EMPOWERING THE GRASS ROOTS

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment has created a legal opportunity for the pursuit of local self-governance at the village level. Though, idea of self governance was in our political thought since the beginning of independence movement, but its practice till date has been largely inadequate on the ground. In spite of the powerful legacy of a nationalist movement with a 'rural bias' and increasing rural politicization, the Indian exercises in rural development have conspicuously failed. Even the establishment of Panchayati Raj institutions and the changing emphasis of programmes, thrust, plan allocation, etc. have proved to be futile.

After independence, we clearly spelled out the ultimate values of democracy, secularism, social justice with rise in productivity in planning, social and economic egalitarianism, rise in the standards of living, etc., but the crucial importance of its planning for implementation was overlooked. In the Panchayati Raj system peoples' participation and involvement was emphasised, yet in general terms, it was a bureaucratically controlled and guided system.

Against this backdrop, recent Constitutional Amendment has its significance. A number of provisions for effective participation, and representation are ensured, a number of responsibilities given to the elected bodies to discuss, debate and decide collectively and then take the responsibility for its implementation. It is true, this is not foolproof, there are shortcomings. But there is a need to carry this message to the masses, poor and oppressed, so that they can take the benefits. New Panchayati Raj system is not merely seen as a change in planning and implementation system but as a vehicle of empowerment process. Local people's rights over the local natural resources should be recognised, their active participation and involvement in the planning, decision making process of local resources should be accepted, opportunities should be given to them. Then only real Panchayati Raj system can be seen in operation, otherwise it will be the same 'old wine in new bottle'. We plan and manage, you participate, since it is easy to implement things with the involvement of people. The real participation means involvement of people right from the beginning, giving them free hand to decide their plans, allow them to commit and learn from that mistake. From outside all possible support should be extended but not the instructions or guidance.

In our rural society we still have a culture of collective discussion and decision making process. In the following pages we give some of the examples of cases of self-governance. There are a good number of such initiatives and efforts throughout the country taken by the local communities. In the summary of the workshop report on National Parks and Sanctuaries given in this issue, what is clearly reflected is, how increasing restrictions on local people's rights to use resources have created problems of survival. Constitutional Amendment is a step but there is more to be done at the grass roots level to put an end to exploitation and initiate the process of development in real terms. There is a need for collective march towards that desired direction.
LOCAL GOVERNANCE: SOME SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCES

The Seed Story:

Behind each of these success stories lies the vision of some inspired soul. Village Seed was fortunate of having been crossed in his travels by Sri Vinoba Bhave as far back as in 1959. This laid the background for the developmental path adopted by the inspired people of this village. Vinoba’s teachings of bhoo-daan made a tremendous impact on the people who resolved to make Seed a gramdan village. The norms of the gramdan were strictly observed and in due course of time these were absorbed in the lifestyles of the villagers, which also were later proved useful in their becoming self-sustaining. In fact, the very environment of the village was preserved by this process.

Seed village formally declared itself as a gramdan village in 1990 under the provisions of the Rajasthan Gramdan Adhiniyam” of 1960 and later by the “Sarsodhkit Adhiniyam” of 1971. Under these provisions the village could not implement its own legal authority - a big step forward in so far as the concept of self rule is concerned. Apart from Seed, three other villages—Hariya Kheda, Gopa-ki-Bhilal and Mangariyala, followed suit in the wake of Seed’s successful developmental strides. Moreover, these villages were also interconnected by virtue of their adjoining boundaries.

A noticeable factor in the community set-up of Seed is that a major part of the population comprises of ‘Rawats’ whereas the ‘Rajputs’ are a distinct minority. Further there is no landless family. The women representation in meetings is non-existent, in the sense that though they are physically present they do not participate verbally. So, in terms of women empowerment there is a whole area open for women activists. Although there are instances where women have lent physical support for the Gram Sabha causes for example, when it came to the question of gaining access to over 800 bighas of land which was under forest department control, the women lent formidable support by joining hands with the menfolk for their rights. They proved their solidarity by facing the wrath of the police and forest officials, when they joined the organised movement of going into the forest at night to cut 9000 bundles of grass, thus asserting and proving their right over the land and its produce. The villagers have termed this power as their maatru-shakt.

