

Training Manual

I. Why and what is convergence (the concept)

➤ The concept

The idea of convergence in BGVS means, essentially

1. Integration of efforts
2. Focusing of various activities in a specified geographical area- the gramapanchayat
3. Formation of a resource group with definite skills and a shared vision in each gramapanchayat

We are engaged in samata- women empowerment, SHG. Women's health, Balmanch, literacy, continuing education, skill development, vocational training, right to work, right to information, right to food, ICDS, early child care, midday meals, primary education, GVV, watershed based development etc. etc. All these take place in the one and the same community. Unless there is a group of people within the community who are knowledgeable about these and who can learn continuously and knit all those activities together into one developmental whole much of our efforts will be of no use.

For the present we are envisioning to provide two rounds of training of six days each, to begin with, by a national /state level resource group. It is our desire to develop, ultimately, a resource pool of 20-25 persons in each block, who can give on the spot support by both hand and head support to the GP group, as and when required.

The term 'convergence' is, also, used by the government people. Aruna Sharma, a senior IAS officer of Madhya Pradesh cadre has written a book called "The Convergence Manthra". In that book she describes that the various departments of the Central Government have floated, in all, more than 2700 'schemes' –many of them with identical objectives. Besides substantially bloating up the administrative expenses, this multiplicity has in effect, worked and cross purpose and as a result not even 10% of the total targets are achieved. Each department wants, now to set up more or less similar, so called 'knowledge centers' in each grama panchayat. The technical support or resource group we form should be able to help the gramapanchayat and gramasabha to force a convergence of these diverse

government programmes into one total development programme and thereby enhance their effectiveness several fold. When we speak of 'convergence' we too keep this in our mind. We can call our programme by yet another name: a Citizen Education Programme for Democracy. It aims at making the 'gramsabhas', the critical location for direct democracy, effective and capable of directing the panchayat's activities. All these are elements of a larger vision- to build a truly democratic and egalitarian society. Those who participate in this programme should develop within themselves this larger vision.

➤ Need and significance

We are told that human society has entered the epoch of globalization. What does it mean? Have we become global citizens, free to move wherever we want? No, absolutely not. All it means, in effect, is that large transnational corporations of USA, Europe and Japan, have gained access to the Natural Resources and markets of all the countries world over. The result of this globalization, as we have seen during the past two decades, is a continuous plunder of Common Resources of the third world countries, a general increase in inequality and in many cases poverty in spite record increase in GDP, increase in unemployment deterioration of environment leading to global warming and other related problems, increasing criminalization of the society, of politics, of all social institutions, measuring loss of faith in others and even in self, increasing conflicts and wars in the name of nationalism, ethnicity, caste, religions etc – in short a slide back to barbarism and a looming threat of the extinction of human species.

Is this an inimitable course of history? Is it not possible to stop this and change the course? Is not another world possible? Some experiments were done in the last century. Though failed due to a number of reasons They give us a right to hope for a better world, a different world, a different society, where everybody has the right to work and earn a livelihood, when every takes part in the management of the society (democracy), where income inequalities get continuously reduced, where people become increasingly more free to decide their own life without implementing on the similar freedom of others. It is this hope that we share and want to share with the rest. This is the vision we have been talking about.

➤ Why cluster level approach

We would have liked and it would have been useful to interact with a large number of persons for a long period and shares with them our hopes and aspirations, our skills and competencies. But, India is a huge country and we are too small group. We have 2 lakh panchayats and 6 lakh villages and about 10 lakh habitats. And we are only handful.

Experiences have shown that cascade training – National Team Training State Level Teams, then at district, Block and Panchayat Level, is ineffective due to transmission losses. The cluster approach was, therefore, conceived because

- i. It gives a fairly good level of concentration – 40 persons in a close locality of 4-5 panchayats, who can help each other.
- ii. It makes provision of additional inputs and monitoring easier.
- iii. It gives the National Resource Team district contact with grass root realities and persons and thus makes the training more meaningful.

II. About the Manual

➤ How we can use the manual

III. About the training (logistics including the pre work to be done)

- Environment creation before training
- Developing pre structures for Panchayat development samiti
- Selection process of participants
- The role of resource team
- Resource mobilization from the community
- The non negotiable

IV. Purpose of the training (objectives)

- To equip and install a group of social activists in a contiguous area with certain level of awareness and understanding.
- To develop a group of activists who have faith and concern about their surroundings especially in the community.
- To develop a group of activists who have faith in collectivism.
- To develop confidence to the activists for understanding the surroundings and realizes the social issues and its causes and to priorities the area of interventions by understanding the scope and limitations and develop strategies by taking into consideration the objective realities.
- To motivate the participants to take the challenge of continuous learning through self learning, collective learning and experiential learning.
- To develop the skill of transaction or communication by understanding the context, need and the level of the participants.

V. About the process of training (methodology)

Diverse strategies can be used for transaction. The objective of the training is to help the participants to develop the capacity to identify a problem and addressing it by using all socially desirable means. For that the training process must enable the participant to obtain confidence, enhance knowledge and skills and promote creativity.

The learning environment must

- Be friendly
 - Be democratic
 - Be secular
 - Be open but structured
 - Be impartial
 - Be dialogic
 - Ensure freedom for expression
 - Promote critical thinking
 - Keep away all kinds of bias- social, economic, political and gender
- Understanding the trainees (The level of the participants)
- Relation with our organization
 - Field of interest
 - Age group
 - Employment status
 - Educational status
 - Social status
 - Involvement and experience in involving social activities
 - Relation ship and experience with other NGO
 - Knowledge about the social dynamism
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- Need of un learning the existing mode of transaction
- Why and how of participatory learning strategies
- The participatory learning strategies will
- Enable the participants to build personal interpretation of the world based on experiences and interactions. (Constantly open, cannot

achieve a predetermined, "correct" meaning, Knowledge emerges in relevant contexts.)

- Create novel situation specific understandings by "assembling" knowledge from diverse sources appropriate to the problem at hand. (flexible use of knowledge)
- Help the trainer to realize
 - Learning is an active process of constructing rather than acquiring knowledge.
 - Instruction is a process of supporting knowledge construction rather than communicating knowledge.
 - Not to structure learning for the task, but engage learner in the actual use of the tools in the real world or based up on issues or problems.

Strategies of transaction

Approach:

Participatory approach has to be adopted through out the training. Try to avoid "Bhasans" which will ultimately function as hindrance to any kind of learning. We have to unlearn many things that we have undergone and what we have practicing now as a part of the learning process. The resource people have to respect and recognize what the participant knows.

The whole environment must be set in such a way that ensures debate and negotiations. Any kind of imposition is to be questioned and avoided. This does not mean what ever existing method is bad. But we have to understand its limitations and try to develop modern strategies which make the learning environment lively and meaning fully.

On the basis of this understanding we can discuss the possible strategies of transaction

➤ ***Discussions***

Discussion is one of the best strategies to ensure the involvement of all the participants. It also provides an opportunity to express one's views towards the discussion points and share one's experiences and concerns. The resource team must ensure that the discussion is taking place with in the discussion frame which will ensure the very objective of the session. Discussions will

provide a chance for emerging consensus or realizing various aspect of an issue or finding a common thread in various social realities etc.etc.

The most important thing that the resource person to be keeps in mind is that

- Try to limit the participant's discussion with in the frame of the issue or discussion points because there is natural tendency to take the group away from the actual discussion points.
- Try to consolidate the discussion at the end. Don't close the discussion put it open. The consensus and the differences have to be mentioned.

- ***general discussion***

It is a process in which all the participants shall participate. The resource person will give a small introduction of the topic and facilitate discussion. The introduction may be in the form of short lectures or discussion points or raising certain questions or issues. On the basis of short presentations and discussion points the participants involved in exchanging of ideas or opinions or suggestions based on their understanding and experience.

The discussions may provide an opportunity for exchanging complimentary or contradictory and conflicting views and logic. The discussion shall enable to reach or emerge common understanding or consensus fully or partially. For conceiving ideas discussion is a fine tool.

The general discussion may provide a common understanding for group discussion if the general discussion is followed by group discussions.

