in villages or cities, can give results, build faith and provide impetus for replication," he concludes.

## HIGH-YIELDING BENGAL GRAM VARIETY DEVELOPED

It has the qualities of bolder grain, wilt resistance of ICCB I and early maturity of Annigeri 1

GULBARGA. Scientists at the Agriculture Research Station of the University of Agriculture Sciences here have successfully come out with a high-yielding variety of bengal gram, incorporating the gene progeny of ICCB-1 Bengal Gram variety (Kabuli) and that of 'desi' variety Annigeri 1.

Senior Scientist at the research station D.M. Mannur and Senior Farm Superintendent S.R. Patil, who have come out with the new variety called MMK1, told The Hindu here on Monday that the new variety has been released in Belgaum, Bijapur and Bidar districts after farm trials in the research station.

Dr. Mannur said ICCB 1, which is popular among bengal gram growers in North India, is a long-duration variety with a maturity period of 160 days. The climate in North Karnataka district is not best suited for farmers to take up the variety, although it is resistant to wilt and many diseases and has good market value.

Annigeri I is best suited to the climate in North Karnataka since it is of short duration. But its grain size and quality is far inferior to the ICCB 1 variety, which has a greater demand in the market and fetch more price.

Taking into all these factors into account, scientists at the research station worked on the segregation of the gene progeny of ICCB 1 and Annigeri I varieties to incorporate the qualities of wilt resistance, bolder grains and ability to mature early and finally came out with MMK 1.

This variety incorporates the qualities of bolder grain and wilt resistance of ICCB 1 and the early maturity qualities of the Annigeri 1.

Dr. Mannur said after trails on the laboratory and in the farms of the research centre, it was decided to release the new variety in select farms of bengal gram growers in Gulbarga, Bijapur, Belgaum and Bidar districts this year. The feedback is encouraging, he said.

The scientists propose to release MMK 1 for commercial cultivation from the next season. The new variety can bear bolder grains and the grain colour is white.

This has higher acceptability in the market and fetches good price unlike the old varieties. '

### **Red gram bowl**

Dr. Mannur, who is also involved in research on red gram said Gulbarga district, known as the red gram bowl of South India, faces the threat of reemergence of wilt problem.

In the past few years, farmers have been going in for local varieties, particularly 'Gullal', as it is a short duration crop. But it is highly susceptible to wilt problem



“If this goes on unchecked, the wilt problem will raise its ugly head in a year or two and ruin the economy of the red gram growers”, Dr. Mannur said.

Dr. Mannur said scientists at the centre have now come out with an improved variety called WRP 1. It is a short duration crop with the capacity to bear bold white seeds.

The Hindu, 05.01.06

## **COMRADES STRETCH OUT TO PVT SECTOR FOR RUBBER PRODUCTION**

The Left Government in Tripura is Slowly opening up to private investment, following the footsteps of its counterparts in West Bengal and Kerala.

Recently it approved all ambitious public-private joint venture in rubber wood processing and furniture making unit to boost rubber cultivation in the State through its Tubber Mission’.

This followed file signing of a memorandum between the, State-owned Tripura Forest Development all If Plantation Corporation Ltd (TFDPC) and tilt, Rubco Haut Woods Private Limited of Kerala for setting tip a company for rubber wood processing and furniture manufacturing.

The new company, christened as Tripura Rubco Rubwood Pvt Ltd, will be. responsible for promotion of rubber cultivation, processing of raw materials, both natural rubber and wood, and their manufacturing.

It has also been authorised to raise money from any source and run like a. professional business house.

Tripura is the second State after Kerala that produces high quality natural rubber and promises to be it major contributor to country’s rubber economy, and thereby, to the. creation of jobs, and family income.

“The launch of the ‘Rubber Mission’ Is very significant as Its success is directly linked with the progress and sustenance of the, proposed venture,” VK Bahuguna, the, mission director told The Pioneer.

The mission envisages developing 85,094 hectares or land under the rubber cultivation in the next 20 years. The strategy is two pronged: On the one hand, expansion of rubber cultivation in the State, and oil the other hand help enhance income of the small and marginal farmers, especially the tribal shifting cultivators,

“To start with, we are focusing on creating a rubber belt along the borders with Bangladesh, and those families who had to vacate their lands because of the barbed wire fencing will be brought under rehabilitation project through rubber cultivation,” Mr Bahuguna said.

## Success Stories related to Agriculture

In the first phase, rubber will be cultivated in some 3,874 hectares of land bordering Bangladesh, and within the span of next 15 years, the mission hopes to reach the target of 85,094 hectares of land under the rubber cultivation.

For over a decade Tripura has been implementing World Bank-funded Rubber development programme for the rehabilitation of the shifting cultivators. At present more than 10,750 ha of land is under rubber plantations.

The TFDPC which helps rehabilitation of the tribal shifting cultivators, claim that, many of the jhumia (shifting cultivator) families are earning Rs 7,000 to 9,500 per month each.

Once the company becomes operational, opportunities for jobs and in-are likely to grow many fold the TFDPC officials say.

The mission would require at least Rs 500 crores for the three years to initiate the process. It hopes to provide 41,000 jobs and settlement of 30,000 tribal population, besides generating over 900 lakh mandays during the period. Special focus will be given on engaging the unemployed youths.

As per the project proposal, a factory will be set up at Ananda Nagar, close to the State capital, Agartala, for manufacturing of various natural rubber-based products and top class furniture from rubber woods.

The Rubber Board headquartered in Kerala, has identified five lakh hectares in the North-East region where rubber plantations can be developed to double the country's total rubber growing area.

## **GROUND CONTROL : ORGANIC MANURE IS NE'S NEW BUZZ**

With an MA degree in international business from the University of Greenwich, London, Kumar Sanjeet Narayan Dev should not have returned to his home state. But that was exactly what he did. He came back to Guwahati and now runs a unit that manufactures organic manure, which he describes as a lucrative area with a tremendous future.

Sanjeet has with him his sister, Panchali an MSc in bio-technology. And their backroom, comprises IIT Guwahati, which has offered them technology as well as standing buy-back orders for most of their output.

Though Assam and the Northeast are mostly organic by default—according to government figures, of the net cultivated area of 4.3 million hectares, around 30.92 lakh hectares have never seen the use of chemical or inorganic fertilisers—conscious organic farming has suddenly picked up across Assam, especially among those cultivating ginger, turmeric, oranges, black pepper and pineapples.

On an experimental basis, the Assam agriculture department has taken up organic cultivation of joha or scented rice across 92 hectares in three districts involving 162 farmers. “The young and educated generation of farmers are the most enthusiastic about organic. These is because they have access to information and want to make farming a profitable venture instead of just a family tradition,” says N N Barpujari, director of agriculture, government of Assam.

That the Northeast is “naturally organic by default” can be gauged from the extremely low consumption of fertiliser in the region. While the national average is currently around 94 kg/hectare, the average in the Northeastern region as a whole is only 31 kg/ha.

In the states of Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim it is even lower: while Arunachal's average is 2.7 kg/ha, Sikkim uses 3.1 kg/ha.

So, though scientists at the Regional Centre of Organic Farming at Imphal, may attribute the low fertiliser consumption to lack of awareness and non-availability of fertilisers, the situation dovetails nicely with the purposes of the Central Technology Mission for Integrated Development of Agriculture (TM-IDH).

Apart from the ever-increasing number of farmers keen to go organic, one section of entrepreneurs is moving the comparatively new area of manufacturing organic manure and vermicompost. While Kumar Sanjeet Narayan Dev's bio-manure 'Green Markets' has found a ready buyer in IIT Guwahati, Hiren

## Success Stories related to Agriculture

Sharma, small-time farmer of Bamunpara village in Darrang district earns Rs 1.6 lakh annually through the 120 MT of vermicompost manufactured in his eight units.

Organic and bio-manure has caught the imagination of the educated unemployed across districts. Nabajyoti Rajkhowa, a science graduate armed with a diploma in computer applications, for instance, did not bother to look for a government job after leaving college. Today, he is a major vermicompost manufacturer in Golaghat in Upper Assam, with an assured market among teagrowers and other cultivators and earns around Rs 3 lakh per annum.

The one problem the authorities foresee, however, relates to certification, essential if the cultivators are to get the tight remuneration. For instance, farmers in the hill district of Karbi Anglong get barely Rs 25 crore for their annual ginger crop; in the national market, the produce is valued at Rs 200 crore.

“We have already taken up the certification process with some accreditation agencies like SOS India of Gurgaon and SKAL India of Bangalore,” says Barpujari. “The farmers’ efforts should not go in vain.”

With the Centre allocating Rs 3 crore for the Northeast under the National Project on Organic farming during 2005-06, and certification agencies conducting tests on different farm products of the region, it won't be long before agriculture comes down to earth.

## **ASH TO CASH : POWER WASTE DOUBLES AS MANURE**

Fly ash is making news again, and this time it isn't about protests and pronouncements. Instead, the tonnes of fly ash generated by four thermal power plants in Maharashtra are directly responsible for crop yields going up and farmers earning more.

What's more, the chances are bright that byproduct Bhusaval, Paralli-Vaijyanth and and Paras). Of these 12 farmers were from the Nashik and Bhusaval belt, near Eklera.

The scientists went to the source of fly ash and then spread out to the fields nearby. For the thermal power plants, this experiment was a "great opportunity" to dispose their "waste". Since June 2005, the Eklera plant, which generates upto 3,000 tonnes of fly ash everyday, has been generously providing its ash for the field trials.

To reassure sporting farmers that their investment would not turn to dust, scientists encouraged them to use the fly ash in only half their field. In the remaining half, the same crop was grown without the ash, Depending on the quality of the ash and the crop, between 20 and 50 tonnes of fly ash was liberally sprinkled on each acre of land of thermal power generation will finally find an eco-friendly disposal system. Fly ash as organic manure is the new buzz in this agrarian belt.

It all began when some farmers around the Eklera power plant in Nashik district decided to join an experiment being conducted by the Dr Punjabrao Deshmukh Agriculture University, Akola.

"Since June 2005, we have been sprinkling select fields with fly ash and the results have been amazing," says A H Deshmukh, scientist in-charge of the project in Nashik, fly ash is rich in both micro and macro nutrients required in fields and revitalises the soil," Buoyed by their success in campus trials between 1992 and 1997, the university decided to join the Union science and technology department's fly ash utilisation programme and go out into 120 fields across the state. All the farms they chose were located around four selected' thermal power plants (Eklera).

The results spoke for themselves. On an average, a 20 percent increase was recorded in soyabean production, 15 per cent in banana and between 10 to 20 per cent in cotton.

"This method will give farmers an alternative to chemical pesticides," explains Dr S M Bhojar, HoD of the agro-chemistry and soil conversation department.

Scientists say that once the benefits of the ash last for five years.

Seventy per cent of India's power needs are met by thermal plant, which produce 108 lakh tonnes of ash annually. It is estimated that by 2012, India will have collected 175 lakh tonnes of the ash.

## IN DRY VIDARBHA, VILLAGE REAPS A RICH HARVEST

In the past, Hatgaon village and the surrounding areas located in the cotton howl of Vidarbha have been in the news for farmers' suicides. But that may soon be history. Hatgaon has become the first village to own a minor irrigation project-which it partly built and is now operating and maintaining on its own.

The project was formally handed over to Hatgaon at a function in Wardha on Saturday. The neighbouring village of Dhotra also secured ownership of its irrigation dam.

The Rs 2-crore project, partially funded by KfW, the German development bank, began about three years ago. The drought-ridden village now has a dam, built on a local nullah, with over 1 million cubic metres of water. the project is being managed by the village's Water Users' Association (WUA).