The gram sabha has gone ahead with other bold and innovative steps also. Unauthorized land holdings have been converted into grazing land for cattle. The villagers have paid to buy these lands and each family has contributed for the purpose. They took it upon themselves to measure the land and look into the formalities themselves, along with the village Panchayat.

The gram sabha has lent extraordinary support to conserve the natural resource in and around Seed. Trees have been planted to preserve the natural ecology of the region as well as for fodder purposes. It was felt that the tree plantation project has not been as much of a success as has been natural regeneration that has been allowed to take place. The local species of trees like Kher, Hanna and Bans have come up very well. This has been possible because the gram sabha has taken strict action on wood-cutters. So felling of trees has been controlled to a very large extent. This has consequently resulted in proliferation of local fauna and flora of the area. Seed is blessed by a river for its water uses, but the gram sabhas also built a tank and dug trenches for maintaining water supply. Social forestry projects in the region have also been fully supported by the gram sabha, resulting in apparent environmental well-being of the region. All these act as an impetus to other surrounding villages which then emulate Seed’s good example.

However, all these were not achieved in a day. It has been a steady uphill task and is an ongoing movement even today. For the people to become self-reliant and self-ruled, it has been an on-going battle with the authorities. Eventually, in every case it has been the people’s will that has reigned supreme, keeping in mind that it was the people’s welfare that was the priority.

Mr. Rameshwar Prasad
Seed Gramdan village,
Via- Kanaud
Dist- Udaipur, Rajasthan
The Mendha Experience

Coming with an entirely different back-drop the Bastar region of interior Maharashtra, the Good tribes of village Mendha in Gadchiroli district are subsequently forging ahead with the slogan "Mawa Nata Mawa Raj". Mendha village was fortunate in the sense that it had Vikashmitra, a voluntary organisation, which has been working amongst the tribes for the last couple of years. The villagers were already familiar with the processes involved in working together for their common good. In order to arrive at any substantive decision regarding self-rule, it was decided to firstly become strong in unity by doing away with their present weaknesses. Through a process of dialogue in which both men and women participated, it was concurred that liquor addiction of the mendikl had to be dealt with in the first place. The women formed a Mahila Sangathan and decided to work on two issues, viz. anti-liquor campaign, and policing the forest.

The Mahila Sangathan was a big success and apart from these two major areas, they also worked towards the betterment of the women in general. For instance, the work of breaking stones was mainly done by women, and so it was agreed that it would be women who would decide the wage rates.

It was seen that the nearby Paper Mill was sending their men for cutting trees. The women got together and decided that no outsider would be allowed to enter the forest and fell trees. Thus, an end to this practice was put successfully.

These attempts to gain access to forest produce and other natural resources and their increasing control over such situations made the Mahila Sangathan stronger. Other events like restarting the Ghotul practice and exercising their Nistar rights also gave the tribes a lot of self-confidence and drive. The gram sabha which had been formed to facilitate self governance, laid down rules and regulations which were strictly followed by the members. Even if the villagers needed timber for their personal house construction purposes, they had to obtain permission from the gram sabha.

The gram sabha has for this purpose made rules for guarding the forest wherein rotation wise two villages for two days each monitor the forest. They see to it that not even the grass in the forest is cut by the people of adjoining villages either. In fact, the gram sabha also makes efforts to influence people of surrounding vil-

ages to adopt their thinking and way of managing things. The whole idea is to take the responsibility of governance of the village in their own hands. They would even plan their own future development programmes. To this end they have formed a gram koshta to accumulate funds for projects. A lot of development programmes are also in the offing which are currently being debated upon. The gram sabha held training programmes to help villagers learn to construct contour bunds. The villagers also decided to build a school for which they provided "Shramdaan". They also invited the DFO and informed him that they would undertake the responsibility of determining which plants to grow. They would also share in protecting the forest. They made it clear that no project should be started by the forest officials before consulting the gram sabha.

The Mahila Sangathan had already taken definite steps to fight the social malady of drunkenness which was prevalent in the village. They took very severe measures to bring the situation under control. They have succeeded in influencing the minds of men for the better, so much so that for religious rituals where previously they offered liquor to their deities, they now make offerings of the Mahua flowers and bark instead of its brew.

By forming associations like these a platform has been created where people get together, discuss, have amicable dialogue and settle matters and plan out future strategies. In all this Vikashmitra's role has been that of a facilitator and mentor. It has been a positive catalyst to get like minded and thinking people together to concur on issues that affect them the most.