- ***Group discussions.***

Group discussion is a process in which 5-10 people sit together and discuss certain issues. Group discussions are means for active exchange of ideas within small groups which increases interest among the participants and promotes critical thinking. It also ensures individual learning through the group process. It also some realization that emerges through active dialogue among the participants and resource person. (Group composition, subject and communication media have their own influence in the group work). In this training most of the discussion are taking place by taking a panchayat as the unit it is better to form panchayat groups.

➤ ***Dialogues***

Dialogue is a way of interaction between a group with an individual or an individual to a group or between groups or individuals. It can also use as structured or unstructured enquiry method for gathering information's, getting clarity, sharing concerns. For a trainer it is one of the best means to know the level of the participants for fixing the depth of the content to be transacted and its process.

➤ ***Debates***

It is also one of the tools for transaction. Here we can group the participants and they can take part in discussion. Individual based debates are also possible. Here individuals or groups shall express there view or suggestions regarding selected issues or topic. Based on the debates the group can reach in some kind of consensus. It is not necessary to reach consensus in all aspects of the issues.

➤ ***Short lectures***

➤ ***Audios***

➤ ***Videos***

➤ ***Role play and simulations***

➤ ***Field visit***

VI. What next

- Finding out a shelter for coordination- physical location
- Enlarging the group by sharing the experiences of the training
- Knowing my panchayat- preparation of the status paper of the panchayat
- Planning and executing some actions
- Developing an organizational structure with in the panchayat

VII. Mechanisms for follow up & monitoring

- Weekly meetings panchayat level
- Fortnightly meeting at cluster level

VIII. Content

1. Our surroundings- World around us

It is very interesting to know about our surroundings and us. The population status and its details- sex wise, age wise, how many of them are educated or the status of education, the economic status, the nature and pattern of employment, the pattern of land ownership, land utilization, mode of production, main crops and its productivity, agricultural practices, natural resources, social diversity in the form of religion and cast, cultural diversity, customs and taboos, nature and mode of operation of family as an institution, marriage, festivals and the mode and diversity in celebrations, the infrastructure status, the institutions which includes public institutions like schools, hospitals, offices etc, private & religious institutions, public spaces ground, pond or lake etc., nature of relation ship between communities, the status of dalith & minority, the status of women within the family and society etc, we can extend this list according to our need and curiosity.

Our education provides us so much information regarding the world and about the country, some information regarding the state, less about the district and

nothing about our panchayat or immediate surroundings. After some time we usually forget these information because none of them are usually relevant or useful to our life. That information has no relevance in our personal life or in the social life. Why? Because there is no way of relating the larger world to our surrounding or immediate world - which is the real world for the majority.

The resource person gives a broad idea about the following.

- Total word population
- Our country's and states population according to 2001 census.
Male, Female - age group wise details
- Literacy & educational status, enrollment and dropout rates
- The mode of distribution of wealth
- The land ownership and mode of production
- The diversity – in natural resources, social life, geographic & - climatic conditions, agricultural practices etc.etc.

Based on the above understanding let us try to know about our panchayat. To

begin with we have to get the following details

1.1 Demographic

- Population
- Literacy
- Religion and cast
- Age group wise details

1.2 Education status

- Literacy
- Enrollment in primary schools
- Drop outs
- The educational levels of people (Metric, Higher, Professional)

1.3 Occupation

- Agriculture
- Artisan
- Labour
- Service

1.4 Self employment/Unemployment

- 1.5 Income generation/Augmentation
- 1.6 Status of women
- 1.7 Land ownership
- 1.8 Poverty alleviation /social security programme
- 1.9 Natural resources
- 1.10 Various govt. offices and non govt. institutions
- 1.11 Prevailing political situation
- 1.12 Habitat distribution/Situation
- 1.13 Infrastructure
- 1.14 Festivals
- 1.15 Hats
- 1.16 Governance
 - Gramasabha
 - Functioning of the panchayat

A couple of words to resource persons

The purpose of this chapter is

- To make the participants to look the world around them or the world where they are living with a purpose.
- To help the participants to have an understanding regarding the immediate surroundings (micro world) in which s/he lives. And also have an awareness regarding the macro world.
- To have an understanding regarding the inter relationships between the micro and the macro world.
- To help the participants to look their surroundings and analyse the economic factors which functions as a part of the life of the society and which influences individual, family and social life.
- To make the participants to understand and analyse various factors such as employment opportunities, nature of employment, how labour is used, the production process (wealth creation process), land ownership, the nature and function of transactions and its operation.
- To make them aware of the social conflicts due to economic and social factors.

- To help the participants to identify and locate the space and role of religion and cast in their society, and to explore how existing (present) understanding and practices leads to gender discrimination and exploitation, the role of the family as a social institution, the evolution of culture and cultural practices and its transformations, the social status of Adivasies, daliths and minorities.
- The role of education and health and work for improving life thus improving the social status.
- To help the participant to have a broader picture of the status of our natural resources
- To help the participants to scan and to have broader estimation of the natural resources of their locality.
- To help them to understand how the natural resources are being used and the pattern of distribution of the resources of their locality.
- To help the participants to realize what is the meaning of governance in a democratic country.
- To help them to explore the scope of gramasabhas and the need to strengthen it.
- To make the participants understand the scope of the local government (panchayat) and exploring the possibilities of creative intervention.
- To help the participants to have an awareness regarding the relationship and the influence of national and global policies in their local dynamism.

Strategies for transaction

- ***Dialogue:***
The resource person introduces the topic by presenting the world where we are living in which the interest of the large majority or their life is not getting any kind of consideration. The resource person with the help of data's can establish the interrelationship of the local situation to that of the nation and the global.
- ***Group discussion:***
The participants will sit in panchyat wise groups and do the analysis. A format

has to be developed for this so as to help the participants to share their experience systematically. This format is basically for the resource persons in the form of discussion points, which will help for guided or structured discussion. Too much open discussion will defeat the very purpose of the training. While discussing both quantitative and qualitative aspects are looked into. No need of giving this format in black and white to the participants. The Resource person during introduction may create a dialogic environment that will help the participants to present their experiences or views systematically.

- **General discussions:**
- **Consolidation:**

After the group discussion each Panchayat group will present the groups understanding and the resource person will help to consolidate the points emerged through the group discussion.

The same methodology as mentioned above

General discussion

2. Understanding BGVS

2.1 How and why we come here

2.2 Have you heard about literacy campaign

2.3 Do you heard any kind of local collectivism/ or any other movement?

2.4 Description of literacy movement.

2.5 BGVS –an informative interaction

2.6 What they want to do through BGVS or what is their expectation

3. Samata

3.1 Issues raised in 1.6

3.2 Employment/ income generation

3.3 Health

3.4 Extra work (over load)

3.5 Marriage/Dowry

3.6 Violence both mental and physical

3.7 Discrimination in education, in food, in health care.

3.8 Oppressive traditions (Customs and folks) which they want to escape.

3.9 Women organization

3.10 What do we mean by gender equity

4. SHG

4.1 We start from 3.1

4.2 Employment/ income generation

4.3 What do we mean by self help?

4.4 Self help group as a joint family (social issues)

4.5 SHG as bank/in place of money lender.

4.6 Various uses of money (conception use and production)

4.7 Micro enterprises-Prospects and problems

4.8 SHG as an organization

5. Panchayat Raj

5.1. 1.11 will be the starting point, the issues raised

5.2 panchayat Raj Systems-Laws importance of grama sabha

5.3 What is a govt.? What is a self govt. - Who runs the panchayat govt.? (Bring the concept of Local self govt. Are our panchayats self govts. Who rules our Panchayat?)

5.4 Are they satisfied with the mode of present governance?

5.5 Role of individual citizens in panchayat raj (his or her place in gramasabha which is the place for feeling democracy)

5.6 Responsibility of panchayat elaboration of 1.6. 29 subject areas transferred to the panchayat.

5.7 Funds- functions and functionaries

"Hello, who is that?"

"Kishen"

"This is Aslam, Can you come to my home tomorrow morning. I thought we can complete the editing of the book".

“Oh Sorry Aslam, Tomorrow I am busy. We have planned an outing. My sister-in-law and her children have come. We have planned a trip to Taj. I have already asked the taxi fellow to come early morning.”

“When you will be back!”

“We hope to be back by 9:30 pm. That is the way we have planned our journey.

