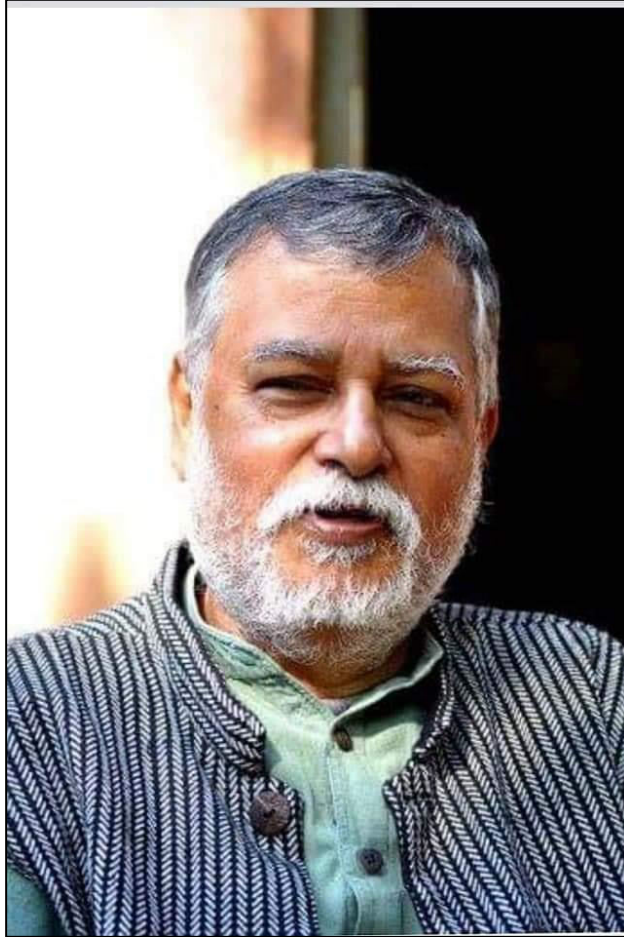




# **The Tribal Discourse:** **Achyut Das** Speaks on Social Media







**Achyut Das**

**Director, Agragamee,  
Kashipur, Rayagada, Odisha**

**“A true visionary, who challenged injustice, amplified the voices of the marginalized,  
and reimagined Odisha with courage, compassion, and an unwavering commitment  
to social change.”**

# Preface.....

We are pleased to present this compendium of 72 insightful Social Media(SM) Posts authored by Mr. Achyut Das, Director of Agrabamee, Kashipur, Rayagada, Odisha, collections made between October 1, 2024, and August 06, 2025. For the period August to 18th June appended in bottom, missed the chronology of date. These reflections, analyses, and commentaries address a wide range of pressing socio-economic development issues and offer grounded, field-based solutions relevant to the grassroots realities of tribal and rural Odisha.

Mr. Das's posts have served as a thought-provoking catalyst for dialogue and action among development practitioners, civil society members, and public institutions alike. His writings cover a diverse set of themes, including sustainable agriculture, tribal empowerment, GO-NGO convergence, and successful models of integrated development, among others. With a deep understanding of community dynamics and policy frameworks, his observations carry both the voice of experience and a vision for inclusive change.

This compilation has been meticulously curated by Phulbani Action Group (PAG), as a reference and guide for development professionals, researchers, and field practitioners. We hope that these posts will continue to inspire reflection, dialogue, and informed action in the journey toward equitable and sustainable development.

Without seeking formal consent from him, we have prepared this compendium out of deep respect for his contributions and with the sole intention of promoting collective learning.

We sincerely thank Mr. Achyut Das for his valuable contributions and his unwavering commitment to social transformation.

**Er.Hari Sankar Rout**

Convenor, PAG-Cum-Secretary, SWATI

Date: 03/09/2025

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## Women's Convention In Kandhamal On Sustainable Agriculture

I am in love with Kandhamal (formerly Phulbani) and more and more when Agragamee had started a project in 1985 being encouraged by the then Collector Dr. Aurobindo Behera. Since then we have not looked back and mobilised women to take the lead on NRM and fight for their Rights. The courageous women led by Mrs. Jatani Kanhara had campaigned on Policy Changes on NTFP, on RTI, on Livelihood Securities. The women had formed a vibrant organisation called Phiringia Anchalika Mahila Mahasangha with a membership of 1000+ women. They took up processing of Mohua seeds (Tola) and a hefty income! Now in 2020, we have women SHGs in Phiringia showing remarkable success in

growing millets which were near extinct being part and parcel of Odisha Millet Mission/ Shree Anna Abhiyan. This is a classic example of Group Action.

We are organising this Women's Convention at Phulbani on June 20-21 where 100 women leaders will articulate what should be the contour of Sustainable Agriculture. Kandhamal has been almost declared as an Organic District but there are already so many threats - commercial maize, commercial plantations, introduction of HYVs, Chemical Turmeric Cultivation etc. Kandhamal being a Drought Prone Dist.(DPAP), we have to have perfect plan for rained Agriculture and Agroforestry. We have to save forest and conserve rain water.



We have to design a plan of action in consultation with women who are the main actors in the Agricultural Development. Kandhamal has a history of Mangos and Jackfruits. Have we forgotten that? Our women will lead the bio-diversity Conservation.

Kandhamal has a huge presence of NGOs- big and small. There is a strong NGO Network - PAG( Phulbani Action Group). Funding by the Government and CSR is substantial. May be the impact and tangible result are not seen much. But the Community is strong. We have Kui Samaj and Dalit Samaj and we have to have a synergy which will be brought about by women. They will be the flag bearers for Development, Change and Harmony!

We are aiming at GO-NGO Collaboration which we have demonstrated in



Nabarangpur. What is needed is a proactive Collector. We have Mr. Amrit Raturaj, IAS ( Collector and DM) extending all support to make this Convention a success. His team of Officials will be fully present. On Day II, we shall have a Round table with all the stakeholders to deliberate on the future plan. The Women's Convention will have a Charter of Demand. In coming days, our women of Kandhamal will show the way

In our efforts a number of retired Civil Servants, Experts, CSO Activists, Media Persons have come together. Mr. Bidyadhar Moharana and Mr. Basant Kar have shared the write-up on Sustainable Agriculture and Nutrition Status.

This Convention is jointly organised by Akragee, Harsha Trust, PAG and Phirigia Anchalika Mahila Mahasangha.







## MOHUA SEEDS IN KAPADANG VILLAGE:

### Issues Regarding Skills, Resources and Technology (Re shared Post)

If my friends remember, I have posted on Kapadang Village of Kashipur Block Rayagada District in Odisha, which has been showing success of GO-NGO Convergence and Community Mobilisation. The entire district administration has been fully involved and a number of interventions have been made successfully. It seems many things have slowed down in the village in past few months due to a) the Code of Conduct of the Panchayat Election, b) transfer of Key Officials and c) lack of certain financial resources. Owing to my illness, I had not visited the village since February, 2022. Finally, I made it and had a mixed feeling when I looked at the successes and failures. We had a serious stocktaking and was assured by the community to bring the process back to the right track! This also has

proved that development trajectory is always non-linear!

As soon as I entered the village, I saw all women and children engaged in processing of Mohua Seeds. While hot sun on the ground was drying some seeds others were peeled very meticulously by women and children. As we know Mohua seeds contain good amount of oil and has both domestic and industrial use. The oil cake is also in high demand for cattle and poultry. I talked to women about how they are processing the Mohua seeds. They had narrated the local processing by using crude technology, which is very labour, intensive. In the process they get oil and oil cake. The other option is that the processed seeds are to be taken to Tikiri Oil mills located at 15kms away. In that



case, the oil mill owner keeps the cake, which has much more demand than the oil. I was reminded of our interventions with Phiringia Mahila Mahasangh ( a tribal Women's Federations of Kandhamal) where women had processed Mohua seeds collectively and had made huge income both from the oil and oil cake. I had asked the women of Kapadang why they are not asking for a proper oil mill as oilseeds like mustard , Sunflower, Alsi are grown and tree-based oilseeds like Pongamia, Kusuma, Sal seeds, Simarua etc are available locally. They said they have been trying to get a good unit but it has not been considered by the Government Agencies.

Any Self-sustaining Development process in the rural-tribal areas needs certain relationships among the skills, resources and the interplay of appropriate technologies.



Mahatma Gandhi's Gram Swaraj has extensively talked about these issues and Rural Industries/Cottage Industries. However, the globalisation process has killed our Rural/Cottage Industries. Our country has been importing huge amount of edible oil from different countries – Palm Oil, Sunflower Oil etc. Once upon a time we had Oilseed Mission as part of Technology Missions visualised by Mr. Sam Pitroda. Things have been forgotten. Again, we have to go back to the basics to have our tribal population get their edible oil and generate a marketable surplus.

I am sure Kapadang will have an appropriate oil mill soon so that the women do not have to go to Tikiri to process their Mohau Seeds!





S.M. Post: 14.06.2025



## WHOSE BHUBANESWAR IS THIS?

### The Story of Kumari, Insulted, Humiliated and Displaced

I have known Kumari since many years as she used to live near the bend of the road passing through our Agramee office. Vidhya used to talk to her as we go occasionally on our walk. Her grandson had gifted us a white cat which we took to Kashipur to scare the rats attacking our household and disturbing us in the night. We named her Dhabli which was killed by the local villagers as it was attacking their pigeons. Dhobli's daughter and granddaughters are still with us.

This time in June when I came to Bhubaneswar, I saw Kumari's House demolished in which she was living for last 28 years. Coming from Kandhamal, she raised a family with the meagre income of her husband who was pulling the rickshaw; accommodated a number of relatives; gave shelter to families of Cats and Dogs. She was much popular as she was working as a domestic help in a number of households in VIP Colony. Living in Bhubaneswar with meagre income after the husband is

paralysed is not an easy thing but life was going on. Unfortunately, she had her hut located in the Green Belt of the VIP Colony where BDA/BMC had the plan to develop. When Agramee's office was constructed, the whole place was the public toilet used by the local slum-dwellers. Subsequently, on my request and that of the Citizen's Committee, many trees were planted to be cut subsequently but quite a few had survived under the watchful eye of Kumari. Occasionally I talked to some VIP Colony Citizen's Committee Members and the Corporator and I was told that the High Court has given order to remove the slum which was growing bigger and bigger after the Kandhamal Communal Riot in 2008.

There were occasional threats by the authorities to demolish Kumari's house but she never expected that her house would be demolished by bulldozer and she would leave the place after 28 long years.

Kumari was profusely crying when I met her and was inconsolable. I was speechless. I am





attaching the photograph of her house before and after the demolition; her interviews and some narration of her world then and now. I hope the the authorities including the CM will consider her case and restore her dignity as equal citizen of this country.

I have seen displacement and distress across the world and was always reminded of the book THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO GALAXY by Douglas Adams in which the protagonist is being displaced by the Galactical Highways and Super Highways! For the domination of

Powerful and Mighty, some people will be sacrificed.

Interestingly, near Kumnari's demolished house, a Goshala is coming up in the protected green belt fast with signboards and fenced enclosure. Young people are gathering every evening to feed the abandoned cows and calves. I love all animals and Goshalas and they should be developed in the most planned way. In the context of the demolition of Kumari's House and Promotion of Goshala a few feet away raise many questions in my mind!

S.M. Post: 11.06.2025



## A Journey from Struggle to Sustainability:

### The Story of Raibaru & Sundarmati Muduli

A visit to Hiruguda village G.P. – Gouda Deopali, Block – Tentulikhunti, Dist. – Nabarangpur Odisha 10days ago will remain unforgettable, I had visited this village 30 years back which was quite inaccessible as

one has to trek miles to reach as we were running night schools and supporting the displaced families of World Bank Supported Upper Indravati Hydroelectric Project. It was quite a bit of challenge to help these



families as the provisions of R&R Policies where a distant dream but the then Chief Minister Late Mr. Biju Patnaik had appointed IAS Officers like Mr. Rajesh Verma ( who has retired as the Secretary to the Honourable President of India) and Mr. Pradeep Kumar Jena ( who has retired as the Chief Secretary to Government of Odisha) as Rehabilitation Officers to do the best. Hiruguda village had accommodated several families from village Amtapas which was submerged by the reservoir. Now Raibaru Muduli and wife Sundamani are 2nd generation Farmers who were the proud students of Agrabamee's Night School.

Raibaru Muduli (45) and his wife Sundarmati (40), residents of Hiruguda village in Nabarangpur district, have transformed their agricultural livelihood through the establishment of a diversified family farm. Displaced in 1985 due to the Indravati Dam project, the family initially survived on limited mono-cropping with an annual income of just ₹8,500. But change came with the establishment of a 1-acre Family Farm in 2022. Today, their farm integrates fruit orchards (mango, cashew, jackfruit), intercropped pulses, millets, and vegetables, with sustainable practices like stone bunding, organic liquid manure, and SMI/SRI methods.



Since 2022, Raibaru has shifted to a sustainable model by utilizing one acre of upland for a family farm. He introduced orchard development with mango, cashew, and jackfruit trees, and planted multiple fruit, forest, and medicinal species. Through intercropping, he now grows a mix of pulses, millets, and vegetables. In FY 2024-25 alone, the farm yielded over 845 kg of vegetables and 585 kg of pulses and millets, generating a net income of ₹28,750 after consumption.

The transformation brought not just financial gains but social change—his elder son, once a migrant worker, has returned home to support the farm. Raibaru has adopted scientific farming methods and organic practices, with a 98% survival rate of his fruit trees. Encouraged by success, he now plans to expand further.

Now, Raibaru plans to expand with medicinal plants, forest species, and vermicomposting. His wife Sundarmati proudly says: “Now we can give our children the food they need, and my heart is never cold!”

A beautiful example of resilience, agro-ecology, and family empowerment.

(This Project has been supported by Azim Premji Foundation)





## **Dambaru Jani Of Nabarangpur: A Lakhipati Mushroom Farmer**

Last week I was in Nabarangpur and had met this inspiring farmer Mr. Dambaru Jani who is showing the way in Mushroom Cultivation. Mr. Dambaru Jani is a marginal farmer, aged 38 years residing in Parajaminiguda village of B. Maliguda G.P. in Nandahandi Block of Nabarangpur District. He is 10th pass from his village Govt. School. Dambaru owned 2 acres of agriculture land in where he traditionally cultivates paddy, maize and pulses. In his family there are 7 persons (Father, mother, 4 children & wife) who depend upon him financially. He has been cultivating paddy and maize in his non-irrigated land where he earns average Rs. 30000/- per annum.

It all began with a NABARD supported ERYA(ENCOURAGING RURAL YOUTHS IN AGRICULTURE) Project. Major Activities: a) Baseline Survey, b) Exposure Visit, c) Skill Development Training of 250 Rural Youths, d) Stake-Holder Consultation Meeting, e)

Common Infrastructure Development. Dambaru Jani was selected for skill development training on “Commercial mushroom Cultivation” through the Baseline Survey conducted by Agramee Jan. 2024. He got 10 days training on the concern agri-trade conducted by Agramee under ERYA Project of NABARD from 19.12.2024 to 30.12.2024 at Nabarangpur. He not only became aware of the production and cultivation process of Mushroom, with practical skills and confidence to start mushroom cultivation as a sustainable livelihood but also how to market a perishable item in and around his village and in the township of Nabarangpur.

In Post-Training activities he initial started his Mushroom Unit with 100 mushroom beds, with continued technical assistance from Agramee field staff to ensure effective implementation and long-term success. In this process he had teamed up



with another two youth trainee from his village to establish the Mushroom unit as group enterprise. They collectively prepared 750 mushroom beds during Jan. 2025. They meticulously followed each stage of the cultivation process— disinfecting straw, inoculating spawn, and regulating humidity—to ensure healthy mushroom growth and successful outcomes. Apart from that he has set up two poly vermi compost tank to utilise the mushroom bed waste into compost. With a modest initial investment around Rs. 17000/- (Preparation of shed house, purchase of drum & sprayer, rope etc.), he could able to prepare 350 oyster mushroom beds individually. Till date he has spent Rs. 29,000/- for the concerned mushroom unit.

Mr. Dambaru Jani has got production of 910 Kg. Oyster Mushroom from 350 beds (an average of 2.5Kg -2.8Kg per bed) in last 5 months (Jan.-May 2025). He sold it in local market and own village @Rs.180/Kg. and got total Income of Rs. 1,64,000/-. The net income is Rs. 1,35,000/- from 350 Mushroom Beds which has set an exemplary to other farmers. Till date he has mobilised and trained other 5 Mushroom farmers in the locality who have set up Mushroom Unit in their respective villages. They are Bhagabati Harijan, Jasab Khara from At/Po-Nishnahandi and Brunda Amanatya, Kamala Amanatya, Gurubari Amanatya from Paikaminiguda, G.P.- B. Maliguda. Now they already cultivated mushroom in more than 100beds each.

