

Ushagram: An Ideal Example of Rural Development

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Abstract: India is a densely populated country in the world, where maximum people are living in rural area. Their main wage earning way is related to primary sectoral work like agriculture, farming, textile (handloom) industry etc. The idea of a developing India is directly related with the development of villages of India. The Government of India has taken so many steps for the up-gradation of rural area by uplifting the livelihood of rural people. After the 70 years of Independence the picture has changed in many region of India, but I think it is not 100% satisfactory till now. Government projects is not enough to cope up with this problem so it is needed to take some steps for making rural people aware with this problem and to influence them for doing so. If we look to the changing scenario of India then we will find some people who have taken many initiatives in this sense. Here I would like to mention “USHAGRAM”, the village of Nadia district of West Bengal, as a role model of village developing. Gopalchandra Chakraborty and Jyotirmay Basu, this two people has changed the character of some portion of Taherpur Natunpara and named it as “USHAGRAM”. The people of this region are aware with their needs and with the help of some people like Gopalchandra Chakraborty and Jyotirmay Basu they have made them engaged in multi earning works. And in this way Nadia had got its first ‘Model Village’ like “USHAGRAM”.

In this research paper I want to focus on the emerging trends of changing scenario of “USHAGRAM” and its effects on rural people of 14 villages of Nadia district including Mahisdanga, Puratanpara etc. I would also like to mention those steps and projects, has been taken by “USHAGRAM TRUST” for the development of this area and those reason behind the development of “USHAGRAM”, as the changing trends of rural development of India scenario of Rural India.

KEY WORDS: USHAGRAM, GRAMIN, BIDYANIKETON SISUBIHAR, GOPALCHANDRA CHAKRABARTY, BIRNAGAR, MODEL VILLAGE ETC.

If we go well through the census of 2011, then we will found that more than 70% people of India are living in rural areas.¹ Their wage earning procedure is mainly related with primary sector like agriculture, hand craft, handloom etc. With this low source of income they are not capable to enjoy the maximum advantages of life as a citizen of India. Though there is few state of India like Punjab are making itself resource with scientific agriculture, but the rest of the state are still unprogressed in this sense. After the 70 years of independence India has progressed in many sector and field but if we compare all this aspect with the neighbor country China then we will be able to find out the lacking here. After the independence of India the Government of India has taken many initiatives to cope up with the basic problem of India, that is the rural empowerment.

The first Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru presented the First Five-Year Plan to the Parliament of India and needed urgent attention. The First Five-year Plan was launched in 1951 which mainly focused in development of the primary sector. The First Five-Year Plan was based on the Harrod–Domar model with few modifications.

The total planned budget of Rs.2069 crore (2378 crore later) was allocated to seven broad areas: irrigation and energy (27.2%), agriculture and community development (17.4%), transport and communications (24%), industry (8.4%), social services (16.6%), rehabilitation of landless farmers (4.1%), and for other sectors and services (2.5%). The most important feature of this phase was active role of state in all economic sectors. Such a role was justified at that time because immediately after independence, India was facing basic problems—deficiency of capital and low capacity to save.”² The rate of growth was estimated 2.1% annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth and the achieved rate was 3.6%, It was satisfactory but India was unable to keep the momentum. The Government of India in its 12th five year plan (2012-2017) intended to reduce poverty by 10% during the 12th Five-Year Plan. Ahluwalia said, “We aim to reduce poverty estimates by 9% annually on a sustainable basis during the Plan period”.

If we see the reason behind this lacking of development in India, then we will find that most of the rural people of India are not aware about their needs and with the projects, have been taken by the Government of India. It is not possible to eradicate the poverty from India without involving the rural people with the thought of ‘Self Sufficiency’. In this paper I want to present the “Ushagram Development Project” as a role model of village development.

Gopalchandra Chakraborty (1920-2007) was a veteran politician of Manda village of Rajsahi district of present day Bangladesh, who had brought up in an atmosphere of liberation movement of India. He was highly influenced with the thought of “Swadeshi”, and in this sense he was affected with the concept of rural development theory, propounded by Rabindranath Tagore

and Mahatma Gandhi. He was determined to serve the village and to find out a way to fulfill his dream after coming in independent India in 1960. At first he was appointed as a Head-Master of 'Phulia Shikshaniketan' and after a clash with the officials of this school he came back in Taherpur Natunpara, a village of Nadia district with an aim to create a pervading aspiration for healthful environmental, sanitary, medical and educational facilities in their life-style. Here he had bought 10 bigha lands from Kalipada Sarkar. Here he had build the school named, "Bidyaniketan Sisubihar" in 1970 for the educational development of this area. The school was started with few students but at present the scene has been changed, most of the willing parents of this area and also from other parts of Ushagram are showing their interest for making admission of their pupil in this school. But not only in the education sector, but also in economic, social and the health sector of this area have been flourished with the help of Ushagram Trust.³ Men like Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) and Sri Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950) had dedicated their lives in their own ways in formulating means for the upliftment of mute, toiling masses of rural India. Ushagram has been announced as the first model village of Nadia district.