In this conversation Kishen has used the word plan several times. Planning is something which we do almost daily.

Often we do it subconsciously. So one need not be afraid of the wider concept of ‘Planning’. The housewife who decided to make iddly or dosa for the next days breakfast has to plan it today itself. She has to soak a definite quantity of rice and urud dal for a couple of hours, grind it to the required fineness, and allow it ferment. She should know how many guests a likely to come, how many iddies are to be made. She has to also decide whether she would serve only chutney or sambar or both. Yes, planning is something we daily do. Of course all planning is not as simple as a trip to Agra or making idly. A plan to double paddy production in villages within, say, three years is a much more complicated one. Planning for an 8% growth rate for a country is stupendously complicated and the Planning Commission and a number of experts Committees have to work on it for months. But, in the ultimate analysis, all plans have the following elements.

- A clear defined objective – qualitative and quantitative
- When to start and when to finish
- The material/ financial and human resources required and how to organize them.
- The possible areas of failure and plans to avert them.

Suppose we want to make plan for Continuing Education in Gram Panchayat area. How do we go about to make the plan

HOW TO PREPARE A LOCAL LEVEL PLAN FOR CE

Planning is an activity we always do knowingly or unknowingly. We plan all our day today activities in our mind, facilitating to do them in a comfortable way. So, first and most important thing is that, we can plan anything according to our requirement and capability. The importance of local level planning has increased in the era of

panchayathiraj and decentralization because it insists the local community to plan various things for governing the locality effectively. The constitution requires every local body to prepare annual plans, five year plan and long term master plans for the economic development of the area.

Even though planning is something known to us, to prepare a good plan, we should know the basic characteristics of planning. What are they?

We should know what we are going to plan. It may be the economic development as a whole, educational activity, health programmes, and the village road networks and so on.

Then we should know the details of the resources we can make use of to implement the plan. It can be financial resources, material resources and human resources too.

We should also know within what period we want to get the output of the plan. It can be one year, five years or more. When the target of activity is big, we have to invest more resources. Likewise, when the gestation period (period for completion of the plan) is less, we have to invest more resources. Once all these parameters are fixed we can start the process of planning. But deciding all these aspects in a systematic way is not a very easy task. It needs lot of homework.

Take for example; we want to prepare a plan for Continuing Education for a Gram Panchayath area. What all information we need for that? How many people we want to cover in the program? What are they actually interested to learn? What is their present level of understanding in various aspects of the subject? Within what period we want them to learn the subject? Who is going to be facilitators or teachers? Is the number of facilitators sufficient? If not, how we are going to make them available? These are the type of questions we have to ask ourselves and find out answers for. As we know very well, finding out answers for all these questions is not very easy because nobody will be having ready made answers for these questions. That means, we will have to make extensive studies to collect the needed data for planning. Quite naturally this will be comprehensive village study. So, our planning process can be like this:

- A comprehensive village study.
- Understanding the actual needs of the learner community.
- Understanding the available resources which can be used for carrying out the plan.

- Fixing the gestation period of the plan.
- Deciding on the methodology of implementation.

Thus, the first and most important task of local planning becomes the village study programme. To make it effective, the study should be conducted by the local community itself.

The village study: We can include as many parameters as we can, in the village study. But, the thrust area should be taken care of. Needs of the learner community will be greatly related to the economic activity of the area. So, we have to learn about the land, water, plants, animals, climate, infrastructure facilities, people and different economic activities etc of the village. Information can be collected in a format designed for the purpose. There are standard formats available for this type of socio-economic surveys. Village level volunteers, who will essentially be the local literacy activists, have to be trained for the purpose. They should know the basics of survey activities.

It is better to have a visual understanding of the village. A map of the village will be useful in this regard. If it is not available, it can be drawn by the activists themselves with the help of the villagers. For this, social mapping techniques can be used. The volunteers can conduct a walk through out the length and breadth of the village to have a better understanding of the geographical conditions of the village. This systematic walk is called a transect walk. There are lots of such Rapid Appraisal techniques which will be practically known to any social worker.

Preparing the report and identifying the learning needs: This is the crucial part of the planning process for CE. All the study activities will be concentrated on this. The volunteers might be getting very clear understanding about the learning needs of the community during their survey activities. Still, to zero in on the topics, better to conduct interactions with the learner community to verify the findings. Including the findings, the study team has to prepare a report on the village study. It will include the compiled data on all aspects of study, but with a bearing on the learning needs of the community.

Vetting the findings in the Gram Sabha: When the draft report of the study is ready for discussion, the Gram Sabha should be convened to discuss the same. The time and schedule of the GS should be according to the convenience of the villagers. For example, in a fishing village the normal timings of other communities may not be

relevant at all. They may be going to the sea as per the fishing time table, may be day or night, always changing. Have a detailed presentation of the study and the findings and encourage them for a discussion. Only with the full agreement of the community, the findings can be used as the basic foundations of the local curriculum we should formulate.

Formulation of Curriculum and content of the course: Once we fix the requirements of the local people related to their economic activities and other day today activities in a process discussed above, it is easy to ascertain the curriculum framework. With this understanding we can prepare the curriculum for that particular area and accordingly, design the course of study and prepare the learning materials. All these activities should be done in a participative manner. The most meaningful curriculum may be the one prepared by an informed learner. At this point, we should take care to make the study materials, suitable for multigraded teaching according to the needs of the community.

Transaction of the curriculum: Transacting the curriculum becomes the end result of all these tasks. So, it has to be planned in such a way so as to get maximum output within the stipulated gestation period. The usual experience is that, the TLC phase is carried out in a campaign mode and the rest of things lag behind. To avoid this, the CE phase of literacy activities should take a different approach. According to the learning needs, the learner communities can be grouped and the study program should essentially take place in their work place itself, wherever possible. They have to be enthused with attractive and novel inputs like technological inputs, latest scientific information on their livelihood activities etc. Study tours to learn the practical applications of technological innovations in related fields must be incorporated with the study program. Thus the CE should become the actual JEEVANSALA program.

Panchayathraj as Local Governments

Panchayathiraj is a very old and familiar term in our country, but it doesn't mean that it is conceived in the proper way at all levels. From the traditional concept of village self government, it has become a very important constitutional award to the nation with the historical 73rd amendment and with all its paraphernalia, it is

positioned as the third tier in the governance system, the National government and the State government being the other two.

In the constitution, it is clearly stated that, the target of Panchayath raj is to establish Self Governance in the rural areas. What do we mean by self governance? It is a system where the people of a particular locality govern their day today affairs on their own. It is conceived as a government just like the governments at other levels, i.e. National and State levels. Do our panchayaths function really as self governments? This is a question to be asked within ourselves. To answer this question, we should know what a government is.

Even in the traditional concept, a government has three different roles- legislation, judiciary and executive functions. That is why, in many states of the country, Nyaya panchayaths has been a social institution from very olden days. There are many examples where the villagers constituted themselves the rules and regulations of day today social life in the locality. Those regulations were socially accepted and those who broke these regulations were punished by the society. Whether these regulations are acceptable to the modern society, is a different question. Most important is that, the society assumed such powers to constitute rules and regulations which they considered right.

Coming to the modern panchayaths, let us examine whether our panchayaths are dealing with all these functional areas ie, legislative, judiciary and executive. In much state level Panchayathiraj Acts, we can see the provision for constituting Nyaya panchayaths, but still and dormant. As a result, the legislative and judicial powers are not conceived and carried out at all. Instead, their functional domain is confined only to development activities. There also, we can see that the concept of self governance is at the minimum. The powers enjoyed by the LSGIs are allotted to them by the state legislatures, as directed by the constitution. If we have a glance at the list of powers given to the LSGIs in each state, we can understand how miserly it is done. To comply with the mandatory constitutional provision, many of the states have just listed some powers under the given topics of the constitution, without providing any facilities to utilize those powers. There are very few exceptions in this regard. What do all these mean? Our LSGIs are not in a position to function as self governments in the given power structure. At the same time, we can identify lot of potentials for transforming our LSGIs to such a status. To make use of these

potentials, of course, there should be consistent actions to educate and empower the citizens of each local body. Literacy activists can play a vital role in this regard as they are appreciating wide social recognition and enjoying a central position in social activities in their locality. Let us examine how this can be done.