The wife of Dambaru Jani was already benefited Rs.7000/-from Horticulture Dept. Nabarangpur under“ Area Expansion Program” of Mushroom Mission scheme for straw mushroom cultivation. He also supported a mushroom shed/house by ITDA



under MMJJM (Mukhyamantri Janajati Jibika Mission) scheme. By which he is given Rs.100000/- with 75% subsidy.

#### FUTURE PLAN:

- Goal set for next season is to produce 600 Oyster Mushroom beds individually.
- Now he is planning for cultivated Paddy straw Mushroom as well as oyster mushroom.
- Financial assistance from Bank to renovate and extend the existing Mushroom Shed.
- Other support from Govt departments for further improvement in production and marketing.

The success of Dambaru Jani has become a source of inspiration within the community, encouraging others to consider mushroom cultivation as a sustainable and profitable livelihood option.

In my recent visit to Dambaru’s Mushroom Unit, with pride he showed me everything and explained to me the whole process of Mushroom Cultivation; told me that District Officials like ADM, DDM Nabard, PA ITDA have visited to extend all support; introduced me to his family and his trainees! A very inspiring story as regards the complexities of Tribal Development is concerned.

## JP DAS: MY MOST UNFORGETTABLE FRIEND

We all love and respect “JP” (Mr. Jagannath Prasad Das) one of the most eminent Odia writers of our time. I had read Prathama Purusha and Desa Kaala Patra long time back and could see a unique lyrical writer and researcher in him. I have been a silent admirer but did not meet him till we could share our views on Facebook. My friend Dr. Aurobindo Behera gave me a message that JP was wanting to meet me and we met in person at his home. I was impressed by his collection of old records/newspaper clippings/ valuable letters which he was sharing frequently on Facebook. He kindly presented me a set of his books one of which was Aali Maalikaa which Agramee has reprinted in large numbers to distribute among all our students of Agramee School(Mukta Gyan Kutira). JP has gifted the following valuable books – 1) NABA GUNJAR (a Novella), 2) ANYA DESHA, BHINNA SAMAYA (a Collection of Poems), 3) ABANAABANAA (a Collection of Poems for Children of all ages) which Agramee will publish one day, 4) SACHARAACHARA ( a Collection of Plays and Essays), 5) PURBAAPARA – VOLUME I &II ( Collection of Poems). It is taking time to read all these books, especially poems but I have promised JP that I shall read all of them and post some comments. I was not keeping well and hence there has been delay to write an appreciation as well as a critique of JP’s writing.

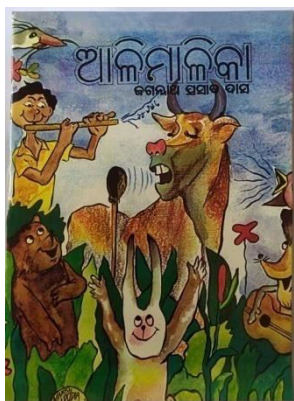
An Essay “Saahityikara Saamajika Sammana O Swikriti”( SOCIAL RESPECT AND RECOGNITION OF A LITERATEUR) published in Odia Daily Anupam Bharat September 2011 has caught my imagination. How correct he is! The present day Odia writers are



hankering after Awards, Rewards, Financial Benefits and many colours of recognitions from the Power That Be instead of the readers. Looks like there are now more writers and less readers. Very unfortunate. JP has written that beyond the domain of writers, there are other groups in our Society like Doctors, Engineers, Teachers, Media Persons, Industrialists, Social Workers who are much more needed by our Society. Ignoring these important Actors, the writers and Artists are getting recognition more than what is due to them. JP and I are on the same page.

This is my second posting on JP. In the first one I had commented on his recent Novella Sayana- “With avid interest, I have read his latest book, a Novel, named SAYANA: A BOOK OF CHAARANA( In plain English, it could be SEX but I view it as FORNICATION). I am no literary critic to comment on the book which is extremely readable and can be finished at a stretch. In an evening with him in the company of my friend Dr. Aurobindo Behera, he discussed about the contour of the book and my instant reaction was why write a book on Sex at this age. I talked about Hesse’s Magister Ludi or Glass Bead Game and Albert Camus’s The Fall. In the later book, there is mentioning of fornication.”

I am looking forward to have another evening with revered JP and get an opportunity to listen his views on LIFE and LITERATURE!







## Demand of all citizens of Bhubaneswar

It should be the demand of all citizens of Bhubaneswar and that of Odisha, the real beauty spot in the middle of our concrete Jungle. I used to take morning walk years back when I come to Bhubaneswar from Kashipur and one of the first persons to enter. Those days, one has to pay for a monthly pass. There are several Groups of Morning Walkers but I used to meet many familiar faces and among them was Mr. Bipin Bihari Mishra, IPS (Retired) who is from my school and my town (Talcher)! He is such an expert in telling stories and anecdotes from his own experiences, we forget the long walk. I have not gone to Ekamra Kanan since last 3 years because of my health issues and the timing of opening of the Park.

My friend Dr. Aurobindo Behera, IAS( Retired) tells me that the entire landscape of Ekamra Kanan is changed of late. I read in the newspaper that mutli-story Apartments are being planned and a wide road is being designed to bypass Saliha Sahi. Is it so? What madness?

Apart from Morning Walkers, it can be a centre to learn Biodiversity Conservation as most of the trees, herbs, fruits and flowering tress ( including Bonsais and Orchids) to attract our students to visit them and learn how trees are part of our finest eco-system. Such a place I have seen in Germany where all the students que up to see rare plants and they pay entry tickets. Why can't we do that to maintain our Ekamra Kanan?

I hope the Power that be will be awake to the reality and preserve the beauty and the science of Ekamra Kanana for this generation and as well as for the future!





## BALABHADRA MAJHI OF PODAPADAR VILLAGE: STRUGGLE TO FIND A FOOTHOLD

### କେରଳରେ ଦାଦନ ଖଟୁଛନ୍ତି ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଟପ୍ପର୍

କାଶୀପୁର, ୨୮/୫ (ଭମିପ): ଯୁକ୍ତ ଦୁଇ ଜଣ ପରୀକ୍ଷାରେ ନିଜ ଉଚ୍ଚ ମାଧ୍ୟମିକ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ଟପ୍ପର୍ ହୋଇଥିବା ଛାତ୍ର ବଳଭଦ୍ର ମାଝୀ କେରଳରେ ଦାଦନ ଖଟୁଛନ୍ତି। ପରୀକ୍ଷା ପଳ ପ୍ରକାଶ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ବଳଭଦ୍ର ନିଜ ବାଙ୍ଗଙ୍କ ସହ ଦାଦନ ଖଟିବାକୁ ଯାଇଛନ୍ତି। କାଶୀପୁର ଦୁଇ ଅବାକୋର ପଞ୍ଚାୟତର ପୋଡାପଦର ଗ୍ରାମରେ ବଳଭଦ୍ରଙ୍କ ଘର। ବିଷମକଚକ ମା' ମାଳିନୀ ଉଚ୍ଚ ମାଧ୍ୟମିକ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ବଳଭଦ୍ର ଯୁକ୍ତ ଦୁଇ ଜଣରେ ପଢୁଥିଲେ। ୨୦୨୫ ପରୀକ୍ଷାରେ ୫୧୭ ମାର୍କ ରଖି ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ଟପ୍ପର୍ ହୋଇ ଶିକ୍ଷାନୁଷ୍ଠାନର ଚୌକି ବଢ଼ାଇଛନ୍ତି। ଉଚ୍ଚ ଶିକ୍ଷା ପାଇଁ ଅର୍ଥ ଅଭାବ କାରଣରୁ ବେଲାରମ୍ପି ମାଝୀଙ୍କ ପୁଅ ବଳଭଦ୍ର ପାଠ ପଢ଼ିବା ପାଇଁ ସଂଘର୍ଷ କରୁଛନ୍ତି। ଯୁକ୍ତ ଦୁଇ ପରୀକ୍ଷା ଦେବା ପରେ ଆର୍ଥିକ ଅନଟନରୁ ଦାଦନ ଖଟିବାକୁ କେରଳ ଯିବାକୁ ବାଧ୍ୟ ହୋଇଥିବା ଜଣାପଡ଼ିଛି। ପରୀକ୍ଷାରେ ସଫଳତା ହାସଲ କରିବା ପରେ ବଳଭଦ୍ରଙ୍କୁ ପିତା ବେଲାରମ୍ପି ମାଝୀ, ମାଆ ମାଳିନୀ ଦେବଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଗ୍ରାମବାସୀ ଅଭିନନ୍ଦନ ଜଣାଇଛନ୍ତି। ଚରିତ୍ର ସାମାଜିକତା ତଳେ ବାପ କରୁଥିବା ବଳଭଦ୍ରଙ୍କ ଉଚ୍ଚଶିକ୍ଷା ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରଶାସନ ପଦସମ୍ପେଦ ନେବାକୁ ଦାବି ହୋଇଛି।



Many of my friends must have already come to know from the Newspaper Reporting that a tribal boy Balabhafdra Majhi of Podapadar Village, Arajor GP, Kashipur Block Rayagada District in Odisha who was a topper in his school in +2 Examination is working as a Migrant Labour in Kerala. He wants to study in the college but has no means. This has caught the imagination of many of our friends. As it is in Kashipur where I have been living since 1980-81, has not come to me as a shock as many youths from this region have gone to other States in search of Livelihood. It has been reported that Buses are coming from different states to take them as cheap labour.

I had sent two of my colleagues to visit Podapadar village and meet Balabhadra's parents. The report is attached. I also talked to Balabhadra to ascertain the reason of going to Kerala and working as a Hotel Boy in an alien land. He said that after his schooling he was at his home doing nothing. The family had nothing to support him and he was under tremendous pressure. Higher Education was not even his dream. When other youths from his village were going to Kerala, he also went with them and got a job in the hotel. I told him that the support from the Government and from my friends are coming and if they come, which College he would want to go. He

said he wants to take up Political Science in Ravenshaw or BJB College.

Reading the newspaper three of my friends have instant response. Dr. Rabi Narayan Dash ( my classmate from Ravenshaw College) and now at Rourleka has given a commitment to support Balabhadra's higher studies. Prof. Pravu Charan Lenka ( eminent horticulturist ) has assured to bear the part of the expenses. Our friend Mr. Pradeep Kumar Jena, IAS Ex-Chief Secretary has been active in writing to the CMO and other Secretaries to support Balabhadra. He has shared the positive news from the Govt. as follows: " Namaskar Sir.

Our team talked with the boy. He wants to study at Ravenshaw University or BJB Auto College with Pol SC honours.

Presently he is working in a hotel somewhere in Kerala.

Higher Education Deptt is facilitating him to fill up his form through the SAMS portal as per his choice.

He will be given required assistance

Regards"

I am thinking of crowd funding. I request all my Facebook Friends to donate generously to the Account of Balabhadra which is given below. If substantial funding comes, we can make it a Fixed Deposit for his Education Security. Please consider my request. The details are as follows:

Name: Balabhadra Majhi  
Father's Name: Balarsingh Majhi  
Mother's Name: Malindei Majhi  
A/c No. 40547886826  
IFSC Code: SBIN0002075  
Mobile Mo. 7978450621



## **WAS I RIGHT BY NOT JOINING CIVIL SERVICE?**

I have very close encounter with Civil Servants throughout my journey in the Development Field and I can say in a straightforward manner that some of the senior officials were more sensitive and serious than so called Social Activists. To name a few with whom I have come in close contact and have got their enormous and valuable support for the work we have been doing in support of the STs, SCs and Rural Poor in remote areas of Odisha, they are- Mr. SR Sankaran, Mr. D. Bandyopadhyay, Mr. Anil Bordia, Prof. Muchkund Dubey, Mr. KR Venugopal, Mr. BN Yugandhar, Mr. KB Saxena, Dr. NC Saxena Dr. Lakshmidhar Mishra, Mr. Ashok Saikia and many others and some of them have passed away. I have so many stories to narrate how their support to me and Agramee at a critical juncture have been the bright examples of how a civil servant would stand by the cause. I can give you some instances of their support and solidarity. While releasing and rehabilitating the Bonded Labourers, I was

assaulted by the landlords and needed protection. Mr. D. Bandyopadhyay and Dr. Lakshmidhar Mishra had written to the State Government for such protection. When Agramee, I and Vidhya were attacked and harassed by the State Government, Prof. Muchkund Dubey, Mr. D. Bandyopadhyay and Mr. B N Yugandhar had visited Kashipur to show solidarity. When a Central Minister was harassing me during the Vajpayee Government, Mr. Saikia was standing behind me like a rock. Dr. N C Saxena once gave in writing that if he won't stand by me he is not worthy of a Civil Servant! All of them were affirming their commitment to the tribal development and thereby supporting our work.

MY own classmates and intimate friends of Ravenshaw College have always stood by me as we have some common pursuits of serving the Society in our own way. Some of the names worth mentioning are Dr. Aurobindo Behera, Mr. Gopabandhu

Patnaik, Mr. Mrutyunjay Sarangi Mr. Asutosh Mishra and many others.

By these unique associations, a false impression was created that I was in civil service and I had refused joining. I had to clarify that I was never in Civil Service and I have never given up anything. No sacrifice whatsoever! Right from my college days, I had the firm resolution that I would never be a Civil Servant. But due to family and peer pressure, I had given the Civil Service Examination once for an experience. That time one has to write an English Essay and I remember I had contested Mahatma Gandhi's famous quote- For a man with empty stomach, the Food is God! I remember I had started by saying that Man Cannot Live by Bread Alone. I had quoted Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisition in the Brother's Karamazov how one who gives food can be a demigod. Man needs food, of course, but it cannot be equated with God. A short Essay I wrote for less than 2 pages. I did not qualify but when the marksheet came, I had scored 126 out of 150! Most of my friends were stunned! I got an impression that the examiner must have been an admirer of Dostoevsky to give such huge mark to me for such a poor writing!

I have to say with courage that during my last 40 years of work among the tribals, I have come in contact with some of the best officers of Odisha Cadre who had come forward to stand by me in our moments of crisis. One officer Mr. Pyari Mohan Mohapatra from my school and my town and like my elder brother had outshone others by supporting me to the hilt till he joined politics! My friend Dr. Aurobindo has

to come to defend me in every forum when I or Agragamee were attacked. Late Mr. Arun Samantray, Late Mr. S P Nanda, Mr. Tarun Kanti Mishra, Mr. Pradeep Jena, Mr. Suresh Panda, Mr. Sanjay Panda and Mr. S P Thakur, Mr. S B Agnohotri and Mrs. Antita Agnihotri, Dr. Hrusikesh Panda, Mr. Rangalal Jamuda are some of the officers who have visited us and have offered unconditional support in their own way and also love and affection.

At the same time, there were officers I have encountered were totally against me and had taken steps to ban Agragamee; had conspired to arrest me and had tried to harm me by getting bribed by mining corporate. I must write about them somehow as they symbolize how they were the hitmen of the State and Market!

These day, all my friends have retired and many senior friends have passed away. They were pro-poor, pro-tribal and fully committed to the Constitution of India. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, known as the Iron Man of India, famously referred to the civil service as the 'steel frame' of governance. I used to agree with the statement. But may be my opinion is changing, of late as I see how politics has changed the mindset of the present day civil servants.

I don't have any regret that I have not become a Civil Servant though I have disappointed my family and friends. The History will judge me what I have done in a mission mode and what life I led. This life has been worth living as, for sure, living among the communities of the poor and marginalised is most beautiful! I am not yet fossilised!



## THE SWEET LITCHIS OF KASHIPUR

### A Historical Narrative since 1980



As I reached Kashipur in early June of 1980, I got a taste of sweet litchis available in small and inconspicuous Kashipur Market at the rate of 10+ per rupee. It was from MANA BAGICHA (the garden of Mr. Mana Majhi) which was allotted to him under Ceiling Surplus Land Act the Land and the trees originally belonging to the RAJA OF KASHIPUR (related to the King of Kalahandi). Mana being a tribal and owning several Litchi trees, did not know the market price. I had probed to know if more Litchi trees were anywhere in Kashipur and I found that in two villages – Khurigaon and Mallijharan- some Litchi plants are owned by non-tribals. Why not with the tribals? I asked many questions to the Horticulture Officials and the answer came that the tribals were cutting the trees fearing that once the litchis start fruiting, the government would take

away their land, a misinformation deliberately spread by the Sahukars( moneylenders) !