Under the Participatory Irrigation and Development Process-restricted to 100-250 hectare irrigation area-KfW provides onethird of the project cost, while the villagers have to fund the rest-either by way of cash or labour. Maharashtra Water Resources Department's Local Irrigation Sector provides the technical assistance while a local NGO-in this case Wardha-based Dharamitra.-is roped in for motivation and administrative guidance.

Since last year, 94 of the 110 families in Hatgaon are reaping rich dividends. Not only have their yields increased, but they no longer have to depend on a single cotton crop as they are able to produce as many as three crops annually. The gross agricultural production of village has gone up roughly by Rs 5 lakh per annum.

"I used to get only three-four quintal of cotton till last year, This year, I had 12 quintals of cotton. Moreover, I also have a second crop of wheat and a third crop of hot-weather gram," says Husen Raut, a farmer in the area. So, although the last cotton picking is usually done in January, Raut still has about two quintals; of cotton left in his field.

Similarly, Bapurao Meshram's three acres of land yielded just one quintal of cotton last year. This year, he got a bumper 12 quintals. He also sowed soyabean and got six quintals of gram, While he invested Rs 12,000, his returns added up to Rs 30,000.

### How it Works

The German government channels its International development funds through the Kreditanstalt für Weideraufbau, now known simply as KfW Bank. The Participatory Irrigation and Development Process

## ***Success Stories of Panchayati Raj***

is being funded by a soft loan of Rs 126.5 crore from KfW. The Maharashtra government has earmarked Rs 42.1 crore (for land acquisition, loyalties) while the farmers are expected to contribute Rs 16 crore by way of cash, labour or raw material. The scheme is expected to cover 34 projects in 12 districts.

“Earlier, we had nothing to do after the kharif crop, so most of us would work as labourers in neighbouring villages. Now, we are busy even at this time of the year. We had never grown soybean, wheat and gram,” says Maroti Thakre.

But acceptance took time. In fact, the German bank had tried to peg the project in Bihar and Rajasthan, but failed. “Progress was initially slow as the Participatory Irrigation and Development Process was a new concept. Initially, the farmers expected the government to pay for everything,” recalled Kevin Smith, the project’s India consultant. “The farmers’ income has increased by three-five times in the first season, and they have been able to recover their investments in a single year,” he added.

“Collection of water charges in a government project is very poor and the cost of maintenance very high. In participatory projects like these, people learn to behave responsibly as the onus is on them”, pointed out K K Badhe, a retired sub-divisional engineer of the Local Irrigation Sector who has been roped in as consultant. Badhe reports to the Pune-based supervisory body called Technical Assistant Team (TAT), comprising technologists, sociologists, agronomists, marketing experts and an NGO coordinator.

M N Khadse, an activist with Dharamitra, was confident that the project was sustainable in the long run too. “It is not like cooperative bodies run by politicians. The WUA body is elected for a five-year term, after which fresh elections are held,” he said.

Besides Hatgaon and Dhotra, Dharamitra is undertaking two more projects at Bibkhed and Kasari in Buldana district of Vidarbha.

## ORGANIC SUGARCANE : PROFITABLE THROUGH INNOVATIVE INITIATIVE

Chemical Pesticides and fertilizers have always been considered 'manna' from heaven for Indian ryots, especially after the second green revolution. Farmers believe that by applying potash and urea to the soil their crop can be made to yield more.

But a vast majority of them have failed to realise that excessive application of these chemicals over the years has poisoned the land, water and the environment.

### **Health hazard**

More than 75 per cent of the food crops grown today have toxic residues of chemicals used for growing them and they are hazardous for human health, according to Mr. R. Ranganathan, President of Organic Farmers Association in Chennai.

Mr. Ranganathan, an organic farmer himself, is growing sugarcane in his 8-acre farm in Mayiladuthurai taluka, Nagapattinam district of Tamil Nadu.

Use of organic methods for crop cultivation is no rocket science, according to him. "These traditional methods were used for decades, but forgotten along the way and now have been rediscovered as safe and affordable alternatives," he explains.

### **Expected yield**

He is expecting to harvest about 40-50 tonnes of sugarcane per acre, compared with farmers who use chemicals in the area who harvest about 30-40 tonnes.

His farm is a model for other aspirants and he is also teaching other farmers the benefits of use of various plant leaves such as neem, castor, custard apple, cow's urine, dung and curd to make insect repellents and vermiwash.

### **Horizontal planting**

Detailing his cultivation technique, Mr. Ranganathan said, "The field was ploughed well into furrows by applying about 1,000 tonnes of vermicompost.

The sugarcane setts were planted on the furrows horizontally at a spacing of about 4x4 feet between them."

In addition to vermicompost, several earthworms were also released into the field.



## ***Success Stories of Panchayati Raj***

Irrigation was done twice every week initially after planting and later continued once every 15 days. About 20 lures of diluted Panchangavya was also sprayed twice over the crop.

The first spray was done 15 days after planting the setts in the. main field and the second in the third month, according to him.

Dethrashing of the dried leaves and removal of weeds, which are usual practices in crop cultivation, were not done.

### **No weeding**

“The dried leaves and weeds were also allowed to grow, as they are also a part of the ecosystem,” he explained.

Once a month the dried leaves were pulled manually and left to rot in the field, as they are a good source of manure to the plants. The durration of the crop is about one year and Mr. Ranganathan is expecting four ratoons from his crop. Like other sugarcane growers, he is not selling his the local cooperative sugar mills.

“The recent price hike announced by the government is an eyewash, he claims. A farmer gets about Rs. 1,200 per tonne of sugarcane, but he is not paid for the by-products such as ethanol or molasses,” he said.

He, along-with other organic sugarcane farmers in the area, are planning to manufacture moulded jaggery (called achu vellam in Tamil) from the harvested sugarcane.

### **Organic jaggery**

Moulded organic jaggery gets a good price especially during the festival season and also creates employment opportunities for the several persons who produce it, according to him.

He plans to sell the moulded jaggery through the several organic product outlets established by his association in the country.

### **Marketing outlets**

The organic farmers association has about 10,000 farmers as its members all over the country.

It has around 200 outlets all over the country under the brand name ‘Poison-free-food’ through which the farmers market their produce.

For more information readers can contact Mr. R. Ranganathan at No16-Vanigar street, Thirupporur, Tamil Nadu-603 110, email: tedetrust@rediffmail.com, phone :044-27446369, mobile: 94433-46369.

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## **SUCCESS STORIES RELATED TO COMMUNICATION**

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- A road that changed their lives
- At e-gram panchayat, new windows open
- A promising use for jute in rural roads



## **A ROAD THAT CHANGED THEIR LIVES**

Villagers in a remote tribal area benefit from a joint effort.

Two winters ago, on January 18, 2004, the first bus reached village Gangapur in Andhra Pradesh's Adilabad district, opening up a whole new world for its people and those in nine surrounding hamlets.

It used to be a day's travel by bullock cart in the summer to reach the town of Pembri, 40 km away. During the rains, it took double the time: the villagers had to cross the back waters of the Kadam reservoir in country boats and then wade through waist-deep water to cross rivulets.

All that changed with a 12 km road connecting Gangapur to the main road and the nearest town of Kadam. About 1,800 villagers and the district police, braving the threat of Maoists, worked together to lay the 'kutchra' road that cuts through two hillocks and many small rivulets. Work began on November 20, 2003, and was completed on December 15, 2003.

## **AT E-GRAM PANCHAYAT, NEW WINDOWS OPEN**

It's a remote area, surrounded by dense forests and the Aravalli hills. Juna Chamun and three other villages here have a population of 4,500 with most of the people belonging to Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes. And only 10 per cent of them own their own agricultural land.

In this most unlikely of places, an e-governance revolution has been silently creating new milestones.

Three years ago, the panchayat of this group of villages had no funds to carry out developmental work. The reason: many families simply won't pay any tax. Two years back it got a system under which the government has provided the GSWAN (Gujarat State Wide Area Network) connectivity using a BSNL dial-up facility installed at its office.

"There was no proper mechanism available with the panchayat to collect taxes from villagers. After I got elected as chief, I collected Rs 60,000 through public donations to purchase a computer, scanner, printer and web camera for the panchayat office," recalled panchayat president Guntant Barot. They then got the GSWAN connectivity that was to change their lives.

Data collection followed: names and addresses of villagers, status of their properties, agricultural land records, details about roads, sanitation, education and so on were fed into the system. The panchayat then identified the tax defaulters and launched a collection drive.

What proved to be an added centive was the facility of getting public utility documents, photoidentity cards etc without any hassles from the office. The panchayat's annual revenue from taxes had been a meagre Rs 1.60 lakh and the entire amount went towards administrative establishment expenditure. Now a surplus revenue of Rs 1 lakh has been invested in a Central Government scheme under which the government provides 75 per cent of the total amount while the rest is raised through public contributions.

This is the first group village panchayat in Gujarat to earn the status of an 'e-gram panchayat'.

Among other things that the panchayat is now able to provide to the villagers are an e-mail facility and information about various developmental and welfare schemes. "We also display results of the SSC/HSC board examinations for students who had to walk a long distance to reach either the taluka or the district centre for this," says peon Suresh Thakarda at the panchayat office. He operates the system when the, sarpanch is away.

Devji Patel, who usually issues land certificates and other utility documents to farmers, says the GSWAN dial-up centre has reduced his burden. "Now, I can concentrate more on developmental work in the four villages and help the panchayat implement them in time."

The public utility documents being issued through this system include birth/death certificates, income and caste/sub-caste certificates and certain documents vital to local farmers like ones which certify the death of their cattleheads.

## A PROMISING USE FOR JUTE IN RURAL ROADS

Think of jute and the picture that springs before your eyes is sacks, gunny bags and at best dusty twines whose loosely woven yarns trigger a dreadful sneezing bout.

Yet there are many lesser known applications of this natural fibre-which can be blended or used in its stand alone form.

These applications are seen in a gamut of area,; ranging from nurseries and pest control to strengthening embankments for roads and railways. Recently the fabric has caught the fancy of top rung fashion designers.

Now, a pilot project involving the use of jute geo-textiles for road construction is expected to increase the possibilities of the environment-friendly material. This will also reduce the threat faced by the golden fibre which has lost some of its glitter in the wake of stiff competition from synthetics.

The project, which is likely to get under way next month, will be taken up in the rural areas of four States to begin with Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal. It comes under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadhak Yojana (PMGSY) covering a total stretch of 40 km. Andhra Pradesh and Assam are expected to join later.

The Jute Manufactures Development Council (JMDC), a Union Textile Ministry body for promotion of jute and jute products, has signed up with the National Rural Roads Development Agency and the Central Road Research Institute for implementing the project.

While the NRRDA is the nodal wing of the Union Ministry of Rural Development entrusted with implementation of PMGSY, the CRRRI is a body under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. The CRRRI has already identified eight trial stretches in four States measuring 36.8 km on which detailed project reports were prepared suggesting appropriate specifications of jute geotextiles. The CRRRI will also monitor the performance of the fabric and the road for 18 months after completion.

It is not as if jute geotextiles have not been used before. Their eco-compatibility, easy availability and transportability help them score over the synthetic versions. As road construction materials they help by enhancing strength while checking subsidence.

They have proven their suitability beyond the controlled conditions of laboratory experiments and have been used on soft marine soils at the Kakinada Port in Andhra Pradesh, Kandla Port in Gujarat as also in West Bengal (including stretches of the Strand Road which skirts the Hooghly).

## ***Success Stories of Panchayati Raj***

As a matter of fact jute geotextiles had been in sporadic use since the 1980s but lack of proper documentation had dimmed their chances of becoming the material of choice.