In the course of their presentations it became clear that most people in Mendha were agriculturists. They were not interested in any political affinity nor were they making any political statement by their slogan "Mawa Nata Mawa Raj". Yet if any candidate would support this thinking in his mandate then he would certainly get a lot of support. If by such processes a new kind of political change and thinking could be started then it should prove beneficial for the people.

The people have had enough of high-handedness of the government officials. They are tired of their exploitation and exhortation and have been taken for granted for too long. They are deprived of their rightful use of forest and natural resources, which can only be made use of by
them after bribing officials by giving them ‘rice’ and ‘poultry products’. It is high time they feel they take matters in their own hands and start governing their lives themselves. The first step towards exercising this is by gaining access over their natural resources and being responsible enough to maintain and conserve the same.

Mr. Mohan Hirabal Hirafa
Mr. Devaji Tola, Vill- Dhanora,
P.O. - Gachhior, Maharashtra

The Adilabad Experience:

The Voluntary Organisation which has been instrumental behind the success story of Adilabad emerged from the university students’ movement when they were confronted with problems relating to the Gond youth. The main objectives of the Gondwana Sangharshana Samiti (GSS) were to strengthen the Gond community, and to help retain the social values of the Gond community. The story of the adivasis of this region is no different from that of adivasi communities elsewhere. In fact exploitation, deprivation and extortion has been the plight of the tribals. Moreover, they have worsened the situation by holding on to their superstition of witchcraft and jadu-tona. The G.S.S in its counselling role first began by creating awareness and educating the tribals about the realities of the situation. The 75 Rai Sabhas or counselling centres in the district, a handy legacy of Christoph von Furer Haimendorf, were a very useful networking facility, which the G.S.S. made full use of.

Further, in Adilabad students gave counseling and guidance to the Gond youth and helped them make decision about their vocation. This was also done at the district level and later a tribal students union was formed. The University Professors were also involved and it became a convention to jointly sit in these weekly meetings held every Sunday. This became like a fact finding committee of sorts and provided a non-formal support structure to the Tribal Student’s Union.

One important issue which the G.S.S. had to contend with was the question of the disintegration of the Gond identity, once the Gond youth started studying or earning in cities. More often than not they tended to shed off their Gond identity and get civilized. The dilemma then was; should this trend be allowed to continue and was it correct?

The answers to such questions need a lot of thinking and rethinking. But nevertheless, the student leaders of the G.S.S. decided to help the tribals on their home ground itself. Stories of harassment of tribals by forest officials were not unheard of and students started guiding them in dealing with the authorities. They also had consultation with the forest officers in this connection.

One of their battles with the foresters was regarding payment of fine for their browsing and grazing animals. The tribals could not understand why the foresters were levying extra fine for goats which were browsing in the forests. Upon questioning the officials they were told that the goats saliva was leaving some viral residue on the plants, which accounted for them getting diseased, and so the extra fine. The students went ahead with some laboratory tests and investigations revealed that the story was unsubstantial. The students thus managed to get the extra fine dismissed for the tribals.

Now the question which confronted the students was how do the tribals fend for themselves once the students went back to the city? It was only during their vacations that they usually set camp in tribal areas to take up their causes. But once the University re-opened they had to return back. It was then they thought of empowering the tribals so that they could fight their own battles. They decided to educate the tribals of their rights, and the relevant rules and regulations.

This enthusiasm of the students was however interpreted as their being affiliated to the Naxalites by some mismatched elements. The students proved their bona fides and successfully extricated themselves from being branded as Naxalites and affirmed their commitment with the tribals. They decided to take up one cause for them every summer vacation. Consequently, the next issue was about the tribals rights over gathering and storing of Mahua flowers. With the help and guidance of the G.S.S. the tribals won their right over this forest produce, which the forest officials had earlier subjugated.

Next, the G.S.S. tackled the Naxalites problem that was playing havoc in the area. Through dialogue and amicable settlement they managed to declare the region as a peace zone. To create employment opportunities, a nursery was opened on 500 acres of land and ownership of this land was given to tribal youth and unmarried girls. Innovative grafting techniques were successfully tried out. All this was mostly possible due to the G.S.S.’s interest in tribal welfare.

(continued on page 19)

Following is the compendium of the report of the National Workshop on “Declining access to and control over natural resources in national parks and sanctuaries by the people”, organised by Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), New Delhi and Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra, Dehra Dun at Dehra Dun on 20-30 October 1993.