The actual breakthrough came in 1983 when the then Horticulturist of Rayagada ( Mr. Patnaik – I am forgetting his full name) came to me and told me that the then PA, ITDA Mr. Jagar Singh, IAS who was my friend could be influenced to sanction a project to import Litchi grafts from West Bengal or Bihar. I talked to both Mr. Jagar Singh and the then Collector Late Mr. Arun Samantray, IAS who were both committed to the tribal development. Thousands of Litchi grafts were brought and distributed to the tribals. We went on spreading the information on market value of the Litchis so that the tribals would protect them and would not cut them. Litchis which need a lot of care and a micro-climate for the survival, we explained

to tribal farmers, women and night school students. One hill-top village Rastuguda Mandibisi GP which had a history of man-eating tigers had the ideal micro-climate for Litchi Plantation. We trained the youths for grafting and propagation. It is incredible that Rastuguda village has now nearly 1000 Litchi trees and they are selling Litchis on their own or to the traders!

In Agramee campus, we had planted 50 Litchi grafts but frost-bite in 1982 had killed all of them. We had planted another 20 in 1983 and some of them have survived. Kashipur's Agroclimatic conditions being favorable to Litchi, we had advocated massive plantations. In the 1990s, part of IFAD Supported Odisha Tribal Development Project(OTDP), Litchi was promoted. Next came UNICEF supported Odisha Household Food Security Project in which it was proposed to have extensive Litchi Plantation by getting hundreds of thousands of Litchi plants by setting up a Tissue Culture Lab which was never implemented as the

Government of Odisha did not facilitate it. It still can be done but the vision is still lacking.

The great contribution to Litchi Plantation has come from Odisha's best Landscape Designer and Watershed Specialist Mr. Bijayram Das ( former Director, Soil Conservation GoO) . He planned to have Litchi in all our watershed. He had wanted to set up a Mother Nursery by importing very sweet variety of Litchi Grafts from Kaluposhi, Sundargarh. Many have survived.

Now Kashipur is a hub of Mangoes and Litchis but the market is not established as the traders are controlling fully. Now the FPOs set up by Agramee have stepped in. Litchi trees also need a lot of care as they are affected by pests and diseases. The scientists from Agriculture University and KVK should step in The challenges to the extensive Litchi Plantation in the tribal areas, especially undivided Koraput are in contrast to the commercial crops like Eucalyptus, Coffee, Cotton etc. My wishful thinking, indeed!

S.M. Post: 22.05.2025

## Agramee Eco-villages

All Agramee Eco-villages have shown success in Plantations - Mango, Cashew, Miscellaneous Trees on the border which are income generating. Now the Government of Odisha has launched a special project for development of the tribal villages and various modules have been suggested but our Eco-village Model has not been considered as we have not marketed our experiences unlike other NGOs. But we are open to share our ideas and experiences with the NGOs, the Government and CSR. Let knowledge come to us from all directions as our Rig Veda (Rig veda 1.89. 1) has firmly indicated.







## MY HEART IS BREAKING - PODU ( SHIFTING CULTIVATION) IN KASHIPUR THIS SEASON

I am shocked and sad, very much in agony and disturbed by what I have seen these days in Kashipur. The LAST FOREST is going. Many questions are coming to me about tribal development and the efforts by the Government, the Panchayat and the NGO. I have visited Dandabad village of Chandragiri Panchayat and Badtibali of Godibali Panchayat. We had intensive Mango Plantation in Dandabad Village. Vidhya and I lost interest after our woman leader Mrs. Sonamati Majhi who was spearheading the NRM committed suicide due to some family trouble and the Horticulture Department officials made money by showing Agrabamee-supported plantation as their plantation and painted our signboard as theirs. Now look at the Photographs of Podu Cultivation and Ecological disaster!

Badtibali village of Godibali Panchayat is known for the eco-tourism spot developed by the Forest Department. We had visited this village as we were having one of our best night schools in Kashipur. Once we had planned to set up a micro-hydel Project there.

We have seen leopards on the road while going to see the night school or to have a village meeting. The villagers were drinking heavily despite our strong protest and we gave up going to the village somehow! Of course, a school was established later on. Now look at the devastation the Podu Cultivation is making.



On Podu, we have many questions and few answers. We all have to join together to prevent this environmental destruction and loss of forest as both tribals and forests are organically linked since generations. This is their best Food, Nutritional and Livelihood Securities. What will happen if the last forest gone and gone forever! Is it a harakiri?

## CHENNAI PAVEMENT DWELLER AND HIS DOG



I am in Chennai and was taking a walk in the park nearby. I was searching for a Green Coconut vendor which was not to be found. The one with whom Vidhya and I had befriended was a communicating fellow from Salem but must have gone closing his outlet. Surviving the competition in a city is very challenging.

Till this date, I have followed my father's instruction to get up by 4.00am and see the sunrise. According to him, if one misses the sunrise, misses half of the day. So even if I go to sleep at midnight, I get up at 4.00am without fail. The body-clock has internalised this alarm.

As I walked away from the Park in search of the Coconut vendor avoiding those medicinal juices offered to the park goers as morning drink, I saw a man sleeping with his dog and with the collection of recycled materials which he must be doing for his living. How dog was also sleeping near him and was startled when I approach for photograph. The image gives many impressions about the city life and the predicament of living as the urban poor. Every pavement dweller has a story within a

story and very fascinating to capture them. These days such stories of the marginalised are not being written though I notice the number of writers has multiplied many times! The cities are dying while killing the villages in the process. Everybody is heading for the cities for new life and livelihood abandoning the home and hearth, history and culture, kinship and pastoral music. Many are forced to leave the villages because of disasters and displacements.

I have the deep passion to capture the stories of the underprivileged, some kind of subaltern response to my eco-system. I am greatly inspired a story written by famous Odia writer and satirist Late Mr. Godabaish Mohapatra which is named as MAAGUNI RA SHAGADA ( The Bullock Cart of Maaguni). I wonder whether this story has been translated into English but it has left behind a perennial message that the poor will be caught in the maelstrom of the Socio-economic and Political Transformation. I have been doing that since my days in Ravenshaw College as I used to go the Cuttack Railway Station early in the morning to see hundreds of poor people ( Men, Women, Children) sleeping on the platform floor despite the mosquitoes and the stink of the station. Many kinds of thoughts and impressions used to etch in my mind!

I know providing shelter to thousand of pavement dwellers in a growing city is a huge challenge but some action should be taken by the Government and the Public to rehabilitate them with dignity. If they are pushed out of the city, they will die and thus the citizen's rights will be violated!





## Save the Seeds - Millets

I am extremely concerned after reading this news item. Thanks to Bidyut for sharing this. We have Odia Asmita in our seeds and their conservation. I know many farmers, especially women farmers, save the seeds - millets, Paddy, Vegetable, pulses - and are more or less self-reliant. The moment there is plan for getting outside seeds, especially HYVs, the Bio-diversity is gone; dependence on outside seeds is maximum as every year the seeds are to be purchased; food security and food sovereignty are also lost. The tribals are already victims. The Millet seeds ( 20+ variety of Mandia( finger millets) 3+ variety of Kangu( Foxtail Millets), 5+ variety of Suan( Little Millets) have been already preserved by our Farmers. Then why did we get seeds from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka? Somebody has to be accountable for this decision. Looks like some of the vested interests are hyperactive to implement this decision of importing millet seeds. Let us revisit the Odisha Millet

Mission/Shree Anna Abhiyan and find out which objectives are fulfilled by importing seeds.

Odia Asmita is very affected in the NGO Sector. Now outside NGOs have made deep inroads into Odisha and each Government Department has engaged these spurious, dubious and dishonest NGOs in every project. The Government should publish a white paper which department has engaged which NGOs and what intention. I am told that in Angul District, several non-Odias are looting the DMF fund which otherwise should have gone to Odisha based NGOs.

I want to warn my friends that Bikasita Odisha will not be possible in 2036 and 2047 if our home grown NGOs are neglected and non-Odisha NGOs are functioning in Odisha and looting the public exchequer. Time is urgent that the non-odia NGOs are shown the door.



## WHY NGOs ARE SILENT ON IMPORTED MILLET SEEDS?

A friend has posted a message- Then who will bell the cat? Sri Anna abhiyan is being operated in most of the blocks of the state. Except one or two all blocks are silent on the matter. Let them show the strength by reporting on availability of quality traditional seeds with them.

My reply as follows: Our NGOs are basically survivors and conformists. I am falling short of calling them spineless. Some Contractor type National NGOs know that Odisha NGOs are weak and vulnerable. They catch some influential NGOs Leaders and National Award Winners and use them to control other smaller NGOs. I am happy at least some NGO Functionaries have raised their voice knowing the consequences fully well.

It is the Farmers who will resist these imported HYVs as they have witnessed how indigenous rice seeds have been removed very systematically by HYVs promoted by the Research Institutions and Seed Companies. In case of Millets, the indigenous seeds are conserved across the world and no matter what happens, they will be conserved by Millet Growers and our Millet Sisters.

S.M. Post: 12.05.2025



## Indigenous Millets

What is the latest status of this historic blunder by the Government and some non-Odia NGOs? Whatever little bit left as indigenous Millets, some vested interests want to destroy. Hope the Chief Minister, the Chief secretary, the Principal Secretary are aware of this development and are taking corrective action.



## The Round Table Discussion on “Agrarian Challenges in Odisha: Pathways for Prosperity and Sustainability”



We and some friends have formed a Dialogue Group to debate, discuss and initiate discourse as part of Citizen's Engagement in the Public Domain of Odisha. It all started with a News item in the Odia Daily the Samaj ( 9th April, 2025). It says- In spite of five times hike in Odisha's Agricultural Budget, substantial crop improvement has not been achieved in non-paddy crops and monthly farmer's income is Rs.5112 by NSSO( 77th Round). The copy of the Article is attached.

During more than last four decades, I have witnessed great setback to Tribal Agriculture, non-impact of various missions ( Potato Mission etc), conversion of Agricultural Land to non-agricultural purposes, introduction of Commercial and Chemical Agriculture; rampant migration of small and marginal farmers as well as

agricultural labourers going out in search of livelihood. There is loss of Food security and Food Sovereignty despite big push given to Shree Anna Abhiyan( formerly Odisha Millet Mission).

The Key Challenges in India in general and Odisha in particular are :

- By 2047, the population of India is expected to be 160 cr that would demand 3-4 times more of diverse food
- The Agriculture GDP may be dropped to 8% from current 18%
- India's food systems are at the cross roads
- The average land holding may be dropped from 1 ha to 0.6 ha
- There is a need to produce more with less inputs

- Fragmented & reduced land holding which is dropped to 0.95 ha with per capita availability of 0.10 ha
- About 92 farmers are SF/MF and 54% are indebted
- 198 blocks are drought prone and 60% of cultivated land is rain-fed
- Only 36 cold stores are functional and the state depends on other states for TOP
- The Core issues for Discussion were identified as follows:
  - Challenges of Climate change
  - Shrinkage of land area , soil degradation and natural resources
  - Low factor productivity
  - Poverty and indebtedness of farmers
  - Storage, marketing and value chain development

The participants has an open discussion on the Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) related to Odisha's Agriculture Development.

All the participants discussed about possible options. Mr. Bidyadhar Moharana presented a PPT with a lot of clarity and possibilities. Many participants from various Sectors shared their experiences on Agri-horticulture, Animal Husbandry, Fishery, Water Management, Processing and Marketing etc. Prof. Amar KJ Nayak had

discussed the benefit of Regenerative Agriculture. It was expressed very strongly that due to lack of market infra-structure, the farmers are not getting good price of the produce and hence preferring to migrate. Some of the notable participants were Prof. Amar Nayak, Dr. Subash Sahu, Dr. P K Mohapatra, Prof. Pravu Charan Lenka, Engineer Mr. P K Paikray; Dr. N.K. Barik, Mr. Amareshwar Mishra, Dr. BK Panda, Mr. Pratap Chandra Acharya Dr. Purna Chandra Patnaik. From NGO Sector Mrs. Vidhya Das, Mr. Suresh Bisoyi, Mr. Ravi Shankar Behera. Mr. Jagannath Jena, Ms. Bhargabi Biswal. Ms. Rakhi Ghosh from Media was present there too. None from Forestry Sector was present though Agroforestry was in the Agenda.

Dr. Aurobindo Behera had suggested to focus on the stated challenges and go for solutions.

Generally, it was accepted that 4 Round Tables will be organized in a year incorporating the local and global issues.

Dr. Amiya Kumar Behera and Mr. Achyut Das had moderated the Round Table.

The discourse will continue. Those friends who want to participate in the forthcoming Round Table, please get in touch with me.







## DOUBLING FARMERS INCOME: MAKING IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE

When the Committee on Doubling Farmer's Income was submitted by our friend Mr. Ashok Dalwai, I was very much delighted as Mr. Dalwai was closely associated with Agramee and its activities. He had perfect understanding of Agriculture, Tribal Context and Agrarian Economy. I had invited him to a Convention of Organic Farmers in Bhubaneswar organized in the year 2017 (October) to share his Vision and Mission. We all were delighted that he came and addressed the convention of 300+ Farmers (mostly tribal men and women who are de facto Organic. I have to admit I haven't read his 14-volume report but when I had met him in Krishi Bhawan, he was giving a convincing analysis. Though the plan and policies for doubling the Farmer's Income have many kinds of view- pro and contra- it has made an impression in the country. The Political Economy of Indian Agriculture is such that the Farmers are always under pressure and many small landholders are

getting displaced all the time preferring to migrate to other places and professions. Every time, some of us who are passionate and ideological supporter of Natural Farming/Organic Farming talk about production and marketing, sustainability and replicability, we were shouted down by a powerful group of Agriculture Scientists and advocates of Chemical and Commercial Farming giving the example of Sri Lanka and the rising Food demand of a growing population. This debate is like a fight to finish as one school of thought meaning thereby a definite type of farming practices will finally rule.

We have seen that our tribal farmers in our Eco-villages committed to Organic/Natural Farming practices have almost double their income within a period of 4 years and if there would be sound market support including certification, decentralized agro-processing, application of appropriate technology and non-interference by the

lobby that promotes chemical and commercial agriculture, doubling the farmer's income is a definite possibility.



In Odisha's Agrarian context, five aspects are to be given full importance as follows:

**1. Fencing:** I have travelled extensively and discussed the farmers and they have indicated that as there is no fencing, the stray cattle destroy crops taken after Kharif crop harvested. How can we achieve this? Community fencing is just not possible. Green fencing is not working as one observes in Kandhamal District. Barbed-wire fencing is expensive. How about Solar Fencing which has not been adequately tried out? Let the Government fully subsidise the small and marginal farmers to install Solar Fencing so that Rabi Crop can easily be taken.

**2. Perfect Land and Water Management:** This is key to the doubling of farmer's income as Soil and Water management with enhanced availability is absolutely necessary. In Odisha we have 35% of assured irrigation in 149 Blocks and less than 35% assured irrigation in 198 Blocks. This is a matter of concern. The rainwater management has to be such that there is adequate conservation of moisture in the subsoil enabling the farmers to take a second crop.

**3. Integrated Farming System:** Our farming system has to be integrated so that there is

perfect co-ordination of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fishery. All over the world, the IFS has shown success. Investment has to be made in this regard. Establishment of Farmers Field School is required in every Panchayat so that dissemination of indigenous Knowledge and technology is possible.

**4. Keeping Women In Agriculture as the main focus:** Women, particularly tribal women, have been the mainstay of the Agriculture in Odisha. Equipped with traditional knowledge and skills, they need to be organized to manage Community Seed Banks; get trained in processing and marketing; play the role of agpreneurs.

**5. Go fully Organic:** The Agriculture has to have a complete U turn from Chemical to Organic. Many question that how do you feed a billion? Many give example of China which has achieved food self-sufficiency by combining both Chemical and Organic together. One has to examine this success story in details but India is not China. Minimum Support Price for Organic Products will be the best incentive.

Since 1980s, I have been studying tribal agriculture and how the chemical agriculture and commercial crops have made deep inroad with introduction of a) Commercial Maize, b) Eucalyptus Plantation, c) Cotton, d) Lemon Grass e) Coffee etc. On the other hand, orchards like Mango have been promoted without processing and marketing support and the Mango growers are perforce selling high quality fruits to traders without bargain. The state intervention is non-negotiable.

I want to initiate a Dialogue with all the Stakeholders including the Farmers how the Natural/Organic Farming practices are revived widely in all tribal areas.

