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पंचायती राज संस्थान
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Employment and skill challenges in rural India:
The current status and possible way out



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Employment and skill challenges in rural India: The current status and possible way out

This is the first and only International Labour Day. It belongs to the working class and is dedicated to the Revolution. (Eugene V. Debs, April 27, 1907)

May Day is celebrated across the globe to remember the movements and struggle of workers for their right, justice and liberation from exploitation and discrimination. With the rise in industrialisation, the workers were made to work for long hours and were paid meagre wages. Workers serving in hazardous industries such as chemical factories and mines, had even worse working conditions. The very first demand of these labour movements was to reduce the working hours. Without thinking about the repercussions, workers united and went on for strike, rallies and protests and finally the working hours were reduced to 8 hours a day. Although the origin and history of May Day differs across countries and is celebrated on different days in different countries, in most countries May 1 is observed as the International Workers' Day. Labour Day in India was

first celebrated on May 1, 1923.

Conventionally, Labour Day is associated with urban industrial factory workers and their movements. In India, however, the proportion of such workers among those who labour, is very small. Instead of a decisive and large-scale movement of labour from agriculture to industry and from the countryside to towns, what we have witnessed in India is an increasing significance of rural non-farm employment. For those engaged in such employment, the site of their work as well as their employer may not even be fixed – this is irregular employment for indefinite periods of the year. It is not a kind of employment very conducive to formation of unions and engaging in collective bargaining either. While the labour laws applicable to organised industrial units have been under debate, regulations for protecting the interests of workers have not covered this growing army of rural workers. Regulations, if any, have also not been designed keeping in mind the special circumstances in which such workers work. 'Informality'

therefore, tends to be the dominant feature of their relations with their employers. Therefore, in this context, it is important to flag up questions such as: How does one address this unique problem of protecting the interests of workers that has been posed by the specific trajectory of Indian economic development? What kind of labour standards are necessary and what should be the method of enforcing them? Do we need to rethink on the role of the institutions of governance at the rural level like the Panchayati Raj system, which was originally designed for primarily an agrarian sector dominated the rural context?

The important issues for rural workers in India are as follows: There are not enough remunerative works or livelihood avenues in rural areas. Agriculture, which used to be the main source of livelihood for a majority of rural workers, has left them with less work, due to mechanisation and new technology and climate change. In the non-agricultural sector, employment opportunities are mainly informal – jobs



without security and temporary jobs. The proportion of regular/secure/permanent jobs has declined in almost all the sectors of non-agricultural economy. Although real wage is rising in few instances, those are, however, accompanied by reduction in the number of days of work per year. Thus, the total real earnings from wage labour are falling for a large proportion of the population/households, resulting in a rise in the proportion of working poor.

Rural India has witnessed both quantitative and qualitative employment challenges. Most of the broad sectors of the rural economy have been facing varying degrees of decline in employment growth. Although, few sub-sectors of the non-farm sector have shown employment growth, their share is too small to accommodate the labour pushed out from agriculture and new entrants to the labour market. Of late, there has been a huge decline in

the female labour force participation, especially in rural India. A high proportion of rural youth are also in the category 'Not in Employment-Education and Training' (NEET). Besides these quantity deficits, the problems of low-paid and

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The Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) can truly be an effective tool to mainstream skill and employment challenges in rural development strategies and economic policies.
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insecure jobs, skill deficit, out-migration, poor working conditions, long working hours, high incidence of occupational hazards, inadequate safety measures at work places, etc., are also issues of great concern in rural areas.

While the rural economy continues to grapple with the problem of limited

employment opportunities and growing inequality, the availability of adequate and relevant skill will also be a major constraint. In rural areas, the share of services sector employment is growing, but at a very slow pace, which may not

commensurate with the sharp fall in employment, in agriculture. While employment is declining in each sector and at the same point, there is evidence of youth bulge (rise in population in the age group 15–24 years), which will enter the labour force with high and a variety of skill, maintaining a combination of the labour-intensive and skill-intensive manufacturing and service sector base, meeting the employment demand will be a great challenge. With the expansion of our education system and a plethora of government schemes and programmes on skill development, varying degrees of improvement were observed in the categories of semi-skilled and skilled workers. However, it is

disheartening to note that quite a large proportion of unskilled workers are still engaged in the primary sector. Further, the proportion of skilled and semi-skilled workers are still very low and quality of skill is also a major concern. Thus, large proportion of rural workers are still struggling with low levels of educational attainment, skill and training.

To address both the quantitative and qualitative employment challenges in rural India, we need to design a multi-pronged strategy. First, there is an urgent need to expand public investment on agricultural and rural infrastructure.

Second, employment intensive sectors such as agro-based industries and food processing and tourism and handicraft need to be identified and sector-specific policies need to be formulated. The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) programme under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) can be an important step towards building a sustainable livelihood and bridging inequalities in occupations in rural India.

Third, given its high employment potential, the growth of rural non-farm sector is also to be further promoted. Policies relating to provisioning of continuous hand-holding, technology support, access to credit and marketing needs will not only be effective for productivity enhancement in non-farm activities, but it will also encourage shift of workers from agriculture to non-agricultural activities. Current government programmes such as Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP), RSETI, DDU-GKY and other livelihood and entrepreneurship programmes under NRLM are going to play a significant role in generating employment avenues outside agriculture.

Fourth, the development of human resources, including upgrading of skills

of the rural workforce, which are relevant to the sector and State, need to be emphasised. Redesigning of education and vocational skills will provide enough opportunities for gaining employment, especially to the rural youth, which will further moderate the high incidence of out-migration. Thus, there is an urgent need to improve the human capital by investing on health, education, skill and training, and also to expand economic activities to boost employment opportunities in rural areas. The recently announced Ayushman Bharat-National Health Protection Mission (AB-NHPM), which aims to provide 100 million poor and vulnerable families up to ₹ 5 lakh cover for secondary and tertiary care and expects to reduce patient hospitalisation expenditure, will strengthen the social security base of rural population.

Fifth, the scope and reach of public work programmes such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) needs to be expanded. Through MGNREGS, efforts should be made to build or rehabilitate community infrastructure, which can increase the productivity of agriculture and the rural non-farm economy.

Sixth, there is also a need to promote rural labour organisations through the wide network of rural development institutions.

Seventh, real-time labour market information at panchayat level can offer a much needed employment scenario and help designing manpower planning in rural areas.