Although LSGIs have been given a much more decisive social and administrative status, many of the stakeholders, especially the general public, are not aware of this. In many of the North Indian states, LSG's are still considered as low grade development agencies and they are given bare minimum resources only, because of the compulsions from the National government and their different agencies. Although the constitution has envisaged shaping self governments at least in a long run, different state governments excluding few exceptions, were not ready to comply with the spirit of the constitutional provisions. Thus, a strong movement for empowering the LSGIs is inevitable. This has to be initiated with a proper *study of the existing state level Act and the related systems*. This study should be made tool for a wide campaign, demanding for more powers and status for the LSGIs. Proposals for a reasonable power structure as provided in the constitution can be suggested by the movement, on the base of experiences gained in the state. All these details have to be worked out by a core group of activists at the state level and the continuing activities should focus on panchayath level activities. As a part of the campaign, they can formulate programmes for better gram sabhas, improving transparency of the activities of the panchayath, designing more development programmes so as to increase participation of the local people and so on. In this regard, the most powerful organ which we can make use of, is the Gram Sabhas.

Invigorating Gram Sabhas: In the constitution and in the state Panchayathiraj Acts, Gram Sabha is given a strong status and it is being given mandatory powers and responsibilities. Although the constitution provides for GS meeting at least once in six months, there are states like Kerala and Bihar, where quarterly Gram Sabhas are mandatory. Powers, rights and responsibilities of GS also vary, although there is a general standard laid down by the constitution.

What is Gram Sabha?

Gram Sabha is the assembly of all voters of a village, meeting periodically to discuss the administrative and other matters of the village. For the purpose of the Gram Sabha, the village can be a whole gram panchayath or a part thereof, if the area of

the panchayath is large. So, in many states, Gram Sabha is for the whole panchayath area, but for Kerala it is for a GP ward. In West Bengal, although there is GS at the Gram Panchayath level, they have Gram Sansads at ward level which acts as another level of Gram Sabhas. The reason for this difference is clear. Kerala and West Bengal have the largest panchayaths in the country by virtue of area and population. It is unable to mobilize all the voters in the Gram Panchayaths of these states in one place. (In Kerala, the average voters in a Gram Panchayath may come to more than 15000 and in West Bengal, it may come to 7000) We should know some details about the Gram Sabha as laid down in the state Act.

The jurisdiction of the Gram Sabha

Who is the convener of the Gram Sabha?

The admissible gap in between two Gram Sabhas or how many Gram Sabhas should be convened in a year?

How the voters should be informed about the meeting.

Quorum of the GS.

Powers and responsibilities of the GS.

The president of the GS.

The possible transactions in the GS.

Duration of the GS.

The mode of presentations and discussions in the GS.

The role of the Sarpanch and the officials.

Follow up of the transactions of the Gram Sabha.

Assessment of the existing system: After understanding the Gram Sabha as designed in the law, we should make an assessment of the same. Is the present system, satisfactory? If not, what all changes do we want to incorporate with the conduct of the GS? It is true that even without any changes in the existing rules and regulations; we can do many things to empower the GS. To do this, we have to know how the Gram Sabhas are carried out in the locality in actual practice. There are various models for active Gram Sabhas available in different parts of the country. We can incorporate one or more aspects of such Gram Sabhas as per our requirement. Let us discuss few points which will be helpful to empower Gram Sabhas.

The role of Gram Sabha: The role of the Gram Sabha can be visualized according to our vision about panchayathraj. It can be

A forum for reporting the activities of the Gram Panchayath.

A medium for improving the participation of the citizens.

A body for organizing local level statistics, having a bearing with local development.

A forum for discussing and deciding all aspects of the local governance, including selection of beneficiaries for different schemes, in a democratic way.

An agency for reviewing the activities of the GP.

A medium for enhancing transparency and accountability of local governments.

An assembly to audit the day today activities and policy approaches of the local governments.

An organ for enacting rules and regulations as envisaged by the village community.

An arena for settling the disputes of common interest among the villagers.

Whatever role we fix, we can redesign the Gram Sabha accordingly. The constitution has put a basic framework for the functioning of the Gram Sabhas and there is no bar in enhancing the powers and responsibilities of it, without negating the constitutional provisions, if the local community wishes so.

Mobilizing the Gram Sabha members: If we go through the experiences of conducting the GS in different states, we can understand that the total picture is not very illuminant. Participation is meager; usually stage-managed by the influential sections; transactions not transparent, and so on. Why people are not attending the Gram Sabhas? In many cases, they may not be informed properly; the process may not be entusing and in many cases, the organizers don't like higher participation.

So, prior to the Gram Sabha, there should be very effective propaganda. Even though it is the duty of the panchayath authorities to inform the public, the literacy activists also take responsibility for communication and propaganda. The net result of the propaganda should be participation of at least one voter from each family for the full duration of the sabha.

In North Indian situation, propaganda is not a difficult task, for the residential area of the village may be a small place. According to the locality, we can rely on different methods for propaganda, including the following:

House to house campaign, loudspeaker announcements, pestering, communication through Neighborhood groups, if available, street processions, kalajathas, and

coverage in the local cable networks. All the propaganda should focus on introducing the coming Gram Sabha, something important, so that everybody should feel pressing to attend it. The date and time of the Gram Sabha should be convenient to the participant.

Structuring the Gram Sabha: The Gram Sabha usually takes place as an anarchic or disintegrated assembly where people assemble and leave according to their convenience. Many of them simply register their attendance and leave after few minutes. Without changing this attitude, Gram Sabha is not going to succeed. Everybody should feel it as very serious. The agenda of the GS has to be designed in such a way, to attract the attention of the public and it should be known to the people earlier. For example, every Gram Sabha can be a special Gram Sabha for something- may be for Planning, Social Audit, Beneficiary selection, Discussion on details of Plan implementation etc. Everything should be time bound, nothing less and nothing more. Unwanted speeches should be avoided and maximum time should be given for discussion.

If the participation is more, making it difficult to handle smoothly, we can go for group discussion, which can be designed very effectively on the basis of subjects for discussion. For example, group of farmers, group of cattle growers and so on. If group discussion is planned, quite naturally, there has to be a plenary assembly to report on the discussion took place in different groups.

The most important thing is that, every Gram Sabha should culminate in a positive note, so as to enthuse the people. Organizing cultural programmes as a part of the Gram Sabha can be thought of.

Gram Sabhas in Kerala is a good model for structuring.

Participation in the Gram Sabhas: The concept of participation in the Gram Sabha should be very clear for the organizers. Participation is not simply attending the sabha. The best level of participation is participation in the decision making process. To achieve this goal, discussions on each agenda item should take place in such a way, conducive to encourage discussion. The literacy activists can act as animators for this, so that they can arrange some preparatory discussions on gram sabha agendas at a lower level. This need not be a continuous process, but in the initial phases, it will be helpful.

Adopting different roles: Earlier, we had suggested few areas of activities, which the gram sabhas can perform. Social audit is one such area, much relevant to local governance. Take for example, the case of **Jan Sunvais**, conducted by Mazdur Kisan Sakthi Sangatan of Rajasthan. It is a type of public hearing, organized after tiresome homework. All details of public works carried out in a locality were collected by the activists of MKSS from the official documents and presented in a public meeting, attended by the concerned officials, laborers and panchayath officials. Data on the records were found absolutely manipulated and the corrupted panchayaths officials and functionaries were compelled to repay lakhs of rupees to the panchayaths. Jan sunvais could evoke lot of attention through out the country as it became instrumental in digging out evidences on the corrupted way of implementation of rural development projects by Gram Panchayaths in Rajasthan. It paved the path for the National enactment on Right to Information.

As we discussed earlier, if the LSGIs should become local self governments in real terms, they should be able to handle all the functions of a government. Enactment of local laws is one such area. There are many examples in rural India which create precedence for the power and scope for local enactment. The traditional community panchayaths has been practicing this for centuries. In positive terms, our local self governments can try out many such possibilities of formulating local laws and regulations without negating the National and State level enactments. The spirit is that, if community as a whole resolves that something is to be done in a particular way, it creates the very basis of law making. In actual practices, many panchayaths are doing this, without knowing that they are making a new law. Many of our traditional customs can be attributed as regulations stipulated by the local community. Like that, Nyaya Panchayaths can be revived to ensure speedy and effective justice on local issues. This also is not new to our country, but should be modulated to the present requirement.