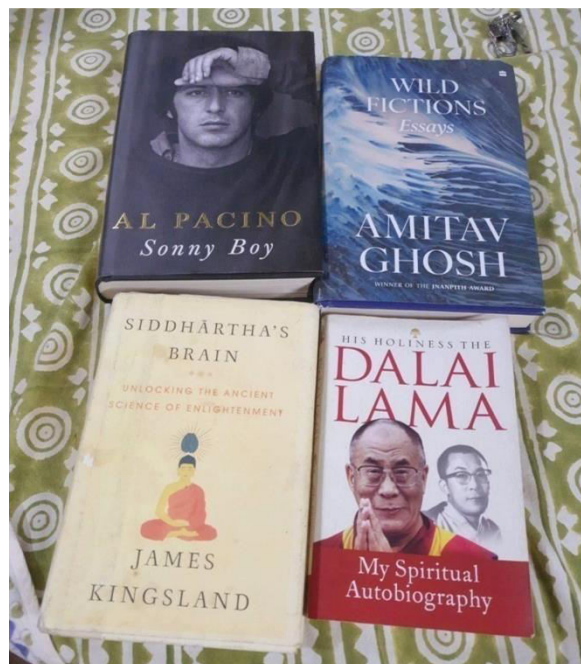


## THOUGHTS ON THE WORLD BOOK DAY

Today, the 23rd April is the World Book Day and this year's theme is- The theme for World Book Day 2025 is "Read Your Way". This theme encourages children to discover reading on their own terms, fostering a love for reading through personal choice and enjoyment, rather than a sense of obligation.

Yes, we should read our books in our own way following the pursuits and tastes in my mind. In my High School Days, some of my teachers encourages me to read books and issued books in their name from the reference library for my reading. By the time I passed matriculation, I had finished the best authors writing Novels, Poetry, Short Stories, Travelogues and Essays. If I remember correctly, I had top 10 books - Chha Maana Aatha Guntha, Paraja, Amabasyara Chandra, Shatabdira Nachiketa, Palli Geeti Sanchayan, Maha Nirvana, Aaranyaka, , Shilatirtha, Maagunira Sagada.

When I came to Ravenshaw College, the first thing I came across of the Literary World with the circulation of 100 Books by Manoj Das out of which I had already read quite a lot. Thanks to Prof. KSR Murty, Prof. Chittaranja Das, I was introduced to Continental and American Literature - Dostoevsky, Albert Camus, Jean Paul Satre, Herman Hesse, Franz Kafka, TS Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, William Saroyan, Jim Corbett, Khalil Gibran, St. Exuprey and many others. I always feel, like Manoj Das I should make a list of 100 Books which one must read. I am still reading and reading books and trying to share with some of my dear friends and looking for common pursuits/quests.



The Indian and the World Literature is expanding at a faster rate and I cannot catch up with. The list of Best Sellers in TIME, THE NEW YORKER, THE GUARDIAN etc offer challenges to me but alas, there is not much time left in this life.

I am always warned by Don Quixote and his adventures by reading books who was disillusioned towards the end of his life and has destroyed all his books! But regardless of that how can I miss Amitav Ghosh and Salman Rushdie? With avid interest I read JP Das, Chandras Choudhury, Arundhati Roy and a few others. Reading books in Kashipur is a tremendous luxury as books are not available and costly also. I have to look for a Lending Library in Bhubaneswar though there is none like the British Council. Reading Books of interest will continue till the last flicker of life. I am attaching a picture of some selected books I have read recently.



## THE CHILDREN'S ANNUAL REPORT:

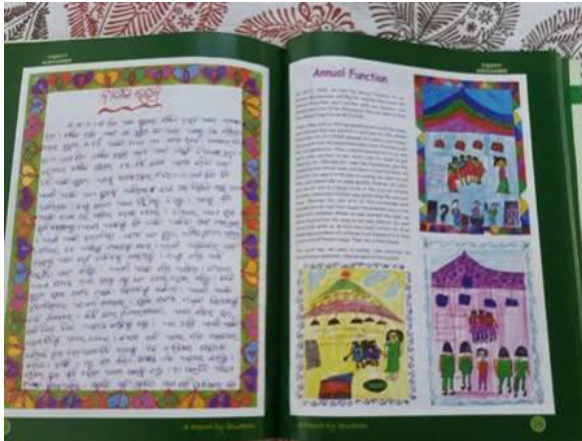
### The Milestone in Tribal Education

Agramee School also known as Mukta Gyana Kutir is the outcome of our efforts in the field of Tribal Education since 1981 shaped and guided by Late Prof. Chitta Ranjan Das ( Chitta Bhai ) , Prof. Manmath Kundu, Dr. Aurobindo Behera and by the teachers of our Night Schools who were compiling their unique experiences in teaching underprivileged children in remote villages and have contributed to the publication of NUA PAATHA NUA BAATA( New Education New Road) in the footsteps of the book WE MAKE THE ROAD BY WALKING ( Paulo Freire and Myles Horton). Our Education Programmes were termed differently, Non-formal Education, Innovative Education, Alternative Education depending on the donor but had a common purpose: To help underprivileged children read and write with confidence and become aware and knowledgeable about their existential situations. Chitta Bhai who had authored Jeevan Vidyalaya ( Life School) and had established the school at Champatimunda ran a school at Champatimunda following the principles of Danish Folk Schools had always asked us to start a similar formal school so

that he would fulfil his unfinished efforts but Vidhya and I did not agree to go for a formal school despite having resources. But ultimately, all our efforts had culminated to start Mukta Gyana Kutir – a day school and for only girls limiting us to go up to Class V. We oppose the Factory Schools and their patrons. We want the Education to be Liberating and Creative.

Agramee School has many problems- Funds, Infra-structures, Teachers etc. Despite all this, despite depending completely on charity, as it caters to some of the poorest sections, the school running since 2005, has firmly established itself as one of the best schools in the district. In fact participants declare time and again during Parent-teacher meetings that there is no other school like this for their children and demand repeatedly that we open up the school for boys, and extend it till Class X. We are truly grateful to our donors, including our wonderful friends, and relatives that despite personal and professional setbacks, they have enabled us to continue this effort.





It gives us enormous hope and strength when we see children's smiling faces, and listen to their songs and chants of the mornings and join with them in their quests for learning and knowledge. We have organized workshops with help of many of our friends – Das Benhur, Rabi Majhi, Prof. Chandra Mohapatra, Dr. Ranjit Sahu, Prof. Manmath Kundu, Dr. Indira Vijayasimha, Cartoonist Nandesu and many others. The success of Agragamee School has attracted many agencies, education experts and the Government Officials. Former Rayagada Collector, Mrs. Poonam Guha, IAS has visited the school in 2016 and encouraged us to take the programme to selected Government Schools. Three District Collector ( Rayagada, Koraput and Nabarangpur ) gave us permission to take the Agragamee School Model in the for of "The Creative Language Development Efforts" project in 18 Government Schools. The professional and independent evaluation of the project indicated a significant change in reading and writing levels of the students of the schools: from 5% at the base-line to 80% after one and a half years. I had personally visited some schools and saw the overwhelming response. All the students are able to read and write on the Blackboard and sing songs contained in our primers Kaau Daake Kaa ( Language) and Anka Kete Majaa ( Math). The teachers were adopting them and very confidentially telling



me to influence the Government to reject the Primer HASA KHELA.

The hallmark of the success of Agragamee School is the Design and production of Children's Annual Report. Our Children write and illustrate the Annual report completely. On the left side is, the Children's writing in Odia and the right side has the English translations. Simply amazing. When the 1st Children's Annual Report was released in Bhubaneswar, many Education Experts and former Development Commissioner Mr. R. Balakrishnan, IAS could not believe that Class IV and V can produce such a Report. In the Report, a student had written about the visit of the Collector Ms. Poonam Guha and made a sketch of her in the classroom. Dr. R. Balalrishnan called the Collector from the meeting hall and wanted to know from her about Agragamee School and her visit. Some of our friends questioned how the children of Class IV and V could write with such clarity and doubted that the teachers might have written for the students. After reading the flawless Odia which yet contained the colloquial expressions of the local language of the children, and seeing the lucid handwriting and colourful childish drawings, all such doubts were dispelled. These Annual Reports are on Agragamee's Website and my friends and critics of Agragamee may see them here: [https://agragamee.org/annual\\_report.php](https://agragamee.org/annual_report.php).



The approach and methods of Agragamee School unleashes children's creativity, and they write, draw, do clay models, and so much more in their playtime that one can just glimpse, as they make and create on sand or mud, with fallen leaf and twigs, and move on to other things, letting their beautiful imagination guide them. They also write regularly for their newsletter: 'Dangar Katha', a name chosen by the children themselves.

As I refer to the ASER REPORTs, I find that shockingly, a significant portion of children of

8th class, in Government Schools are not able to read and write. Here is a case-study of how with a little effort there is magical impact and phenomenal outcome. We invite one and all to visit the schools and see for them how our underprivileged children express themselves with such unique creativity! These Children Annual Reports are dedicated to these children and I am hopeful that as they grow up, they will cherish the same thing with their children and compare with the children of the Factory Schools.







## ECO-VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT:

### The Vision and Mission of Tribal Community

After more than 4 decades of our intensive development in the tribal districts of Odisha, we have seen the socio-economic and political transformation among the tribals. We have been involved with various Government Schemes, Policies and Pro-tribal Acts to ensure that the tribal communities are duly empowered as the equal citizens of this country and demand and get their legitimate entitlements. We have got PESA, FRA, RIGHT TO EDUCATION ACT, FOOD SECURITY ACT, MGNREGA, The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (RFCTLARR Act ) OSATIP so on and so forth. Have they made any difference? We as an NGO/CSO have also tried to ensure Food for the Hungry and a Voice to break the culture of silence. But between 1980 and 2025, we notice that the tribal areas are in a flux with rising distress migration, small land holders being displaced, landscape changing into miles

and miles of commercially grown monocrops. The dependence on the Government is total and the idea that the tribals will decide their development using their genius has vanished. Mahatma Gandhi's dream of Gram Swaraj now more or less looks very remote.

Have we lost all hopes? No. We in Agramee have been trying to consolidate our efforts to develop some of the tribal villages as Eco-villages and have shown success. Mrs. Vidhya Das and Prof. Pravu Charan Lenka have designed the Concept of Eco-villages. Mr. Bidyadhar Moharana has done the micro-planning . These Eco-villages have a few salient features- a) Each Family will have a Family Farm, b) The Commons will be developed by Women, c) The GO-NGO Convergence. Many Tribal Farmers from other Districts and States, Agriculture the Experts, the NGOs/CSO and the Donor Representatives visit these eco-villages and wonder how such a transformation has been possible within a period of four years. In our efforts, we have



got support from the Government (District Administration), Karl Kubel Stiftung (Germany), Azim Premji Foundation, Bangalore. Two former district collectors of Nabarangpur, an Aspirational District Dr. Ajit Kumar Mishra, Dr. Kamal Lochan Mishra have provided tacit support for GO-NGO Convergence. The progressive farmers like Mrs. Mangai Jani of Kandraguda (Tentulikhunti, Nabarangpur), Mr. Bhujabal Patra of Uppergodi (Tentulikhunti, Nabarangpur), Mr. Dhanapati Dhangadamajhi of Maligaon (Kashipur, Rayagada), Mr. Lima Majhi of (Durkhal( Kashipur, Rayagada) have led these villages. A Group of Scientists led by Dr. Prasant Kumar Mishra (former National Director of Soil and Water Conservation Research Institute Dehradun, Dr. Amiya Kumar Behera of OPSL Bhubaneswar have been trying to research further on these Eco-villages for the International Journals. However, the success of these Eco-villages goes to the entire community who have shown the way for others to emulate.

The Major Impact of the Eco- Villages and Sustainable Results have been published in a small Booklet which is attached herewith. If any friend is interested to know more about these villages, they may visit them or write to me to get a PDF copy.

I am glad that currently the Government is envisaging the development of the tribal villages and have earmarked special budget allocation. May be the Government will consider this model for tangible development. I am told MSSRF is developing such Eco-villages following similar concept. We have presented the experiences at the State Level. There are You Tube Videos on Eco-villages and the links are: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krr8k92ldcQ> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krr8k92ldcQ> The CSR and other Donors may send their representatives to visit these villages to see how some of the Sustainable Development Goals can be easily achieved.







## **SHGs have created history by growing Ragi/Mandia at Kandhamal Dist**

Thanks, Shuvam for posting this Article. Kaailamba village of Kelapada GP of Phiringia Block, Kandhamal District and the SHGs there have created history by growing Ragi/Mandia for the first time after a generation. The success is a joint effort of Agramee, the then Odisha Millet Mission ( Now Shree Arna Abhiyan) and SHG Women. The SHGs women numbering 27 took a compact patch of 32 Acres I had visited the village a few times and had discussed with Mr. P K Jena, the then Chief Secretary and had requested him to support the village to develop as a Model Village. He readily agreed and asked the then Collector to Dr. D. Brunda to visit the village and she did and a plan was developed. The women were

demanding water for drinking water and irrigation. The net impact is a) Solar Lights have been installed, b) 7 Borewells have been sunk, c) 2 Farm Ponds have been dug, d) 1 Checksum has been constructed, e) 3 Tube-wells have been repaired, f) Anganwadi Wall has been constructed. It is unbelievable how GO-NGO convergence can achieve success. Kaailamba needs fencing for the best land and water use and multiple crops. I am sure it will be a demonstration what SHG women can do in Phiringia.

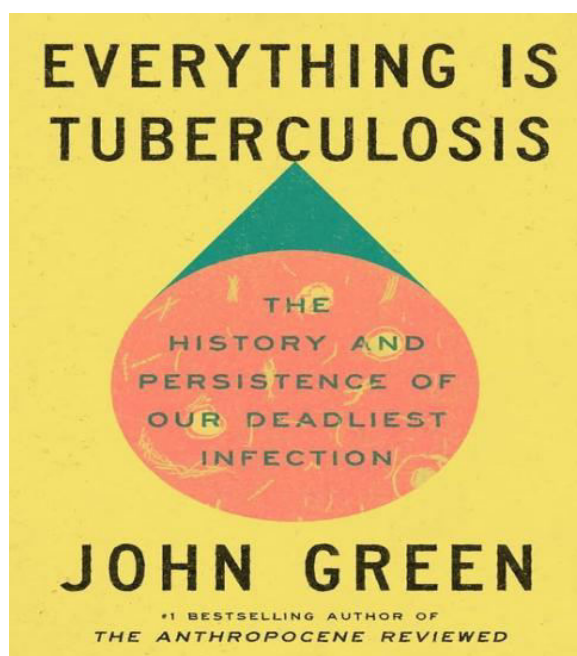
Learning from the women of Kaailamba, now 63 SHGs have taken Ragi Crop under Shree Anna Abhiyan in Phiringia Block. It has initiated a paradigm shift in the entire agronomical practices in Kandhamal District.

## DEATH IN MALAMBA VILLAGE AND THE BOOK- EVERYTHING IS TUBERCULOSIS BY JOHN GREEN

Today, the April 7th, is the World Health Day and we all need to talk about Public Health Policy and the status of Health for All. Today is the day we must focus our attention on the state of awareness of our health (Physical and Mental).

In the Hindu Sunday Magazine on 6th April, an Interview with John Green, the author of *EVERYTHING IS TUBERCULOSIS* has been published. It is very enlightening but why am I interested in Tuberculosis? It seems many in the tribal hinterland are affected by Tuberculosis and numerous deaths have been reported. Odisha figured among top-ten TB incidence States in the country. District-wise details reveal that Gajapati has the highest incidence of 275/lakh/year in State and is followed by Mayurbhanj, Malkangiri, Rayagada and Sundergarh. One set of Health Statistics says that 10% of the tribal population is affected by the disease. John Green says that 1.3 Million people have died of TB in 2023.

I have seen Tuberculosis and its impact from a close quarter as my eldest sister's husband died of the disease; my elder brother was treated in a sanatorium in Madanapalli, AP; my interaction with many TB patients in many tribal villages. The most shocking situation is in Malamba Village of Kshipur where two of my favourite night school teachers Trinath Jhodia and Khaga Jhodia had started work to change their remote village in the 1980s. For many years, I could



not visit the village located on a plateau as one has to trek for hours and the night school was closed. After a PMGSY Road was constructed, I could visit the village, I was shocked to find that my friend Trinath Jhodia has died of T.B. and Khaga Jhodia has also contacted the disease. Luckily, Khaga Jhodia has recovered. Upon inquiry, I was told that many in the village have been suffering from the disease – men, women and children. I had brought this to the notice of the District Administration and the Health Officials. The callous response from them was that the patients have to be brought to Rayagada for tests and treatment! None from the village could go to my surprise. Dist. Hospital at Rayagada is far off and there is a cost involved to go to the hospital. Even if the T.B. treatment is free, the message has not percolated enough. In a



village meeting, I had urged oner all in Malamba village to have a T.B.Test. During another visit to the village, I met the ASHA Karmi and asked her to find out how many children have contacted T.B. and report to the authorities. I ponder who are at fault- the villagers, the Health Officials, the Health Policy! Then what could be the reasons for widespread T.B. in the tribal areas? Malnutrition? Smoking? Lack of Awareness? Is it endemic? A comprehensive study is required to find the reason and work on remedial measures.