For setting the target of employment generation in rural areas, it is essential to assess the magnitude of the employment challenge and mainstream it in the overall rural development strategy. The Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP), can play a direct role in identifying sectors, sub-sectors and activities by

their respective employment generating potential and devise a mechanism to prioritise resource allocation and help in overall direction of policy towards the achievement of holistic development in rural areas; employment could be one of them. While undertaking monitoring and evaluation of various employment generation programmes under the Ministry of Rural Development, a checklist of questions can be addressed to different authorities, agencies and ministries in respect of the intervention area. To illustrate a few: Whether employment is a central objective of the programme? What is the nature and extent of employment generation envisaged in the programme? Does the programme result in adequate quantity and quality of employment? What are the major constraints in creating the envisaged employment? Is the employment generated under the sustainable programme?

While the poor quality of education and skill deficit will become a major constraint in the path of long-term rural development and sustainability, generation of employment consistently and at a rising levels of productivity, will be a major challenge in coming years for rural India. But, given a wide and strong network of rural development institutions and numerous policies and schemes in each and every area of concern, effective implementation and monitoring of these policy changes, will be of utmost importance to address the issues of skill and employment challenges, in rural India. Finally, the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) can truly be an effective tool to mainstream skill and employment challenges in rural development strategies and economic policies.

Dr. Partha Pratim Sahu
Associate Professor
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Development (CED)

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Training-cum-Workshop for MLAs and MLCs from 13 States

The Centre for Panchayati Raj (CPR), National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR), Hyderabad organised a training-cum-workshop on 'New Strategies in Rural Development and Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals' for the Honourable MLAs/MLCs from May 8 to 11, 2018 on the NIRD&PR campus. The prime objective of the programme was to upgrade knowledge and skills of Hon'ble MLAs/MLCs, specifically on planning, implementation and monitoring of rural development programmes. Altogether, 48 legislators from 13 States, namely Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Mizoram, Odisha, Punjab, Tripura, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh attended this training-cum-workshop. As the constituencies represented by legislators were largely from rural areas, the training programme was designed to familiarise them with the ongoing flagship programmes of rural development and also share best practices and grassroots realities. In this course, a variety of training methodologies such as lecture-cum-discussions, video-film based discussions, etc., were used. Also, the MLAs/MLCs were thoroughly motivated to develop their constituencies as model constituencies. Further, they were encouraged to share

their best practices with their fellow legislators.

The training programme was inaugurated by Honourable Speaker of Telangana Legislative Assembly Shri Sirikonda Madhusudana Chary on May 8, 2018, who highlighted the need for providing basic amenities in rural areas such as drinking water, education and health. He also appreciated NIRD&PR for organising this programme. Further, he advised the MLAs/MLCs to visit villages in their constituencies regularly and also to have direct interactions with people to collect first-hand information about rural development initiatives in their respective constituencies. Shri Sirikonda Madhusudana Chary shared his own experiences of staying (including night-halt) in a village (Palle Pragati Nidra programme) every fortnight, which he has been practising for the last few years. He mentioned that the initiative made him understand the grassroots realities and helped him take immediate action to resolve the issues.

Smt. Radhika Rastogi, IAS, Deputy Director General, NIRD&PR, delineated in her deliberations the need and importance of training courses on rural development for MLAs/MLCs. Further, she admired MLAs/MLCs for attending the programme. Dr. Franklin Laltinkhuma, IAS, Registrar & Director (Admn.), Dr. Y Bhaskar Rao, Professor and Head,

Centre for Panchayati Raj, Dr. S N Rao, Associate Professor and Course Director, Centre for Panchayati Raj and Dr. P SivaRam, Professor and Head of Centre for Rural Infrastructure and Centre for Livelihoods, NIRD&PR were also part of the inaugural session.

Exposure visit to Malkapur gram panchayat

As part of the programme, a one-day field visit was organised to Malkapur model gram panchayat in Gajwel constituency, Medak district, Telangana, where the Hon'ble MLAs and MLCs interacted with the villagers and understood the nitty-gritties in the successful implementation of flagship programmes of State and Central governments for rural development. All participants expressed that the visit was a great learning experience for them and it provided confidence for replicating the schemes in their respective constituencies. The details of programmes and their appreciations are presented below.

- Piped drinking water supply under Mission Bhagiratha programme, which is the pet programme of Telangana State. Under this programme, each household is being supplied sustainable piped drinking water supply (100 LPCD). Besides, an ATW (Any Time Water) facility was established in the GP by i-JAL (NGO).

Under this programme, drinking water is being supplied round the clock and the beneficiaries have to pay ₹ 5 for 20 litres by recharging the ATW card.

- Four village tanks were renovated under Mission Kakatiya scheme, a State run programme, helping to increase farming, from 200 acres to 700 acres.
- Each household was provided five plants (Fruit bearing and flowering trees) under Haritha Haram programme, a green initiative by the Government of Telangana. The programme is being run through public partnership, which turned out to be a great success.
- Participation of village youth in Swachh Bharat Mission - Voluntary participation for two hours every Sunday on village cleanliness drive for the past 129 weeks and achievement of 100 per cent ODF with participation of people.
- Double bedroom houses for 101 beneficiaries have been identified by Gram Sabha, which are under construction. Water harvesting facility in every household, 100 per cent LED street lights, 100 per cent liquor prohibition and creation of public amenities like rock garden and mini parks are clearly visible in the GP.

Interactive sessions with experts

In this four-day training-cum-workshop, 10 interactive sessions on topics such as MGNREGA, NRLM, skill India, sanitation, sustainable housing, creating value chain in agriculture, strengthening decentralised governance, design thinking for sustainable rural development and child-friendly governance were handled by national-level experts associated with various flagship programmes/initiatives. The legislators actively participated in all the sessions and discussed the practical issues faced by them in their respective States.

In particular, sessions handled by Dr. Gyanmudra, Professor, NIRD&PR (70 years of RD Journey in India), Shri Arun Jain, Chairman and MD, Intellect Design Arena Ltd. (Design Thinking for Rural Development), Smt. Aparajita Sarangi, Joint Secretary, MoRD (MGNREGA Convergence and SDGs), Shri Arindom Datta, Rabobank (Creating Value Chains in Agriculture), Padma Shri Shri G. Shankar (Sustainable Housing Technologies), Dr. P. SivaRam, NIRD&PR, Shri Venkatesh, UNICEF (Sanitation: Changing Attitudes and Achieving SDGs), Ms. Gayathri (Skill India – DDU-GKY) and Dr. M.N. Roy, IAS (Retd.), Sigma Foundation (Strengthening

Local Governance–Role of MLAs) garnered much interest.