The crux of the whole argument is that, Gram Sabha has a vital role in deciding what type of a Panchayathiraj we need. It can be a medium of empowerment of the local community, if used with proper vision and control. Again, the literacy should be able to conceive the Gram Sabhas in such a way and they have to play a key role in transacting these ideas in the rural community. Development literacy is an important

aspect of literacy activity and panchayathiraj creates ample scope for it in the present situation.

6. CE- Life Long Education

6.1 Begin from the discussion as per point raised 1.2

6.2 Levels of education

- 6.3 Many are illiterate why? Have the adults stop learning? The concept of life long learning beyond adulthood.
- 6.4 Education and learning. Education is considered as formal structure. Learning must be continuous. Differences between Formal education and life long education. The importance of books –codified knowledge-The importance of language. Experiential learning and codified learning
- 6.5 Importance of literacy. Different levels of literacy
- 6.6 How literacy can enhance life long education.
- 6.7 Various forms of literacy. or different levels of literacy.
- 6.8 Institutionalizing literacy- literacy to life long education. CLEC and PLEC
- 6.9 Other activities in CLEC

- ***Moping up of literacy or Backlog of Literacy programme:***

Our organisation is born for and through literacy or Saksharta Campaign. We actually helped the trodden down and marginalised people to have the basic idea of literacy mainly how to write and read in their own mother tongue. We tried to make them understand the relevance of collectivism. We told them words are windows for looking at the world. What we actually did was a Herculean task in which the government system with full money and organisation failed. Why we succeeded in this effort? Because we threw away the individual mode- which was the mode of the Government Department – into a social mode, through campaigns. We called the newly literate people as neo-literates. We assumed that when the illiterate know the process of learning they will continue learning on their own. It is evident that our assumption was not right. Some more help is needed for that community to continue their learning process for making learning a meaningful one. The post literacy activities are also not very satisfactory. And during the literacy campaign we couldn't give much attention to bring back the drop-outs because of various reasons, due to the very nature of the campaign itself. We couldn't bring into certain sections of the community to the campaigns at all. Hence there is a space and need for well planned conscious involvement regarding making good the backlog of literacy programme. Some specific activities are as under:-

- **Health:**

All data and statistics reveal that our country is top of lists for many of the diseases which is due to unhygienic health practices and poverty.

Superstitions also play a crucial role for the death of children. Lack of drinking water, food, sanitation facilities etc is the real causes. The social/economic system is not so much interested in the preventive aspects of diseases. All this results in the increase of sufferings of the poor community. In this context intervening in the health activities are very relevant. Our intention is not promoting curative remedies, though there is certain relevance in it, but preventive. We want to help the people regarding their right for good health. Right to live a constitutional obligation. Through hygienic health practices and through compelling the government system for providing the essentials for healthy hygienic conditions good results are expected. Some activities are listed below: -

- **Awareness programme or Programmes for building Social, Scientific and secular Outlook:**

Our country is very vast. It is divergent in all aspects. It is divided into different climatic zones. When it is very hot in North, it is rainy season in South. When it is winter in North East, in the South West the climate is just opposite. Within a state itself the climate varies. The distribution of natural resources is also uneven. These things have direct impact over the life and way of life of the people. Apart from these natural diversities, man made diversities are also there. Religion, caste, community are some of these. After independence the nation planned various programme and schemes for alleviating poverty, eradicating, illiteracy, enhancing productivity, developing infrastructure and providing education to all up to elementary level. We achieved a lot and had a lot of progress but the progress is not reflecting the majority of the Indian rural mass. Because of the progress food grains are dumped in the warehouses, godowns but at the same time we can hear the news of starvation deaths near the warehouse. More than 3 crores of children are out of the main stream of school education. 37% of the Indian population is illiterate, High rate of mortality exists. Drinking Water is a long dream for a larger section of

people. De-forestation and unscientific exploration of natural resources are common phenomena. What ever schemes and programmes planned and implemented are not reaching to the actual beneficiary.

What is the reason for all kinds of this sorry affair? The main reason is that people are not aware of their rights. Superstitions, old customs and practices are the driving force of the majority of the exploited masses. Science and Technology is used by many, but for propagating anti-science. In this context the only way for the renaissance is to educate the masses and make aware of the people regarding the world around. Some of the activities are listed below: -

- ***Information centre***

Our CEC play a crucial role by providing all kinds of information's to the society. It can also functions as an information service center, which could be helpful to the community to know about various schemes and facilities and laws to reach the authority for claiming their rights. If there is a "people's wall", people can express their emotions through writing on it. Some activities are given below.

- ***Local governance watch***

After the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment, the Panchayat Raj Institutions have got more power. Many schemes are implemented through the PRI's. PRI's are nodal centre for the distribution of social service/ security activities. In many places reports are coming about the mishandling of these powers. This has to be looked into. A CEC or PCEC can work as a local governance watch. Hence a PECE can support the pro people activities and mobilise masses against anti people activities and policies of PRIs. Some activities are given below: -

- ***Helping for micro planning***

(a) Each centre has to develop their own perspective plan and yearly plan. The planning has to be done by considering the needs of the community. Proper consultation has to be done with different sections of the community, which could be consolidated at the CEC level and then at the PCEC level. The plan prepared is to be vetted by the concerned experts at district/state level. By considering the expert opinion if any re-modification

is needed it must be done at PCEC level and CEC level. The so approved plan should be then discussed with the community in detail and implemented with the help of the community. Ensuring the participation of the local community in the planning and implementation is essential.

(b) An important part of micro planning is to include a mechanism to sustain Prerak/Prerika economically, by a suitable activity that does not interfere with or contradict the CE activities

- ***Establishing library***

A physical centre is needed at PCEC level. There must be enough space for arranging discussion forum, for conducting meetings and for arranging training programmes. A library is an inevitable component of a PCEC. Sports and physical exercises have their own relevance. It has also included as included as an essential activity of PCEC activities. If possible, CEC can also have this kind of infrastructure thus more people can be involved in various kinds of activities of their choice.

7. Organization

7.1 Necessity of an organization

The issues that we want to address are related to the life of people. And our mode of operation is in a collective way. For addressing peoples issues by ensuring peoples participation there must be an organization. The organized way of doing things will ensure the effectiveness of any kind of programmes. The organization also ensures emergence of leadership and sharing of responsibilities. If the organization is conceived in a democratic way it will promote collectivism in both thought and action.

7.2 Need and significance of an organization

We are envisaging broad and comprehensive programme which involves a verity of activities and the entire citizenry. It involves, besides mopping up literacy, post literacy programmes to library, vocational training, welfare of children etc a broad citizen's education programme to build a democratic and **egalitarian** Society. This means very large number of specific activities, their integration into a developmental whole and participation of all the citizens. Obviously, we would require a number of organizational structures. The traditionally existing structures are the habitat, the villages, the gram panchayat, the block and district panchayats, the states and National governments. Here we are concerned with only up to the district level. A typical village will have two or more habitats with and a gram panchayat may consist of one, two or more villages. The number of panchayats within a block or district can vary considerably 10 to 20 per block and 50-250 per district. The village has its

'Gram Sabha' then we have elected bodies at GP, Block and District level.

Generally, the elected members are not technical or professional people. We have got, also a host of government employees, from village to district level. These persons are however, responsible only to their departmental heads and not to the elected panchayat, definitely not to the Gram Sabha.