I am told that T.B. is curable. The standardized regimens for anti-TB treatment recommended by WHO include five essential medicines designated as “first line”: isoniazid (H), rifampicin (R), pyrazinamide (Z), ethambutol (E) and streptomycin (S). But there has been some studies that the antibiotics have become TB

resistant. John Green has talked about the new medicine Bedaquiline which should be available to every patient as the conventional antibiotics have become resistant. John Green who has spoken in the UN and has appealed to eradicate TB within next 10 years. Hope his mission will be accomplished.

I know we have a greater responsibility to ensure health and well-being to every citizen under the framework of Right to Health. I have two friends who are experts in the field of Public Health – Dr. Madan Mohan Pradhan (who has inspired the well-known film DAMAN) and Mr. Jagannath Chatterjee. I wonder if there is some alliance of the like-minded people to undertake mass awareness campaign on many diseases like Tuberculosis. I shall await the responses from all my friends.

S.M. Post: 15.11.2024

## **TODAY IS BIRSA MUNDA'S BIRTH ANNIVERSARY**

November 15. The Birsa Munda Birth Anniversary and every tribal and we who take their side must celebrate it. I have been living and working among the tribals since 1980 and have been witnessing the flux. I have written and published a book in Odia on Tribal Issues - SEMAANE BI BANCHIBE( They shall Live Too) - published by Sikshasandhan Bhubabeswar. I have been deeply influenced by well-known writer Mrs. Mahaswata Devi's biography on Birsa Munda. In Jharkhand, I have seen his birthplace.

This is 150th Birthday of Birsa and we must make it special by remembering what he stood for.

I think the Constitutional Rights of the tribal indicated in PESA must be respected and enforced. I am very happy that the current Government of Odisha has announced that PESA will be implemented and PESA Rules will be finalised. This is what I have been looking forward to since more than decade. We all shall participate in this implementation.

## THE CONCEPT AND PRACTICE OF ZERO TILLAGE AGRICULTURE- THE BASICS OF NATURAL FARMING



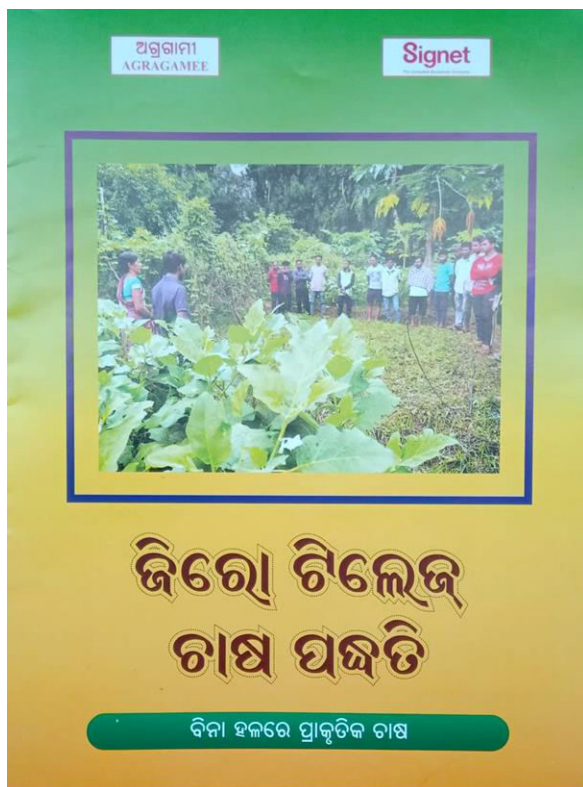
I am delighted to read in the newspaper that in Odisha State Assembly our honourable MLAs have discussed and debated the adverse impact of excessive use of Chemical Fertilisers and Pesticides in Agricultural practices. Many have expressed concern.

Taking this into consideration, the Government of Odisha and Government of India have given top priority to the programme under Natural Farming. The Government of India has launched a National Natural Farming Mission. The Government of Odisha has also envisaged a Target of promoting Natural Farming in selected districts. It is most welcome step and I am hopeful that the Mission will be accomplished if our farmers are mobilised and weaned away from harmful chemical agriculture.

My organisation Agramee is committed to Zero Tillage Agriculture being inspired by

well-know Japanese Agriculture Scientist Late Mr. Masanobu Fukuoka ( Author of two famous books - ONE STRAW REVOLUTIUN, THE NATURAL WAY OF FARMING. This Zero Tillage Agriculture is based on the fundamentals of the principles of Natural Farming. It takes a lot of time, perseverance and commitment to establish a Zero Tillage Farm. Agramee has established such a farm which has shown a lot of result. The Soil Scientists have tested the soil of this farm to show the dramatic changes in quality. The productivity of crops like Millets and Vegetable is comparable to that of Chemical Agriculture We have published a small booklet on Zero Tillage Agriculture in Odia - BINA HALARE PRAKRUTIKA CHAASA- which was released in a State Level Conference on SOIL, SEEDS AND ECOSYSTEMS organised at Rayagada on 21st and 22nd of March. The Booklet is available in PDF form and can be widely



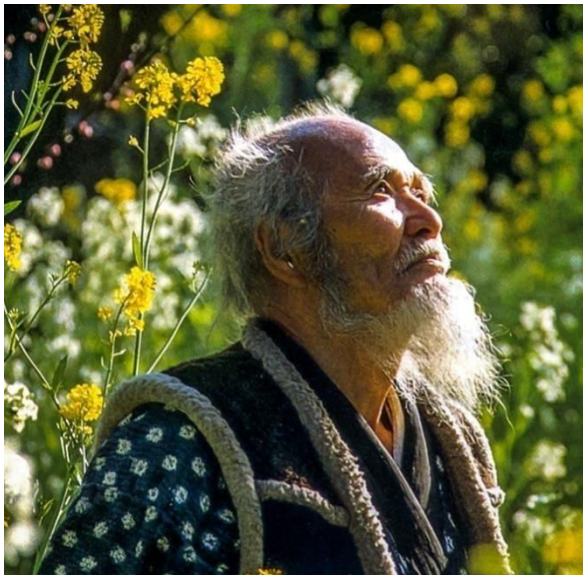


shared. It is heartening to know that some young farmers have come forward to take up this farming practices. In SAMBHAV and other places, there are successful demonstration of this Zero Tillage Agriculture.

Some critics have questioned the profitability of the Zero Tillage Agriculture and cost effectiveness. This method ensures less inputs, less labour, no pests and fully ecological agriculture. The Environmental returns of this method is substantial apart from the organic food one gets. What is most urgent is that our Agriculture Scientists and Experts need to change their mindset and go for adoption of this Zero Tillage Agriculture methods as the most cost effective way of Natural Farming.

S.M. Post: 04.11.2024

## Zero-tillage Agriculture promoted by great Masanobu Fukuoka



Our Farmers and Policy Makers must consider the benefits of Zero-tillage Agriculture promoted by great Masanobu Fukuoka, the Japanese Farmer-cum-

Agriculture Scientist. He had visited India to help some Farmers establish such farms across India. Unfortunately, it has not caught the imagination of the mainstream farmers due to attraction of Chemical and Commercial Farming. Fukuoka has written a few important books - ONE STRAW REVOLUTION, THE NATURAL WAY OF FARMING, The Road Back to Nature - Regaining the Paradise Lost, Sowing Seeds in the Desert: Natural Farming, Global Restoration, and Ultimate Food Security etc which are a must read for all of us who believe in Natural Farming. Let us adopt Zero-tillage Farming in large scale to protect soil, ecology and get the healthy food which is essential for a happy life.

## EATING MANGO KERNEL IN KANDHAMAL: A TIME TO LAUNCH ACTION FOR ZERO HUNGER AND ZERO MALNUTRITION

I am very much distressed to read in the newspapers about tribals eating Mango Kernel and there has been an adverse impact with 2 deaths and 6 hospitalised. I was reminded of the deaths and diseases due to intake of Mango Kernels in Kashipur Rayagada many times - especially in 1987, 1995, 2001. The Socio-economic and Political impacts on the tribals have been far-reaching. There have been many policy changes and programmes launched. At least two Prime Ministers had taken it seriously. Late PM Mr. Rajiv Gandhi had visited Kashipur. Late PM Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee had a direct talk with the tribal women of Kashipur and took a decision to open the granary as million tons of food grains were stocked up in the FCI Godowns.

The other impact has been the door delivery of rations as Odisha showed the way by using supply vans to carry PDS to remote villages. There had been launching of IFAD supported Odisha Tribal Development Project( OTDP), UNICEF Supported Household Food Security Project in vulnerable Blocks, Wold Food Programme (WFP) supported Community anti-hunger projects.

All have become history but were these projects replicable models? We have to look back and evaluate.

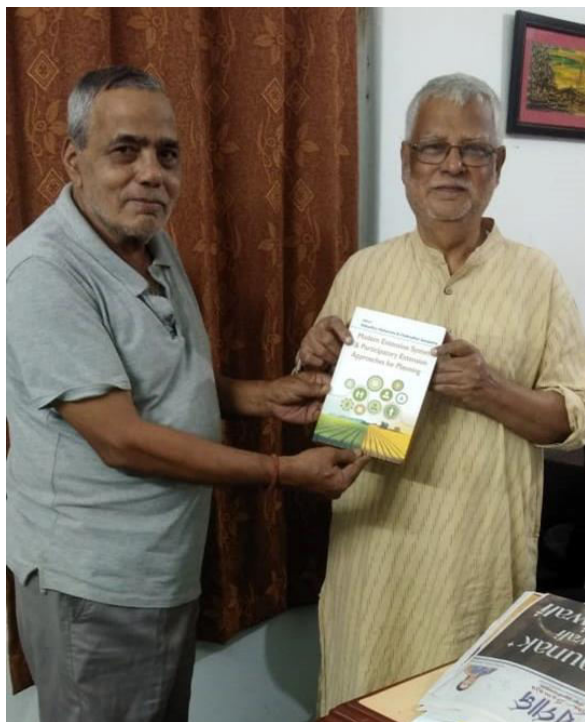
The latest NFHS Report indicates that South Odisha has the disturbing indicators of



malnutrition. When we are talking of VIKASITA ODISHA in 2036 and 2047 ( as I understand by reading newspaper reports), it is time for some collective campaign-based action. All Political Parties, all NGOs/CSO, Corporates and PRI Functionaries to come to a platform and make strategic planning by identifying high-risk and vulnerable GPs and Villages. Can we do that? My organisation Agramee has taken a stand that we shall show examples of Zero Hunger and Zero Malnutrition in the selected GPs where we have been working in different tribal districts. Hope all my Face book Friends will join with me in this campaign. I want a commitment and quality time. It is not relief that we need. It is a long term action plan to address various components of Hunger and Malnutrition. We have to help the community to achieve Zero Hunger and Zero Malnutrition. Friends, this is possible.



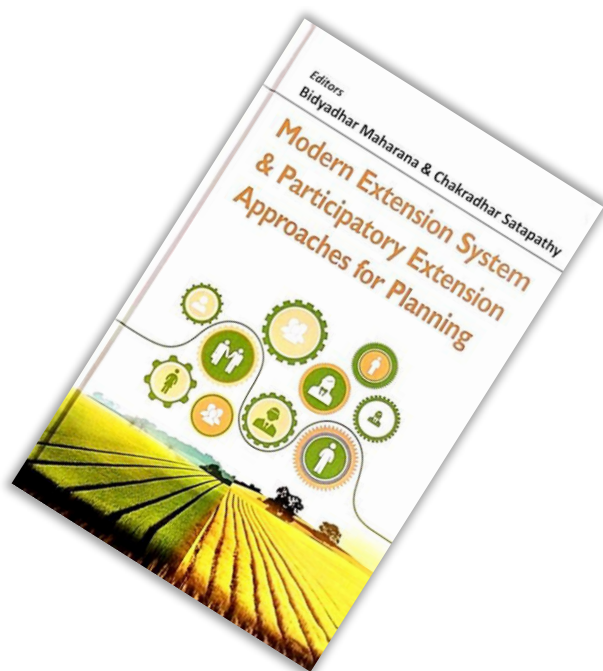
## MR. BIDYADHAR MOHARANA AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND EXTENSION IN ODISHA



Yesterday, Mr. Bidyadhar Moharana presented his book MODERN EXTENSION SYSTEM AND PARTICIPATORY EXTENSION APPROACHES FOR PLANNING to me much to my delight. I have my great respect and admiration for Mr. Moharana for his understanding and articulation on Odisha's Agriculture. This book is his 3rd book. He is 81 now and in his career in the Government of Odisha and in the UNDP, he has extensively travelled in Odisha, especially the tribal districts. He is an expert on Participatory Micro-planning and designing Sustainable Agriculture Projects. Though we have some difference of opinion, I have always accepted his views on Agriculture and NRM. He is also associated with a number of NGOs and Professional Organisations.

Odisha has produced a number of well-known Agriculture Scientists but a few have only writing skills. Academic and Technically Sound Books based on practices are required for Students, Researchers as well as policy makers. Good Odia Books on different subjects are also needed for Farmers. Mr. Moharana has written several Books for the Government, UNDP. I have also requested him to write books in Odia for Farmers and NGO Community. He has assured me to do that.

The concept and practice of Participatory Planning are becoming obsolete as more and more inputs are given from the top. In that context Mr. Moharana's Book will be of immense significance. I hope to post a Review sometime after I go through this Book.





## THOUGHT ON CHITTA BHAJI'S BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

I was invited to the event organised yesterday by Suhrud Team to remember Late Prof. Chitta Ranjan Das ( Chitta Bhai). It was attended by many who have been very close to Chitta Bai and notably Prof. Basant Das( Chitta Bhai's brother), Prof. Dhaneswar Sahu, Mr. Ranakanta Swain, Mr. Prafulla Behera, Prof. Biswaranjan, Mr. Asit Mohanty, Mrs. Pravina Mohanty, Dr. Basanti Mohanty, Mrs. Vidhya Das, Mrs. Madhabi Mishra, Dr. Aurobindo Behera, Mr. Sailaja Rabi, Mr. Rabindra Nath Padhy, Mr. Sarat Chandra Das, Dr. Madan Mohan Pradhan, Mrs. Shanti Das, Mr. Manoranjan Pothal, Dr. Reenarani Samal, Mrs. Nivedita Behera. and many others. The letters written by Chitta Bhai to two of his favourite students of Champatimunda Jivan Bidyalaya - Mr Nani Gopal Palit( Badal Bhai) and Mr. Sashi Bhushan Panigrahi( Sashi Bhai) were compiled into a book and was released.

I spoke a few words highlighting Chitta Bhai's best known book Shilatirtha ( according to me) which has been a common thread of friendship with many. I must have purchased 25+ copies of this book to be distributed among the new friends since my Ravenshaw days in late 1960s. Two concepts

have influenced me personally - Chareibeti( Fare forward) and Spiritual Quest inspired by Himalaya like Mountains. Chitta Bhai's other inspiring philosophical pursuit is DIALOGUE as envisaged by Israeli Philosopher Martin Buber ( Author of I And Thou and Between Man and Man) which I have read a few times and have followed in the practice of cognitive exercises.

I consider that Chitta Bhai has left behind three powerful Institutions. He with support from Me and Dr. Aurobindo Behera had been instrumental in forming Agradamee ( on Tribal Development), Sikshasandhan ( on Primary Education) and Naba Pallav ( On Children's Creativity). These three Institutions have survived despite Resource Constraints and have been trying to realise the dreams of Chitta Bhai.

Chitta Bhai's Centenary Celebration was held with a lot of activities, events and Publications by all his admirers all over Odisha and abroad. Was something missing? It is a pity that Chitta Bhai's 200 Books need quality translation. Few including Dr. Aurobindo Behera are trying to bring him to an international audience/readers.



## ON DIWALI DAY LET US REMEMBER LEO TOLSTOY

I wish all my friends a HAPPY DIWALI!