On the third day, the participants visited Rural Technology Park (RTP) on NIRD&PR campus and they were introduced to innovative and sustainable rural technologies. Many MLAs and MLCs expressed keen interest in replicating some of the technologies in their constituencies, for creating employment opportunities.

The four-day programme ended on May 11, 2018, with a feedback session handled by Dr. W R Reddy, IAS, Director General and Smt. Radhika Rastogi, IAS, Deputy Director General, NIRD&PR. The participants said that the programme has undoubtedly upgraded their knowledge and skills in the context of rural development. The Director General, NIRD&PR, in his valedictory address requested the legislators to make model constituencies based on their learning. In addition, he requested the MLAs/MLCs to document the good work carried out by them and share with NIRD&PR to be used as case studies in other courses. The course ended with a vote of thanks by Dr. S N Rao, Associate Professor and Course Director, Centre for Panchayati Raj, NIRD&PR.





NIRD&PR augments hygiene and sanitation in public schools through Uddeepana

Uddeepana is a community-based initiative to strengthen the government schools of Nakrekal constituency and is being implemented in 100 schools spread across six mandals of Nalgonda and Yadadri Bhongir districts of Telangana State. Uddeepana has taken up an innovative intervention to achieve one of its six goals, i.e., School Hygiene and Sanitation through Uddeepana Sanitation Lead (USL) for promoting health and development among children, teachers and community. The Uddeepana Sanitation lead is being implemented by Shri Vemula Veeresham, Chairman and Honourable MLA of Nakrekal constituency with the guidance of National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR), Hyderabad represented by Dr. T. Vijaya Kumar, Associate Professor as Chief Advisor. USL is working by involving the local elected representatives, district administration, Government District Institute of Education and Training, officials of education, panchayati raj and rural development departments, teachers, community-based organisations like Mother Theresa Rural Development Society and women members of self- help groups to promote awareness on hygiene and sanitation in the schools and community through campaign mode of functioning.

The activities of Uddeepana Sanitation Lead is to raise awareness on personal hygiene, handwashing with soap and improvement of hygiene while cooking and serving mid-day meals, use of toilets, maintenance of cleanliness in toilets, classrooms, school premises, water posts, kitchen shed among children as well as their families and communities.

The background of this initiative is to observe and inform the teachers and parents that, in majority of the government schools, children are frequently absent to the schools because of unsafe water, inadequate toilet facilities, unhygienic hand wash habits, lack of hygiene and sanitation. To address these issues, the core committee of Uddeepana developed strategic plan in consultation with the stakeholders of government schools enabled by Dr. W. R. Reddy, IAS, Director General of NIRD&PR, Hyderabad, with resource support of NIRD&PR faculty to Uddeepana. The strategic plan is for improvement of hygiene and sanitation in 100 schools with a major focus on washing hands with soap, mid-day meal and the proper way to wash hands and maintenance of hygiene in classrooms, kitchen sheds, sanitation in water facility and school toilets, etc.

The Uddeepana Committee has identified nearly 60 women members of Self-help Group (SHG) from all the six mandals of



schools organised smart walks in their respective villages raising slogans and holding placards to generate awareness on hygiene and sanitation issues on weekly basis in all the school catchment areas with the help of teachers.

For successful and sustained behaviour change to occur, the Uddeepana Sanitation Lead engaged Swachh Doot students, women self-help groups, research scholars of NIRD&PR and Osmania University, volunteers of Mother Theresa Rural Development Society, Narkatpally, interns of State Nursing College, Uttarakhand and teachers as change agents for hand wash campaign in 60 schools under the guidance of Dr. T. Vijaya Kumar, Associate Professor, NIRD&PR and Shri R. Manga Reddy, Lecturer, Govt District Institute of Education and Training, Nalgonda as an entry point activity for children to understand and take up this good hygiene practices back into their homes and communities.

The team under the guidance and supervision of Dr. T. Vijaya Kumar, Associate Professor, NIRD&PR and Shri R. Manga Reddy, faculty of Government DIET, Nalgonda, Uddeepana Sanitation Lead, include UGC post-doctoral and doctoral scholars of NIRD&PR (Dr. V. Lalitha and Mr. K. Shiv Kumar), nursing students of Uttarakhand State Nursing College (Ms. Preethi Dhangar, Ms. Kirthi Chauhan) and coordinators of Uddeepana.

Shri C. H. Sateesh Kumar, Shri N. Shankar and women SHG members Smt. Ramya and team organised 'Clean Hands Save Life' campaign in 60 schools of Uddeepana from the first week of March to first week of April, 2018. During this campaign, the team distributed pamphlets on hand wash techniques of WHO



and gave a live demonstration on nine steps of hand wash to students, teachers and community members. In total, 4000 students, 1500 community members, teachers of various villages and print and electronic media representatives participated in this mega event. The SHG women supplied Uddeepana sanitary product 'Turbo Saaf' liquid hand wash and other products during the campaign. Third party survey on this initiative reveals that 70 per cent schools maintained cleanliness at the water post, 90 per cent of children had teeth cleaning habit, in 87 per cent schools, personal hygiene of the children was maintained, 70 per cent schools had clean environment, 90 per cent children are using liquid hand wash and the schools also use dishwashing powder which was unheard earlier.

**The Uddeepana Sanitation Lead is coordinated by
Dr. T. Vijaya Kumar, Associate Professor,
Dr. Lakhan Singh, Assistant Professor, Centre for Human
Resource Development, Dr. Raj Kumar Pammi, Assistant
Professor, Centre for Livelihoods, Dr. N. Deepa and
Dr. V. Lalitha, UGC Post Doctoral Fellows.**