With such an ideal vision Gopalchandra Chakrabarty started his work from a scratch in 1980, it was registered in the name of "Memorandum of Trust Deed" on 15th August of 1980.⁴ Ushagram trust is a kind of NGO (Non-Govt. Organization), a voluntary social service organization. It's first working committee members were- Jyotirmay Basu, Dilip Kumar Mukherjee, Charuchandra Joardar, Monotosh Biswas, Gurudas Mustafi, Debkumar Mukherjee and Gopalchandra Chakrabarty. Ushagram Trust started its journey under the guidance of Jyotirmay Basu who was its first secretary. Gopalchandra Chakrabarty has donated his 5.44 acre land and all the properties he had, to the trust.

At first Gopalchandra Chakrabarty; s intention was to make the educational development of this area and he build a school named, Bidyaniketan Sisubihar. Though the school has not get the government affiliation but in spite of that people comes here to get fruitful education. In 1978 he has started the K.G (kinder Garden) section. During this initial stage of this work he did not have support of local people as well as local politician, but he didn't stop his work. But at a time local people like Kamalprasanna Sarkar, Kamadaprasanna Sarkar, and Rekha Sarkar started to make them involved in this work. As a leader during Independence movement of India Gopalchandra Chakrabarty has gathered experiences of rural development and social services. After getting a chance he never stopped to make his dream fulfill.

It has few departments to drive those upliftment projects, those are:

- 1) Yogasram
- 2) Pre and Primary School
- 3) Health and Hygiene
- 4) Rural Development
- 5) Jute Industry Development Centre
- 6) Lokshiksha Niketan
- 7) Apiary Centre

The moral education centre of this trust is known as "Yogasram". It has one meditation room, one prayer room and also the Mira Usha Hostel are situated there. Actually it has been playing its role for the moral and spiritual development of the people of this area and there is no discrimination on the sense of caste and creed etc.

Its educational works are going on in 14 villages of Nadia district like Mahisdanga, Gagrakhali, Puratanpara, Ushagram etc. There are pre-primary schools in each of this village and one primary school (Vidyaniketan Sisubihar) in Ushagram. The schooling system was started with 10-16 students but if we look in today's scenario of Ushagram Trust then we will find that the number has crossed 700. Here is one library for its students, named "Ushagram Gramin Pathagar". But the teaching-learning process of this area is very much related with the concept of Rabindranath Tagore and his Shantiniketan.⁵ Pupils are been encouraging to learn in play method and the teacher of this school is also sincerely pursuing their duty. Physical education is must for every student; because they remembered the word of Swami Vivekananda "playing football is even better than reading Gita".

It is also working for the betterment of economic life of this area, and to fulfill this work it has created a department, which named "Aarogya Bhaban". Its objectives are: take care of children and mother, rural health and to make people aware about environment. It supplies free medicines to poor and needy people. Besides this all it has contributed for the development of water supply in agricultural field, making of sanitary latrine and also to build smoke free oven (Bio-Gas).

It also working on - road making, house building, water purifying and skill development of people. It has built 5.5 K.M roads, 215 house, 36 deep tube well, 1003 Sanitary Latrine, 550 smoke free kitchen-rooms etc in those 14 villages. Child Resource Centre is working on to nourishing the child talent and makes them as human resource for future. Child Resource Centre was started in 1990 and at present there are 700 boy and girl of different families who have been merged with this innovative project.

It is also working for the development of sick jute industry with the help of NCJD (National Centre for Jute Diversification), IJT (Institute of Jute Technology) and IJIRA (Institute of Jute Industries and Research Association).⁶ Its objectives are: to make rural people skillful and to create new market for Jute products. "Udyogbhaban" is the core centre for this kind of project and with the help of some experienced teacher; the rural people have been involved in this. Gopalchandra chakrabarty had taken many initiatives for the betterment of this sector. He had made a commercial link between 'SASA Expert' of Kolkata and 'Sanhati Bipani' of Shantiniketan.