Let us celebrate it differently by questioning some of the Facts and Figures. I read in the newspapers that in our country for Dhanteras on the eve of Diwali, 35 tons of Gold has been sold this year. In the year 2023 it was 42 tons of Gold. Bhubaneswar has one of the largest numbers of jewellery shops in the country. I also read in the newspapers that during vigilance raid, it has been found that some people have got 15 plots of land, 5 Apartments, many kgs of Gold and crores of cash. Someone was saying that many officers in Odisha Government have got assets more than 100 crores and so have many leading politicians as they spend crores during the election. What is the message? Our Society has become acquisitive, you may like it or not.

Let me tell you, let us celebrate Diwali in our own way with lighting Diyas and remembering our Ancestors and strictly avoid bursting crackers to check pollution- air and noise. I know many of my friends will not agree with me as there is an urge to go for display of wealth by lighting and having most expensive crackers! The idea of Diwali Gifts smells of corruption and degeneration.

Right from my School Days, I have been influenced by Leo Tolstoy's famous story - "How Much Land Does a Man Require?". It is an 1886 short story about a man who, in his lust for land, forfeits everything. Wikipedia says- James Joyce wrote to his daughter that it is "the greatest story that the

literature of the world knows"; Ludwig Wittgenstein was another well-known admirer.[2] Motifs from the short story are used in the 1969 West German film Scarabea: How Much Land Does a Man Need? directed by Hans-Jürgen Syberberg. The story was adapted into a graphic novel by Martin Veyron. "Zameen" an episode from the 1986 Indian anthology series Katha Sagar was adapted from the story. When we all go to graveyard, how much land and gold we take with us? Please tell me. Please speak out what is in your heart?

The other powerful story that had influenced me was the story of Beejigupta in the novel Chitralkha by Bhagwati Charan Verma ( eminent Hindi Writer). It depicts the story of Philosophy of Life, Love, Sin and Virtue. The Novel analyses human characters through Dancer Chitralkha, Saint Kumargiri and Agnostics Beejigupta Beejigupta, a rich Aristocrat in the King's Court gave up everything and goes on a pilgrimage and for penance. Beejigupta after owning everything in the world give up the power and glory to find new meaning in life.

Vidhya and I have tried to follow a life and a philosophy so that we are not leaving behind any of our personal belonging( Land, Building etc) On Diwali Day, let us think for a while about those wretched of earth and those suffering masses who need our support, sympathy and kindness. Let us celebrate this Diwali in different manner. Can we?



## ARE YOU CONCERNED THAT IRON ORE SLURRY WILL DESTROY KEONJHAR DISTRICT?

Today I felt very much distressed to read a news item published in Odia Daily SAMBAD - SLURRY SAARIDEBA KENDUJHAR KHANI, PANI ( Slurry will destroy Kendujhar's Mines and Water Resources). The link is:<https://sambadepaper.com/.../30102024-md-hr-8/186256.jpg>

I was reminded of my friends Wing Commander Late Mr. Kiran Shankar Sahu, President, Citizens' Forum of Keonjhar. Mr. Sahu was one of the most committed environmentalists of Odisha in the midst of many NGOs/CSOs taking benefit from CSR and DMF funding. We had met a number of times and had discussed the problem how ESSAR Company has been diverting the entire water of River Baitarani to transport iron ore slurry to Kalinga Nagar Steel Complex which is considered the most efficient of carrying the ore in comparison to carrying by trucks/train. He had knocked the doors of the officials and politicians and how disappointed he was. The Mining

Companies had so much that Late Mr. Kiran Sahi could not do anything against the violation of Water Rights of the people of Keonjhar.

I am told that our honourable Chief Minister Mr. Mohan Charan Majhi had referred to Late Mr. Kiran Sahu and the role of Civil Society Organisations in his address in the Collecrcor's Conference held recently. I request he will look at the issue and intervene to protect the Water Rights of the People and will not allow the Mining Corporates to divert the Water Resources for industrial purposes.





## A DAY WITH RAMLI, EXTRAORDINARY ODISSI DANCER FROM MALAYSIA



I am privileged to be a friend of Padma Shri Datuk Ramli Ibrahim of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He is an internationally celebrated Odissi Dancer and his love for Odisha is beyond imagination.

Datuk Ramli bin Ibrahim (born 20 May 1953) is a Malaysian choreographer and classical ballet dancer. He founded the Sutra Dance Theater as well as the Sutra Foundation to encourage people to learn various traditional dances. In 2018, the Government of India awarded him the Padma Shri in for his contribution to Odissi. Ramli started learning Odissi in New Delhi under Guru Deba Prasad Das. He was a student of Mechanical Engineering in Australia but learnt Ballet, the Bharatnatyam in Chennai and finally Odissi. He had established SUTRA DANCE THEATER/SUTRA



FOUNDATION in 1983 which has an organic relationship with Odissi Dance. His association with late Dr. Dinanath Pathy, one of the most well-known Artists of Odisha took him to Ganjam and his dance form took many changes. With Dr. Dinanath Pathy, he visited Agragamee Kashipur in the year 2015 and danced with the students of our school Mukta Gyana Kutir.

Ramli is in Bhubaneswar now to perform on the occasion of the celebration of the 18th Guru Debaprasad Award Festival 2024 and took time to be with our friends. In the evening Vidhya and I were spell-bound by his Odissi performance at Rabindra Mandal.

Ramli presented me a Coffee Table Book - SIVAM SELVARATNAM: A LIFE IN ART. He had earlier presented another Coffee Table Book- KUMBH MELA. Both have been published by Sutra Foundation.

Ramli is 71-year old yet his energy level, the passionate attraction to Odisha, Friendship with Odias and, above all Odissi Dance make him one of my most unforgettable personalities. I hope he will visit Kashipur again.





## NANDU MAJHI: THE SON OF A BONDED LABOURER BUT A TRUE LEADER OF KASHIPUR

I know Mr. Nandu Majhi since last 35 years when he was a boy of Halia Sahi, a colony of Bonded Labourers of Mandibisi. Mandibisi as many will remember has been the cradle of two powerful movements- Jhadoo Struggle ( Movement against Policy on MFP) and anti-Liquor Policy. We took up the issues of these Bonded Labourers in 1981 after surveying their Socio-economic Status and came to know that they were bonded since 3-4 generations to the Zamindar of Mandibisi related to the Maharaja of Kalahandi. The land on which their habitation came up was given by the Zamindar. In the mean time, that piece of land was sold and purchased by 3 persons. The third person showed them the patta/land record and wanted them to evict. That time the Government was implementing the Bonded Labourer Abolition of Act and had a scheme called the Bonded Labourer Rehabilitation Programme under 20-point Programme of the then Government. I had invited the then ADM of undivided Koraput District Dr. Hrushikesh

Panda, IAS ( IAS Topper) to meet these group of Bonded Labourers and he was much agitated by this unjust way of evicting them. He filed a case against his Tahsildar for allowing the land transfer without consulting the bonded labourers. But despite the intervention of Dr. Panda and the Bonded Labourer Abolition Act, the land could not be restored.

Nandu, a School Dropout became the Night School Teacher and mobilized the community to buy a piece of land by paying out of the savings of school children from the goats we had given to them. The Indira Awas Scheme was implemented by the assistance of the then Collector Late Mr. Arun Samantray and community had mobilized the Bonded Labourers ( Men and Women) to do Shramadan ( voluntary labour) and the best IAY houses were constructed in the country and they have survived till today. Nandu being the only literate of the colony was eyes and the ear of his community. Nandu's leadership was





reinforced by Late Ghasi Majhi ( a bonded labourer) and Sukri Majhi, Lakai Majhi ( two tribal women leaders of Mandibisi)who have been my inspirations in my entire life. Sukri and Lakai led two successful movements-movement against the unjust policy of the Government on Monor Forest Produce/ NTFP and country Liquor Shop established as per the Government License. Nandu was part of these movements. He became so popular, he was elected as Sarpanch of Mandibisi GP in 2007 by overwhelming majority. Under his leadership, the Gram Sabhas were held regularly. The PDS rice was supplied to all the families. Employment Generating Schemes were given to the village committees. Link Road were constructed to remote villages. The Government Schools were running well as he supervised them. Pensions were given to the needy people. In one Gram Sabha, he passed a resolution to remove the Liquor Shop which was causing much harm and even the children were taken to liquor pouches. . The Liquor lobby, the Excise Department and the Liquor addicts put enormous pressure on him to change the Gram Sabha decision. Even he was offered a bribe a few lakhs rupees which he refused as the women of Mandibisi GP had led this anti-liquor movement. The liquor shop license was cancelled by this combined efforts and under the Gram Sabha decision.

All the political parties made an effort to defeat him in the next election and succeeded. Village level politics was at its worst. And Nandu diverted his attention to farming and showed the way. Today, I am impressed that he has developed a family Farm to produce a range of crops – Fruits( Banana, Mango, Orange, Jackfruits), Vegetables( Brijnjal, Chillies), Millets ( Desi Maize) and Pulses( Kandul) etc. He has a backyard desi Poultry ( which has given an income of Rs.35,000)/ He is involved in Goat Rearing which will generate income. Under rain-fed conditions and uplands, he has demonstrated what is possible and how income level will go up. The entire Mandibisi GP is learning from him and his wife Wanang Dei how all families will have Income Security

Last time I met him a few weeks back, he told me that he would contest again for the post of Sarpanch as the people have requested him. He would spend no money, no posters and no public Address System. Even no patronage of the Political Parties. I asked him if would be able to win in a situation where party sponsored candidates would spend lakhs! With a smile he said this time, like last occasion, he would win with total support of the people of his Panchayat. Let us wish him all success as such type of Sarpanches can bring about real changes in the Tribal Areas.



## GRAMODAYA YOJANA IN ODISHA: REQUIRED GO-NGO CONVERGENCE



A few days back, I read in the Media that the Government Of Odisha will develop 583 villages in the areas affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE). I welcome this decision as the villages which have been identified must have been inaccessible and affected by Poverty, Hunger, Malnutrition, Distress Migration and must be having very poor quality of life indicators.

I have been participating in a discourse on LWE initiated by the then Planning Commission in the year 2006 and a very important Document has been in the Public Domain titled - Planning Commission Experts Committee Report on Causes, Consequences and Nature of Maoist Insurgencies.

[http://planningcommission.nic.in/.../publicat.../rep\\_dce.pdf](http://planningcommission.nic.in/.../publicat.../rep_dce.pdf).

Set up by the Planning Commission, in May 2006, the Expert Group on “Development Issues to Deal with the Causes of Discontent, Unrest and Extremism” submitted its Report in April 2008,

It had 16 members, finally: D. Bandyopadhyay, S.R. Sankaran, Dr B.D. Sharma, Kamala Prasad, Prakash Singh, Ajit Doval, Sukhdeo Thorat, K. Balagopal, Ms Bela Bhatia, Dr E. A. S. Sarma, K.B. Saxena, Saibal Gupta, Dilip Singh Bhuria, Ram Dayal Munda, Dr N. J. Kurian and Santosh Mehrotra..

This is a very important document which we refer to while developing the villages in LWE Area. I am of the firm belief that two strategies can be adopted as follows:

- 1) Sound Governance System as per PESA and take all decisions regarding Development in the Gram Sabhas
- 2) GO-NGO Convergence

Unfortunately, PESA Rules have not been finalised by the Government and many have questioned it. I request the Present Government to finalise the PESA Rules and share with all the tribal communities.

The other thing is that Agramee has been developing Eco-villages in Nabarangpur District under GO-NGO Convergence. This was supported by two ex-Collectors Dr. Ajit K Mishra and Dr. Kamal Lochan Mishra and have laid the foundation stone involving the NGOs and the Line Departments of the Government. It has been a demonstration how impossible can be made possible within given time( 4 years) and given budget. It is a collaborative framework among the Community Members including Women, Government and NGO. In Kandraguda village of Tentulikhunti Mrs. Mangai Jani and her community had shown the way. Dr.



Ajit K Mishra had visited this village a number of times to inspire the community and the Government Departments for a number of interventions. He led from the front and results were visible. This approach has been replicated in many villages. Now a unique 10-crore Goat rearing Project is under implementation in Nabarangpur District formulated under the leadership of the former Collector Dr. Kamal Lochan Mishra in which Agramee is involved. I hope the Government Departments, the Policy Makers, the NGOs and other Tribal Communities will adopt this model wherever possible. The NGOs should have a spirit of learning to learn from these communities away from the Meetings held in Hotels and Resorts.

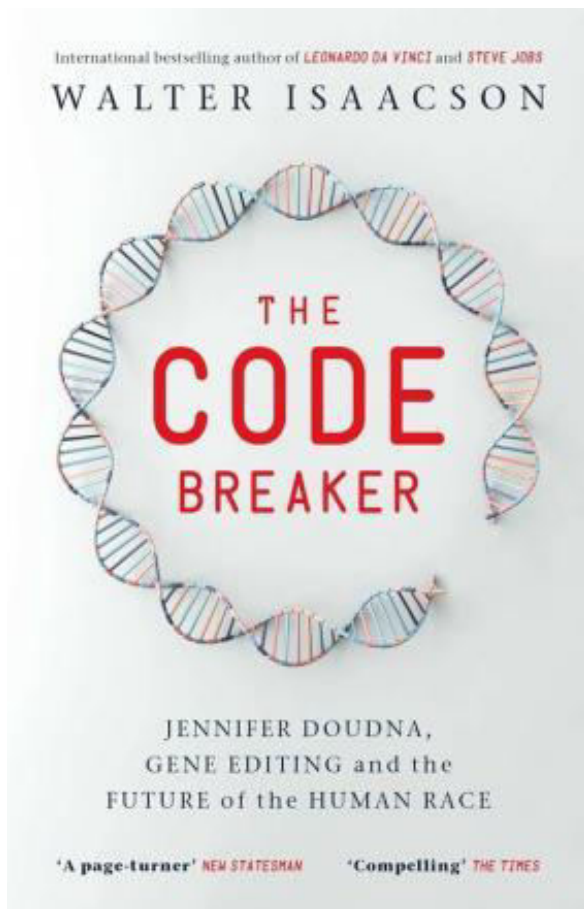
The GO-NGO Convergence is not a new idea. The erstwhile Planning Commission has underscored this GO-NGO Convergence in various plan documents. There was a framework called JOINT MACHINERY in which 20 Secretaries of the Government of India and 20 NGOs Representatives along with the PMO to forge the alliance. I was a member in the Joint Machinery. Now NITI AYOJ has an NGO Cell. In Odisha, there has been a history of GO-NGO Convergence and we used to have the State Level Consultative Committee under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary. At the District Level, we used to have Dist. Level Consultative Committee (DLCC) under the chairmanship of the Collector. For long years, I was the Convenor of this DLCC in undivided Koraput. The State Planning Board has also members of the NGO Communities and I was also a member in the SPB ( 1990-95) under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister Late Mr. Biju Patnaik.



There has been a gradual decline and the NGO/CSO space has shrunk. This was very acutely felt during the Covid-Pandemic. I had written to the Government to involve the NGOs in combating COVID including relief. But the then Development Commissioner and State Relief Commissioner told me that the Govt. at the highest level will not have a GO-NGO Collaboration. They advised me to try at the District Level. I wrote to many District Collectors and I had got good response from Nabarangpur, Koraput, Kalahandi, Bolangir and all these Collectors had involved the NGOs of the districts in the action plan against COVID-19 Pandemic. I am grateful to Dr. Ajit K Mishra , former Collector of Nabarangpur who laid the foundation of the GO-NGO Collaboration in the District. We have not looked back since then.

It is heartening to note that the present Collector of Kandhamal Mr. Amrit Raturaj is emphasising on GO-NGO Collaboration to have Sustainable Irrigation Livelihood. Kandhamal is a drought prone district (DPAP) and Water Conservation and Utilisation is a big issue. Here, I am sure, GO-NGO Convergence will be path breaking.

## THE CODE BREAKER: A BOOK ON GENE EDITING



This book THE CODE BREAKER is the most exciting book I am reading now downloaded in my Kindle and questioned my decision why I did not opt for Biology and did not pursue Chemistry but took much interest in Physics. This book is by well-known Biography Writer and Best Selling Author Walter Isaacson. Walter Seff Isaacson (born May 20, 1952) is an American historian and journalist best known for having written biographies of important public figures, including Henry Kissinger, Benjamin Franklin, Albert Einstein, Steve Jobs, Jennifer Doudna and Elon Musk. One time he was included in the Time Magazine's List of 100 most Influential Personalities.

I bumped into this book during Farid Zakaria GPS while interviewing Noble Laureate Prof. Jennifer Doudna. This book The Code Breaker: Jennifer Doudna, Gene Editing, and the Future of the Human Race displayed during the interview was published in March 2021 by Simon & Schuster. It is a biography of Jennifer Doudna, the winner of the 2020 Nobel Prize in Chemistry for her work on the CRISPR system of gene editing. The book debuted at number one on The New York Times nonfiction best-seller list for the week ending March 13, 2021. Publishers Weekly called it a "gripping account of a great scientific advancement and of the dedicated scientists who realized it.