SUCCESS STORY OF A SCHOOL UNDER UDDEEPANA

Marthavari Gudem is one among the five hamlets of Aitipamula village panchayat under Kattangoor mandal of Nalgonda district in Telangana State. The hamlet has witnessed remarkable improvement in hygiene and sanitation through Uddeepana initiative under the guidance of Dr. T. Vijaya Kumar, Associate Professor, National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR). The village panchayat is supplying water to this hamlet with 70 houses and a population of 570, including 277 women. However, it lacked individual household toilets. During 2016-17, the inhabitants of the 56 houses of this hamlet suffered with dengue fever and they had to shell out huge amounts for their treatment. Through Uddeepana initiative, the headmistress of local government primary school Smt. N. Indira Devi, along with 12 student volunteers of School Swachh Doot Club, took up a hygiene and sanitation door-to-door campaign at the household level. The Swachh Doot volunteers generated awareness on personal hygiene, cleanliness and sanitation among the inhabitants on a weekly basis by their visits and smart walk in the habitation by raising slogans and giving demonstrations on hand wash techniques to the villagers. The inhabitants of the Marthavari Gudem hamlet availed the IHH (Individual Household Toilet) facility from the Government and constructed 26 IHH toilets and few more are under construction. The headmistress played a significant role in seeking the attention of Mandal Development Officer, Shri Mohan Rao of the Kattangoor mandal parishad in the procurement of raw material for construction of the IHH toilets and sanctioning of new toilets. The Swachh Doot campaign of Uddeepana school, influenced the village sarpanch to facilitate the cleaning of drainage and support to village sanitation. The headmistress, with the help of Swachh students, facilitated the availability of 'Turbo Saaf' brand sanitary products liquid hand wash, dish wash powder, toilet cleaner and white phenyl of Uddeepana Sanitation Lead, prepared by SHG women with technical support of Rural technology Park of NIRD&PR. The school promoted hygiene practices among the students, parents and villagers. The Swachh Doot Club of primary school along with Village Sanitation Committee, helped the villagers in improving the hygiene and sanitation practices through the use of liquid hand wash, awareness on open defecation and maintenance of cleanliness and sanitation. The school also has plans of tree plantation and making the hamlet open defecation free in next year through Swachh Doot Club volunteers with the active support of elected representatives of the village and mandal parishad.

Before and after retiring, 15 years ago

An inspiring tale of Dr. Prakasam Tata's five-decade adventure in the US

BEFORE

Will Rogers once said, "Half of our life is spent trying to find something to do with the time we have rushed through life trying to save." May be, I am an exception. In spite of my tumultuous childhood, I consider myself blessed, because I neither tried during my formative years to find what I wanted to do with my life nor to choose a career. Perhaps, it was due to the best wishes of my teachers and blessings of my mother, who was widowed when I was three years old and was helpless. Her words that still ring in my ears, "stay in school, do your best, otherwise we all have to beg!" I obeyed her to the best of my ability growing in an impecunious condition and living in not so glamorous surroundings. It was due to the kindness and help of a great soul that I could leave home when I was 17, lucky enough to continue my studies at Nagpur University, India and obtain my M.Sc degree in 1955 when I was 19. Then, a tall American, Frederick Erickson, who came to India as a Visiting Professor of Sanitary Engineering at the All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, Calcutta, entered my life, interviewed, offered me a Research Assistant job in 1955 and motivated me to work on Rural Water Supply and Sanitation problems at the health centre in Singur, West Bengal. He told me that the whole world, in particular India and other developing countries, would be struggling in 25 years with water scarcity and pollution of water and air, and with my training I would be able to help not just India but the world. His prediction was on the mark like the one of an oracle.

Prof. Erickson's motivation and my working in India for seven years led me to understand the environmental issues of rural and urban India and those of the western world. With an intense desire to receive my doctoral degree, I set my sail, literally, to the USA in 1962,

and received my Ph.D. degree in 1966 from Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, in Environmental Sciences under the tutelage and mentorship of Profs. H. Heukelekian and Norman Dondero. It was my dream to seek a position at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRDGC) after earning my Ph.D., because of my knowledge of its colourful history and pioneering work in the wastewater collection and treatment field, and its commitment to protect lake Michigan from pollution. But, the nuances of the residency requirements of Cook County, etc., did not qualify me, a poor student from India with a Ph.D. degree from a great US University!! Without a second thought, I accepted a faculty position at Cornell University that was offered to me even before I finished my Ph.D. This opportunity also led me to associate with a wonderful gentleman, scholar, and professor, Dr. Raymond C. Loehr. I still cherish his association, support, and friendship.

Someone once said, when you dream hard, dreams will come true. It happened to me during the first week of May 1974, after I presented a paper at the Purdue University Industrial Waste Conference on a timely topic of concern in the environmental engineering field. Dr. Cecil Lue-Hing, Director of R&D, MWRDGC, was in the audience. After hearing my presentation, he invited me for an interview and visit to the MWRDGC facilities the following week after the conference. I accepted his invitation and he offered me a job within 48 hours after the interview. No Cook County residency requirements stood in my way, as I had obtained my permanent residency by then. My dream came true, and I felt that it was a gain to the MWRDGC.

AFTER

Soon after my retirement, my nephew presented me a plaque, which



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says, "A retired husband is wife's full-time job." Isn't it funny? The best part of my life, which I am going through now without making my wife tired running my chores, started in October 2002, when I retired with the utmost job satisfaction that one could ever have, I dealt with the thrill of success or agony of disappointment during my career with my chin up. Needless to say, the monthly retirement cheque that every MWRDGC retiree gets is a well-deserved gift, and I am no exception. Long live MWRDGC and its exemplary work to protect the water environment of metropolitan area of Chicago.

It was a great journey for me during the last five and half decades in the USA, including my career of almost three decades at the MWRDGC. Working with my mentors at Rutgers, Dr. Loehr at Cornell, and Dr. Lue-Hing at the MWRDGC was indeed a challenge. All strived for excellence and put a lot of trust in me and my work. They were very fair. As an

Adjunct Professor when I worked at the Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, I kept myself updated with the advances in the field environmental engineering and science. During my career, I fearlessly met all the challenges. At the MWRDGC, my team and I worked on various environmental problems and satisfactorily solved them, published numerous reports, co-authored four books, participated and led many committees at the national and international level, helped the MWRDGC obtain awards for its great work. Opportunities came my way during my career at the MWRDGC, and I consulted with national and international organisations during holidays and vacation periods, which often resulted in recommendations that were implemented.

I had dreamt many a time, to give back to India, which gave me my birth, and to USA, that adopted me. I think that this dream is now being realised in my retirement years. In 2003, I founded a non-profit organisation, Bharathi Theertha (Sanskrit phrase meaning Abode of the Goddess of Education and Knowledge) in Illinois and also joined the Rotary Club of Naperville. Rotary International with its motto of "Service Above Self" is well-known in more than 200 countries of the world for its various charitable service projects locally, nationally, and internationally. My inspiration and initiatives to undertake any projects, stem from my association with Bharathi Theertha and Rotary. Through numerous hours of volunteering and charitable contributions of money and energy from friends and family and the Rotary Club of Naperville, I have been able to do several educational, environmental, and health related projects with passion and persistence. I have been leveraging our giving and the matching funding from Rotary Foundation for the benefit of the needy in our local community in DuPage County and the poor and infirm in India in the areas of education, environment, and health.

