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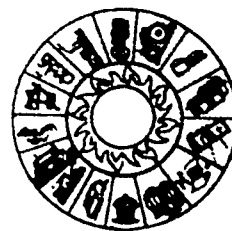
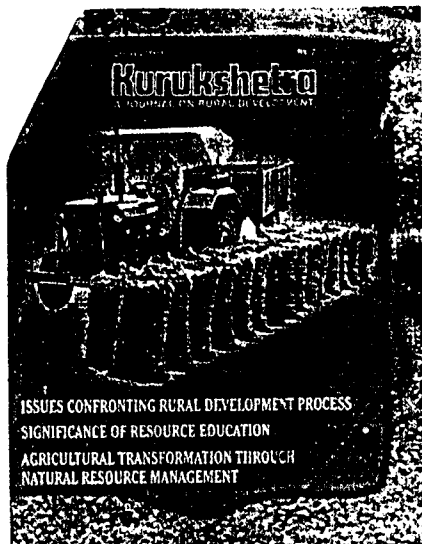
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ISSUES CONFRONTING RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS
SIGNIFICANCE OF RESOURCE EDUCATION
AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH
NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT



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**Kurukshetra wishes it's readers a very happy
and prosperous ~ New Year 2003 ~**

Kurukshetra seeks to carry the message of Rural Development to all people. It serves as a forum for free, frank and serious discussion on the problems of Rural Development with the focus on Rural Uplift.

The views expressed by the authors in the articles are of their own. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the government or the organisations they work for.

SAGA OF A PROGRESSIVE FISH FARMER

Bhawesh T. Sawant
Paramita Bandyopadhyay

Haricharan Das, a 70 year old fish farmer from the state of Tripura has contributed commendably to wards fisheries development through his own unique efforts. His, is a success story of fruitful endeavours, painstaking trials and above all, self confidence, which has earned him the long awaited acclaim in ways more than one.

Drawing inspiration from his mother, Haricharan Das set up his brainchild, M/s Rangamoyee Fish Breeding Centre, in west Tripura, and the returns that he reaped never made him look back ever since. Along with his fifty odd family members living in what is called a perfect harmonious joint family system, he has, through honest efforts given shape to a compact farming unit, comprising of broodstock ponds, hatcheries, feed plants, agricultural, horticultural and livestock complexes. His accomplishments has provided much needed employment to many and he dreams of planning aqua-eco-tourism for earning foreign exchange for his country, on the sprawling twenty five acres of waterspread area that his farm covers.

Recognizing his expertise, the Department of Science and Technology, Tripura government, entrusted him to conduct training programmes for unemployed youth between 1993 and 1995. His yeoman service in the field of fisheries has recently been rewarded with the **The Best Fish Farmer Award for 2000-2001** from one of the pioneer Deemed Universities of ICAR, The Central Institute of Fisheries Education, Mumbai. With effect from the year 1993, the Govt. of Tripura has also started nominating one of the workers of his farm every year to serve the Fish Farmers Development Agency in west Tripura.

The award has given him impetus to set up prawn hatcheries in the near future and apply latest technologies in his field, through proper liason with technical and scientific advisors from different universities and institutes. Das is equally keen to share his knowledge and experiences acquired through years of toiling, with resource poor farmers so that they too can savour the fruits of success, much like himself and effectively conquer the socio eco-

nomie hurdles towards self sufficiency, in years to come.

The seventy year old fish farmer of Vidyasagar Palli village in Tripura State, is a celebrity today. The young and old in his area applaud his achievements. Many governmental organizations, NGOs and universities are taking turns to bring out his story as an example for the others like him in this field.

The sixth of June, 2001 was a memorable day for him. On this day, during the occasion of celebration of "Four Decades of CIFE, Challenges and Path Ahead", Mr. Das, a humble and progressive fish farmer from the farflung State of Tripura, received amidst applause the prestigious Best Fish Farmer Award. For him, the award was more of a hope belied. Long before such types of awards were instituted, the poor Haricharan tried to achieve through sheer hard work and determination, something that would fend for his family for years to come and earn them enough to make both ends meet. Born in a resource poor family in the 1930s, his father's premature demise and the political anarchy in the country deprived him of formal education beyond middle school. A brave lady as she was, Hari's mother picked up the strings of her husband's profession, that of sorting out live fish seed from dead ones in the mountainous valley water bodies of Tripura. Little Hari, eldest of the five brothers, by his helpful nature started to help his mother in her task so that at the end of the day, could add a penny or two more to feed the five hungry mouths at home.

After a prolonged struggle with destiny, his tireless efforts earned him a few waterbodies to call his own, which were otherwise unproductive. Little did anyone know at that time, that he would turn them into a goldmine! By this time, his brothers had started lending helping hands, which raised his spirits further and within a few years he multiplied profits, enough to expand his fish culture unit into an integrated fish farm. The family matured with time and new members started to pour in, joining heartily to expand the once small venture into a booming profitable cooperative venture, so much so that at present, his fifty-

member family is a matter of pride for the old man.