We envisage a number supporting structures, to support the democratically elected structures and also to function as a bridge between them and the officialdom. These are voluntary structures, either registered or unregistered. Under the Panchayati Raj System the smallest unit is the Gram Sabha. It is the central element of direct democracy. All voters in the villages are its members. However for intimate and in-depth discussions a gram sabha of one hundred or

several hundred members is too large. The habitat is a smaller and more uniform unit. For implementation purpose the habitat could be the basic unit. However for in-depth discussions and studies, even on habitat may prove to be too large. We can conceive of a compact unit of 20-30 households and designate it as a Neighbour Hood Group or NHG. A habitat may have one, two or more NHGs. These NHG can form the basic units of a Panchayat Vikas Samiti consisting of two representatives – one women and one man – from each NHG, the panches and sarpanches and the government officials in the Panchayat. This Panchayat Vikas Samiti can be consider as an extended informal panchayats and can have an executive committee of its own. The PVS shall help the elected panchayats to integrate all the governmental developmental schemes, to run literacy and Continuing Education Centers, to organize Teachers Training, enrollment campaign, etc under SSA to implement total sanitation and watershed development programmes, to carry out health programmes, to run employment guaranty schemes, for ensuring the access of the social security schemes to whom it is meant for, to support SHG'S, Conduct vocational trainings etc. The Technical Support Group developed through these Training Programmes will work through and under the Panchayat Vikas Samiti.

There are limitations to the capabilities available within a gram panchayat. In order to provide them with technical professional support, in programme planning and implementation, in training etc, at Block and District level. We shall strive to develop Block and District Level resource pools.

7.3

7.4 The organization ladder from tola to Panchayat level. One male and one female from each tola/ habitat-Ward samity- Panchayat samity

7.5 How to establish

- Through direct activities
- Indirect activities

7.6 Do's and don'ts of any organization

What will be the organizational Structure?

The organizational structure must ensure the participation of all members of the community irrespective of class, cast, and gender. For ensuring the participation of

all the citizens we have to structure the organization from their neighbourhood. The mode of habitat varies from states to states and some times with in the states itself. The habitat is known in different names such as Tola, Nagla, Mohalla, Phalliyan etc.etc.Let us visualize the following organizational ladder for ensuring the democratic functioning.

○ ***Tola level***

All citizens of the tola will be members of the tola committee. The tola will be the basic unit of the organizational ladder. All members of the tola committee will have to take some kind of responsibilities for the organization building and its effective functioning. The members of the tola will elect two members one male and one female (This is non –negotiable) as their organizational coordinators. The tola level sitting will also elect conveners for various programmes like samata, balmanch, kishormanch, yuvamanch, health and sanitation, drinking water, CE, Education etc.etc.

○ ***Village level***

All citizens of the village who are part of gramasabha will be members of the village level form. They will elect one female and one male as their coordinators. And also elect village level programme coordinators for different activities like samata, balmanch, kishore manch, health and sanitation, drinking water, education, art and literature children of preschool age group. Etc.etc.

(while electing programme coordinators ensure atleast 50% of them are women and also ensure the representation of dalith, adivasis and minorities and other marginalized groups in other words - the cross section of the social strata)

For ensuring the effective functioning of the village level form there will be an executive committee comprising of the following members.

- The village coordinators
- The programme conveners of the village level
- The coordinators of the tolas
- The head of institutes with in the village like common schools, hospitals, anganvadi, social centre, bank, animal husbandry, agriculture etc.etc.
- The elected representatives of the panchayat- who represents the village.

Subcommittees

In order to ensure participation and for better functioning it is advisable to form subcommittees. Egs. Samata, balamanch, SHG activities, Art and literature and culture, health and sanitation, drinking water, education, CE, pre school children etc. etc. The programme coordinators at all tola level subcommittee will be members of the village level subcommittees.

○ ***Panchayat level***

Panchayat level will be the functioning unit because it is the smallest political unit in the panchayat Raj system. We have to ensure the democratic way of functioning in both taking policy decisions and its implementation. In the planning and policy making process we have to ensure the presence of each habitat. Why can't we think of the following structure for it?

Panchayat Vikas Samiti

IT will be the peoples plat form for planning developmental activities. Conceiving programmes , evaluating various schemes and peogrammes and projects, implementation, monitoring and so on.

The coordinators, the programme coordinators of the village level, the institutional heads of various institutes with in the panchayat, elected representatives will be its members. The panchayat vikas samiti will have a minimum representation of 75 and the maximum 125 depending up on the number of habitat.

Panchayat vikas samiti Executive Committee

The role of the panchayat Vikas samiti executive committee is most crucial because it will be the actual implementation body which is answerable to the panchayat Vikas samiti. Before deciding the nature and individuals of the EC we have to take into consideration of the role of panchayat vikas samiti and its relationship with the elected panchayat body. In some places the panchayat parliament may function as a supplementary and complementary role while in some other places in some aspect the supplementary and complementary role will function and in many aspects the panchayat vikas samiti have to do the function of institutional critic and also have to propose alternative plans. In some other panchayats the role will be fully to that of institutional critic and to fight for the implementation of the programmes for the majority. (Hence more discussions

are needed before proposing the EC of the panchayat parliament or panchayat development samithy.)

What are the supporting structures envisaged

The panchayat development samithy is addressing life related issues they have to function organizationally and technically. Supporting structures are needed for proper up gradation and continuity. Two kinds of supporting structures are essential

1. Organizational support
2. Technical support

Developing confidence, organizational capability and technical capability is the major challenges of this new approach. It can be possible only through conscious intervention. This intervention must enable to realize and upgrade the present understanding of the core groups with in the panchayat. We can examine the scope of the following supporting structures.

1. Cluster group

This is the immediate larger collective. All core group members of the panchayat will be its members. The cluster group may elect two members one female and one male as their coordinators.

Block supporting center

The block supporting center must provide all technical support to the cluster or panchayats according to the demand from the cluster or panchayats according to the need and demand from the cluster or from the panchayats. The block supporting center will be the technical unit. The coordinators of the clusters and the block panchayat office bearers will be its members. It will do the coordination role and this center will have different technical groups corresponding to the subcommittees with in the panchayat. And also some other technical groups like industries etc which have no subcommittee at the panchayat level. The technical group comprises all expertise available who have a positive attitude towards these kinds of activities ,this include officials who are working as a part of the govt. system and working as a part of scientific and research institutions etc.

District level supporting group

There will be a district level supporting structure comprising BGVS district level leadership and district level experts of various disciplines who will function as faculty members for training programme

State level supporting group

BGVS state leadership will function as a state level supporting group which will ensure the organizational mechanism.

What are the functions of different structures?

Tola

The tola level organizational structure is the basic structure which ensures the participation of each and every individual.

- Ensures the enrollment of children in schools and their retention
- Developing student supporting structure.
- Ensures children's enrollment in the anganwadies.

Village

- To ensure the participation of all citizens
- Listing needs and aspirations or desires
- Prioritizing the need
- Planning logistics and implementing certain social activities like
 - Ensuring a hygienic environment
 - Ensuring the cleanliness of drinking water sources
 - Ensuring faecal matters not mixing with drinking water sources
 - Ensuring all children going to school
 - Ensuring the accessibility of preschool centers
 - Ensuring availability of midday meal with quality
 - Sensitizing the community regarding education, health, anganwadies, social security schemes.....
 - Sensitizing the community regarding new tendencies in agriculture.
 - Arranging debating forms like charchamandals regarding various issues
 - Monitoring the activities of village level as well as tola level
 - Arranging cultural get together.

Panchayat level

7.7 The organization ladder from tola to Panchayat level. One male and one female from each tola/ habitat-Ward samity- Panchayat samity

7.8 How to establish

- Through direct activities
- Indirect activities

7.9 Do's and don'ts of any organization

While building a peoples organization we have to keep in mind the following aspects and the way of addressing those aspects

- Management strategy
- Mobilizing various sections
- Conducting a meeting
- Preparation of Agenda
- Preparing and sending letter
- How to behave in situation where contradiction and conflicts occurs
- How to write minutes
- Mode of resource mobilization
- How to prepare accounts
- What are the records needed writing accounts
- How to keep vouchers
- How to write accounts with the support of vouchers
- Importance of transparency
- How to write letters

The purpose of this chapter

- To make the participants to understand the relevance of an organization.
- To help the participants to have minimum understanding regarding an organization and its organizational strategies and management strategies.
- To help them to develop confidence by practicing various organizational strategies as a part of training.
- To make them understand the need of proper accounting and the need of transparency in organizational matters specifically in finance.
- To make them understand for doing community work the need of mobilizing resources from the community itself.

- To make them to understand various ways of mobilizing resources specially by propagating scientific information & knowledge through book sales and janvachen. Hence making books as a main source of resource mobilization.