The previous issue of Land and People addressed various issues related to state-sponsored conservation in the form of national parks and sanctuaries in the country. Incisive feedback from a number of grass roots groups, activists and other quarters on this issue made it essential to develop a comprehensive understanding of state-sponsored conservation strategy, especially national parks and sanctuaries, laws and policies of the government with regard to national parks and sanctuaries, practices and the specific problems caused by these ‘protected areas’ for the local communities dwelling in and around them. This required to bring the groups and activists working on these issues together for a collective probing and poring of the problems and their causes.

This provided the context and the spur to organise a national Workshop on “Declining access to and control over natural resources in national parks and sanctuaries by the people”, PRIA and RLEK convened a three-day workshop at Dehra Dun in the premises of Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education. The precise objectives as enumerated in the beginning of the workshop were as follows:

- to understand the nature and dimension of the problems posed by national parks and sanctuaries for the local population;
- to understand government policies and laws with respect to national parks and sanctuaries;
- to evolve some common and future plan of action.

About twenty grass roots groups and some activists from ten states, viz. Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh participated in the Workshop. Apart from these groups, a few researchers, government officials and legal experts also participated.

In the first session of the workshop, groups and activists working on various national parks and sanctuaries presented their experience-based case studies. The particular protected areas covered in the case study session are Bhitarkanika Sanctuary, Bird Sanctuary and Rajaji National Park (Uttar Pradesh), Sitanath Sanctuary, Salimullah Sanctuary and Phoolanai Kinal (Rajasthan), Mulumalai Sanctuary, Nagarhole National Park, Indira Gandhi Sanctuary and Coimbatore Zoological Park (Tamil Nadu), Similipal Tiger Reserve and Konark-Balukhand man-made Sanctuary (Odisha), Haripur Sanctuary (Gujarat), Kanha National Park, Pench Tiger Reserve and Sanjay Gandhi National Park (Madhya Pradesh).

As revealed by the case studies, the contemporary strategy for conservation of wildlife, ecosystem and biological diversity has proved antithetical to the very survival interests of the communities living in and around national parks and sanctuaries. The presentations unequivocally pointed out the crushing effects of the endowments of nature for the sustenance of the local people and their social, cultural and spiritual life, too. The people, both tribal and non-tribal, living in and around national parks and sanctuaries have remained as peripheral groups in the process of country’s post-independence development, just because of their disadvantage of spatial location. Often, they, rather than not, for a large section of these groups, have been the only source of their sustenance in their surrounding natural resources, such as forests.

The modern conservation strategy has further contributed to the process of their marginalisation by depriving them of their natural resources, their customary usu-fruct rights over such resources. For instance, all the national parks and sanctuaries heard in the first session have curtailed or terminated grazing rights of the people. Some of them have completely terminated grazing rights and where over it exists, severe restrictions are imposed. Similarly right to minor forest produce, right to timber, food, fodder, etc., are also abrogated. On their ancestral homeland the people are considered as unlawful encroachers. On the one hand, the basic rights of the people are denied, on the other they are subject to extortion, exploitation, suppression and harassment by the forest officials and other outside forces.
Contradictions in government's actions are also frequently noticed. While on the one hand people's survival interests are undermined for wildlife interests, on the other, protected areas are unhesitatingly denoted for non-forest use and for industrial and commercial interests. Two case studies which exemplified such situation are that of Konaik-Balukhand man-made Sanctuary and Sariska. While Konaik-Balukhand Sanctuary faces the danger of denotification for setting up of a Beach Resort by private commercial sector, Sariska is replete with rampant mining.

The case studies further pointed out various shortcomings in the laws and policies of national parks and sanctuaries and also their management. First and foremost, the laws under reference are the extension of the colonial ones which were essentially anti-people. Even though India is a democratic country, the people whose fate is decided by such laws are kept out of the law making process. The people are neither consulted while declaring any area as a protected area, nor are their interests taken into consideration. Often the provisions of laws are flouted by the government machinery. For instance, as pointed out by almost all the case studies, the local people are neither informed nor given an opportunity to prepare their rights while an area is declared either as a national park or a sanctuary as stipulated by law.