But this time around, as efforts are being mounted to dovetail jute geotextiles into the PMGSY and promote their large scale use, it is causing a bit of excitement. The reason is not far to seek.

Says Arun Bat, secretary, JMDC. "The consumption 'of jute geotextiles will get a tremendous boost with standardisation after execution of the pilot project". Mr. Bat's optimism regarding the emerging opportunities for jute geotextiles is perhaps well-founded. An investment of Rs. 60,000 crores has been envisaged under the PMGSY, and according to Mr. Bat, if only 10 per cent of this project could be clinched by jute geotextiles, a demand of around two lakh tonnes of this material, valued at Rs. 500 crores, would be generated. However, the material will be suitable only for use on rural stretches as it is not amenable to taking heavy traffic loads.

As for the jute mills. manufacture of jute geotextiles can be taken up without major modification of existing equipment. Many big mills have already introduced colour to their production basket by including items other than hessian sacking and carpet backing cloth. Items of urban styling and home decor have already found a market. Of the total production of 15.71 lakh tonnes of jute goods in 2003-04, about 2,92 lakh tonnes was in nontraditional items.

In case the project take, off it is sure to bring cheer to the big mills. The intensely competitive packaging sector and the uncertainties of the packaging market make any alternative use a worthwhile proposition.

This is as true for the domestic market as for the export market, especially in European countries which Offer a ready market for eco-friendly modes of laying roads.

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## SUCCESS STORIES RELATED TO LIVELIHOOD

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- In Naxal country, the call to farm
- Mid-day meal scheme a success in Rajasthan
- Chhattisgarh plans first eco-ethno tourism trails
- Indian cattle model jumps global fence
- घरेलू उद्योगों की सूची में 18 और उद्योग शामिल करने संबंधी अधिसूचना जारी





## IN NAXAL COUNTRY, THE CALL TO FARM

Mushrooms pave way to alternate livelihood in Jharkhand

Naxalite groups in the heart of Jharkhand are facing an unlikely opponent. It's white, it's soft, it's edible and it's a fungus. Mushroom cultivation is rapidly emerging as an alternative occupation for the youth who have traditionally provided the largest number of recruits to ultra-Left groups.

Budmu, 25 km from Ranchi, is the perfect example. Two dozen-odd families in this block bear the 'extremist' tag and seven people have been arrested on serious charges over the past two years. But the current passion among the youth here is the mushroom.

Seeds of the societal revolution were sowed here in 2001, when Poonam, a resident of Budmu block and an undergraduate student in a local college, joined the Krishi Grain Vikas Kendra (KGVK), an NGO. She was trained by the ICAR's Ranchi-based Horticulture and Agro Forestry Research Programme (HARP) to grow mushrooms inside a dark room.

As her initiative took off, the Jharkhand government's World Bank-aided Swashakti Project (SP) gifted her a moped, which she used to travel from village to village, mobilising women to form self-help groups. "The Naxals tried to recruit me, offering to double the amount KGVK had paid me. But I declined," says Poonam.

As the MCC and the PWG looked on the self-help groups took off and even began weaning away professional extremists. Anju and Hemvanti Devi, who head the group in Dadia village, were once actively involved with ultra-Leftism; now that's a thing of the past.

"They are worse than goons. We want to make a living through hard work," says Hemvanti, who has prospered after joining the self help group. "Since mushroom cultivation is not very labour-intensive, we are beginning to make good profits."

According to Murlatoli group president Kiran and member Munni Devi, the high demand for their crop is responsible for their good fortune. "There is no dearth of buyers. As soon as we take the mushrooms to the market, they disappear. Even our bankers book their supplies in advance," they say.

Each self-help group in Budmu has 15 to 20 woman members, each of whom procures seeds from HARP to sell mushrooms at Rs 60/kg.

Starting with just Rs 400 in 2002, the Murlatoli group has a proud sum of Rs 4,050 in its bank account as on March 3. The groups across Murlatoli, Gurgai, Mudatoli and Dadia farm out their capital among villagers keen to take up alternative vocations.

## **MID-DAY MEAL SCHEME A SUCCESS IN RAJASTHAN**

The Rajasthan Government has taken a positive note of a survey on the mid-day meal scheme launched in the schools, leading to a significant decline in the dropout rate, increasing the enrolment of new students and enhancing the students' interest in studies. The survey has revealed that the enrolment of girl students in particular has increased by 29 per cent following the scheme's implementation.

The survey was conducted by the noted economist, Jean Dreze, for New Delhi-based Centre of Equity Studies in three States—Rajasthan, Karnataka and Chhattisgarh. It has shown that the school enrolment between July 2001 and July 2002 went up by 14 per cent in the States where the mid-day meal scheme was implemented. The corresponding figure in 1990's was only two per cent.

“Rajasthan has thrown its weight behind the Supreme Court order, showing what a political will can do,” Dr. Dreze said in a report based on the extensive survey. The programme, in which ‘ghooghri’—a semiliquid diet made of wheat—is distributed to children in the age group of 6 to 14 years, has also successfully dealt with the problem of their chronic malnutrition..

Rajasthan is the first State in the country where the mid-day meal scheme was introduced in all the 32 districts in the academic session 2002-03 in compliance with the Supreme Court's directions. Cooked meal with the 300 calories content and 8 to 12 grams of proteins is given to each student of first to fifth standards.

The scheme is in operation in all the Government and aided primary schools, including the Rajiv Gandhi golden jubilee schools and the mobile schools.

Despite the critical financial situation worsened by the consecutive droughts, a provision of Rs. 120 crores was made in the State Budget for the ambitious programme during the last financial year.

The Principal Secretary, Rural Development, and Panchayati Raj, M.K. Khanna, said here today that Rs. 105 crores had been provided under the programme during the current financial year, and 77.31-lakh children studying in over 73,000 schools and other educational centres were benefiting from it.

Mr. Khanna said the scheme's main objective was to achieve the target of universalisation of primary education and ensure the retention of students in schools. The State Government is providing assistance at the rate of Rs. 5 per kg for cooking the foodgrain supplied by the Central Government free of cost to the primary schools.

The village panchayats have been entrusted with the responsibility to provide cooked meals to children in the rural areas, while municipalities have been asked to bear this responsibility in the urban areas. The local women and selfhelp groups have come forward to cook ‘ghooghri’.

Special committees have also been constituted to monitor the distribution arrangements. Another committee conducts joint inspection of foodgrain before lifting it from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) godowns. Mr. Khanna said 1.38-lakh quintals of wheat had been lifted till June this year.

According to Dr. Dreze, “what is heartening is that Rajasthan has done the best in food logistics and monitoring. It reported timely delivery of grains and the teachers invariably described the quality of grain as above average. It even set up a high level monitoring committee to supervise the programme.”

The Hindu, 28.08.03

## CHHATTISGARH PLANS FIRST ECO-ETHNO TOURISM TRAILS

Tourists visiting Chhattisgarh will soon be able to feel-what it is like to live with primitive tribes in natural environs. The tourism department got an approval from the Union Tourism Min, to establish the first-of-its-kind eco-ethno tourism trails in the country which involves integration of tribal ages in the tourism circuit. The department plans to set up two eco-ethno tourism trails in the state, which involves establishment of tourism infrastructure in tribal areas dominated by the primitive Baiga and Chamar communities of the state. With tribals forming almost 44 per cent of total population of the state, the government hopes the launch of the pilot project will help in bringing economic benefits for these communities.

Tourists staying at the Baiga circuit will be able to cover Kanha National Park, Bhoramdeo Sanctuary, Chilphi Ghati, Bhoramdeo Temple and Madwa Mahal. Those visiting the Kamar circuit will be able to visit Raipur, Rajim, Udanti sanctuary and Sitanadi sanctuary. A limited number of tourists, accompanied by trained tribal guides, would be allowed on these trails.

Tourism Minister B M Agrawal told The Indian Express that the promotion of eco-ethno tourism is part of the state’s tourism policy, which aims to develop activity-based tourism to increase the duration of tourists’ visit. “This effort will also help us in preserving the cultural heritage, archaeological monument and natural landscape of our state,” the minister said, adding “It is a pilot project and we are confident that this project can contribute in a big way to the economic prosperity of our tribal population.” The government also hopes that the trails would also help create awareness about tribal handicraft and lead to employment generation.

### What the govt thinks

- Project will bring economic benefits for tribals
- Will help in preserving the cultural her archaeological monuments and natural landscape.
- Create awareness about tribal handicraft and employment generation
- Preservation of indigenous knowledge of herbal medicines and crops

## ***Success Stories of Panchayati Raj***

Chhattisgarh enjoys a unique culture with a majority of the tribal population having its own distinct identity and way of life. 'And it is to present this unique feature of the state that we have decided to provide basic tourist infrastructure around tribal villages. It will be based on the concept of sustainability and minimal interference in the daily lives of local tribals who have over centuries evolved a way of life, which while dependent on natural resources, uses them in a sustainable way,' Chhattisgarh Tourism Managing Director Rakesh Chaturvedi said.

"Indigenous knowledge on the plantation of herbal medicines and crops is well developed, but is disappearing fast. We hope with the introduction of these tribal trails, we will be able to provide them with enough incentives to preserve their knowledge," he added.

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The Indian Express, 30.03.07

## **INDIAN CATTLE MODEL JUMPS GLOBAL FENCE**

FAO studies benefits of indigenous and upgraded breeds besides cooperative efforts

The Indian cattle-breeding model, putting to use a mix of indigenous and upgraded breeds, is proving to be a good example for replication across the world. With more than 30 diverse cattle breeds and several agencies at work, the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) is considering tailoring the model for other countries.

A team of FAO officials recently visited the Pune-based Bharatiya Agro Industries Foundation (BAIF) to deliberate on and prepare a set of broad guidelines that can steer the cattle breeding policies of member nations.

"Typically, governments across the world fail to make distinctions between pure and cross breeds and indiscriminately promote the latter as the preferred way to improve productivity," says Lucy Maarse, regional team leader, South Asia ProPoor Livestock Policy Programme and a member of the team that held discussions with BAIF "Often, however, indigenous breeds prove to be much sturdier as they are well adapted to local climatic and geographic conditions. Compared to cross breeds, these varieties can continue to remain productive even with limited inputs of fodder, feed and healthcare." According to Maarse, maintaining and improving pure local breeds through selection is vital to ensure that they do not disappear altogether in the future.

Besides, "farmers have informal, yet sophisticated ways of coming together to undertake breeding programmes which are often not recognised by the government", explains Maarse. For instance, in some parts of Rajasthan, community members jointly select, own and maintain a genetically superior indigenous bull that enables the community to breed productive offspring.

“We have recommended that where resources like fodder, healthcare facilities, marketing, transportation and storage are available, cross breeding can be encouraged while good indigenous breeds can be promoted in other areas,” says Dr Ashok Pande, vice-president of BAIF. “We have suggested that exotic breeds like Jersey not be promoted among farmers at all. Though they can produce 25 litres of milk everyday, they can survive only in controlled agro-climatic environments.”

But local non-descript breeds, when upgraded with indigenous varieties, can produce close to three litres everyday, at virtually no cost. As Maarse puts it, “The emphasis will be of promoting indigenous breeds with low and medium inputs as they are best suited to developing countries.”

As for governmental support, BAIF and FAO have recommended that exotic and cross breeds be promoted only in well-equipped areas. “We also feel that a 100 percent subsidy should be made available to small and marginal farmers so that they can also breed high-yielding species. This would serve the purpose that we have set out to achieve namely giving farmers an opportunity to earn supplementary income, while maintaining traditional breeds of the country,” sums up Pande.

