



# ANKUR

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VOLUME 2, NUMBER 1, Spring 1995

## *Half of seventeen is not odd!*

**Priyadarsan Patra**  
*University of Texas at Austin*

"Centuries ago when camels were a fortune, a Bedouin patriarch bequeathed all seventeen of his camels to his three sons. On his death bed, he willed that his eldest son get half of this property, the middle get a third, and the youngest get one ninth of the lot." My childhood story-teller continued, "Shortly after the funeral rites, the three restless, dim-witted sons started apportioning the camel herd as per the will. A crowd gathered as the summarily frustrated brothers contemplated hacking a camel." The story-teller then paused to ask me the reason for and the solution to their frustration. But, of course, you all know how a wise passer-by, on seeing a frantic crowd blocking his way, gets off and lends his camel. Now, the brothers could obtain their fractions and return happily with 9, 6, and 2 camels, respectively. The rider resumed his journey back on his camel..

Now perhaps I understand more the import of the story: the passer-by simply provided a catalyst or a "seed" needed to solve the vexing problem for the three brothers (and cleared the road to his destination as well!). There is plausible argument that we have a similar world situation in human progress & development

today. Perhaps we all are faced with "three brothers willed to receive 1/2, 1/3, and 1/12 of 23 bequeathed camels". And, we have the opportunity to lend our camel so the three brothers get 12 (= half of 23+1), 8, and 2 camels respectively. We even have the prospect of getting back two camels! -- a sound proposition, won't you say? ...Thanks to your help, SEEDS strives to provide the proverbial "loaner camel" to some of the neediest. We look forward to your active participation, more than donation, to keep the SEEDS spirit alive! Our new 'activist' friends and supporters, welcome aboard!

Many things have happened since Ankur's first publication last Fall. We would like to say good-bye to our dear friend and colleague Engr. Dhanada Mishra who -- congratulations! -- completed his doctorate and is returning to India. He proposes to soon start a SEEDS "branch on the field" in Orissa in his spare time. He will also put together some creative, honest people including some whom a couple of us have already known and met during our visits to India. More power to Dhanada as he becomes our "eyes and ears" there! Also, my personal thanks to my colleagues trying to reduce my burden, especially with the treasurer's job, etc.

This issue of ANKUR contains interesting accounts of our colleagues, who recently returned from

India, and about the various development projects we are undertaking or considering. Finally, note that SEEDS is accessible on Internet at <http://www.cs.utexas.edu/users/darshan/SEEDS/>. In future, we will try to send our newsletters to you electronically, if possible and agreeable to you, for efficiency. ■

## **Trip to Orissa: a report**

**Lalu Mansinha**  
*University of Western Ontario, Canada*

One of the aims of the trip to Orissa in December 1994 was to visit the SEEDS project in Kalahandi. Originally I was hoping that Priyadarsan Patra, I and Dr. Mike Powell would be able to travel together. However each one had different travel plans and it was not possible to coordinate the travel. As it turned out, Mike and I did not get to Kalahandi. I would like to report to you about (1) Two meetings with Mr. Bharat Agarwal of ABVKA; (2) A visit

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*Layout, Editing: Priyadarsan Patra*

to a Rotary Village Corps project at Andheisahi- Gopinathpur and Satyabhamapur, near Cuttack; (3) Meeting with Mr. S.K. Mohanty of ASRA, the Association for Social Reconstructive Activities of Pithapur, Cuttack.

1. I met Mr. Bharat Agarwal and a local community worker, Mr. Binoy Bhuyan in Cuttack. We had a wide ranging discussions, lasting over an hour. We fixed up details of the visit with Mike Powell for December 31. Mr. Agarwal said he will come to Swosti Hotel in Bhubaneswar on December 30 evening to meet Mike and me., and then travel with us next morning. He was going to make all arrangements for food and lodging on the way, even though I told him that through my contacts I could make arrangements myself. He was extremely solicitous about our meals, enquiring about special requirements etc..