For the skill development of young people of this village it has created two individual departments: "Srinilay" and "Udyogbhaban". In Srinilay people are being trained of handloom, block printing, embroidery, mushroom cultivation and toy making. In Udyogbhaban people are being trained of welding, mechanism of electronic pump and motor making and at present it is working on to produce cheap spices. Lokshiksha Niketan was registered under the 'Society's Registration Act' in 1996-1997. Rural women were involved in Srinilay and they are making themselves empowered by opening various SHG (Self Help Groups). It is working in the food processing sector and all its food products are certified by the Food Technology Department of Jadavpur University. Ushagram trust is also working for making people aware of the danger of using chemical fertilizer and its side effects; it is giving effort to produce organic food by using organic fertilizer. At present 100 people are involved in "Lokshikha Niketan" who are very dutiful in making of honey, ghee, nutrimix, jam, jelly, batik and various types of clothes etc.

So that was the main points on the working of Ushagram Trust, but we know that these kinds of works are influenced by other similar projects. Its founder Gopalchandra Chakrabarty and Jyotirmay Basu were deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo, whose ideological thinking were related for the upliftment of poor and empowerment women. Gopalchandra Chakrabarty was also influenced by "Sriniketan" and "Shantiniketan", the rural development of Sriniketan and the education system of Shantiniketan made him fond of Rabindranath's developmental thinking and in Ushagram he had tried to make a composition of Sriniketan and Shantiniketan. Jyotirmay Basu was influenced by Srma and he devoted his life for the development of Ushagram.

Gopalchandra Chakrabarty had no intention of asking help from others for fulfilling the development work of Ushagram Trust, but people from different parts of Nadia like Tanmoyee Chakrabarty and Paritosh Biswas adjoined him later of 1980's. Tanmoyee Chakrabarty has discussed in her book about some people like Yolanda Garcia, Mr. Andre, Smt. Mitchell, Brigatte etc. Once a German lady, named Ute Semite said to Gopalchandra chakrabarty that-"Ushagram is my second motherland"⁷ So that was the affection level of even foreigners from France, Germany and Switzerland. Kari Bohr has said-"Gopalda was a light for humanity, his love for everyone immense, his sharpness very much respected"⁸

Ushagram Trust is a brain child of Jyotirmay Basu and today it has taken a giant shape. Its economic funding is coming from different foreign country and also the NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) of India is helping it by giving fund for the equipment of rural development projects. 31,000 villagers of 14 villages have received balwadis, Youth Clubs, medical care, clean drinking water, latrines and income generating programmers i.e. work. This kind of rural development programme is the key to success for the development of India by developing the rural areas of India.

Here are few projects taken by the central government of India for rural development-

1. Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (Gram Swaraj Abhiyaan is a campaign that is being organized on the occasion of Ambedkar Jayanti during the period 14th April to 05th May, 2018.)
2. DISHA (A large number of significant and ambitious programmes are being implemented for improvement of infrastructure and for improving human development and well-being of the people. District Development coordination and Monitoring committee (DISHA) is being formed with a view to fulfill the objective of ensuring a better coordination among all the elected representatives in Parliament, State Legislatures and Local Governments (Panchayati Raj Institutions/Municipal Bodies) for efficient and time-bound development of districts in our country)
3. Mission Antyodaya (Mission Antyodaya is a convergence framework for measurable effective outcomes on parameters that transform lives and livelihoods. Mission Mode Project envisaged by the Ministry of Rural Development. Comprehensive and integrated system for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness at Gram Panchayat Level)
4. MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act)
5. PMAY (G) (Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (Grameen))
6. DDUGKY (Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana)
7. PMGSY (Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana)
8. DAY-NRLM (National Rural Livelihoods Mission)
9. NSAP (National Social Assistance Programme)
10. RURBAN (NRuM) (National Rurban Mission)
11. SAGY (Sansad Adrash Gram Yojana)
12. DIKSHA (Training Portal)
13. Swachh Gram (For making the rural area clean and hygienic)⁹

Those initiatives will be more successful if NGO's like Ushagram Trust helps the rural people to achieve success by chanting the mantra of "Self Help".

Key Words: USHAGRAM, GRAMIN, BIDYANIKETON SISUBIHAR, GOPALCHANDRA CHAKRABARTY, BIRNAGAR, MODEL VILLAGE ETC.

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