The Indian Express, 08.12.06

## घरेलू उद्योगों की सूची में 18 और उद्योग शामिल करने संबंधी अधिसूचना जारी

नई दिल्ली, (उमेश लखनपाल विरंची सिंह) केन्द्रीय शहरी विकास मंत्रालय ने राजधानी के गैर नियोजित अवासीय क्षेत्र मास्टर प्लान में स्वीकृत घरेलू उद्योगों की सूची में 18 और श्रेणी के लघु उद्योगों को शामिल करने के लिए मास्टर प्लान में संशोधन करने की प्रक्रिया शुरू कर दी है।

अब इस नई घरेलू उद्योगों की सूची में आटा चक्की, ड्राईक्लीन की दुकान व स्कूटर मरम्मत आदि श्रेणी के उद्योगों को शामिल किया जाएगा।

मंत्रालय द्वारा इस संबंध में आज जारी अधिसूचना के तरह दिल्ली के नागरिकों से इन 18 श्रेणी के लघु उद्योगों में शामिल करने के लिए पक्ष या विपक्ष में सार्वजनिक आपत्तियां आमंत्रित की गई हैं।

अगले एक-दो दिनों में इस संबंध में समाचारपत्रों में अधिसूचना संबंधी विज्ञापन प्रकाशित कर 30 दिन के भीतर आपत्तियां या सुझाव आमंत्रित किए जाएंगे। दिल्ली सरकार के उद्योग मंत्री श्री मंगतराम सिंघल ने बताया कि वर्तमान में घरेलू उद्योगों की सूची में इन 18 उद्योगों के भी शामिल हो जाने से दिल्ली के लघु उद्यमियों को बड़ी राहत मिलेगी। उन्होंने कहा कि पिछले दिनों शहरी विकास मंत्री श्री गुलाम नबी आजाद

की अध्यक्षता में हुई बैठक 18 और लघु उद्योगों को घरेलू उद्योगों की श्रेणी में शामिल करने के लिए वर्तमान मास्टर प्लान में संशोधन करने का फैसला लिया गया था।

इसी फैसले के तहत 18 और उद्योगों की घरेलू उद्योगों में शामिल करने की प्रक्रिया शुरू की गई है।

घरेलू उद्योगों की सूची में शामिल किए जाने वाले उद्योगों की सूची इस प्रकार है— इनमें आटा चक्की, बैकलाइट स्विच की एसेम्बली, नापतोल के संयंत्रों की मरम्मत व एसेम्बली (पारा व अन्य खतरनाक पदार्थों को छोड़ कर), क्ले माडलिंग (प्लास्ट आफ पेरिस के साथ), डेयरी उत्पाद जैसे पनीर, घी और क्रीम तैयार करना, बड़ी कार्यस्थल को छोड़ कर ड्राईक्लीनिंग, एनामोलिंग विटरेस (बिना कोयले के प्रयोग से), खस-खस टट्टियां, जूट उत्पाद, दूध से क्रीम बनाना, बिन्दी निर्माण, फोटो काप्रिंग आफ डाइंग (बड़ा आकार में भी) पैकिंग आफ शैम्पू, पैकिंग हाफ हेयर आयल, रबड़ सटैम्प, रिपेयर आफ स्कूटर, स्क्रीन प्रिंटिंग और बर्तन धोने का साबुन केवल मिक्सिंग एंड पैकिंग शामिल किए जाएंगे। इसके साथ ही 16 अगस्त, 2004 को घरेलू उद्योगों की सूची की श्रेणी के संबंध में जारी अधिसूचना में संशोधन करते हुए घरेलू श्रेणी के उद्योग नम्बर-18, 20 और 21वीं श्रेणी के उद्योग की सूची में संशोधन क्रमशः इलैक्ट्रिकल गैजेट, कूलर व हीटर की मरम्मत व एसेम्बली, कपड़े सीलने की मशीन की मरम्मत व एसेम्बली तथा फ्रंट कास्टिंग को छोड़कर टाइप राटर की मरम्मत के कार्य को भी घरेलू श्रेणी के उद्योगों की सूची में शामिल किया गया है।

इसके साथ ही कोयले को जलाने के जुड़े कार्य व सीएफसी गैस आदि के प्रयोग के गैस-बैल्डिंग आदि कार्यों को प्रतिबंधित श्रेणी में ही रखा गया है। एक अन्य संशोधन के तहत शेड्यूल एक और दो के तहत रासायनिक पदार्थों के स्टोर को खतरनाक पदार्थों के निर्माण स्टोर और आयात नियम 1989 और पब्लिक लायबिल्टी इश्योरेंस एक्ट 1990 के तहत प्रतिबंधित श्रेणी में रखा गया है।

मंगतराम सिंघल ने बताया है कि दिल्ली सरकार अदालत में किसी तरह का हलफनामा नहीं देगी परन्तु वह अदालत के उद्योगों को हटाने और बसाने से संबंधित जानकारियां भर ही देगी। उन्होंने यह भी बताया कि बी से ई श्रेणी की कुल 2200 उद्योगों की बिजली काटी गई है।

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## **SUCCESS STORIES RELATED TO SELF-HELP GROUP**

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- Self-help groups set up in the Sunderbans
- TN village a hit with drivers for cheap bio-diesel
- Village that's a model for self-help
- An NGO at the service of rural poor





## **SELF-HELP GROUPS SET UP IN THE SUNDERBANS**

The authorities of the Sunderbans Tiger Reserve Project in West Bengal are now disbursing funds for schemes aimed at building the economic self-reliance of villagers in a region better known for Royal Bengal Tigers.

So far, the funds allotted by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests have been for community and ecological development and preservation of wildlife.

Thirty “self-help” groups, each comprising between six and 10 members drawn from the fringe villages, will be provided revolving funds for Pulse cultivation, paddy husking, pisi-culture duck and poultry farming, etc.

So far Rs. 2.37 lakhs have been allotted for the purpose. Seven of the groups comprise only women.

The Deputy Field Director, Sunderbans Tiger Reserve Project. Nilanjan Mallick, told The Hindu today: “Each of these self-help groups will be allocated between Rs. 12,000 and Rs. 40,000 for a start to this novel scheme.” The activities to be taken up will also go a long way in preventing depredation of forest resources and poaching of wildlife, particularly deer and wild boar.

The authorities also increased the target set for honey collection from the forests to 30,060 kg this season. Permits were issued to about 400 villagers who would set out in teams of four next month into the forests to collect honey, Mr. Mallick said.

Each honey collector earns about Rs. 40 for every kilogram of honey collected; the produce is ultimately handed over to the West Bengal Forest Development Corporation for marketing.

About 20,000 kg of honey was collected from the region last year.

Mr. Mallick said 14 eco-development committees had been set up in the 25,000-hectare tiger sanctuary and another 11 in the buffer areas, covering about 25 per cent of the total Sunderbans population for implementing 23 micro-plans that envisage community, development and wildlife preservation.

“Nearly Rs. 50 lakhs has been allotted this financial year for community development an important feature of which has been extending the solar energy network system in the region. Solar energy is being used to provide illumination in the bazar areas, at the jetties scattered across the islands and also to enable spotting of wildlife that could be straying into the village areas. There were 11 cases of tigers straying into pockets inhabited by humans last year but all of them were tranquilised and driven back to the forests with the help of villagers.” he said.

## **TN VILLAGE A HIT WITH DRIVERS FOR CHEAP BIO-DIESEL**

Sriparangusanallur village in Thoothukudi district has become a favourite stop for autorickshaw drivers and private bus owners. They are making a beeline to this village for its Rs 20 per litre bio-diesel produced from 'pungan' seeds.

The pioneer of this cheap and eco-friendly fuel, selfhelp group TANWA 'Pannai' started its bio-diesel unit in the village just a few days ago. And since then, the 'pungan' seeds have become 'manna' for the locals. The village, located on the banks of the Tamiraparani, is surrounded by abundant 'pungan' trees and there is no dearth of its seeds.

The bio-diesel extracting unit, with a 5 HP seed breaking machine and a 15 HP oil rotary unit, was installed at an estimated cost of Rs 2.1 lakh. The unit was inaugurated by former district collector K. Rajaraman, said DRDA project officer G. Radha. SUTRA (Sustainable Transformation of Rural Areas) Agency provided the technical guidance for the project.

The SHG purchased large quantities of 'pungan' seeds at the rate of about Rs 2.50 per kg and stored it in a shed. The seeds were then dried and kept in the seed breaking machine. Then the seeds were ground in the oil rotary unit.

DRDA project officer Radha said that 4 kg of seeds produce one litre of bio-diesel. The end product is heated for five minutes before it is ready for marketing.

Eco-friendly fuel marketed by self-help group is sold at Rs 20 for a litre, and can make an autorickshaw run for 72 km on just 3 litres

The unit has a capacity to grind 40 kg of seeds in one hour and can run continuously for 5 hours. According to estimates, the unit has the capacity to produce 50 litres of bio-diesel from 200 kg pungan seeds in five hours. The by-product; about 150 kg of oilcakes, is sold as biofertiliser at Rs 4 per kg. Interestingly, the SHG has been running the seed, breaking machine on the bio-diesel it produces.

Radha said the concept of producing bio-diesel from 'pungan' seeds had been conceived by the Indian Institute of Science (IIS), Bangalore. She added that she had visited the bio-diesel test unit run by IIS in Dharmapuri district to get the technical know-how.

"There is already a huge demand for this bio-diesel," said B. Gopalakrishnan, Block Development Officer of Srivaikuntam, He pointed out that during trial runs, an autorickshaw ran for 72 km on 3 litres the fuel, as against 54 km on the regular diesel.

N. Indira, leader of the SHG, told The Indian Express that “we have fixed at Rs 20 per litre. But there are many who are even willing to pay Rs 25.”

She said the SHG owe it all to the former district collector. She recalled how most of the women here were unemployed and called on Rajaraman during his visit to the village some four months ago and sought his help to set up factory. “It was the collector who took the initiative to make this project a reality,” Indira said.

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The Indian Express, 06.06.04

## VILLAGE THAT’S A MODEL FOR SELF-HELP

It’s not what you would expect an Indian village to be. There are neither any dung heaps, nor garbage mounds. And anyone defecating in the open is slapped with a Rs. 20 fine. You can’t dump garbage outside your house.

And if all this sounds too wonderful to be true, there’s more. From being water deficient, Mahaluge, village in Thane district, 80 km from Mumbai, has managed to end its dependence on outside sources. Agriculture is back in fashion and migration has ebbed.

All this hasn’t happened overnight. In fact, when about 500 villagers from Koyna were rehabilitated here in 1962 due to the construction of the Koyna dam, they were filled with despair. For the next 20 years, nothing changed.

Things started moving after one Suresh More retired in 1987 and settled in the village. “When I started living here, I realised that the dirty surroundings were coming in the way of the development of the village. So I decided to get everyone together to clean it up,” recalls More, now 68.

Today a huge arched cement gateway welcomes you to the village. When you walk on the clean red-mud village road, you marvel at the dustbins hanging from-green hedges on either side, every 25 metres, and boards with messages to keep the village clean on the trees around you. This has fetched the village awards.

“Earlier we used to wait for someone from the Collectorate to come and clean our village and for politicians to (yet us water. When nothing happened, we decided to do it ourselves,” said More.

It wasn’t easy. The villagers were so used to defecating in the open and dumping garbage outside that they were reluctant to spend money on toilets. But when More and some other villagers. started sweeping the village themselves, they were convinced.