As it turned out, we had to cancel the trip. However Mr. Agarwal did come and meet Mike Powell me on December 30. I had particularly wanted Mike Powell and Bharat Agarwal to meet, basically to educate him (Mike) on our Kalahandi project. When the Flyash project gets funded, the project would pay all costs in transporting the fertiliser to the forestation site, and would bear the cost of planting. However, for the seedlings to thrive, it is very important that the local villagers look after and guard the seedlings until trees could be harvested for their common benefit. After talking to Mr. Agarwal I felt that our ongoing SEEDS project has already started the creation of a community spirit in the 100 or so villages in our project area. Thus my expectation is that the seedlings will be looked after. As I write this (in January 1995), my expectation is that large scale funding will be forthcoming from Canada. We should know in a few months.

2. Rotary Project in Andheisahi - Gopinathpur -Satyabhamapur This is a service project of the Rotary Village Corps., run by the Cuttack Mid-Town Rotary Club (There are three different Rotary Clubs in Cuttack). I came to

know of this project from my uncle, Mr. Durgamadhab Behura. Mr. Behura retired as Director of Agriculture, Orissa, 27 years ago. Today at 84 he is mentally and physically active and is a prime mover in the Rotary project. Rupee for rupee this must be one of the most cost effective community projects in Orissa, probably in India. Every rupee donated to the project is actually spent in the village. The Rotary Club absorbs all administrative costs and provides ideas, expertise and the cost. Rotary also persuades local officials to provide certain facilities like, road, school, electricity and so on. For construction, planting etc. the villagers provide the labour.

The three villages are located about 45 minutes away by car from Cuttack city. Mr. Behura, Mike Powell and I spent the better part of a day at the village. We visited only one village, because of shortage of time. Ours was a surprise visit; yet we saw activity around us. We talked to whoever was around in the village. So what we saw is real, not a well rehearsed show. We saw trees planted and flourishing; we saw a pre-school with kids singing away; we saw a pond with fish stock. The fish will provide good cash return when sold in the local market. We saw piles of straw for fodder and roofing. We talked to villagers that happened to be around. They were full of praise for the project and wanted more. It was impressive.

To provide drinking water, they have sunk 12 hand operated tubewells. We saw several in use. To provide irrigation they have sunk one large diameter diesel powered tubewell. The villagers have built a pump house and irrigation channels of brick and concrete. The bricks are locally made. We saw one brick pile oven which had just been fired. We were told that the new bricks are for the veterinary hospital.

The success in agriculture has been dramatic. With improved stock and instructions in usage of compost and fertilisers, the paddy yield has been doubled. New quality seedlings has led to a variety of high yield vegetables for

family use and marketing. The villagers have been given advice on what trees to plant in the backyard. We saw a small garden patch with mango, banana, papaya, bamboo, chakunda trees, all flourishing and now about 40- 50ft tall. The whole idea is that each family, with a small plot of land can be self sufficient in basic needs such as fuel, fodder and fruits and vegetables. With Rotary funding the villagers started building a high school.. Each year they have added one new room to the school. They have already reached Class 7 and are planning to go to Standard 12 (+2). The salaries of the teachers are being met >from Rotary and government funds. We saw the school, but on that day there were no classes.

The villagers have also built an one room pre-school. I saw about 20 happy kindergarten level children, singing away. I had a brief chat with the lady teacher. The same school house is used for vocational instructions such as tailoring, for health information such as birth control. What remains to be done here? The villagers told me that they badly need a 'veterinary hospital'. All the hospital is a two tiny rooms with a roof. The foundation has been dug, some stones and bricks are lying around. The project has run out of funds. Estimated cost for completion is Rs100,000. =US\$3000. The villagers said that the single irrigation pump does not reach all the land and they need a second tubewell and pump. Estimated cost Rs150,000. = US\$5000.

Mike Powell was sufficiently impressed that he would be willing to provided for afforestation project for this area. We talked to the villagers and they would be wiling to look after the trees once planted. My question to SEEDS: Can we help this ongoing, successful community project? Certainly we will be given credit for the help they receive. Certainly we can bask in the existing success, while contributing a small amount.