Knowing that creating awareness on the importance of water, which is a finite resource on planet earth, for sustaining life and development of any country is of utmost importance, I have initiated with my friends the celebration of World Water Day in March of every year since 2003, to educate the general public, students, and faculty members of some universities in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, India on the looming sanitation and water scarcity problem. Rallies, workshops and forums in schools, colleges, and universities were conducted. Thousands of students, faculty members and environmental activists have participated over the years. Annual costs for these celebrations ranged between \$3000- 4,000. I hope that some youngsters will be motivated to do their part in the future for making our water environment better as they grow older and wiser.

A man-made lake of 170 acres was built more than 120 years ago in Vizianagaram, India by its Maharaja to store and provide water to his people for irrigation and drinking water. It was progressively polluted by storm water runoff and indiscriminate discharge of sewage into it, and it became a source of stench and a haven for breeding swarms of mosquitoes that affected many people in the area with filariasis. I had dreams in colour of how this beautiful lake had swans peddling with their yellow feet and fish gracefully swimming, only to see it in a disgusting filthy state during my annual visits.

It was my dream to use my education and decades of experience in the environmental field, both in India and the USA to bring this lake back to life. After 15 annual visits and endless discussions with locals and administrators, finally my dream was realised, when I met Dr. Rajat Kumar, the young and dynamic District Magistrate and Collector of Vizianagaram in 2003, who helped me in realising my dream of rehabilitating the lake with the help of Mr. Ashok Gajapathi Raju, who is a descendent of the royal family

of Vizianagaram and the current Civil Aviation Minister of India. I designed a deep pond waste stabilisation system and had it constructed with their help in 2003 to remediate the pollution of the lake with a cost of about 1 million US dollars. The stench was gone, mosquito population dwindled, and fish came back and are flourishing. Thousands of people residing in the area are enjoying a much cleaner and healthier environment. During my recent visit in early 2017, some members of a newly formed fisheries cooperative told me that the families of about 200 fishermen are still being benefited by harvesting fish from the lake.

Another dream of mine was to provide safe drinking water and hygienic sanitation facilities to a poor community of about 400 people belonging to the so-called 'Scheduled Caste', who openly defecated and obtained their drinking water of unknown quality from a dug well. This dream was also realised with the design and construction of a self-sustaining clean community bathroom-flush toilet and safe drinking water supply facility with the help of a Rotary Matching Grant of \$43,000. Villagers buy their filtered and disinfected drinking water from this facility for a nominal cost of \$0.04 for 10 liters, the revenue generated by a non-profit organisation that operates the wat-san facility is used for the maintenance of the facility. Open defecation was eliminated on the average by 86 per cent during 2016.

In 2015, Bharathi Theertha adopted Devada, a village of about 1,500 population in Vizianagaram district and as its first step, it wanted to develop their water supply and sanitation and other facilities. Motivated by the initiative of Bharathi Theertha, the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Department of Vizianagaram district designed and built a safe drinking water system at a cost of about \$60,000 benefiting the villagers of Devada.

Bharathi Theertha supports the education of children interested in

learning classical music and dances of South India, our ancestral home at Vizianagaram, India, is given at no cost to Tyagaraja Sangeeta Nritya Kala Niketan, an established music and dance school in dire need of financial resources to teach classical music and dances. This school has trained numerous children in the last 14 years. Bharathi Theertha established a free computer training centre in our ancestral home in Vizianagaram, India with support from the Rotary Club of Naperville, IL to train children, who do not have the access to computers at their home with a cost of \$4,000. Volunteers from the Great Heritage of Vizianagaram organisation, manage the operation of the computer centre at no

cost. Many students received certificates of completion of basic computer operating skills and word processing. This house is donated on March 4, 2018 to a community service organisation, Ramakrishna Mission, to carry out these activities and other activities that we plan in the future into perpetuity.

Some scholarships and food were provided to a few deserving poor students so far at a cost of \$ 4,000. Solar- lanterns were supplied to homes in 44 villages in Madhya Pradesh, India, where there is no electricity with funding from a Rotary grant and from the Government of India at a cost of \$100,000. More than 2,000 poor villagers were benefited. The potential adverse

effects such as respiratory diseases, cancer, and cataract, caused by emissions from kerosene lanterns, were completely eliminated. Instead of the three hours of light from kerosene lanterns, solar lanterns provided six hours of light during late evening and nights enabling children to study and do their homework.

Smokeless stoves were constructed in eight villages of Madhya Pradesh, India with a Rotary grant of \$25,000, which improved the indoor environment by minimising the smoke caused by burning sticks, leaves, cow dung patties, etc., which were used as fuel to cook food on open flames. As a result of this initiative, the indoor air quality was immensely improved.

Double the farmers' income to accelerate the economy's growth rate

It is simple economics. If the farmers' income is doubled by 2022, India's economy would achieve double-digit growth in due course since India still lives in villages and farmers are the major stakeholders.

John F. Kennedy says that farmers buy their inputs at retail price and sell the produce at wholesale price thereby losing on both sides, apart from bearing freight charges in the process. Nearly 60 per cent of India's population lives in rural areas and agriculture provides livelihood to a significant share of this group. Though the contribution of agriculture has declined from 52 per cent in 1950-51 to 16 per cent in 2017-18, still it is the largest employer (49 per cent) in India. As per 2011 Census, agriculture and allied sectors provide employment to nearly 120 million households, i.e., approximately 600 million people (by taking average family size of five) in India. However, Indian agriculture sector has been saddled with underemployment and disguised employment for quite some time. As per an estimate, the sector can support the livelihoods of only 140 million people. Hence, the farmer, the virtual Anna Data, in India is becoming the victim of



indebtedness, poverty, and hunger.

India loses 2035 farmers every day to other sectors, according to a study conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies; and about 76 per cent of the farmers are ready to quit agriculture for better jobs (Kaur & Kaur, 2016). It is reported that nearly 1.2 million people left agriculture sector during the last four decades in Kerala, mainly due to migration of rural youth to urban areas, strenuous nature of work, and paltry returns. Palagummi Sainath, the famous journalist on rural economy, comments that the farmers

are converting themselves into unskilled manual workers in urban areas for the want of livelihoods. In view of the above, there is a growing concern among the policymakers about sustainability of the agriculture sector which triggered the government to take a plunge to double the farmers' income by the year 2022.