## ***Success Stories of Panchayati Raj***

Recalls Balkrishna More, 70, who supported Suresh More right from the beginning: "Slowly people started joining us in sweeping the village and collecting the garbage and the look of the village changed." For those who couldn't afford cement toilets, they devised a Rs. 500 toilet and also contributed for those who couldn't afford.

Today Mahaluge is swept on Tuesdays and there's a daily muster for garbage collection. Besides, 90-odd homes have their own toilets.

Once the villagers witnessed how they could improve their quality of life, it was only a matter of time before they resolved to solve other problems similarly.

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The Indian Express, 08.09.05

## **AN NGO AT THE SERVICE OF RURAL POOR**

Tirupati-based samiti is implementing government schemes

The Rashtriya Seva samiti (RASS), a non-governmental Organisation headquartered at Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh, has been in the forefront of implementing schemes of the Central and State Governments for women and children.

Started in 1981 as the Rayalaseema Seva Samiti to cater for the needs of the drought-prone region, its name was changed 10 years ago after the NGO's activities expanded to other States.

According to G. Muniratnam, general secretary, RASS is managing creches for children of women farm workers in villages not covered by anganwadis at and around Tirupati. Thirty children up to the age of six are taken care of by a teacher and an assistant, given supplementary nutrition and educational tools and kept in a clean environment free of cost. The scheme is funded by the Union Human Resource Development Ministry.

Under the Child Sponsorship Programme, children are provided with clothing and education material up to a particular age. Funded by the Government and international agencies, the poorest of the poor children from villages are given aid for education up to matriculation. Special grants are given by international agencies on the birthdays of the children and on festival days.

More than 6,000 children have benefited by the programme started in 1999.

At Tirupati, RASS has formed women's self-help groups-in more than 200 villages. The members are given financial assistance to set up businesses of their choice. They are asked to save Re. 1 every day and aid is given to them. Petty shops, leaf plate making units, and other small units have come up in these villages. Mr. Muniratnam claims that nearly Rs. 12 crore has been given, as loans to the members and repayment is prompt.

## Success Stories related to Self-Help Group

The products of the SHGs are marketed by the producers with RASS guidance.

Mr. Muniratnam says gambling, which was widely prevalent in villages around Tirupati, has been curbed to a large extent. A de-addiction centre with 12 beds has been set up by RASS at Pappanaidupetta and significant results have been achieved.

The dropout rate has come down, thanks to increased awareness among women of sending their wards, especially girl children, to school. A separate school for the disabled and another for differently-abled children have been set up with assistance from the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry. Nearly 500 children have benefited from these two schools.

Youth interested in agriculture are trained in the use of modern implements and practices under the Acharya Ranga Krishi Vigyan Kendra.

Nearly 1,000 youths have benefited under the programme, for which a nominal fee of Rs. 50 is charged.

RASS has started implementing a programme, 'Sahaya Gram,' for the physically handicapped.

It has promoted a concept of model village on 20 acres to help all sections of the handicapped. The scheme provides health services on wheels to the community and creates awareness of the importance of education. It lays stress on immunisation and child care and corrective surgery, and gives mobility aids. At a computer training centre set up at Tirupati, youth are trained for six months in various programmes free of cost.

### **Work in naxal areas too**

Mr. Muniratnam says the Organisation has set up women's SHGs even in naxal-prone areas in Orissa.

The Organisation's finances are audited and test audits by the Comptroller and Auditor-General are also conducted.

Among the honours conferred on the organisation are the FICCI award for outstanding work in rural development (1997), The Government of India National Award for good work in the field of disabled welfare (1994), the Jamnalal Bajaj Endowment Award for service to disadvantaged groups and the rural poor (1989), the Rotary India Award for improving rural employment (2004).



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## SUCCESS STORIES RELATED TO MEDICINAL PLANTS

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- Novel technique to boost Amla yield
- US Firm Patents Kerala Tribe's Jeevani
- आयुर्वेद की ओर लौटती दुनिया विकल्प नहीं देसी चिकित्सा का





## NOVEL TECHNIQUE TO BOOST AMLA YIELD

Amla (*Phyllanthus emblica*), The improved selection: varieties like blica), is a prime constituent Anand, Banarasi, BSR-I, Chakya, of thriphala and is known Kanchan, Krishna and NA7 bear affor its high medical value. tractive fruits and fetch good market value.

A technique called in-situ budding has been advocated in Maranthai, Adaikalapatnam, Kadayanal for and Tenkasi areas of Tirunelveli District to increase amla yield. Six to ten year old trees are cut at three feet height front ground level during June-July or October-November.

New flushes are allowed to grow to pencil thickness. It takes two to three months to attain pencil thickness.

Three to four branches at opposite angles with equidistance were selected for budding with improved varieties.

A patch of bark of 1.5 cm length and 0.75 cm breadth was removed from a selected branch.

Approximately the same size of the bark with bud front the stem of a selected variety was fixed with a polythene strip tightly in the upper and down side of the bud without covering the bud.

The entire tree was defoliated.

Irrigation was done at 3-5 days interval up to 2 weeks.

New flushes emerging from the trees were removed frequently to facilitate active bud growth.

On proper establishment of new growth from the bud the trees should be irrigated once in 15 days up to six months.

The new growth emerging from the buds should be cut at half to one foot from the tip during the third month of planting and thereafter at two to three months interval depending upon the growth.

This facilitates early growth of the girth of the budded branch to the size of girth of the cut end of the free to avoid breakage of branches due to wind heavy winds.

## **US FIRM PATENTS KERALA TRIBE'S JEEVANI**

Apathy, indifference and sheer lethargy on part of Government has enabled an American firm to surreptitiously procure the trademark patent of Jeevani, a popular herbal compound with regenerative powers, developed with the active participation of tribals of Kerala.

Jeevani, an ethno-pharmacological herbal compound made from indigenous medicinal plant extracts, was developed by Tropical Botanical Garden and Research Institute (TB-GRI) after eight years of research and with the help of the native knowledge of tribal communities of Kerala.

For a decade, neither TBGRI nor any other agency of the Government bothered to secure an international trademark or patent both the product and the process.

Suddenly, everybody has woken up to the fact that a leading US food supplement manufacturer and vitamin store chain, Great Earth Companies Inc. has secured trademark rights for Jeevani.

The American company is now using Jeevani in its widely marketed product 'Jeevani Jolt 1000' without technically infringing the intellectual property rights of the original Jeevani. The ingredients mentioned in the American product are the same as those in the original Jeevani, such as *withania somnifera* (*ashwagandha*), piper longum, and *evolvulus alsinoides* besides the main ingredient *arogyapacha*.

Jeevani, known as the ginseng of the Kani tribe of Kerala, is a herbal formulation famed for its anti-fatigue, immunity-enhancing and liver-protecting qualities. Widely used as a wonder drug by the tribe, it strengthens the body's natural defences by activating the cellular immune system and enhances a host of other innate faculties.

The formulation is based on an extract of the plant, *Trichopus Zeylanicus* subspecies *Travancoricus*, endemic to the Western Ghats, with a heavy concentration in the Agastyar hills of Kerala.

Jeevani was developed by TBGRI here and an Indian process patent was acquired. The TBGRI-tribal partnership on Jeevani, with half the royalty going to the tribe, has been acclaimed as a model in benefit-sharing for which, the institute got the UN Equator Prize in 2002.

After patenting, the product was subsequently licensed out to Coimbatore Arya Vaidya Pharmacy for manufacturing and marketing for a period of seven years. In 2002, the UN Environment Programme and the World Trade Organisation even accepted the Kerala model on Jeevani as a global model in benefit-sharing and recognising intellectual property rights of indigenous people in accordance with the guidelines of the UN Convention on Biodiversity Treaty.

## Success Stories related to Medicinal Plants

Interestingly, Jeevani, the globally renowned herbal drug, does not enjoy a global patent protection even a decade after its development, but only has an Indian process patent, which is not valid in international markets. The TBGRI is yet to apply for patent protection in international markets. Confusion also prevails whether the process patent of Jeevani is still valid in India.

Jeevani was earlier trapped in a controversy when Nutrisciences Innovations LLC, a New York-based firm, applied to secure trademark rights a year back.

Interestingly, this company has now withdrawn its claim due to the controversy. This US company, a global supplier of herbal drugs, registered Jeevani under the US Trademark Rules for some time and the product was being freely sold in the US market without the knowledge of TBGRI.

Now, according to Great Earth Companies Inc literature, the product has *trichopus zeylanicus* together with other herbs in a botanical complex named 'Jeevani'.

Successful clinical trials were conducted with Jeevani making it available in the West as an energiser, 'anti-stress' adaptogen, and immune system supporter.

Among Kani tribals of Kerala, *trichopus*, is known as *arogyappacha*, meaning green health and vitality, says the company literature. The product is being sold at a price of US\$ 21.99 per 60 capsules, instead of the original Jeevani sold in granular form.

## आयुर्वेद की ओर लौटती दुनिया विकल्प नहीं देसी चिकित्सा का

आयुर्वेद, यानी देसी चिकित्सा पद्धति के बारे में आम धारणा यही है कि यह एलोपैथी के मुकाबले, काफी पिछड़ी हुई है और इसमें बीमारियों के उपचार के लिए वे तकनीकें मौजूद नहीं हैं, जिनका इस्तेमाल आज के एमबीबीएस डॉक्टर करते हैं। जो लोग आयुर्वेद को जानते हैं और इसके फायदों से परिचित हैं, उनके लिए निश्चित रूप से यह एक गलत धारणा है, क्योंकि आयुर्वेद में न सिर्फ उन बीमारियों के इलाज लिखे हैं, जिनके बारे में दुनिया को उन्नीसवीं और बीसवीं सदी में पता चला, बल्कि जटिल रोगियों की शल्य चिकित्सा आदि के बारे में भी विस्तार से वर्णन किया गया है। आयुर्वेद के विद्वानों ने रोग की ऐसी स्थिति के लिए अत्यंत ही उत्तम वैज्ञानिक शब्द 'आत्यैक व्याधि' प्रयोग किया है, जिसका तात्पर्य है त्वरित चिकित्सा करना। इसमें मुख्य व्याधि को ध्यान में रखकर ही उपद्रव का निवारण करना चाहिये।

यदि रोगी के उपद्रव निवारण में मुख्य व्याधि या दोष के प्रतिकूल भी कोई चिकित्सा करनी पड़े तो करनी चाहिये। इसका कारण यह है कि अधिक हानिकारक उपद्रव के निवारणार्थ अल्प हानिकारक व्याधि व दोष बढ़ भी जाये तो उसे सहन किया जा सकता है।

### ऑपरेशन भी होता है आयुर्वेद में

आयुर्वेद ने चिकित्सा के किसी भी अंग को अनछुआ नहीं रखा है। पाचन संस्थान से औषधि के शोषित होने में पर्याप्त समय लगता है। अतः औषधि के सीधे रक्त में पहुंचाने के उपाय निकाले गये। गंभीर रूप से बीमार मरीज के सिर में शस्त्र द्वारा काकपदाकार नामक स्थान बनाकर वहां औषधि भर दी जाती थी, जिसमें वह रक्त में मिल सीधे शरीर में फैलकर शीघ्र प्रभाव डालती है। रक्त से औषधि का संपर्क होते ही मूर्च्छित व्यक्ति उठ बैठता है। इसी सिद्धांत पर इंजेक्शन विधि का आविष्कार हुआ है। मूर्च्छा सर्पविष, सत्रिपात ही भयंकर अत्यधिक अवस्थाओं में इंजेक्शन द्वारा औषधि की शरीर में पहुंचाने का निर्देश दिया है। औषधि को पत्र पेटी सिरिज में भरकर सुई की नोंक से नसों में पहुंचाने का स्पष्ट विधान उल्लिखित है।

अतः आज को लोग समझते हैं कि आयुर्वेद के डॉक्टर इंजेक्शन लगाना नहीं जानते थे, रक्तक्षय होने पर रक्ताभरण नहीं करते थे तो यह उन अज्ञान षडयंत्रकारियों का प्रलाप मात्र है। आयुर्वेद में शराब और विष को भी औषधि में प्रयोग करने का विधान है।

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## GENERAL SUCCESS STORIES

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- Just drive half hour from Chennai to see what a village can be
- Let CEOs wear dhotis, kisanbhais pin-striped suits
- Bhagirath award for Rajasthan villager
- Punjab Village Taps Money Plant
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## JUST DRIVE HALF HOUR FROM CHENNAI TO SEE WHAT A VILLAGE CAN BE

A model of sustainable development, village has harnessed water, eradicated poverty, done away with huts

President APJ Abdul Kalam has described this village as the signpost for modern India. About 30 km from Chennai in Tiruvallur district, the predominantly Dalit village of Kuthambakkam is a text-book example of what Gram Swajar can do to make sustainable development, meaningful with the help of technology.