After Quantum Revolution led by Albert Einstein came the Digital Revolution led by Steve Job and others, and now it is the Genetic Engineering. The world has been affected by Sickle Cell Aenemia, Hepatitis HIV AIDs, Cancer, Corona virus led Covid and many such diseases in a world of viruses and bacteria. Some are genetically propagated. Using bacteria to break the genetic code ( with RNAs and DNAs), of various viruses was not idea but was being experimented all over by the scientists, especially biochemists and biologists.

Walter Isaacson has written this book as some sort of biography of Jennifer Doudna ( Noble Laureate in Chemistry in the year 2020) who has pioneered this Gene Editing. Prof. Jennifer Doudna of the University of California, Berkeley the Li Ka Shing Chancellor's Chair in Biomedical and Health



Sciences, and a Professor of Biochemistry, Biophysics and Structural Biology. Her research focuses on RNA as it forms a variety of complex globular structures, some of which function like enzymes or form functional complexes with proteins. Her lab's research into RNA biology led to the discovery of CRISPR-Cas9 as a tool for making targeted changes to the genome. In bacteria, CRISPR systems preserve invading genetic material and incorporate it into surveillance complexes to achieve adaptive immunity.

The book also gives a fascinating account of the intricacies, complexities and competition among the top geneticist of the current generation and how Prof. Doudna has overcome all these roadblocks to make things impossible possible.

I request writers like Prof. Debkanta Mishra, Dr. Ramesh Chandra Parida and Dr. Nikhilanada Panigrahi to read this unique book and share their views and comments for benefit of our Odia readers. Dr. Nikhil Patnaik who's a student of Bi-chemistry in the Chicago University can also share updates.

S.M. Post: 11.10.2024

## AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CHIEF MINISTER OF ODISHA ON CHANGING THE NAME OF RAVENSHAW COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY

To

**Shri Mohan Charan Majhi**

Honourable Chief Minister of Odisha

Secretariat

Bhubaneswar-751001

Subject: DISCUSSION ON CHANGING THE NAME OF RAVENSHAW COLLEGE/ UNIVERSITY

Respected Sir,

I am Achyut Das, Director of Agragamee, Kashipur, Rayagada Odisha -765015.

Over the past few weeks, I have been going through many news items, debates and discourses on renaming Ravenshaw College/University, my alma mater. I was a student of science there from 1968-72 and became a part of the group called Ravenshavians. What I am today is because of Ravenshaw College. My two elder brothers were also students in this College and what I heard from them had inspired me to join this institution. I was fascinated by the structures, the Sun Dial, Kanika Library etc. as well as some of the eminent professors of our time like Prof. Bidhu Bhusan Das(English), Prof. D C Mishra ( Economics), Prof. KSR Murthy ( Physics). Prof. Altaf Hussein (History), Prof. B. Mishra (Mathematics), Prof. Sarbeswar Dash (English) and many other reputed academics. For me every day in

Ravenshaw College was memorable as many eminent personalities of the country visited us and gave lectures. I remember Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, Jaya Prakash Narain, Swami Ranganathananda of Rama Krishna Mission and many more writers and intellectuals. We, a group of friends, had the dream of going to the tribal areas and start a school being inspired by people such as Gyanpith Award winning novelist, Gopinath Mohanty and eminent writer, thinker and orator, Professor Chittaranjan Das. This inspiration has sustained in me the zeal and persistence to continue my work among the tribals since 1980. During my years in Kashipur, a number of civil servants, doctors, bankers and so on who were Ravenshavians have been posted in undivided Koraput at different points of time. They have made me feel as a part of a big family, always ready to support me in all the comprehensive and integrated tribal development initiatives. I am proud to be a Ravenshavian and shall remain so till my last breath.

I am a little disturbed as to why there should be any discussion on changing the name of Ravenshaw College/University. The views-pro and contra- published in the mainstream media and social media indicate how a non-issue has been made into a contentious issue. Ravenshaw College/ University is known all over the world. During my travels abroad I meet Ravenshavians who have made their mark in various professions. Ravenshaw University is one of the distinct identities of Odisha and I am convinced that there is no justification for suggesting any change in its name. Incidentally, many leading institutions of India such as IIT Bombay, IIT Madras, St. Stephens College Delhi, Presidency University Kolkata have not changed their names and like Ravenshaw University they are also the world's premier academic institutions.

The challenge today is to ensure that the glory and greatness of Ravenshaw university are maintained. There should be collective efforts by one and all to take this historic institution to the pinnacle of success. Ravenshaw College/University has a legacy of producing leaders, civil servants, academics, entrepreneurs, writers and artists. This legacy must be carried forward rather than destroyed. After Quantum and Digital Revolutions, the present era is that of Genetic Codification and Editing, Artificial Intelligence and Climate Change. Let there be new Departments to deal with these burning topics so that Ravenshaw University becomes a leading Institution for contemporary science.

I would appeal to you to take a firm decision as head of the State Government not to change the name of Ravenshaw University under any circumstance so that this unnecessary and unwarranted debate is closed for all times to come.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Achyut Das; Director Agragamee; Kashipur-765015; 9437073588; Date: 11-10-2024



## THE VILLAGERS OF KASKATA NEED INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL VEGETABLE SEEDS

I have visited a remote village Kaskata of Kucheipadar GP on Kashipur-Dasamantpur boarder. In the 1980s, I had visited this village after climbing Malamba Ghati. Now there is road connectivity and also Jio Network. A broad 2-lane pucca road is under construction to my surprise. May be future mining is in the agenda. During the IFAD supported OTDP, two check-dams were constructed irrigating the entire village. Some cashew Plantations of 1990s supported by OTDP have survived.

Aragamee is implementing two projects in this village- Millet Mission/Shree Anna Abhiyan and Signet for development of Family Farms. While talking to the villagers, both men and women, I notice that the village is reluctant to have full utilisation of the land and water. Upon inquiry, they told that two problems are there - a) Lack of good seeds and b) Lack of fencing. A millet sister Sukhmani Jhodia explained it all while showing line plantation of her Ragi field.

The farmers were telling that every season they are buying seeds from Dongasil and Dumaguda Weekly Heat by paying huge amount ( a small packet of any seed will be Rs.500+) and many times they do not germinate or have stunted growth. Obviously they are cheated but there is no alternative to buying the seeds from the market.

In fact, I want to know if anyone has local and indigenous seeds of a) Potatoes, b) Beans, c) Green Pea, d) Small Onion, d) Garlic, e) Chillies f) Tomatoes g) brinjal etc. They will grow these vegetables for home consumption and marketable surplus. I have communicated with Sabarmati if she knows any Farmer or NGO preserving local seeds. She has assured to help. I know we have many varieties of brinjals. We have a local variety of Field Pea. We shall try to supply.

Aragamee is trying seriously to revive the Indigenous Paddy in more than 100 villages with 1000+ of farmers and it is catching on. When I shared the experience in Kaskata



village, the faces of the farmers brightened up and they appealed to me to provide the seeds of Kalajeera, Machhakanta, Haldichudi, Lyseri etc. I have promised them these seeds. The farmers are saving wonderfully the local maize seeds and resisting the incursion of HYV and Chemical Maize. I have appreciated this commitment of the farmers.

Are we for Farmers Welfare or not? At times I have doubts. Kashipur is attacked from north with large scale Cotton crops and from South by the Chemical and High Yielding Maize crops. In the upland, it is



Eucalyptus and Eucalyptus promoted by the local paper Mill. What is the impact? The Food Security Basket and the Biodiversity both are threatened and the market driven Agriculture Policy is fully responsible for this situation.

S.M. Post: 08.10.2024



## Japakhal village presents a sad story with the Cotton Crops

Japakhal village presents a sad story with the Cotton Crops all around and how a false sense of market has an overwhelming presence- investment by outsiders and risk taking by farmers with minimum profit but enormous environmental cost as the cotton farmers have to apply fertilisers 3 times and spray pesticides 4 times. I asked the outreach of Odisha Millet Mission/Shree Anna Abhiyan and nobody has heard of it.

Japakhal village is 5 kms away from Rayagada Dist. Headquarters! I met and befriended a small child Bantu who was a silent listener in our meeting with the villagers. I carried him to assure you that Japakhal village will change for sure and will come back to the ecological agriculture and traditional crops like Ragi( Millets( and Kandul ( Pulses)! Three cheers for Bantu!

## WHERE WOMEN MILLET SISTERS OF KHARKIGUDA VILLAGE SET AN EXAMPLE FOR OTHER VILLAGES



Kharkiguda is a small village comes under Patraput G.P. in Tentulikhunti Block in Nabarangpur District of Odisha State, India. It is located 25 KM towards east from District headquarters, Nabarangpur. Here Kondh (ST) and Harijan (SC) community of people reside. The population of Godigan approximately comprises 412 of about 82 households.

Total area of Millet Cultivation covered under OMM – 34 acres

Total No. of Millet Growers – 31 nos.

Traditionally the women farmers of Kharkiguda village used to live off their millet fields, something this generation of farmers also strives to do. Because knowledge of millet farming has been lost over time and a variety of new challenges have appeared, the women now struggle to cultivate millets to the same extent. These women millet growers explained that one of the main challenges for them is the changing patterns of the monsoons. Following climate change the rains now come too late, too early or not at all. This makes it difficult to

know when the right time for sowing is. The changing climate brings many difficulties for the farmers, but through the Shree Anna Abhiyan formerly known as Odisha Millet Mission implemented by Agramamee they get support, training and share knowledge and resources with other farmers which makes them hopeful for the future. All the women farmers came together to cultivate millet (Finger Millet) in one common land of 16 acres out of total 34 acres.

Our village mainly relies on millets like – Finger Millet and Little Millet as our staple food, and we have shifted our focus towards it, Damaya Majhi added. In spite of strong influence of hybrid Maize and Paddy in the region the farmers of our village have been cultivating millets, she added. This kind of act have been united and inspired us to keep cultivating Millet as prime part of our life in terms of Food, Nutrition and Livelihood security. We will be cultivating Millets and expand the area for larger impact in the community.





Following the efforts of these women millet growers, many farmers in the neighboring villages now have started to grow millets by replacing COMMERCIAL Maize. Most of the farmers are now using organic inputs like Handi Khata, Jibamruta and Neemastra, which lowers production costs, they claimed. Apart from that they have created a community where they look out for the joy of learning and sharing. . The community stretches beyond the millet fields to all aspects of life.

Voice of Women Millet Growers of Kharkiguda Village:

"In my village I see mostly women growing different variety of millets in their fields, while the farmers of other villages grow only maize or paddy and rarely cultivate millets. I think men's idea of agricultural development is through increasing their financial income, while women have a closer relationship with food. For women money is not the focus, but instead a healthy and varied supply of food for us and our families." – Ghasni Majhi

"Agriculture is what keeps me alive, it's my life. I love the Seeds, Soil and Millets. I love to speak to other farmers about what I love. – Para Majhi

"Cultivation of millets is less expensive." "Crops like hybrid Maize and Rice need a lot of fertilizers and pesticides. But for millets, there is no need for the additional costs. Sometimes, if there are pests in millets, I apply Handi Khata and Neemastra to fix the issue." – Mangi Majhi

Millets are hardy crops that can thrive in varying agro-climate regions and can withstand extreme temperatures and droughts. Some varieties of pearl millets survive at temperatures up to 46 degrees Celsius. Most importantly, these crops also help mitigate the effects of climate change through their lower carbon footprint equivalent of carbon dioxide per hectare, as compared to maize and rice. Millets also require less water than rice, sugarcane and maize. In comparison to maize, millets use 40 per cent less energy in processing and offer a significant cost advantage as feedstock for bio-ethanol production.

With the initiation of Shree Anna Abhiyan and provision of incentives, farm machinery for drudgery reduction, equipment for processing, storage of grain and marketing support through procurement, farmers have realized that millet can be an aspirational crop which can provide both income and nutrition.





## Thoughts On Gandhi Jayanti- 2nd October 2024



Every year before Gandhi Jayanti, i.e. October 2, I become very restless as I am reminded of his Talisman- "I will give you a Talisman Whenever you are In doubt, Or when the self becomes too much with you, Apply the following test: Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man Whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him." How far am I practicing it? How far my colleagues in my organisation are following it? How far so called Gandhian are following it? It is a question only an Individual with intellectual honesty can answer. If all of us would have followed in action what Mahatma Gandhi has said as a Talisman, then most of the problems our country is facing, could have been solved.

In any case, we have been following two essential components of Gandhian thoughts- Gram Swaraj and Education. What is Gram Swaraj? It is a blue print to make our villages self-reliant in every sense. I have my firm belief that every village will achieve self-reliance and ensure Food, Nutrition, Livelihood, Income and Ecological Securities with a bit of planning and full community

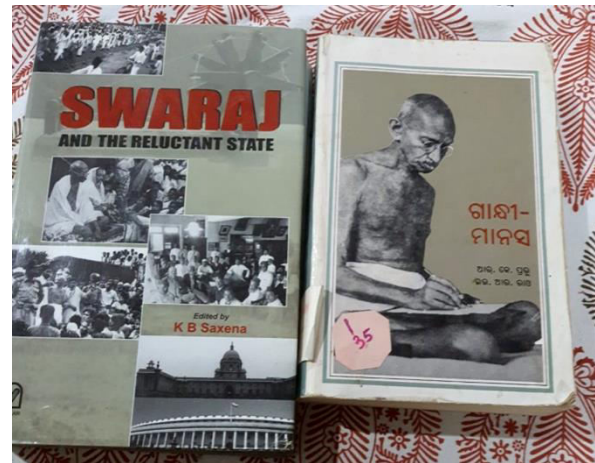
mobilisation and participation. The village will have no distress migration. The village will address the issues of Governance and will have a perfect system of decision making process. The village will not have any issue regarding water and sanitation. We in Agramee are developing many Eco-villages keeping the Gram Swaraj concepts and practices in mind. We have achieved some success. We are not alone. Many in this country are following Gram Swarj with passion and professionalism. The Council for Social Development (CSD), New Delhi have published a book- SWARAJ AND THE RELUCTANT STATE ( AAKAR BOOKS Delhi) – in the year 2009 to celebrate the 100 years of the book Hind Swaraj written by Mahatma Gandhi himself. Vidhya and I have written a piece for the book.

What is Gandhian Education based on Ethics and Morality? The chief tenets of Gandhiji's educational philosophy may be mentioned as:

- Free and compulsory primary education. Education should be craft centred. Education should be self-supporting and self-sufficient. Education should be given in mother tongue.



Aragamee Mukta Gyana Kutir and Learning Centres are following these tenets avidly. Learning with Freedom and Creativity, the underprivileged children, especially girls, have achieved miracle. Apart from reading and writing, these children of Class IV & V are able to produce their Annual Reports with full authority and maturity. Our Learning Centres in many villages are helping children and drop-outs to join a unique learning process backed up by a Rural Library to go for further education. Agramee is creating a platform for the community to enhance their potentials to own the domain of true knowledge. We are creating Edu-leaders who are also our Eco-leaders. A comprehensive development of the entire village is the goal. We have a long way to go as the mainstream education has caused much damage to the Identity and



Culture which are fundamental to a community. Co-operation not competition is fundamental to the true learning process.

I am hopeful the true Gandhian thoughts and actions will grow from strength to strength despite many kinds of threats and divisive forces unleashed on our contemporary society.

S.M. Post: 01.10.2024

## The Last Mushrooms of Kashipur



Every time I see these Mushrooms wildly grown I am reminded of their profuse availability in 1980s and 1990s. If one comes from Rayagada to Kashipur in the month of August and September, one sees many children and women selling these mushrooms. Now one seldom sees them as

the forests have vanished and the soils have been degraded. According to me these Mushrooms which are locally called Shravani/Naada/Manai are the tastiest mushrooms and far better than Straw or Button Mushroom. In the market I am told that it is sold at Rs.400/-+ per kg.

This is the Forest Food and part of Food and Nutrition Basket of the local communities. It is a tragedy that it is vanishing. This morning I returned to Kashipur and found that the mushrooms are waiting for me and Vidhya. Our staff members have been feasting on them since last two days. Kashipur was having incessant rains past few days! Now in specific locations, one sees these mushrooms coming up in small numbers.