As far as management of national parks and sanctuaries is concerned, it is practiced on the principle of complete exclusion of local people. It is based on the conviction that the local people are the foes of forest and wildlife, and the forest bureaucracy is adept enough and the sole authority to protect wildlife and preserve their habitat as well as natural ecosystem. Hence, the local people are to be kept out not only of management of protected areas, but also the protected areas. However, no protection is given to the people against the uncertainties of their very existence. In general, and the threats posed by wild animals to their life and crops, in particular.

All apart, conceptual issues with regard to people's right to and control over natural resources also emerged and discussed and debated. Prof. B. K. Roy Burman defined 'right' as viewed by indigenous people in terms of their custodial association which is a combination of custodial responsibility and custodial rights with the endowments of nature. Dr. Chhatrapati Singh advanced 'trusteeship' over natural resources as the means of control and management.

Light was also thrown on the rationale behind national parks and sanctuaries as well as the current policies of the government by Mr. H. S. Parwar, Director, Wildlife Institute of India and Dr. D. N. Tiwari, Director General, Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education. Dr. Tiwari highlighted that as per the Constitution of India, Wildlife protection of conservation of biological diversity for that matter is not antithetical to the people's survival interests. The common spirit in both these endeavours is welfare of human society.

In the small group discussion, the problems and their causative factors were analysed in-depth and some thought was given to find out solutions to these problems. The following are some of the seminal points with regard to suggestions for solution:

1. The present anti-people laws should be amended.
2. The local people should be granted their customary rights.
3. Special attention should be given to the development of forest dwellers.
4. The local people who are affected by protected areas should be involved in the process of law making, at the time of constitution of protected areas and their management.

A consensually agreed upon twelve point Follow up Strategy was also formulated in the last session of the workshop. Doon Declaration on People and Parks which follows, was also formulated out of the deliberations and emerging issues.

(English and Hindi version of the workshop report is available with PRFA)
DOON DECLARATION ON PEOPLE AND PARKS

Doon Declaration was framed out of the deliberations and emerging issues in the National Workshop on National Parks and Sanctuaries held at Dharamshala.

1. The primary strategy of conservation of flora, fauna and wildlife in our country today is the setting up of National parks and Sanctuaries. Nearly 450 sanctuaries and 60 national parks (including Tiger Reserves) have already been created. It is proposed by Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) to substantially increase this number to nearly 650 sanctuaries and 150 national parks in the next few years.

2. This conservation strategy of creating protected areas has already affected many people, forest-dwellers and tribes. The MOEF has accepted that six lakhs tribes and forest-dwellers have already been displaced. According to our conservative estimates, nearly 20% of tribal population is affected by these national parks and sanctuaries. This figure is likely to double in the next few years with the creation of more national parks and sanctuaries.

3. The situation of widespread degradation of our natural resources, forest and wildlife has obtained primarily due to indiscriminate and unsustainable use of these resources for commercial and industrial interests which has been a part of our Government post-independence development strategy.

4. Local forest dwellers and tribes have been the major agents of protection and conservation of our forests and wildlife. They have developed insights and valuable knowledge and ecological preservation and sustainable use of such resources. They have created institutional mechanism and norms to ensure that people live in balance and harmony with nature.

5. The protection of our forest, flora-fauna and wildlife is critical for conservation of biological diversity in the country. This is a common purpose among tribal and forest dwellers, environmentalists, voluntary organisations and social activists, Ministry of Environment and Forests and management of National Parks and Sanctuaries.

6. However, the current strategy of achieving this purpose has led to widespread displacement, harassment and neglect of forest dwellers, nomads and tribals of those areas. Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and its amendment in 1991 deny peoples' customary rights over such flora and fauna and prohibit their access to the natural resources on which their survival livelihood depends.

7. There is an urgent need for redefining the strategy of conservation through protected areas to include local people and tribes, and not to exclude them. This has been widely recognized and emphasized nationally and internationally. AGENDA 21 adopted at the Earth Summit at Rio in June 1992 clearly underscores the crucial role of knowledge and practices of indigenous people in conservation of bio-diversity. It recommends that management of protected areas should involve local people and tribals in an active process.

8. Likewise, Delhi Declaration issued by the First Ministerial Conference on the Forest-Forum for Developing Countries (held at Delhi during September 1-3) clearly recognizes "the importance of the involvement of people at the local level in the conservation, management and sustainable development of forest resources".