On March 10 this year, when panchayat president Ilango Rangasamy (42) met Kalam in New Delhi and told him about the revolution brewing in his village, the President remarked, "Ilango, this country needs many more like you," and promised a visit.

Ilango was the first Dalit from the village to obtain an engineering degree. He landed a job with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research but gave it all up because his village needed him. Nearly seven years later, Kuthambakkam is self-sufficient in water and fast moving towards achieving zero-hunger and hutless-village status.

Kuthambakkam's success flows from its home grown wisdom— optimise the use of locally available resources through technology, make grass roots empowerment the key to community development, respect the environment you live in and every thing else will follow.

It's one of the very few villages that has a website— [www.modelvillageindia.org](http://www.modelvillageindia.org)— that the rural community uses to both improve its resources and sell its produce.

But it is in optimising environmental resources that Kuthambakkam stands out. Through an intricate series of check-dams and rainwater harvesting structures, it has managed to dramatically increase the ground water level— potable water is available at a depth of less than 10 feet. Seven water tanks and pumping stations have been built and all nine village ponds desilted. The result— 2000 acres of the village's wetland now sport



## **LET CEOS WEAR DHOTIS, KISANBHAIS PIN-STRIPED SUITS**

There is a vast market in the rural areas; corporates and NGOs need to work in partnership and end their cold war

A great deal has been written on bridging the divide between urban and rural India, but unfortunately, in actual terms this divide is increasing rather than diminishing. The reason: there is no identified party which sees a strong economic benefit for themselves in implementing such a change.

The government would be an ideal agency to bridge the divide, but despite its efforts, the divide has not really decreased. Now it seems that the government needs to be shown the way, and so the bodies identified are corporations and non-profit organisations (NGOs). Currently confined to their own worlds, these bipolar organisations need to end the cold war and understand one another.

The majority of corporate India does not understand rural India mainly due to their focus on metros and urban centres, where they have always believed a population exists for goods and services. This market theory is now facing a problem. Corporates are experiencing saturation and competition is severely eroding margins. These entities are realising the need to expand their markets to ensure growth. Concurrently, over the last decade, spending power outside of Indian metros and cities has been increasing by leaps and bounds, mainly due to a succession of good monsoons.

Unfortunately, the corporate sector does not have enough knowledge of this lucrative segment and therefore has not been successful in devising strategies to penetrate this sector.

The NGO sector, dependent on funding for survival, still believes in the socialistic/communist adage that the capitalists exploit the poor. The irony is that the source of most NGO funding comes from foundations established by large corporations to fulfill their owners' philanthropic needs.

Examples of such foundations include the Ford Foundation, Gates Foundation, Wadhvani Foundation, Azim Premji Foundation etc. Now, NGOs are experiencing a shift in mindset, where the new buzz word is "sustainability". Non-profits are realising the need to release their current dependence on grants, and the importance of being self-sufficient. In addition to financial independence, the other realisation is the need to introduce new management techniques-for functioning efficiency.

The NGO world has become conscious that to expand the scope of their activity, an inflow of corporate techniques and management requirements is critical. Therefore, the potential for a marriage between the corporate and the NGO, or urban and rural, does seem to exist.

## General Success Stories

The corporate sector spends millions of rupees on training and exposing their executives to innovative and cutting edge management techniques, sending their executives to IIMs, ASCI, and even foreign institutions like Harvard. Why do they spend these vast sums? The obvious answer is to bring relevant knowledge into the company in order for employees, and therefore the organisation as a whole, to function more efficiently. What do these expensive institutions provide? Basically faculty and facility. Yet corporate India today needs to gain in-depth knowledge of rural India. NGOs work in rural India. NGOs in turn need exposure to knowledge of modern management systems.

The way I see it there are two factors: education and economy. The academia's role in this process is crucial. Here, a reputed institution such as WASCII would need to step in and create an educational setting for corporate executives at the NGO. Various training Programmes can be devised, focusing on imparting knowledge of rural requirements, such as rural marketing and product development (eg the need to design TVs with uninterrupted power supply for rural markets, instead of focusing on the urban product of flat screens).

The selected academic institutions would work with the NGO to create faculty and facility. The academic institution would take charge of conducting the necessary research prior to developing courses for corporate executives. As a by-product of the actual course, these executives would get the opportunity to have on-the-ground rural work experience and thus gain exposure to rural India. The NGO would attain value from exposure to executives and the entire training programme, in addition to tuition fees which would be shared with the management institute. It would be important to devise programmes initially to meet the corporate sector's urgent knowledge requirements, in order to start the process.

The next logical step to a training programme would be to build a more engaged economic relationship. Here, the NGO could get involved with helping the corporate sell its goods/services to benefit its own members. Such a venture would enable the NGO to ensure its own funding/sustainability while simultaneously building social entrepreneurship at the grassroots level.

The globalisation process is said to have left the underprivileged behind, creating a time lag for this segment to catch up through the "trickle-down" effect. Could this process be hastened?

## **BHAGIRATH AWARD FOR RAJASTHAN VILLAGER**

Tall and gaunt Arjun Kaka is a simple villager from Alwar in Rajasthan. This 60-year-old uneducated man was instrumental in reviving a dried-up river with indigenous conservation methods. And today the Arwari is a perennial river and is the source of fresh drinking water for 70 villages in Alwar.

For accomplishing this feat Kaka was given the presidential award three years ago. On Monday he was bestowed with the Bhagirath award at the convention of water-experts and activists currently on in the Capital.

Narrating how he had revived the river which had dried up during the time of his ancestors, Kaka said that he constructed a check dam with the help of villagers of Kolala and Baontha. The check dam stopped the run-away water from the nearby jungles and recharged the ground water in turn revived the river.

“The river used to be only a seasonal one during the time of my ancestors but it has now become a perennial river. There is no shortage of water the whole year round,” Kaka said.

As on date, the villagers are raising the height of the checkdam through shramdan. A parliament of 70 villages meets regularly to protect the environment and conserve the water resources of the area.

Arjun Kaka’s achievement was brought to light by water activist Rajinder Singh.

“I refused to come to Delhi to collect the Presidential Award and said that the President should come and see the work and only if he likes it should he give the award,” Arjun Kaka said. The then president K.R. Narayanan did, in fact, go to Alwar and hand over the award to Kaka.

## PUNJAB VILLAGE TAPS MONEY PLANT

Their secret: Vote in a sarpanch in sync with the government

And you thought only politics were self serving'. They could take a lesson from Sahoulivillage, where community interests have led the 3,200 residents to vote in a sarpanch in sync with the state's ruling power.

Before you scream 'manipulation'. Consider the fallouts: Sahouli's largely agriculture and dairy farming-dependent populace have pucca roads, equipment and technological guidance at their disposal.

"From planters to harrows to cutters the Sahouli Cooperative Agriculture Service Society Agriculture Service Society will loan out anything a farmer needs for rabi and kharif crops. If an individual were to buy them, it would impose heavy debts on him. So the society is a practical option," Says Harvinder Singh, former sarpanch of the village.

"We also have a fully computerised cooperative dairy, which produces around 700-800 litres of milk a day. We even have 12 computers in the village school; a local NRI gifted them to us in 1998, when even city school did not have them," adds Malkiat Singh, the current sarpanch.

Considering that Malkiat is a Congressman and Harvinder an Akali, it would be unusual for them to be singing the same tune elsewhere. Not so in Sahouli. "We have learnt through experience that if the Akalis are in power in Chandigarh, an Akali sarpanch ensures state money comes in. Ditto for a Congress government and a Congress Sarpanch," Says Gurdial Singh, a villager.

"Since we need state funds for all development work— be it water supply or reconstruction of the old bridge connecting us to a neighbouring village— in the last two elections we have voted for a sarpanch allied to the state government."

With funds flow assured, the villagers have taken up innovative farming in a big way. "Out of the 2,100 acres of agricultural land, about 300 acres have been earmarked for vegetables. We took the decision a couple of years ago, when we saw that the water table was dropping steadily and the farmer could not continue to deepen his tubewells indefinitely," says Harpinder Singh, who himself grows vegetables on 10 acres of his land.

The vegetables, which use organic manure, also provide three crops a year, unlike the traditional wheat-paddy cycle. A ready market is available in nearby Ludhiana.

For a village that's learnt to work the political system, these things are almost child's play.

## **RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

The first of July 2003 marks a historic day for the state of Sikkim. For it was on this day that powers were de-centralised and awarded to panchayati raj Institutions.

In order to empower rural communities, the rural development programmes along with the government and institutions of civil societies, are focusing on a number of interrelated areas, particularly human development.

The emphasis is on decentralisation, participatory approaches designed to improve the delivery of rural services such as drinking water, sanitation, connectivity, microcredit, education and health to the poor, and vulnerable sections of societies.

Fiscal and administrative decentralisation is also being emphasised in order to enable local institutions to undertake various programmes. The emphasis is also on bridging the rural-urban inequality, thereby decelerating the process of rural migration.

The department is also trying to create off-farm employment for reduction in rural poverty. It is also trying to address issues like gender bias. For this it has taken a number of steps. They include 70 per cent allocation of the state's budget towards development of rural areas, 33.5 per cent reservation for women at panchayat level.

The state's framework for panchayati raj institutions include several features. Grain Prasashan Kendras have become central offices where field functionaries of all line departments are posted and accommodated under a single roof in the administrative control of the panchayat president. Gram panchayat units and zilla panchayats now have the power to prepare, sanction, supervise and implement schemes of Rs. 3-10 lakh.

To enable the panchayats to exercise these powers, the government has provided an amount of Rs 10 lakh to each of the 166 gram panchayat units in the state. The four zilla panchayats have been given Rs 50 lakh each during the financial year 2003-2004.

To enhance scheme's implementation rate training has been imparted to all the panchayat sabhapatis, sachivas and rural development assistants. All government institutions like the primary schools, PHCs, VLO centers, libraries, CICs, rural tourism, etc, within a Gram panchayat unit have been put under the administrative control of the president of the respective gram panchayat units.

All plans and schemes are to be passed in the gram sabha and district planning committee meetings. Villagers are given equal opportunity in the decision-making process.

The real charm of democratic decentralization and devolution of financial powers to panchayati raj institutions lies in the fact that the villagers need not run anymore from pillar to post in big offices of the district head quarters and in the state capital to get their work done.

All work can be done in the village itself at the grain prasashan kendras.

## LITTLE PANCHAYAT, PERCENTAGE RAJ

Poley Yadaiah is not worth a statistic indebted farmer committed suicide in April this year. But official dom has not noticed. Everyone else has, though, in his age of Neradacheruvu in Mahbubnagar district. Well, almost everyone. The panchayat seems to have taken no action behalf of his family. And they may get no help.