## Campaign For Nutrition Security



The Nutrition Month from 1st September to 30th September is going to end tomorrow. We should have a stock taking what has been done and what has been the impact. I was discussing with Mr. Basant Kar, the eminent Nutrition Expert what can be done and how the Civil Society Organisations can do. In the tribal areas, the extent of Malnutrition (Stunting and Wasting) is alarming as per NFHS Data. As one visits tribal villages, one can see the state of malnutrition. During a period of 2014 to 2018, I had visited many tribal villages in 10 districts, 20 Blocks and 100 GPs to understand the entitlement of the citizens as regards the implementation of Food Security Act and to my horror, many have been deprived of the PDS Card; the Anganwadi's are not functioning; the supply of mid-day meal to the school children is most erratic. Many do not know what has been the entitlement.

If you look at the tribal communities, their nutrition is dependent on Forest Food (Fruits, Flowers, Leaves, Tubers etc) but in most of the area, the forest is gone. If you

look at Agriculture, the traditional crops like Millets, Pulses, Oilseeds are on the decline as the commercial crops like Eucalyptus, Cotton, Lemon Grass, Commercial Maize are heavily promoted. Food Sovereignty of the tribal communities are at stake.

To achieve Zero Malnutrition, Mr. Basant Kar who has National and International Experience has suggested a) total community mobilisation and mass awareness, b) creation of a cadre of Nutrition Warriors, c) total commitment to Millets, Pulses, Vegetables and backyard poultry etc d) an Action Research Projects in selected panchayats to achieve zero malnutrition, e) establishment of a collaborative framework among Government, Civil Society, UN Agencies, Corporates Media, People, Nutrition Networks and Alliances and Research Institutions and above all communities. Can we take this suggestion seriously?

My Organisation Agramee will make an efforts in selected Panchayats of 5 districts of Odisha by bringing all stakeholders to one platform. We shall surely try.





## WHERE BILLIONAIRES GROW WHILE CHILDREN ARE STUNTED

If stunting is related to hunger, then surely we are the hungriest country in the world as India has the highest number of stunted children at 35 million. This number is especially painful, when we consider that we have the third highest number of billionaires, and THE FASTEST GROWING ECONOMY.

India has had child health and nutrition programmes since the 1970s. The Balwadi Nutrition Programme (1970) provided rural children (aged 3–6) with about 300 kcal and 10 g of protein per child per day. This was soon absorbed into the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), launched in 1975, offering supplementary nutrition, preschool education, health check ups, and nutrition counselling through the Anganwadies. A series of Supreme Court rulings beginning with the PUCL Right to Food case (2001) made the Mid Day Meal Scheme and ICDS universal and non negotiable entitlements. The Court affirmed the right to food under Article 21, directing governments to provide cooked school meals to all children aged 6–14 and supplementary nutrition through Anganwadies to children under 6 as well as pregnant and lactating mothers, with decentralised, community based delivery.

Between 2005 and 2009, ICDS was expanded in phases to cover all habitations across India, eventually reaching universal coverage.

The Mid Day Meal Scheme, expanded in the mid 1990s and became universal in 2001 by



Supreme Court orders, to ensure schoolchildren aged 6–14 received at least one hot, nutritious meal a day. Alongside these, the Public Distribution System (PDS), which subsequently became part of the National Food Security Act (2013), was intended to guarantee subsidised foodgrain for nearly two thirds of India's population.

And yet child undernutrition and malnutrition persists. Public policy seeks to address this through further nutrition schemes, and addressing micro-nutrition imbalances. The Poshan Abhiyan seeks to converge various nutrition-related schemes like Anganwadi Services and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana to create a synergistic impact. The primary focus is on improving the nutritional status of children (0-6 years), pregnant women, and lactating

mothers. The Poshan Tracker, a mobile-based application, is used to monitor the progress of the scheme and track key indicator. UNICEF India is a key implementing partner in this mission, providing technical support and advocating for its implementation. The program aims to reduce stunting, anemia, and other forms of undernutrition through a life cycle approach

The question remains; how much under nutrition and malnutrition will these interventions address? A third of the children in this country and their parents and their siblings (many of whom would have gone beyond the zero-five age group and would not have been factored into the present calculations) just do not have access to adequate food! Prof. Amartya Sen points out: “People have to go hungry if they do not have the means to buy enough food. Hunger is primarily a problem of general poverty ... It is particularly critical to pay attention to employment opportunities ... which influence people's ability to buy food.”

And Utsa Patnaik, in *The Republic of Hunger*, argues: “Macroeconomic contraction and trade liberalisation have ... led to severe employment decline, income decline and hence fall in aggregate demand for a large segment of the population—especially the rural population.”

“UNICEF’s life cycle approach to combat stunting and anemia is well meaning. Such schemes have been cycled and re-cycled several times, but they often miss the ground reality: Families do not need another mobile based tracker or a new project cycle; they need food on the table. people simply lack the means to buy enough food, as Prof. Sen reminds us. What would people do if they do not have the means to buy enough

food, as Prof. Sen aptly points out. Which will eventually happen, when these schemes run out of their project period. And that is presuming that these schemes do provide enough food in the first place!!



Sometimes, I ask children in Agramee School about what they had to eat before they came to school. Some children go completely silent. The others answer for them, ‘she did not eat anything’. Just about a year back, I was walking amongst rows of children gulping their Sev boondi after the August 15th flag hoisting. There were many children, who had plastic bags with them. I sat down beside one little girl, who was filling most of the eats into the bag to ask why. I am taking this for my mother, as she asked me for some of the sweet boondi from the school! I quickly walk out blinking back tears. Come monsoon, rural and tribal women are extremely stressed. There is little to eat, and they have to spend long hours in the cold and rain transplanting! The government PDS, hardly lasts 10 to 15 days! Then again, it is just rice!





## IF WE TAKE CARE OF OUR LAND, IT WILL TAKE CARE OF US!

‘These plants were given by Agramee’ Dasu points to the mango, litchi and other fruit grafts that are thriving on his land . “Initially, I was only growing ragi in this area. Then Abina came and told me, Agramee would give fruit trees if I made the pits for them. I was not interested but my wife said this is a very good idea, we can have fruits, as well as ragi from this land. Let us dig the pits. So together, we dug the pits. It was difficult, but with hard work, we managed to complete the pits. Then they said take these seeds and grow vegetables during the monsoon season. After that they gave us some yam and turmeric tubers also.

“In the dry season, they supported for making a fence around my land. All this has helped my land become more fertile. Previously, I used to only cultivate mandya (finger millet) or suan (little millet), and then leave the land fallow. Sometimes, the production would be good, other years, the production would be poor. But now I realize, that my land can give me produce

throughout the year. Because of Agramee’s support, I got 50kgs of kandul (Arhar), and earned Rs.15000/- from the vegetables. Even though my land is not irrigated, I can produce something throughout the year.

“I have planted bananas, papaya, and drumstick and also have built a small hut, where I keep poultry, and also stay to better take care of my crops. Now I know that if I take care of my land, it will take care of me and my family!

Dasu Miniaka is one of 8 farmers supported for family farms, in the village of Gujarbadi in Rayagada, Odisha under the Signet - Agramee Collaboration for Climate Friendly and Sustainable Livelihoods in Tribal Areas Project. He has only studied upto class V, his wife Alai, has not gone to school. Both of them are however determined to educate their 2 sons, who are studying in the tribal residential school in Mandhara. He has 3 acres of upland in the hilly terrain that is



characteristic of Rayagada, and other districts of the Eastern Ghats. These once forested uplands are getting fast eroded and denuded, because of lack of forest cover. Tribal farmers hard put to make a living from these lands are turning to commercial crops like cotton, which is toxic to the ecosystem, toxic to the soil, and to human beings. Family farms with integrated multi-

tier systems offer a way out, providing subsistence crops, nutrition, income and ecosystem services.

Aragamee is working with farmers to revive their interest in their land, not in just the money from their land. Once the farmers' mind and imagination is fired, then Like Dasu, they will nurture it back to life, and the symbiosis begins to take shape.

S.M. Post: 29.07.2025



## Stunted Futures

Behind our country's glowing growth figures lies a grim reality: millions of our children cannot even grow to their normal heights. While the economy races ahead, our youngest are too hungry to grow, learn, or dream. The early childhood phase of human development, are crucial. In these first few years more than one million neural connections are formed each second – a pace never repeated again.

How much a child has grown during these years that is, its height for age reflects the nutritional intake of a child over a period of time. A child too short for her age is stunted and this indicates chronic undernutrition or LACK OF FOOD. According to the UNICEF, "In India, 35% of children younger than five years of age are stunted, a manifestation of chronic undernutrition. Stunting and other forms of under-nutrition are thought to be

responsible for nearly half of all child deaths globally.(Source: CNNS 2016-18)

“STUNTING IS ASSOCIATED WITH AN UNDERDEVELOPED BRAIN, WITH LONG-LASTING HARMFUL CONSEQUENCES, INCLUDING DIMINISHED MENTAL ABILITY AND LEARNING CAPACITY, POOR SCHOOL PERFORMANCE IN CHILDHOOD, REDUCED EARNINGS AND INCREASED RISKS OF NUTRITION-RELATED CHRONIC DISEASES, SUCH AS DIABETES, HYPERTENSION, AND OBESITY IN FUTURE.

“While India’s economy has been growing at impressive rates, the country still has the highest number of stunted children in the world, (40.6 million children) representing one-third of the global total of stunted children under the age of five. (CNNS 2016-18)

“Stunting starts from pre-conception when an adolescent girl who later becomes mother is undernourished and anaemic and it worsens when infants’ diets are poor. It is irreversible by the age of two.

“India has recorded a declining trend in child stunting from 48 per cent in 2006 to 35 per cent in 2018 - a relative 20 per cent

decrease. Even with impressive decline, 40.6 million children are stunted in India today (JME 2018).(Source: CNNS 2016-18)

As I write this, I risk repeating myself, but that is a small risk, compared to 40 and a half million children AND their parents facing hunger repeatedly day after day, month after month: a risk to these hapless people, a risk to the nation, as its people become weak and sickly!

Aragamee’s programme of helping farmers improve their livelihoods and food and income security with organisations like Azim Premji Foundation, NABARD, and others, of providing nutritious food to tribal girls in Aragamee School, with the help of organisations like Roti Foundation and concerned individuals is an effort to address this problem. Yet, it is but a small small effort, considering the scale of the problems. Much bigger and concerted effort is required, so that one day in the NEAR future, all humans – children, women, adolescent girls, men, adolescent boys will get good, nutritious food. The question is will we, as a nation, match our economic ambition with equal ambition for our children’s welfare and wellbeing?







## WORLD JACKFRUIT DAY

World Jackfruit Day is celebrated annually on July 4th. It's a day to appreciate the unique and versatile jackfruit, often used as a meat substitute in plant-based diets due to its texture and ability to absorb flavours.

We have a strong Network of Jackfruit Lovers and passionate promoters called JACKFRUIT FOREVER with very active members from Odisha, Kerala, Tamilnadu, Karnataka etc. and we had campaigned for launching of Odisha Jackfruit Mission(OJM) with a budget of 99crores+. No-one knows what the OJM is going as it lacks transparency. We had envisaged a Jackfruit Fair and also had planned to attract investors and entrepreneurs for processing and marketing. Odisha has the second highest production of Jackfruits, according to some statistics. We are happy to know that Tamil Nadu Government has launched a Jackfruit Mission. In our Jackfruit Forever WhatsApp Group, we have eminent experts

like Mr, Shree Padre, Mr. Haridoss, Dr. Narayan Hegde, Mr. Ashok Methil and many others.

Recently, we had organised a Women's Convention in Kandgamal and Women Farmers and Leaders had demanded Jackfruit Processing and Marketing as well as plantation of quality Jackfruits as old Jackfruit trees are dying.

My friend Mr. Ashok Parida has posed a story on Facebook drawing the attention of the scope of Jackfruits in the district. I am sharing some of the photographs he has posted.

My take on the World Jackfruit Day is to promote Jackfruit Plantations, scientific and technological methods of processing and marketing, Bio-diversity Conservation as the Jackfruit is organically linked to the tribal communities and it is also fully climate resilient.



## TRIBALS ARE AT CROSSROADS



I was talking to a Group of NGOs supported by a particular donor and was sharing my ideas and experiences on the theme TRIBALS ARE AT CROSSROADS. I was expressing strongly my apprehensions on the future of the tribal population in Odisha and in India ( STs and PVTGs). It is a fact that the tribal population is declining and also the status of Food, Nutrition, Livelihood Securities are being threatened more and more. The PESA is not implemented in letter and spirit. And so is FRA. The OSATIP is being diluted and the Government is planning to buy the land belonging to the ST Communities. It is a matter of Concern. Our Honourable President is from ST Community. So is our honourable Chief Minister. As per the Constitutional provisions, the Governors are supposed to submit a Report Annual on the Schedule V Areas to the President. These Reports

should be placed in the Public Domain so that the STs will read and have inferences.

I have published a book SEMAANE BI BANCHIBE (They Shall Live) published by Sikshasandhan Bhubaneswar which contains my 50 Articles dealing with the Tribal Issues. May be it is time to publish a Second Volume as the tribal areas are in a flux.

I have focused on the reality check between the Tribal Policy formulated by Verrier Elwin in 1960 and the current National Tribal Policy of 2006/2013. The tribals are not able to stand on their own as there are many flaws in the implementation of PESA and TRIBAL SUB-PLAN. Tribals must articulate on their own history and take decisions regarding their own development and change.

## Youth Icon in Aquaculture: Sangram Kumar Mohapatra's Inspiring Journey

In the 1990s when I was a Member of the State Planning Board under the chairmanship of the then Chief Minister Late Mr. Biju Patnaik, we had very serious discussions how to make Odisha self-reliant in Fruits, Flowers, Fish, Vegetables and Poultry Items. Now after almost 50 years, where are we? Odisha is still importing all these items despite many Missions and a number of Governments. It seems Planning and Implementation both have gone wrong! Let us look at Pisciculture/Aquaculture and analyse the present scenario. We have Tanks, Farm Ponds, Reservoirs and many kinds of Water Bodies across the state. Even hilly and tribal areas of Odisha have thousands of water bodies. We have CIFA (Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture at Uttara, Bhubaneswar). We have a good College of Fisheries Rangeilunda, Gopalpur. What is then missing? I wonder.

I have been interacting with Fishery Scientists and they have been telling me that the Fish Ponds are like ATMs if properly managed with a spirit of Entrepreneurship. I totally agree. My Organisation Agramee has taken a small step in Nabarangpur by launching a new initiative with support from NABARD under ERYA (Encouraging Rural Youths in Agriculture.) Aquaculture is one of the components of this project. We have trained 25 youths (23 boys+2 Girls) already and some of them have shown success. We have selected an Incubator Mr. Chandra Sekhar Mohapatra, a Retired Fishery Expert from Nabarangpur. We have



also good support from the District Fishery Officer Mr. Bishnu Charan Kissan and had a discussion with him how to make Nabarangpur a hub for fish production and integrated Fish Farming. We have visualised the GO-NGO Collaboration to make it a success. A special project can be designed by CIFA under the leadership of the District Collector and special support may be given by NABARD. Just a suggestion. I am giving the example of a youth trained in ERYA Project who has achieved success. Mr. Sangram Kumar Mohapatra, a 27-year-old graduate from Nabarangpur district, has emerged as a role model in scientific fish farming. Trained under NABARD's "Encouraging Rural Youth in Agriculture (ERYA)" project from 14th–23rd February

2025, Sangram turned his career around through pisciculture, driven by passion and perseverance.



After completing his education, Sangram struggled to find a satisfying job. Motivated by a retired Assistant Fishery Officer and inspired by the potential of high income from fish farming, he decided to utilize his ancestral land for pisciculture. He received technical guidance from the Fisheries Department and incubation support from Agramee, which helped build his skills in scientific aquaculture.

He began farming over 2 hectares, stocking 15,000 yearlings of Rohu, Catla, Mirgal, and Cyprinus Carpio. Using organic and floating feed, rice bran, and vitamins, and adopting multiple stocking and harvesting methods,

Sangram achieved a fish harvest of 12.5 quintals.

He markets fresh fish daily through a local outlet, engaging two local youth, and sells at Rs. 200–220/kg, earning around Rs. 20,000 per week. So far, he has earned a net profit of Rs. 2.15 lakh, which is enough to support his family for a year, says Sangram proudly.

“I am happy and proud. This success motivates me to expand and support others,” says Sangram.

Looking ahead, he plans to expand his culture area to 10 acres and aims for an annual net profit of Rs. 7.5 lakh. With growing experience, he hopes to generate employment for others and promote sustainable fish farming in his community.

Sangram’s journey is a shining example of how skill development, right guidance, and determination can turn rural youth into successful agri-entrepreneurs.

The Chinese Proverb says - "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step" Let us start the journey right now.





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