8. EGS

8.1 Based on 1.4 and 1.8

8.2 What is NREGS?-The text book

8.3 Case studies

8.4 How to intervene? Possible problems and obstacles.

8.5 Awareness and educative programmes (methodology to evolve the organization)

8.6 Help the Panchayat to make work code (shelf of projects)

9. Health

9.1 Health status for awareness.

- Sanitation
- Epidemics
- Drinking water
- Mosquitoes and other -----

9.2 Actual available health facilities- advocacies and in advocacies.

9.3 What are the changes that we want to make in these aspects

9.4 Health and poverty.(Who is being sick and what kind of sickness.

9.5 What can we do?

9.6 What is NRHM

10. Midday meal

10.1 Start from 1.8

10.2 Why midday meal is important?

10.3 Case studies

10.4 How to intervene? Possible problems and obstacles.

10.5 Awareness and educative programmes (methodology to evolve the organization)

11. ICDS

11.1 What is ICS?

11.2 Status of ICDS

11.3 Case studies

11.4 How it is running

11.5 Possible community involvement (involvement of the catchments area community)

IX Possible activities for activating people

1. Balmanch
2. Kisan Manch
3. Yuvamanch
- 4 Samata Vigyan uthsav
5. Peoples media -Wall news papers etc.
6. Local History
- 7 Panchayat ko janem
8. Charchamandal
9. Information Centre
10. Library
11. Kishori Manch

From programme to projects

Annexure

INDIA'S ECONOMY – WHO BENEFITS?

(A write-up for the convergence trainings)

The national media has lately been agog with the fact that India's economy is now growing at about 9%, and is only second best in the World after China that is growing at about 11%. Sounds great! But ask a rural person, away from the national media glare, whether her life is getting better, and the answer is likely to be – no. Why is that so?

(During the training, let each Panchayat team write down the economic profile of its Panchayat – its population, agricultural produce, cottage industry, dairy and other animal products, employment, exports from the Panchayat, unemployment and so on)

A 9% economic growth rate is simply quite impressive, by all standards. But what does it mean in relation to the lives of the people. That is what we will explore in this brief note.

First, what does rate of economic growth mean? There are various indicators that give us an over-all idea of a country's economy. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP, or *sakal deyak*) is one of the commonly used indicators. GDP implies the total products produced in a country over a year; which gives a good idea of the wealth of the country. Its annual rate of increase tells us how this wealth is growing. The 9% increase refers to increase of GDP in India during the first three months of 2006 (it is also provisionally calculated for every 3 months).

(The participants, with help from the resource persons, may make an estimate of the GDP of their Panchayat, and discuss whether it has been growing in the past few years or not)

For many years after independence, the rate of growth of India's economy was around 3 to 3.5 per cent; compared to that, a 9% growth rate indicates progress and is making people forecast that India will be an economic superpower in 10 to 15 years if such a growth rate is sustained, perhaps at around 10%. Qualitatively, one can discern the presence of increased wealth in cities and amongst the middle class – whether it is in the increase of cars, better housing, urban infrastructure and

so on. But why isn't it so in the rural areas? There, we find news about farmer suicides, forced displacement, and even starvation deaths.

India's Planning Commission, that monitors the economic health of the country, is in the midst of finalizing the 11th five-year plan of the country. For that purpose, it has recently brought out the details and analysis of the 10th plan, which will end in March 2007. The total wealth of the country or the GDP is mainly composed of three elements – Agriculture, Industrial Production and Services. Services are the general term in which all Banks, Insurance, Software companies, police, army, government, teachers, medical professionals and so on are grouped together. For the tenth plan, the planning commission has given us the following tentative growth figures for the three sectors:

Agriculture	1.8%
Industry	8.0%
Services	8.9%

A very revealing feature of this statistic is that that fastest growing sector in India is neither industry nor agriculture, but services! In a sense that says all about the impact on people. To understand that better, consider the amount of labour in these sectors:

Agriculture	about 38 crores
Industry and Services	about 2 crores

Isn't that staggering? The increase in wealth is the least where maximum labour resides, and is the highest where the labour is the least. It is therefore no wonder that the rural areas, totally dependent on agriculture with a majority of labour and population, continue to languish economically, where as the urban areas, where productive services (particularly centered around Information and Computing Technologies) are based, are shining. Yes, India does seem to be Shining for a small minority, but is forcing suicides due to economic bankruptcy in large rural tracts.

This is the economic reality of India today.

At the macro level therefore, agriculture and farm based production needs to be supported and strengthened immediately. A lot of rural distress is because of the withdrawal of support to agriculture, like soft loans, subsidy to seeds, fertilizer and pesticides, and proper support price for the produce. Farmers are being forced into 35% to 60% private loans from loan sharks, and with falling prices for their produce,

they are caught in a spiral of debt, from which many are exiting by taking their own lives. For the landless, it means lesser avenues for labour, increased migration and other distresses, which are badly compounded by natural disasters like floods, droughts, earthquakes, cyclones and tsunamis; and developmental policies of the government that takes away their dwellings.

Subsistence Economy: We must constantly remind ourselves that a very large population of India may be close to half, which is 50 crores, survives and subsists not because it can procure all its basic needs from the market, but because they are available to it as free common property resource: like water, domestic energy, fodder, building materials and small tracts of lands. This is of course true for the adivasis, but equally so for large non-advansi populations too. We can call it subsistence economy. As more and more of such natural resources are taken away by the government for developmental projects, or given to corporates, or for setting up Special Economic Zones (SEZ) now, people subsisting from such resources are mercilessly deprived from their life sources, with no possible alternatives. That is why so many mass movements have come up in recent years from such deprived people.

International Linkages: What is happening in our village today does not flow from national policies alone, but perhaps more so from international trade and services related agreements. These agreements allow more and more of foreign products, capital and services to enter other countries, including India. In many countries, for complex reasons, like China, the products are made with less costs, and are therefore available in the market at lesser rates than locally produced products. Consequently, when they are freely available – like umbrellas, pens, kitchen products, bulbs and tubes, clothing and so on, at cheaper rates, why would anyone buy the local products? Same is true for agricultural products, whereby wheat, rice, maize or soya from the US may be cheaper (because of huge subsidies the farmers get there) than locally produced varieties. If and when such farm products enter our market, the deathly impact on our agricultural products will mean further rural deprivation. It becomes therefore imperative for us to understand and oppose those international agreements that put large deprived populations of our country into further stress.

Finally about agriculture, we can not overlook the question of land holdings. Since big productive land is in the hands of a minority in the country, even if there are improvements in agricultural productivity, the benefits will flow to those who have substantial land. The marginal farmer and the landless will continue to suffer. Such skewed land holding is also the basis of the oppressive feudal social structure that has bound large rural populations to merciless machinations of the landlord, who, under the garb of the 'benefactor' uses caste, gender and money-lending to exploit the already marginalized. We can not therefore give up the struggle for land redistribution, as Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala and West Bengal have already implemented.

Our Actions must therefore be of the *sangharsh* and *nirman* type. In the *nirman* category, our work will involve helping more and more of the poor to benefit from relevant government schemes, in particular the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. We would also need to explore relevant income generating programs that could be launched in a particular gram Panchayat, particularly involving the women SHG's. Livelihood protection and increased wages must be our priority.

In the *sangharsh* category, we need to first understand the impact of national and international policy on our gram panchayats, and use that understanding to convince, from the local Panchayat members to MLA's, MP's and media, about the kind of policies that will be beneficial the rural population. Equally we must become vigilant and vocal against policies which deprive the masses from economic sustenance in favour of huge profits for a few.

Vinod Raina

“Charcha Mandal” (Discussion Forum)

Introduction

In the Indian constitution, we have declared India as a Sovereign, Secular, Socialist, Democratic, Republic. All these years we have been working in a democratic framework too. But still, the participation of the people in identifying their problems and in planning the remedial measures of those problems has been very meager. All the problems were identified by a group of ‘experts’, sitting in the capital cities and the ‘solutions’ were also prescribed by them. Hence even in the implementation process the people had no role at all.

Since the sovereignty rests with the people of this country the development should come from below. In other words the actual problems of a local area must be identified by the people of that locality and the suggestions should come from them as to how the priority should be accorded in respect of every problem. This voice of the people should be given the paramount position in a democracy. For making democracy meaningful, it is absolutely essential to provide stages where people can express their voices on anything and everything pertaining to their day today life.