Andhra Pradesh has a new government. But it also has its bureaucracy. One that acts as it did for years. With striklack of concern on the farmer's suicides. So the proper count of their number and nature is proving chaotic. Many affected households have been recorded wrongly or not at all if that was to be expected of the State machinery, whatever happened to the panchayats?

Janmabhoomi happened," young K Jangaiah, He is panch of Shabuddlapur in Nalgonda district. "Janmabhoomi" was the flagship project of Naidu Government. One seen as a whole new "model of development." It aimed, among ny other things, "to involve people in the implementation of relopment programmes." In theory, at least.

In practice," says Chandra han Reddy in Mahbubnagar district, "a huge parallel structure emerged. One that simply passed people and crippled ichayati raj in this State." Mr. Idy was sarpanch of Midgil in-district for about 13 years. ke gram sabha, gram panLyat, none of these had any aning. The show was run by bureaucrats."

Andhra Pradesh could well be the biggest violator of the 73rd Amendment of the Indian Constitution. If the panchayats have failed in the ongoing crisis, there is good reason for it. They have had no real power for years now.

"The parallel setup led to a sharp centralisation of power," says Mr. Reddy. "New committees came up at the village level that were not elected by the people as a whole. Only by small groups with vested interests. And who could be managed from above."

Committees sprouted in great numbers. Each village had them. These included an education or vidya committee. And, of course, one for watersheds. Also, a ryuthu mitra (farmers' friends) group. "Forest committees sprang up where no forests existed," says Mr. Jangaiah. Then there were also the "Water Users Associations." And Library Committees. Even one for Continuing Education. The Anganwadis were run by "mothers" committees.

"Not a single one of these was answerable to the panchayat," says Mr. Jangaiah. "They were run by small cabals, each with a chairman who could control them. But the funds Went to them. Not to the elected panchayats who lost all decisionmaking powers."

## ***Success Stories of Panchayati Raj***

In name, these too, were „elected.” But by a tiny base. Yet the large funds they got ensured that village elites took over quickly. “My gram panchayat had a budget of just Rs. 13,000,” says Mr. Jangaiah. The funds poured into the committees by the Government and its foreign donors ran to millions of rupees in many cases. This profusion of bodies drew a positive nod from the World Bank and other backers. This was in Bank jargon, “facilitating stakeholder consultations.” Once it bombed, some quietly distanced themselves from the programme.

Battles for control could be intense. Like in Chaudanpally in Nalgonda. Here, “elections” to the “mothers committee” were postponed four times as rival groups clashed. The total electorate for this poll was all of 55.

In theory, legitimacy flowed from gram sabha to gram panchayat. And from there to the mandal and zilla parishad. Not in Andhra, say the sarpanchas. In all villages, people speak of how that process was gutted. Here, a “nodal officer” at the mandal level wielded much power. A bureaucrat, he was appointed by and answered to the Collector. Who, in turn, reported to the Chief Minister. Constitutionally, elected bodies were simply shoved aside. The panchayats were starved of funds. The “committees” of the parallel structure were flush with them.

“The gram sabha meeting was controlled by the nodal officer,” “This system helped the flowersays Mr. Jangaiah. “Not by us. They decided and told us when the gram sabha would be held. And what its agenda would be. We were never consulted. The nodal officer ran the show. The sarpanch sat as a nominal chairman. A mere figurehead. “Their will prevailed over public opinion.”

The impact of the parallel structure was devastating. “Local democracy died,” says Chandramohan Reddy in Midgil. This system helped the flowering of contractor raj. A percentage raj. In which each vested interest got its cut. Right up to the MLA and MP. Democratic pressure from below could be ignored. The post of chairman of the vidya committee could be as hotly contested-with a micro-electorate-as that of the sarpanch! Why? Because of the money involved.”

## GOVT SHIFTS FOCUS TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT

PM to launch Food For Work programme in 150 districts

With Maharashtra victory in the bag, Prime Minister Mamnohan Singh is now planning his first real public interface on October 28 at a Jharkhand village to flag off the much-hyped 'Food For Work Programme.

So far, his public appearances have been limited to a visit to a drought-affected village in Andhra Pradesh or a trip to Maharashtra for a campaign.

Singh is going to follow up the launch of the programme. 'Operation 150', (the campaign will run across 150 districts in the country) with the formal opening of four missions on November 14. Besides Food for Work, they are about Rural Healthcare, Urban Renewal and Water.

The last two days have seen intense and indepth discussions on these programmes, involving the Prime Minister, Finance Minister. Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia and Rural Development Minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh.

"There have been detailed discussions on what these missions entail and how to make them effective," said a minister, after attending a meeting.

Pressing ahead with the advantage that Maharashtra has given the UPA and with the Congress sensing a potential for revival, Singh is planning to project an image of his government which is 'pro-poor'. It is not surprising that he has chosen Jharkhand for the programme launch. Elections are due in the state early next year and the incumbent BJP government there faces an uphill task. Fourteen districts have been identified in the state for the programme.

The largest number of districts identified as "most backward" are in Orissa (18), followed by Madhya Pradesh(15), Bihar (15)Jharkhand (14). Maharashtra (11), Chhattisgarh (10), Andhra Pradesh (8) and Gujarat (6). The southern states account for a smaller number of backward districts-Tamil Nadu has 4, Kamataka3 and Kerala's got 1.

'Operation 150' is the first step towards the enactment of the National Employment Guarantee Act, a draft of which is now ready. Finance Minister P Chidambaram had announced in his Budget speech that pending the enactment of the National Employment Guarantee Act, which would provide legal guarantee for at least 100 days of employment on programmes of public works, a massive Food for Work Programme would be started in 150 of the most backward districts.

The Planning Commission has evoked a method of identifying the most backward districts: taking poverty ratio as the bat for the identification-usual agricultural productivity, rate and SC/ST population. Many current states would have been excluded, say sources, if 150 districts at the bottom of the ladder of backwardness had been taken. It was decided that that at least one district each state would be covered. The only exception Goa, which is relatively prosperous. The Centre will provide these states with foodgrains free of cost.



## पंचायतों का शासन

पंचायतों को सशक्त बनाने और उनको आर्थिक मदद तमाम जटिल प्रक्रियाओं और एजेंसियों को लांगते हुए सीधे पहुंचाने के लिए केंद्र के स्तर पर बीते सालों में तमाम बातें की गई हैं। एनडीए से पहले, एनडीए के दौरान और अब यूपीए सरकार के दौर में भी वहीं ऊबाऊ कवायदों की जा रही है। यूपीए सरकार ने तो अब एकाधिक समितियां भी बता दी हैं जिनको एक ऐसे लक्ष्य की दिशा तय करने का काम सौंपा गया है जिस लक्ष्य को साधने की इच्छा शक्ति का ही तमाम सरकारों में अभाव रहा है। केंद्र की इन सरकारी कवायदों से अलग इस मामले में सबसे ठोस कदम उठाया है बिहार ने। पहले इस पिछड़े माने जाने वाले राज्य ने त्रिस्तरीय पंचायत व्यवस्था में महिलाओं को 50 फीसदी आरक्षण देकर एक बड़े बदलाव की नींव रखी तो दूसरी तरफ कई ऐसे प्रावधान किए जो ग्राम प्रशासन और सुधार का ताना बाना तैयार कर सकते हैं।

वित्त आयोग की सिफारिशों के आधार पर पंचायतों को धन मुहैया कराने के फार्मूले पर तो केंद्र सरकार को ही कुछ करना है लेकिन बिहार ने पंचायतों को जो अधिकार दिए हैं वे अपने आप में अनूठे हैं। यह एक तरह से साहसिक प्रयोग भी कहे जाएंगे। नए प्रावधानों से एक तरफ सवा लाख महिलाएं पंचायतों में जनता की नुमाइंदगी कर रही होंगी तो दूसरी तरफ भारतीय दंड विधान की दो दर्जन से ज्यादा धाराओं के तहत कार्रवाई के लिए पंचायत कचहरी को सक्षम बनाने से स्थानीय स्तर पर कानून व्यवस्था की समस्या तक से निपटने में मदद मिल सकती है। यह भी कटु सत्य रहा है कि बिहार में वर्षों से पंचायत चुनाव नहीं हुए लेकिन पंचायती राज कानून 1993 की जगह लाए गए पंचायती राज कानून 2006 ने यह पुरानी कमी और आलोचना की भरपाई करने का काम बखूबी किया है।

केंद्र की पंचायती राज अधिकारिता उप समिति अब लंबे अरसे बाद एक अदद बैठक कर पाई है तो बिहार ने ग्रामीण अदालतों की कल्पना को जमीन पर उतार दिया है। चुनिंदा आपराधिक धाराओं के तहत आने वाले मामलों के साथ-साथ दीवानी मामलों में भी पंचायतों को न्यायिक अधिकार दिए गए हैं। अब कचहरी पंचायत का सरपंच चुनिंदा मामलों में पुलिस को रपट दर्ज करने के लिए कह सकता है, तीन महीने की सजा सुना सकता है, जुर्माना ठोक सकता है और यही नहीं किसी अवांछित व्यक्ति की कुछ गतिविधियों पर पाबंदी भी लगा सकता है। अनुमंडलीय अधिकारी इस कार्रवाई को रोक या प्रभाव रख सकता है लेकिन पंचायत के ऊपर एक अधिकारी बैठा देने के बाद भी पंचायतों को सशक्त बनाने की इस राज्य की मूल भावना पर इसका कोई असर नहीं पड़ेगा।

यह तब बंदोबस्त किया गया है कि चंद ऐसे मामलों में कोई अदालत संज्ञान नहीं लेगी जो ग्राम कचहरी की न्यायपीठ द्वारा संज्ञेय है। क्या यह कम है कि जो न्यायिक अधिकार पंचायत के स्तर पर ले जाए गए हैं उन्हीं के दम पर महिलाएं बलात्कारियों, छेड़खानी करने वालों तक को सबक सिखाने की ठान रही है। बिहार ने जो कानून बनाया है उसकी धारा 103 (क) के तहत भारतीय दंड संहिता की 30 धाराओं में ग्राम कचहरी संज्ञान ले पाएगी। दीवानी मामलों में भी सुनवाई ग्राम कचहरी कर पाएगी। स्वाभाविक रूप से ये कहचरियां दीवानी मामलों को जटिल कार्रवाई में नहीं उलझना चाहेंगी लेकिन गांव के स्तर पर चोरी, डकैती, बलात्कार, छेड़खानी जैसे मामलों में ये गांव स्तर पर ये अदालतें चमत्कारिक नतीजे दे सकती हैं।

हालांकि बिहार ने पंचायतों को अधिकार संपन्न बनाने की ईमानदार कोशिश तो की है लेकिन अभी भी आर्थिक रूप से उन्हें सुदृढ़ करने, बजट को स्थानीय जरूरतों के अनुसार खर्च करने की स्वतंत्रता देने, या आय के वैकल्पिक जरिये स्थानीय स्तर पर विकसित करने जैसे मामलों में अभी यहां भी कुछ खास नहीं किया गया है। पंचायतों को राज्यों के समेकित कोष से पैसा देने पर ही सहमति नहीं बन पाई है और इसके लिए पंचायती राज मंत्रियों की बैठक बुलानी पड़ रही है। कई राज्य पंचायतों के चुनाव कराने के लिए ही तैयार नहीं हैं। इन सबके बीच बिहार ने केंद्र सरकार के सामने एक नजीर तो पेश की ही है।

## **WATER IN THE DESERT**

Jaipur in May.....think of the desert state of Rajasthan and a kaleidoscope of images swirl before the mind's eye - colourful, romantic, harsh and even intimidating. But few think of in abundance of water and a powerful system to collect and conserve this precious resources as being intrinsic to the land, its people and culture. Yet the fact remains that some of the most exquisite architectural marvels built around water bodies dot the entire region and the present day's cities have grown around water sources, be they lakes, well or other natural and man-made systems.