9. More than 50 social activists, people movements and voluntary organisations working on such issues in 17 National parks and Sanctuaries in the states of U.P., Bihar M.P., Orissa, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala have attended a national workshop on "Declining Access to and Control over Natural Resources in National Parks and Sanctuaries" held at Forest Research Institute, Dehradun during October 28-31, 1993. The workshop was jointly organised by the Rural Litigation and Environment Kendra (FLEK) Dehradun and Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), New Delhi.

10. The deliberations conducted in this workshop addressed several issues raised above. Our analysis of experiences at local levels and the policies and programmes of the Government has conveyed that significant changes are needed in the policies and strategies of conservation currently being adopted. Hence, we ask the Government to ensure that effective conservation of flora-fauna and wildlife in our country much be based upon the following:

   a) Recognition of customary rights of local people (including Nomads) living inside and around such areas on use of natural resources;

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Workshop with Panchayat Leaders

PRIA in collaboration with New Hope, a grass roots voluntary organisation (Himachal Pradesh) organised a three day orientation programme for elected Panchayat members in Palampur district in Kangra, Himachal Pradesh during January 28-30, 1994. Nineteen elected representatives participated in this programme. The basic focus was to develop a collective understanding about the role and nature of functioning of Panchayats, in the context of new constitutional amendment. A follow up training workshop was organised during 20-24 March, 1994.

One Day Meeting with Panchayat Representatives

Volunteers for Social Justice, Jalandhar (Punjab) in collaboration with PRIA organised an one-day meeting with the elected Panchayat representatives at Kapurthala on 6th March, 1994. The purpose was firstly to understand the present state of functioning of Panchayat system at the grass-roots level and various problems and issues; secondly, to draw a strategy of training intervention (inevitable) in the context of new constitutional amendment. A wide range of issues was discussed and debated. A follow up plan is being prepared.

Aralavali Chetna Yatra

Aralavali Conservation Working Group (Save Aralavali Campaign) launched the Aralavali Chetna Yatra on 2nd October from Himmat Nagar (Gujarat) to Delhi under the leadership of Shri Rajendra Singh of Tarun Bharat Sangh. The Yatra was concluded on November 22, 1993 at Delhi covering 900 km route through Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi.

The main objective of this Chetna Yatra is to draw people's attention on the gradual degradation of Aralavali Hills by continuous deforestation, mining and other hazards. Aralavali Hills are considered to be the life of the people of Rajasthan and this very lifeline of the people - i.e. Aralavali is being rendered lifeless day by day. This is all being done in the name of modern development which is based on unmitigated exploitation of natural resources as well as human beings, reads the leaflet of Aralavali Conservation Working Group.


The tribal society has always been active in protecting its identity and culture. With the advent of modern industrial culture, the first blow fell on the tribal society. May it be in South America or Asia or Africa, the tribals were exploited and oppressed in the name of development. The tribal communities which are the child of nature have been oppressed by the modern monetised system, to the extent that some of them have been extinct. As exploitation and oppression of tribals is done all over the world, hence, the struggle against such forces should also be launched at the World level.

The deliberations in the Conference note that collective efforts have to be made to safeguard the struggle through which the tribals have been able to preserve their traditional life style and culture to a certain extent. It is a happy note otherwise that the contemporary development model has caused serious environmental problems which has drawn the attention of all towards these shortcomings. Now it is realised that without harmonious relations with the nature, neither human being nor the whole creation can remain safe.

It was voiced that till now the tribals had unity at the local level, but at present, it is gradually spreading, may it be Bosi or Chhattisgarh, Wynaad (Kerala), or Mysore (Karnataka), the need for unity at a wider level is increasingly felt by all. Unless we take this unity out of our sub-continent and try to have unity at the global level, it is not possible to mobilise wider public opinion in support of our struggle. With this purpose, this South Asian Conference of Indigenous People was organised to discuss various issues related to language, script and culture; development policies; the problems of tribal women, human rights, right to life, so on and so forth.

National Seminar on Development Project and Rehabilitation of Displaced Persons

Institute for Socio-Economic Development (ISED), Bhubaneswar organised a three-day National Seminar at Bhubaneswar during January 28-30, 1994. The main objective was to bring the social activists, academicians, lawyers and various groups working on the issues of displacement to a common platform and to share their experiences. Fifty participants from various states attended this seminar.
At the end of the seminar six broad principles of rehabilitation were adopted and urged the policy makers to formulate the rehabilitation policy on these lines.