3. Association for Social Reconstructive Activities (ASRA), Cuttack. I had a visit from Mr. S.K. Mohanty, Sec-

retary General. I have a copy of their 93-94 annual report. Mr. Mohanty told me of their old age home in the Jagatsinghpur-Balikuda area. With children moving away for jobs elsewhere, many old people are now destitute and helpless. This group runs an oldage home, with 25 inmates. I heard a number of touching accounts of ill, starving and abandoned old men and women being brought into the oldage home. With longer life span, and with children moving away from the villages, care of the elderly is now a major social concern.

ASRA has set up a family welfare center at Baharana, with 1 lady doctor and 25 Health Workers, covering 41 target villages. I first heard of ASRA when I was describing the Kalahandi project to my brother-in-law, Mr. Lalit Mohan Nanda. He said he belongs to ASRA and arranged the meeting with Mr. Mohanty. I would have liked to visit the various ASRA projects, but there was not enough time.

My Recommendations: In the past we, who live in comfort in North America, hid behind the excuse that we do not have any trustworthy organisation to send money to. We now see that there are many good, active organisations that need our support.. I recommend that we continue our support of those groups who already have major projects underway. We avoid all groups that siphon off significant amounts of the donated funds for personal profit (I met a few of these types also). So (1) We continue the funding of AVBKA project in Kalahandi (2) We should support specific parts of the Rotary Village Corps. Project. (3) Explore the possibility of support for ASRA projects. ■

**Excerpts from “Appropriate methods of water conservation”**  
by T.J. Mathew.

During recent years, more and more importance is given to conservation and environmental protection. India’s top soil losses are staggering. Indian Council of Agricultural Research estimates

losses at nearly five billion metric tonnes annually, and predicts that the situation will still worsen since few farmers practise soil conservation. The People’s Republic of China also has similar problems. Each year the country loses about four billion metric tonnes of top soil through erosion. According to the World Watch institute in the U. S., the global crop-land losses now exceed new soil formation by 25.4 billion metric tonnes per year. USA has 14,000 experts from the Agricultural Department’s Soil Conservation Service (SCS). During the last 50 years SCS has spent US \$20 billion trying to end the problem, but the soil is still flowing away or washing away into creeks, rivers and drinking water supplies. The loss of soil in the agriculturally sophisticated country exceeds tolerable levels on 44% of the cropland.

Wind, earth and water are the primary energy sources of the world. It is the solar energy, conserved through billions of years, that we are now enjoying as fossil fuel. But, the energy crisis of the 1970s jolted America into greater awareness for alternative energy development. We have yet to realise that, it is the solar energy that is the only source of our past and future energy. It is the sun that converts our water into vapour and makes it fall back on the land surface. It is this water combined with the photosynthetic conversion of the solar energy that enables the vegetation to grow and survive on the earth surface. It is again the sun that helps to generate oxygen and helps the survival of the entire life on this world.

In ancient times, when the balance of nature was not so much destroyed by man, there was reasonable natural conservation of water by the porous soil all over the world. But with the heavy and indiscriminate deforestation, construction of buildings, roads etc., this natural percolation of water has been upset. This has resulted in the lowering of the local water tables, and disappearance of the perennial springs that once kept our rivers ever flowing. The uncontrolled flow of water is also resulting in severe floods like the recent one in Godavari in South India.

...Based on my successful experience in conserving water, I am inclined to share the following methods which are quite simple, appropriate and inexpensive to manage.

**CONTOUR TRENCHING:** This is a system where unskilled labour can be used. In areas with a slope and where the soil texture is suitable this is the simplest, easiest and cheapest system possible. But this may not be suitable for the entire earth surface. In this system, trenches along the contours, spaced according to the slope of the land, intensity of rainfall, crop etc. are made. The trenches are usually 2 or 2 1/2 feet wide deep and of convenient length from 8 to 12 feet. The soil is deposited along the lower side of the trenches. As and when these trenches get filled up, the soil is again removed and the trenches are revived.