Within a span of twenty years, his efforts bore the desired fruit and presently his family owns:

- Thirty fish ponds of twenty five acres of water area.
- Three sets of hatchery units in the modern process of Chinese hatchery system.
- Twelve jar hatcheries , whose successful operation , according to him, has given him adequate profits in the initial years – enough to help him set up additional integrated farming projects , which now consist of:
 - A cattle farm consisting of thirty two cows.
 - A poultry complex consisting of six thousand parent birds , having two double setters (of thirty thousand egg capacity each and hatchers of ten thousand egg capacity each).
 - A commercial broiler complex consisting of thirty thousand birds.
 - A pig house having capacity of twenty animals at a time.
 - Eight sets bio gas plant, with total capacity of gas chambers of forty cubic meters.
 - A small mushroom production unit.
 - A feed mill with production capacity of two tons per hour which yields adequate surplus of livestock and animal feed to be sold at low cost to farmers.
 - Horticultural and wood plantations having two hundred and fifty coconut trees, around five thousand adult trees of Neem, Mehogany, Teak, Gamair and the like.

Expansion of his farm to the tune of the above dimensions was not an easy task at all. The mountainous terrain of Tripura apparently posed a lot of problems for Haricharan. However, Mother Nature too had to surrender in front of his untiring endeavors to fish out wealth from the undulations, when a rich source of underground water was located by him with laborious excavations of four to sixteen feet inside the uplands. But as bad luck would have it, this water was overloaded with iron pyrites, which would be toxic to fish. So at first, the old man had nothing to do but to wait for the monsoons till mid May every year to wash the stagnant water out. This however could not dampen his spirits. It was during this fallow period that he had a brainstorm to start poultry breeding and plant coconut trees for livelihood. With little profits that he made during these initial days, he approached the Dept. of Fisheries, Tripura to include his brothers for training in fish

farming and animal husbandry. Convincing the officials was not an easy task but Haricharan's undaunted nature ultimately triumphed. Slowly, his family's expertise in the subject grew, so that they could now manage water quality quite on their own and therefore did not have to depend on the monsoons to wash away the impurities. With time, Haricharan's family learnt to process the waste of poultry and livestock through the bio gas plant and use the resulting slurry to fertilize the ponds, horticultural and wood plantations. Again, besides its domestic use, they devised an indigenous method of conditioning the broodstock of poultry with bio gas. This ensured quick hatching of eggs and also kept the brooders free from parasitic attacks.

Haricharan's method of fish culture is essentially intensive. They periodically harvest about one third of the stock three times a year, and restock healthy fingerlings equal to the amount of adult fishes withdrawn. This method according to him is fetching maximum profit of Rs.3 to 4 lakh per year, and along with excellent returns from animal, poultry and agriculture set ups, he is now able to generate employment for unemployed youth, both technical and non technical in his farm. About twenty thousand persons are benefited directly through business with Haricharan's fish farm, Rangamoyee Fish Breeding Centre. About five hundred persons are given business as co traders for retail sale of his produce. He has also engaged about fifty to sixty technical hands to assist him. So one can well understand that his service to the society may make many of our high profile Government employment exchanges and recruitment boards bow down in reverence.

He is simple, soft spoken and hospitable personality. As a social worker, he provides free advice to poor farmers, students from nearby colleges and other North Eastern States. His service to the nation had been first recognized by the Dept. of Science and technology, Govt. of Tripura, when they entrusted him to conduct three training programmes for a period of fifteen days each, on fish culture consecutively for three years, 1993, 1994 and 1995, during which practical training on all aspects of fish culture namely nursery management, broodstock management, feed preparation, water quality management and treatment of disease by indigenous preparations. However, his success story was unsung at the National level , until in December 2001, a team of scientists, led by the Director of CIFE, (Deemed University), Dr. S. Ayyappan and eminent principal scientist, Dr. R.C. Das, came across his farm on one of their exploratory visits to Tripura and were awestruck to witness his accomplishments. So deep was the impression created on their minds, that they offered him return air ticket to come to Mumbai and receive the prestigious award in front of a distinguished applauding

audience so that his efforts can get due credit.

Today, the award has encouraged the old man to dream big – of building a big prawn hatchery and also promote eco-tourism on his farm. As the great scientist A.P.J. Abdul Kalam has rightly said, "Dream to think and convert thoughts into actions", the future generations should personify the determination and grit of Haricharan Das in their own lives and use his success story as a bulwark of inspirations to scale great heights.

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...Contd. from pg. 29 (Stakeholders...)

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1. World Bank, UNDP and IDB used the term to analyze the project performance. The term evolved in the 1990s into the notion of stake holding. Currently much of the debate and practice regarding participation is based upon the concept of stakeholders and the relative importance and influence that different stakeholders can have on the outcomes of development activities.

2. Since the late 1970s there has been a range of inter-

pretations of the meaning of participation in development. With regard to rural development, peoples' participation includes people's involvement in decision-making processes, in implementing programmes, their sharing in the benefits of development programmes and their involvement in efforts to evaluate such programmes.

3. For details see Chambers, R (1993) 'Rural Development: Putting the Last First', Longman, Scientific and Technical Pub. London and (1994), 'Challenging the Professions: Frontiers for Rural Development', Intermediate Technology Publications, UK and (1997) 'Whose Reality Counts? Putting the Last First', Intermediate Technology Publications. Cernia, M. (1991) 'Putting the Last First: Sociological Variables in Rural Development', Published by World Bank, Oxford University Press, UK also reflected in the same way.

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