Charcha Mandal (Discussion Forum) is envisaged as such a platform where all the people in a locality can assemble, say, once in six months or so and express their viewpoints on issues in relation to their daily life. Since they are not accustomed to such a practice the Charcha Mandal should be planned and conducted in such a way that maximum number of people of that locality should assemble there and participate in the discussion. In fact this will be a very effective peoples education.

How to organise a Charcha Mandal?

The successful organisation and conduct of a Charcha Mandal can be done in various steps. They are given below.

Step 1

A core group consisting of four to six persons of the locality, has to be formed first. The criterion for selection of the members to the core group is very important. Those persons who are always anxious to become leaders or who are crazy for

publicity shall not be included in the group. The first criterion for a member in the core group must be his/her commitment to society. As far as possible, equal number of men and women should be included in the group. Generally they should have credibility and recognition in society. In short, this core group is to act as a spirited team to conduct the Mandal effectively.

Step 2

The core group is to conduct a thorough discussion to list out all the local problems affecting the day-to-day life of the common people. They should finalise the priority of the problems on which effective discussion is to be conducted in the Mandal. According to the availability of time for discussion in the Mandal the number of problems may have to be limited.

Step 3

All the available details in respect of the problems, intended for discussion in the Mandal may be collected by the core group from different sources. With the available details, every problem should be understood by the members of the core group very clearly and while the discussions are going on in the Mandal, they should be able to provide any required information/data to enable the people to raise relevant and meaningful opinions. If some required details are not available the fact of the non-availability may have to be frankly told. Anyway the collected details may be properly documented and kept.

Step 4

Decide a suitable day, time and venue for conducting the Charcha Mandal. This is a very important decision. The main objective of this whole effort is to ensure the participation of the maximum number of people. Hence in taking the above decision the convenience of the expected participants must be given top priority. The easy accessibility of the venue, the suitability of the day and the availability of the sufficient time must be ensured. If the proposed day collides with the day of a local festival it will adversely affect the participation of the people. Hence the above decision must be taken very cautiously.

Step 5

Wide publicity must be given among the local people about the conduct of such a Charcha Mandal. The correct date, time and venue must be effectively communicated. In the main corners of the village, big boards can be established or banners exhibited. A notice must be prepared, highlighting the necessity of people's participation in such Charcha Mandals for identifying and solving the problems affecting their lives. For attracting their attention, some problems also can be cited as examples in the notice. The people may be requested to come and participated in the Mandal with more problems and their details. Even in the preparation of such a notice utmost care should be taken to use polite language in attractive manner so that people may be persuaded to attend the Mandal.

If necessary door to door campaign may be conducted to distribute the notices and invite the people. Such wide - spread communication may be given to the local people sufficiently early so that they may be mentally prepared to take part in the Mandal.

Step 6

The core group may visit the proposed venue of the Mandal in advance and a suitable plan may be chalked out to conduct the Charcha Mandal in a most effective and useful manner. The most important points to be remembered are:

- i. The people who participate in the Mandal should feel their participation or rather their presence is suitably recognised.
- ii. Each participant - Man or woman, should feel that he/she has been accorded equal treatments by the organisers.
- iii. All the participants should get sufficient opportunity to express their opinions or ideas.
- iv. Every idea or opinion expressed in the Charcha Mandal should be recorded seriously. Keeping in mind the above points the venue should be made ready.

Steps 7

An agenda for the Mandal shall be chalked out in such a way that the time set apart for the discussion shall be fully and fruitfully utilised. Emphasis must be given

to conduct the Mandal exactly as per the time schedule given in the notice. Agenda can be published early so that the participants may get a pre-thought on it.

Stage 8

The core group members along with some volunteers shall reach the venue in advance on the day of the actual holding of discussion. According to the plan finalised earlier, everything should be properly arranged. The seating arrangement may be made in such a way that all the participants may be able to communicate in face-to-face position.

The proceedings of the discussion may be regulated and guided by a team of two or three members from the core group or some people with caliber and recognition. A general presentation may be made in 20 to 25 minutes giving the aims and objectives of conducting such a Charcha Mandal and inviting all the participants to take part in the ensuing discussions actively and sincerely. Such a polite but emphatic presentation may encourage the people to open their mind and to put forward problems after problems that affect the day-to-day life of them.

All the statements and opinions presented by various people may be carefully recorded. Maximum number of people may be sufficiently encouraged to express their ideas and to take part in the deliberations actively. Wherever it is necessary to have more details in respect of any particular issue for conducting a meaningful and creative discussion, it shall be the duty of the panel regulating the forum, to provide those facts. Anyway care should be taken to provide maximum available time for the participants to respond.

At the end of the discussions one of the members of the panel who recorded the discussion may give the highlights of the deliberations and sum up the important suggestions and opinions expressed by the participants. The details of the follow up activities may also be presented before the audience.

A successfully conducted Charcha Mandal may well convey the message to the participants that in a meaningful democracy the people have got a vital role to play and that they have not only the right but also the duties and responsibilities. Thus Charcha Mandal is one of the effective tools for bringing in 'development from below'.

CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMMES AND TRAINING

Why CE?

Is education ever complete for anyone? The obvious answer is no. Even if one does not want to do anything more than what he/she is doing at present, life itself forces him/her to know more and do more. How? Ageing itself forces him/her to learn more about illness and health and medical curves/ preventions; the ever changing needs of his/her children and family also force him/her to know about their problems and solutions; and all the time the ever developing events and changes in his/her tola/village/district/state – like calamities, elections, government projects – force him/her to know about these and respond to these. Living itself requires endless need to know more.

This is so for someone who does not want to change. Then what about someone whose present condition of life is one of poverty, bad health, economic stagnation and uncertain future? He/she wants to change many, many things in his/her life. For this purpose he/she needs to know and learn much, much more about how to improve his/her living condition. This process of knowing more – knowing about how to improve life – is nothing but Continuing Education (CE). CE is for improving life conditions.

CE INDIVIDUALLY OR COLLECTIVELY?

Since every person's life is unique, should he/she pursue CE individually or collectively? It is true that every person must find his/her way out of unsatisfactory living conditions. This cannot be denied. But, in practice it is found that most often individual improvement needs collective action, For example, stagnant waste water outside my own house will breed disease producing insects and I, and others, will suffer. But i and others can avoid such diseases only by a collective action – a common waste disposal drainage system for the entire tola/village. This applies to most human problems. Therefore CE recognises that while life improvement is for an individual, the means is mostly collective.

SO WHAT SHOULD CE PROGRAMMES DO?

It must be always kept in mind that every tola/village is unique. Therefore the desirable CE activities and Programmes should be decided while keeping the specific situation of every tola/village in mind. This is a must.

All the same, based on actual experiences, CE activities can be grouped – for the sake of understanding – in two categories viz.

Core Activities: These are activities which will be relevant for every tola/village. Moreover, these activities are such that their benefits will reach maximum resident of the tola/village.

Peripheral Activities: These are activities to be selected for specific tolas/individuals for specific advantage. These will be different for every individual/ tola/village. For clearer understanding illustrations of these two categories are given below:-

1. **Bal melas, Joy Of Learning festivals**

- a. Awareness building regarding the relevance and importance of education.
- b. Providing an exposure of collective learning practices.
- c. Promotion of creative learning among children.
- d. Developing a secular space for children's activities.
- e. Using as an entry point for the intervention of formal school system and utilizing the scope of introducing gyan vigyan shiksha.

2. **Jan Vachan Utsav**

- a. Promotion of reading habit
- b. Promotion of analytical/appreciative discussion regarding the books or any reading material.

3. **Bal Vachan Utsav**

Special reading festival for children for promoting the reading habit of children.

4. **Community news paper reading**

Creating news paper reading habit.

5. **Hand written magazines**

Recognize the writing talent and dissemination of indigenous knowledge.

From Programmes to Projects

Earlier we have identified and listed out various issues for intervention. The next step is prioritizing the issues. While prioritizing we have to look our resources both financial and human. After prioritization we have to prepare project for each programme. Projects are details regarding a single item which gives us full picture of its purpose and its implementation strategies. The project will detail all the nitigrities including the finance and activity chart and financial flow.