It is said that Indian agriculturists dance to the tunes of the monsoons – predominance of rain-fed agriculture and effects of climate change resulting in low levels of productivity and profitability. Besides, around 85 per cent of the farmers' landholdings in India are less

than two hectares, thereby depriving them economies of scale. Transaction costs of farmers are high and distress sales are common due to inadequate supply chain infrastructure in the country. Exploitation of scarce natural resources coupled with excessive use of chemicals and fertilisers vitiated the fragile rural ecosystems. Further, high cost debts, lack of proper extension services and enabling institutional environment made the life of Indian farmers miserable; so it is no wonder that some of them commit suicide and none of them wish their children to be farmers. In view of the above, we need to adopt the following strategies to transform the Indian agriculture into a viable business activity, thereby increasing the farmers' income:

- i) Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) may be encouraged in a big way given the small and uneconomical landholdings of the farmers. In the Union budget for 2018-19, allowing hundred per cent tax deduction for five years in respect of FPOs with an annual turnover of up to ₹ 100 crore is a right step in this direction by the government.
- ii) Focus should be on creation of supply chain infrastructure, right from 'farm to fork'. Farmers should be educated about the brand equity and value addition for their agriculture produce, viz. Alphonso mangoes, Strawberries from Panchgani, Darjeeling Tea, etc., so that they can export their produce and enhance their returns. According to one estimate, 30 per cent of cereals and 40 per cent of fruits and vegetables produced in India are wasted due to inefficient supply chain management. Post-harvest losses are estimated at 0.60 per cent of India's Gross Domestic Product (Jha et al., 2015). To address this, Government of India has been implementing Kisan Sampada Yojana to establish mega food parks, cold storage chains and food processing units, by extending capital subsidies.

- iii) We need to revive the cooperative sector in India to focus on production, marketing and remunerative price structures in the larger interest of the farmers. Best practices of successful cooperatives such as Amul, Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative (IFFCO), Mulkanoor and the like may be replicated throughout the country.
- iv) Organic farming may be tried by the small States on the lines of Sikkim and Uttarakhand, in order to follow sustainable agricultural practices and improve soil fertility and biological diversity. As people have become health conscious, organic farm produce can be sold at higher prices too.
- v) Roof-top solar power on the farmer's house may be installed as in case of the Europe. This will generate green energy on one hand and save on electricity bills on the other. Excessive generated power, if any, can be sold to the grid which will increase farmers' income.
- vi) Farmers may be encouraged to develop alternative sustainable livelihoods by way of dairy, fisheries, rearing of sheep and goats so as to diversify their revenue streams. Many research studies confirmed that the farmers who possess cattle are less prone to committing suicides due to additional income.
- vii) Indian farmers are born in debt, brought up in debt, and die in debt. Mehboob Khan's classic movie 'Mother India' released in 1957 showed how money lender exploits the helpless, hapless and voiceless farmer. As such 'agricultural debt waiver and debt relief scheme' is a popular agenda item in every election manifesto with an eye on vote banks. Though the outstanding institutional debts of the farmers have been waived many times till now, informal credit has not been touched so far. As the money lenders/traders levy exorbitant interest rates, especially on small and marginal farmers, they commit suicide to

escape from the clutches of these modern day Shylocks. Therefore, it is suggested that the government may think of waiving off informal debt owed by farmers to money lenders or traders, etc., like in the case of abolition of bonded slavery system in India. This can happen if local governing institutions namely gram panchayats are empowered at the grassroot level to take care of the farmers' interests in letter and spirit. Governments of the day need political will to do so. Alternatively, we may think of expanding the network of formal financial institutions like small finance banks on the lines of Self-Help Group-Bank Linkage Programme (SHG-BLP), thereby achieving last mile financial inclusion on one hand and creating substitute to money lenders in rural areas on the other.

According to the Economic Survey 2017-18, climate change can adversely impact agricultural yields to the extent of 15-25 per cent. Hence, there is an imperative need to deepen the penetration of crop insurance and develop climate resilient technologies in the agricultural sector. Further, with a view of reducing pressure on agriculture, major thrust should be given to solid waste management, i.e., generating compost from waste/wealth from waste, etc. This has the potential to meet the rural energy requirement and create (part-time) employment to at least 4-5 people in every village.

According to Mahatma Gandhi, if the legislature proves itself to be incapable of safeguarding farmers' interests, they will always have the sovereign remedy of civil disobedience and non-cooperation. As farmers provide food security to the nation, we need to provide financial security by way of doubling their income by 2022; in the process, double-digit growth in our economy can take place automatically.

Dr. M. Srikanth
Associate Professor & Head,
Centre for Financial Inclusion &
Entrepreneurship



One-day workshop on 360-degree feedback

The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR) conducted a one-day workshop on '360-degree feedback' on May 15, 2018, aiming to formulate the strategy to assess the employees of the institute from all directions of organisational hierarchy. Dr. T V Rao, the pioneer of 360-degree feedback methodology and former Professor, IIM, Ahmedabad was invited to conduct the workshop. While introducing the programme, Dr. Gyanmudra, Professor & Head, CHRD, reflected the importance of 360-degree feedback, which is also known as multi-source feedback.

Welcoming the participants and guest, Dr. W R Reddy, IAS, Director General, NIRD&PR assured that the Institute would introduce the assessment at the earliest. He further requested all staff members to participate in the workshop and try to build a good methodology for the Institute.

The Director General mentioned two objectives of this procedure to identify where each of the employees stands through a transparent assessment method and to assess the quality of work-delivery by employees, which is also an instruction from ministry.

"The second objective may touch very few people but the first one is very crucial and we have to carry out the process," he said. He further asked all the members to address the grey areas which may be identified through this assessment procedure. He echoed that every member of the Institute has to optimise the factors of their performance.

Dr. T. V. Rao, in his inaugural speech, said that the assessment tool acts as a third eye for assessing others. "It has

not been designed for creating fear among the employees. It is a tool for self-discovery," he said. Dr. Rao said he had started the methodology 40 years ago to assess the classroom behaviour of teachers. "Many research was done thereafter by my team to enhance the procedure of 360-degree feedback," he said and informed that IIM Ahmedabad follows this assessment system. "Students use it to assess the faculty members. This methodology has been conceptualised to assess both the strength and weakness of an employee," he said.

The inaugural session was followed by Dr. Rao's interaction with employees from different centres. He held discussions with every section of the hierarchy to collect various issues related to HR policies and performances. The key intention of holding such a discussion was to prepare a better questionnaire to carry out 360-degree assessment in the Institute. Dr. Rao informed that he would share few questionnaires which would be finalised after his discussion with the Director General and heads of the centres.