Historically societies relied on natural or man-made water bodies as their primary source of freshwater. However, with the passage of time, most of them have fallen into disrepair and the perpetual lack of water is today a well-known, and politically advantageous, story. Whiled the lake city of Udaipur as also Jaipur lake, are well known, few are aware of a traditional system of 'bawaris' or step-wells right across the state capital.

The bawari has been an inherent part of social life in Rajasthan. In the erstwhile Amber kingdom, entry into Aamer was restricted to day-time. To facilitate travellers' night stay, huge shelter houses or 'sarais', with an in-built water source (bawari) were constructed at regular intervals.

The bawari descends floor by floor right to the water source. Step lead down each floor and a ledge right around the well has niches leading off them. Stringent regulation, like ban on bathing and washing clothes ensured the water remained clean and unpolluted, Located on traditional caravan routes, these bawaris served as rest-houses for travellers and royal cavalcades or army as the occasion demanded. In time these oases drew settlers. The present day cities are but a collection of these water bodies, once under royal patronage, established by a fort or palace at advantage point. Sadly, today the cities have flourished but the water bodies, where it all began are forgotten, often buried amidst earth and rubble.

But the good news in the revival of traditional wisdom, coupling community based water conservation techniques, which use conventional wisdom with the latest advances in technology. Two such examples in Jaipur are the restoration of the Sarai, and Kala Hanuman Bawarls, with help from soft drink major Coca-Cola India. The company worked with the state government, village communities expert hydrogeologists and the local municipal authorities to chalk out a programme to remove silt, rework catchment and strengthen boudaries.

## USAID FOCUS ON DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

U.S. 'working closely with NGOs, Govt. officials' and affected communities'

The US Agency for International Development's (USAID) support is targeted at improving disaster preparedness in six coastal districts of Tamil Nadu, David T. Hopper, U.S. Consul General in Chennai, said on Tuesday, while inaugurating sanitation systems for the coastal hamlets of Chinnakuppam, Injambakkam and Periyakuppam.

A programme linking the cities of Cuddalore and Nigapattinam with the U.S. cities in the State of Florida which are highly prone to disasters, is also ongoing, he said.

He said that through USAID, the U.S. Government was working with local NGOs in close co-operation with local government officials and communities to address the needs of those affected.

"Our support has progressed through two phases-relief and transition," he said pointing out that approximately \$4 million were distributed using NGO networks focusing on water and sanitation, solid waste management, education, psycho-social support and restoring livelihoods.

During the transition and recovery phase, \$14 million were provided as fund, he said. The U.S. would continue to support those affected by the tsunami till the programme finishes in September 2007, he said.

Mr. Hopper inaugurated individual household toilets with waste-water treatment systems (WWATS) and solid waste management programmes.

Ranvir Prasad, Tiruvallur District Collector, said that a tsunami vulnerability map was being prepared. But this did not mean that people would be forced to vacate vulnerable zones, he said.

P. Kubendran, Kathivakkam Municipal Commissioner, said that a new drinking water scheme for Rs. 6 crore would soon be in place for Kathivakkam. A.L. Rangarajan, programme-coordinator, said that Exnora was providing solid waste management facilities in 28 habitations covering 13,840 tsunami activities in the five tsunami-affected districts of Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram, Cuddalore, Nagapattinam as well as Kanyakumari districts.

Exnora had constructed 121 individual household toilets in the fishing hamlets. It is also providing support for developing community waste management programmes in the coastal regions.

Approximately 400 houses in the Chinnakuppam and Periyakuppam villages have received waste bills. Sanitary workers would collect the segregated waste and bring it to the segregation yard for composting and disposal, he said.

Paul McVey, Tsunami Recovery Programme Manager, USAID, Nalini Keshavaraj, Programme Manager, Tamil Nadu Tsunami Resource Centre as well as members of Exnora International participated.

## बदलाव की राह पर पंचायती राज

बात इसी वर्ष जून महीने की है। बिहार के कटिहार जिले में एक भिखारिन हलीमा खातून ने किंरोड़ा पंचायत के चुनाव में जीतकर पंचायती राज के इतिहास में एक नया अध्याय जोड़ दिया। इससे पहले उत्तर प्रदेश में गाजीपुर ने 60 प्रतिशत महिलाओं का पंच निर्वाचित कर आरक्षण के सभी रिकार्ड तोड़ते हुए एक नया कीर्तिमान स्थापित किया था। सच तो यह है कि पंचायती राज छोटे से छोटे गांव और वहां रहने वाले लोगों को लोकतांत्रिक सरकार से जोड़ने की एक महत्वपूर्ण कड़ी है। इसका श्रेय जाता है 1992 के 73वें संविधान संशोधन को जिसके तहत बीस लाख से अधिक आबादी वाले सभी राज्यों में गांव, खंड और जिला स्तर पर हर पांच साल में नियमित चुनाव कराने और अनुसूचित जाति, अनुसूचित जनजाति और महिलाओं के लिए आरक्षण का प्रावधान किया गया था।

स्थानीय जनप्रतिनिधि संस्थाओं का सुखद पहलू यह है कि 12 लाख से अधिक महिलाएं निर्वाचित हुई हैं। जहां पहले महिला सरपंच या उप सरपंच दीया लेकर दूढ़ने से भी नहीं मिलती थीं वहां अब ये ही ग्रामीण महिला नेता अपनी कर्तव्यपरायणता, निष्ठा और निष्पक्षता के कारण पंचायती राज के इतिहास में स्वर्णाक्षर बनती जा रही हैं। पहले महिलाएं निरक्षरता के कारण घर की दहलीज पार करने को पाप या अपराध मानती थीं लेकिन अब साक्षरता की सीढ़ियां चढ़ते हुए बिना किसी की परवाह किए हर क्षेत्र में पुरुषों से आगे निकलती जा रहीं हैं। कई पंचायतों को तो फास्ट ट्रैक अदालतों से भी तेज गाति से झगड़े निपटाने का गौरव हासिल है।

पंचायती राज की नींव मजबूत करने के लिए त्रिआयामी संस्थागत तंत्र बनाया गया है। इस त्रिमूर्ति में राज्य निर्वाचन आयोग, चुनाव प्रक्रिया के तहत विभिन्न स्तरों की पंचायतों का गठन करता है। दूसरा राज्य वित्त आयोग उपलब्ध संसाधनों से पंचायतों को पोषित, विकसित और सुदृढ़ करता है। तीसरा जिला आयोजन आयोग विभिन्न कार्यक्रमों और परियोजनाओं के आकार, व्यय और संसाधनों की रूपरेखा तैयार करता है। इस संपूर्ण परिदृश्य के शोख गुलाबी रंग के बावजूद तस्वीर के मटमैले पक्ष से आंख मूंद लेने से सचाई नहीं मिट सकती। आज निष्क्रिय पंचायतों की संख्या भी इतनी बढ़ गई है कि मुश्किल से चार प्रतिशत पंचायतों में ही निचले स्तर पर लोकतंत्र क्रियाशील और जीवंत है। त्रिस्तरीय प्रतिनिधि संस्थाओं के चुनाव नियमित न होने की शिकायतों के साथ साथ घपलों, अभियंताओं की जोर जबरदस्ती, हिंसक घटनाओं, मतपेटी छीनने आदि की बढ़ती घटनाओं ने पूरी चुनाव प्रक्रिया की निष्पक्षता को ही कटघरे में खड़ा कर दिया है। पंचायती राज संस्थाओं में धांधली और भ्रष्टाचार के निवारण के लिए कोई अचूक उपाय और कार्यनीति भी नहीं है।

असल में पंचायती राज राज्य का मामला होने के कारण उन्हें लेकर कोई नीति नहीं बन सकी है। हाल में दिल्ली में पंचायती राज पर आयोजित तीन दिवसीय कार्यशाला में यह विचार सामने आया कि राज्य चुनाव आयोग, राज्य वित्त आयोग और जिला आयोजन समिति को भ्रष्ट नौकरशाहों, छुटभैए नेताओं, जमींदारों और उच्च वर्ग के लोगों और ठेकेदारों से दो-दो हाथ करने पड़ते हैं। जहां तक नौकरशाहों का संबंध है तो कलेक्टर और उनके सहकर्मी सत्ता सूत्र अपने हाथ में रखने के चक्कर में नहीं चाहते कि जिला प्रधान और अन्य निर्वाचित प्रतिनिधि उनके अधिकारों में सेंध लगाए। इसी तरह निचले स्तर पर बीडीओ और पंचायत प्रमुख के बीच अधिकारों को लेकर खींचतान और मनमुटाव होना आम बात है। यह एक मानी हुई बात है कि अधिकतम लोकतंत्र वहां होता है जहां सीढ़ी दर सीढ़ी अधिकारों का हस्तांतरण होता चला जाता है और अंततः जनता की आवाज सारे राष्ट्र की आवाज बन जाती है। लेकिन कई ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में धारा इसके उलट बह रही है। इन समस्याओं का समाधान पंचायती राज को खत्म करने में नहीं बल्कि उसको बेहतर बनाने में है। इसीलिए 29 मामले उनके अधिकार क्षेत्र में रखे गए हैं। इसके अलावा यह भी जरूरी है कि पंचायती राज संस्थाओं के कामकाज में पारदर्शिता लाई जाए और ग्रामीण उसके कामकाज पर पैनी निगाह रखें। पंचायती राज संस्थाओं का आर्थिक दृष्टि से भी मजबूत होना जरूरी है। इन संस्थाओं को 29 मामले तो आवंटित कर दिए गए लेकिन उसके लिए धन की पर्याप्त व्यवस्था नहीं की गई।

यह विडंबना तब और भी कचोटने लगती है जब हम पाते हैं कि ग्रामीण विकास मंत्रालय और पंचायती राज मंत्रालय को संयुक्त बजट राशि किसी भी अन्य मंत्रालय से कम नहीं है। इस वर्ष ग्रामीण विकास मंत्रालय के लिए 39073 करोड़ 18 लाख और पंचायती राज विकास मंत्रालय के लिए अलग 3825 करोड़ 73 लाख रुपये आवंटित किए गए हैं। संसद की स्थाई समिति के अनुसार पंचायती राज को सौंपे गए 29 विषयों के लिए निर्धारित बजट की 71000 करोड़ रुपये की राशि में से 40000 करोड़ रुपये से अधिक राशि केंद्रीय मंत्रालयों को दी गई है। इस राशि को पंचायत के कार्यों में न लगाकर मंत्रालयों को दी गई है। इस राशि को पंचायत के कार्यों में न लगाकर मंत्रालयों द्वारा हड़प लेना घोर अन्याय है। पंचायतों को कुल मिलाकर चार प्रतिशत से भी कम राशि मिल पाती है। लेकिन यह निश्चित है कि औद्योगिक घरानों के गांवों की ओर रुख करने से ग्रामीण भारत की कृषि व्यवस्था, बुनियादी ढांचे और पंचायती राज की पूरी संरचना में जबरदस्त परिवर्तन होने जा रहे हैं। कृषि और उद्योगों का यह मिलन किस करवट बैठेगा यह तो आने वाला समय बताएगा लेकिन पंचायती राज में बदलाव की यह राह कई जोखिमों के साथ आशाओं भरी है।