**CONTOUR PITS:** In areas where there are already established trees, whose roots may be seriously damaged by such trenches, the next alternative is pits. The pits may be of any size of 3 to 4 feet cube, and the root damages are minimised. The pits may be located as and when they are feasible. These are more efficient than trenches. In this system the benefits are multifarious. In addition to localised conservation of water, these help the accumulation of the fallen leaves which in turn, with the moisture in them retained for longer periods than on exposed land, encourage the root development of the nearby vegetation. This gives vigour to vegetation, even during the dry months, for longer period, as already observed in field trials.

**DEEP BLASTING OF HARD SURFACE STRATA LIKE LATERITE:** Due to continuous soil erosion, there are extensive areas where the entire top soil has been eroded exposing the hard laterite substrata. In such areas, drill 11’ holes to a depth of 8 to 10 feet and blasted with suitable explosives to create a crushing effect in the substrata and with a suitable amount of common salt applied into the blast holes, the laterite will disintegrate faster. If some good soil is put into the top part of the blast holes, and hardy trees like cashew planted, then

the area can be made productive immediately. The crushed, deep blast holes will also be able to retain more rain water...

**BENEFITS:** The benefits of localised water conservation are unlimited. I am trying to present a few of them here...  
Flood Control: Floods are caused by the fast run off of the rain water from higher levels.... It is impossible to control the flow of the water, except at the point of precipitation itself. Raising the Ground-water Table; Greater and easier Availability of Fresh Water; Regeneration of Vegetation... [are other benefits].

Though thousands of trees have been planted along road side, today we see only the planting pits and no trees after one summer. This must be the case with most of our highly publicized tree planting projects. Without water, it is impossible for a tree to survive. At the same time it is equally impossible to provide irrigation to all these areas where even human beings are in need of water.

(T.J. Mathew is convenor, Society for Water and Environment Conservation, Areepiachy, Kerala. Article adapted from *Development Network* -- Ed.)

### YOUR VIEWS

*This section will contain letters from you. You are requested to give us your views, opinions and advice regarding any aspect of the SEEDS activities and on this news letter. You may also email it to [darshan@cs.utexas.edu](mailto:darshan@cs.utexas.edu) --Ed.*

Hi! My name is D.T. and I am a 3rd year medical student at Emory U. in Atlanta. I would like to spend a

year beginning in August and work in India. I am interested in community health and firmly believe in small-scale grass-roots development projects. I found your organization SEEDS while surfing the WWW and thought you might be able to help me set something up. Do any of the projects you fund take volunteers with a lot of energy and a commitment to social justice? I am not fluent in languages other than English... Any information, ideas or suggestions will be greatly appreciated. Thanks. ---D.T.

### LIST OF NEW MEMBERS

SEEDS thanks the following *new* members for having made direct financial and moral contributions to the efforts of this young organization.

*Purna Mishra, Rajesh R. Mishra, Kula Misra, Ranjeev Misra, Debasis Mohanty, Neelamadhaba Mohapatro, Gopal Mohapatra., Prakash K. Muduli, Kartikeyan Obla, Nabin Panda, Pradipta Panigrahi, Rabin-dranath Patnaik, Surjit Sahoo, Sashi & Namita Satapathy, A Group of well-wishers from Canada.*

### Other News

Over three wonderful days in last December, colleague Umakanta Choudhury and I visited a dispensary at Katingia, a students' hostel at Raikia, Biswanathpur and surrounding areas of Lanjigarh, a "satsanga" center at Harlanga, a "kanya ashram" at Jalespata, and a homeo/allo-pathy dispensary at Kurtamgarh -- all run by Vanabasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA) in Kalahandi and Phul-

bani areas of Orissa. We went to 3 of the 14 one-teacher schools, sponsored by SEEDS, that had started functioning since first week of December. Their names are Kuburi, Matkera, and Nagjhari villages populated by tribals. I hope to write a more detailed report later.

On another front: In July 1994 SEEDS had sponsored training of some volunteers from Orissa in "sustainable development" at the Bhagavatula Charitable Trust. Unfortunately, we have not yet received any report from the trainees or the trainer since then, despite our earlier agreement. ---Ed.

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