Fifth meeting of TOLIC-2 held at NIRD&PR



The fifth meeting of the Town Official Language Implementation Committee (TOLIC)-2, Hyderabad was held on May 16, 2018 at the National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR) under the chairmanship of Smt. Radhika Rastogi, IAS, Deputy Director General, NIRD&PR and Chairman, TOLIC.

While delivering the welcome address, Smt. Radhika Rastogi asked the officials of various institutions to provide their official address, e-mail id and phone number to the member secretary, to invite them for official language seminars/workshops conducted in NIRD&PR in future. She also asked them to work as

per the directive of the Rajbhasha Vibhag, Ministry of Home Affairs.

Smt. Anita Pandey, Member Secretary, TOLIC, gave a PowerPoint presentation about the activities of TOLIC. Shri Kaushal Mahour, AD (OL), MoRD, represented the Ministry and spoke about the Official Language Policy & Rules. Dr. Kaushalya, -AD, Hindi Teaching Scheme, briefed about the training programmes, i.e., Praveen, Prabodh, Pragya and Parangat.

Silk Board, Shadnagar and National Fisheries Development Board, Hyderabad expressed their willingness to organise Technical Hindi Seminar under TOLIC-2, which was approved by the Chairman of the committee. Dr. Akanksha Shukla, Associate Professor and Head (CDC), proposed a vote of thanks. Shri E. Ramesh, Senior Hindi Translator, compered the programme.

Off-campus regional ToT course on skill and entrepreneurship development for rural youth

The Centre for Livelihoods (CFL) organised an off-campus regional ToT course on 'Skill and Entrepreneurship Development for Rural Youth' from May 21 to 25, 2018 at the State Institute of Panchayat and Rural Development (SIPRD), Khanapara, Guwahati, Assam. Altogether, 44 participants comprising senior and middle level officials from Extension Training Centres, State Institute of Panchayat and Rural Development (SIPRD) and State Skill Development Mission (SSDM), District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), and prospective entrepreneurs attended the training programme.

The programme was inaugurated by Shri Khageswar Pegu, Director, SIPRD,

Assam and Joint secretary, P&RD Assam. In his inaugural speech, he highlighted the need and importance of skill and entrepreneurship development for rural youth development in India in general and northeast region in particular. The course design was briefly presented by the course director. The session started with ice-breaking through seed-mixing and familiarisation exercises by Dr. Raj Kumar Pammi, Dr. U. Hemantha Kumar and Shri Anupam Dutta, senior faculty, SIPRD.

Dr. P. SivaRam, Professor & Head, Centre for Livelihoods and Centre for Rural Infrastructure, NIRD&PR, interacted with the participants. He also conducted a session on 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan' and spoke about personal hygiene,

environmental sanitation, need to stop open defecation, waste from wealth through role plays, videos and participatory exercises.

The following topics were dealt by NIRD&PR faculty members and guest faculty:

- Rural farm and non-farm entrepreneurship
- Importance of skill development in micro-enterprise promotion
- Promotion of agri-entrepreneurship and agri-innovations through skill development
- Skill promotion and placement among rural youth in Assam-DDU-GKY
- Youth entrepreneurship and sustainability

- Rural youth capacity building and self-employment opportunities through RSETIs
- Self-employment opportunities for rural youth
- Marketing strategies and techniques for promotion of micro-enterprises in rural India
- Skills for increasing promotion of productivity, value chain and income generation
- Life skills, communication and negotiation skills of rural youth for entrepreneurship development (soft skills - building positive attitude and time management)
- Waste from Wealth, new entrepreneurship concept and 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan', personal hygiene, environmental sanitation and open defecation-free, etc.
- Field-cum-exposure visit to DDU-GKY Empower Skill Training Centre; Indian

Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE); Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), and SIPRD Handloom Entrepreneurship Centre

A variety of conventional and participatory training methods such as lecture-cum-discussion, role plays, Large Scale Interactive Event (LSIE), video-film based discussion, flash card exercises, energies, field-cum-exposure visits, group discussions, case presentations, etc., were used in the training programme.

A one-day field visit was organised to DDU-GKY Empower Skill Training Centre, Guwahati, Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE) Guwahati, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Kamrup, Extension Training Centre (ETC), Kahikuchi and SIPRD New Campus Handloom Skill Training Centre. The participants interacted with trainees of ongoing courses under various trades. Based on the field visit, the participants prepared a group report and the same was presented before course

team. According to the participants, they learned to identify needy rural youth for skill training, upgraded knowledge and skills in preparation of curriculum and designing of various soft and hard skill training programmes and placement-linked training courses.

In the valedictory session, the participants said that they have upgraded knowledge, skills and attitudes in the area of youth skill and entrepreneurship development. Furthermore, the participants said they would organise a series of training programmes at district and block level in the back-home situation.

The course team for the training programme comprised Dr. Raj Kumar Pammi, Assistant Professor, Dr. U. Hemantha Kumar, Associate Professor, Centre for Livelihoods and Shri Anupam Dutta, Senior Faculty Member, SIPRD, Guwahati, Assam.



Training programme on Open Source GIS Tools for Forest Resource Management (Advanced)

A training programme on Open Source GIS Tools for Forest Resource Management (Advanced) was organised by the Department of Forests, Government of Rajasthan in collaboration with NIRD&PR wherein CGARD, NIRD&PR provided faculty and knowledge support.

Shri H K Solanki, Senior Assistant Professor, CGARD, NIRD&PR and Dr. G V Reddy, IFS, Additional Principal Chief Conservator and Chief Wildlife Warden, Department of Forests, Government of Rajasthan, coordinated the programme. Birla Institute of Scientific Research, Jaipur, provided the venue and

computer lab for the programme.

The training programme was designed by course coordinators from CGARD in due consultation with coordinators from the Department of Forests. Most of sessions were handled by Shri H K Solanki with hands-on support from Shri Navin Kumar, Project Associate,

CGARD. The Forest Department also deputed two GIS interns for hands-on experience and support during the training. The course has advanced contents and assumed prior knowledge on GIS of the participants. The employees of Forest Department, Government of Rajasthan, who attended GIS training previously and had basic knowledge of GIS, were invited as participants. A total of 21 Assistant Conservators of Forests (ACFs) and one researcher from Forest Department, attended the training.

On the first day, Dr. G V Reddy, Chief Wildlife Warden, interacted with participants and discussed uses of GIS/remote sensing in the context of forests. Further, basic introduction to the mobile mapping applications were provided by NIRD&PR course team. Open Data Kit (ODK), mobile tool for form-based research data collection was introduced and a test form for collection of data on waterholes was prepared by participants.