ISED is also doing a study on displacement in the State of Orissa.

For further details contact:
Mr. Balaaj Pandey,
ISED,
N-6/39, Jayadev Vihar, Bhubaneswar - 751 015.


Sustainable development, its theoretical, conceptual and praxiological issues, has been subjected to serious scrutiny at various levels and in various fora. It is realised that the biggest challenge the country faces today is to evolve a development process that would ensure equity, growth and sustainability.

As an attempt to understand various issues and dimensions of sustainable development, the Department of Sociology of Panjab University, organised a three-day National Seminar during 23-25 February, 1994. The deliberations of the Seminar focused on the following major themes.

1. Environment and Development: Theoretical and Conceptual Issues

2. Urbanisation, Industrialisation and Environmental concerns.

3. Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development

4. Dams, Deforestation and Development

5. Environment Activism and Mobilisation

Some Non-Governmental Voluntary Organisations also participated leading to meaningful exchange of ideas between activists and academicians.

For information regarding papers please contact:
Prof. K. Gopal Iyer
Seminar Director
Department of Sociology
Panjab University, Chandigarh - 160 014.

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It was around this time, now that the tribals had achieved some level of self-confidence and sense of uprightness, that they decided to tackle the continued harassment by the police and Naxalites, themselves. They decided that they would resolve their disputes by themselves, come what may, and not get embroiled in every controversy between the police and the Naxalites. It was thus resolved by the tribals that they would begin a process of self-governance for their own welfare.

Integrated Tribal Development Schemes are now at the door steps of tribal homes. The main agents for their promotion adoption and implementation have been the "Rai Sabhas" and the G.S.S. But for this they have been labelled as government agents. The G.S.S strongly resents such allegations because they believe that they are carrying forward the task of propagating the philosophy of self-rule. The G.S.S is ensuring that the tribal community takes its social and political welfare in its own hands. It wants to make the tribes realise that the decision to exercise their rights lies in their own hands. And that they should be ready to tackle confrontations at any point in order to maintain their rights.

The motivating factor in the entire movement to safeguard tribal interests has been the will and desire of the students and professors on a continuous basis, as well as the active participation and interest of the community itself. Yet essentially, it has been the enlightened educationalists that took up the challenge of preserving the identity of the community with the aim to teach them to become self-reliant.

Dr. Todsam Chandu, Men's Hostel,
Gandhi Medical College,
Secunderabad, Andhra Pradesh.
Rural People's Knowledge, Agricultural Research and Extension Practice.
Published by International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

The Sustainable Agriculture Programme of IIED promotes and support the development of socially and environment friendly agriculture through research, training, advocacy, networking and information dissemination. The above research report is the findings of collaborative research programmes. The volume contains both overview papers and case studies designed from the Rural Research and Extension Practice project. This involved researchers from Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America.

For further details write to: IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London, WC1H ODD.

Principles and History of the Tenancy Laws of Chotanagpur:
Author- Roshni Katayen, Published by: Society for Participatory Research in Asia, New Delhi.

This a product of the research based on field study of the tribal communities in Chotanagpur region, the structure and function of their social system, their land system, their oral traditions that reflect their perception of social formations in time, and their legal history on agrarian relations. The central focus of the Report is the history of and the contemporary land tenure system of the tribal communities in Chotanagpur region. For the copy of the English and Hindi Report contact PRIA.

Tribes In Perspective:
Author: Prof. B.K. Roy Burman
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This volume is the first of a series on Encyclopedia of Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and Disadvantaged peoples. Prof. Roy Burman who is popularly known as walking encyclopedia of Social Sciences in India is eminently qualified to launch this ambitious venture.

In this book, Prof. Roy Burman takes the position that the tribal social formations need not always be held to represent a stage in the evolutionary scheme of human social organisation. They represent a way of life, primarily based on moral bindings and reciprocity among the members, rather than being made to behave by the crucial power of the state. Prof. Roy Burman has presented another interesting idea in this book. As he puts it, notwithstanding differences in methods of earning livelihood (hunting and gathering, animal husbandry, cultivation, manufacture of objects by the application of simple technology and so on) the tribal social formation generally encompasses two modes, namely ingratiation mode of subsistence and custodial mode of production in varying degrees of permutation and combination. This perspective has far reaching implications for social activism, particularly in the ecological realm.

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