Import of ODK data in offline environment by using ODK Briefcase utility was described and demonstrated on the second day. A quick recap for georeferencing and file format conversions were made. For general GPS data collection in the form of point and lines, a mobile mapping application named OSMAND was introduced.

On the third day, a field visit was made to the nearby Jhalana Wildlife Reserve area, Jaipur and forest assets, where data were collected on waterholes using ODK forms and general assets were collected through OSMAND mobile mapping tools. In the second half of the same day, data import was demonstrated and shown in GIS environment. All classes during training, both theory and practical sessions, were taken with parallel exercises by the participants. Dr. Mahaveer Punia, Head, Remote Sensing, BISR took a session on 'Analysis of Tiger territory in Sariska Forest, Rajasthan'.

The data collected through ODK and advanced processing on field data using clip/buffer tools were exercised along with linking of field photographs on the fourth day.

On the fifth day, for effective visualisation of data, arrangement of layers and change of layer properties were introduced and print composing was exercised to get standard quality map outputs with all essential mapping elements. All participants were able to generate basic maps with the use of their data layers.

On the same day, Dr. A K Goyal, IFS, Head of Forest Force (HoFF) and Dr. G V Reddy, IFS, Chief Wild Life Warden, Department of Forests, Government of Rajasthan, made a thorough interaction.

Online evaluation was made by the participants in Training Management Portal.



Training programme on ICT applications and e-Governance

The Centre for Information and Communication Technology (CICT) organised a training programme on 'ICT Applications and e-Governance' from May 21 to 25, 2018 at NIRD&PR, Hyderabad. A

total of 43 officials, majority representing departments such as Rural Development, Rural Housing, Forests & Environment, Health Missions (NHM/NRHM), Soil & Water Conservation, Rural Water Supply &

Sanitation, Panchayati Raj, Zilla Parishad/ Zilla Panchayats, DRDAs, SIRDs and academicians from 12 States, namely Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya

Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu participated in this programme.

The main focus of the programme was to sensitise functionaries of Rural Development, Panchayati Raj, Zilla Parishad/Zilla Panchayats, DRDAs, SIRDs and line departments such as Agriculture, Forests & Environment, Health Missions, etc., to the potential of ICTs and its applications, especially in rural development, agriculture, health, e-Governance, geo-informatics for governance, Digital India and providing skills in development of information systems.

Smt. Radhika Rastogi, IAS, Deputy Director General, NIRD&PR, interacted with the participants. She emphasised that their ultimate goal should be to utilise ICTs and e-Governance in such

a way that they improve the service delivery to the rural poor. It must be citizen-centric in nature and should explore new ways and means of solving issues, taking appropriate support of technology, she added. Smt. Radhika Rastogi further explained the type of teething issues in implementation of any software application and the change management and hand-holding efforts needed, while narrating her experiences in computerisation of treasuries in the State of Maharashtra.

To provide better insights into the potential of ICTs and e-Governance, in addition to topics relating to information systems development, e-Governance, G-Governance, Digital India, ICT applications in health such as Telemedicine by Care Foundation Hyderabad, role Internet of Things (IOT)

and Wireless Sensor Networks (WSN) in precision agriculture, Panchayat Enterprise Suite (PES), cloud computing, cyber security and data centres were also discussed.

A visit to National Informatics Centre, Hyderabad, was arranged as part of the programme to gain a better knowledge of cloud computing, cyber security and data centres management.

A visit to CARE foundation was arranged to know more about the Telemedicine initiatives. The participants were also provided an opportunity to visit Museum and Golconda Fort.

Shri A Narendra Kumar, Head i/c, CICT, interacted with the participants and distributed thm certificates. The programme was coordinated by Shri G V Satya Narayana, Senior Assistant Professor, CICT.



Dr. Parsuraman interacts with PG (DRDM) students of NIRD&PR

As a part of policy initiated learning, the 14th batch of PG (DRDM) students of NIRD&PR had a chance to interact with Dr. Parsuraman, former Director of Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) on May 25, 2018.

He began the 90-minute session with a mention of the National Sample Survey (NSS), Statistics of 2004 and

2005, which quoted India having 70 per cent population as poor. Dr. Parsuraman went on to explain in the vivid session that when the economy raises, the per capita income per person comes down due to unequal distribution of wealth. He explained that despite the increase in economy, the poor remain poor because they buy water, education

and healthcare. He quoted that China is the only country where economy and per capita income grew together due to neo-liberal policy. In India, the Anglo-Saxon model of growth is followed, he said.

Challenging the Malthusian theory, which he proclaimed states that poor people are poor as the number of children in their family is considerably high. He

spoke on why poor have more children as due to high levels of mortality, many may not survive, as they are also social security for the poor who have no health insurance and pension benefits.

Dr. Parsuraman relived his childhood memories when his first job on getting up in the morning was to get water from a distant well. He related how school which was three kilometres away was a daily walk and after returning from school, his job included taking their lone buffalo out for grazing. From this window-peep into his past, he linked how he had held important posts like Advisor to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, UNESCAP, Bangkok, Thailand, Asia Regional Policy Director, Action Aid International, Employee of World Bank and IUCN as also Programme Director, Oxfam GB, India.

Dr. Parsuraman weaved his personal experiences and interactions with people, over the world to pinpoint problems

that plague India at present. His basic contention being that unequal distribution of wealth is a result of lopsided policies. He suggested that five per cent of tax be levied on people who are wealthy so that money can be distributed.

As a part of corporate social responsibility, he commented that more and more corporate houses be made responsible for development. The planning, which has erstwhile been done by people who have no firsthand experience of rural India, should be decentralised to the grassroots and Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) initiative, is a big step towards it. Stressing on the healthcare expenses that cause one to take loans and become indebted, he lauded the efforts of the government but stressed on making rich pay the extra income tax of five per cent to bring in the money for socially beneficial schemes.

Witnessing the stalwart speak, and the spark he created amongst

students beckoning them to marshal a novel path for development was a treat to not only the eyes and ears but the very soul. A man of true spirit, he related how his love for the country made him return after having served the World Bank. Appreciating the present government on its Swachhta campaign, he shared how he felt that the Prime Minister could be a possible contender for a Nobel peace prize with his cleanliness and climate change initiatives. Overall, the short rendezvous was a heart changing experience for all the students and the faculty alike. The session was coordinated by Dr. C. S. Singhal, Professor & Head, Dr. Aryashree Debapriya, Associate Professor, Centre for PG Studies and Distance Education and Dr. Akanksha Shukla, Associate Professor, Centre for PG Studies and Distance Education, Head(i/c) for Centre for Development Documentation & Communication.

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