

Auro-Mira Service Society

Sri Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi Branch, New Delhi 110016

Report of activities in Kechla, Dt. Koraput, Orissa during 2008-09

1. Education:

Primary Education

A. Finally, during this fiscal year, Auro-Mira Service Society (AMSS) was able to start a new school on its own site in Kechla. Prof. Chandra Sekhar Rath, eminent educationist, inaugurated Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir on the auspicious day of 5th July 2008, the birth anniversary of Km. Tara Jauhar, Trustee and Secretary of Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch. The school already has an enrolment of about 60 children from the tribal hamlets in the vicinity and is expected to grow considerably since education will now be available on the door-step of the surrounding villages. Initially 30 Children in the age group of 4-6 years were enrolled. 30 children of older age for whom sponsorships were not available were enrolled on Nov. 24, 2008.

Meanwhile, construction of boarding school for 300 students is progressing.



B. AMSS, Kechla, through the generosity of Sri Aurobindo Education Society, New Delhi, has continued to sponsor education of children in several Integral Schools. During this year, 47 sponsored children of five neighbourhood villages were studying in the following schools:

1. Sri Aurobindo Integral Education Centre, B. Maliguda, Aurnagar, Nabarangpur, Orissa
2. Sri Aurobindo Integral Education Centre, Khatiguda, Indravati, Nabarangpur, Orissa
3. Sri Aurobindo School, Barijhol, Halua, Rayagada, Orissa
4. Sri Aurobindo Integral Education Centre, Kotpad, Koraput, Orissa.

Continuing Education through Camps

Teacher's Training Camp : As in previous years, a Teacher's Training Camp was conducted for 20



participating teachers from a number of Integral Schools spread over several districts of Orissa. Teachers from Mirambika School and the Heritage School, New Delhi, who

helped conduct the camp included Prakash, Srinath, Prem, Vinod, Sangeeta, Saswati, Niharika Soni, Vijaya and Lata.

Studentís Camp : Twenty five students and 7 teachers of the Baleswar district Integral Schools (Kantabhaunri, Kaptipada, Gopinathpur and Raghunathpur) took part in a camp conducted by

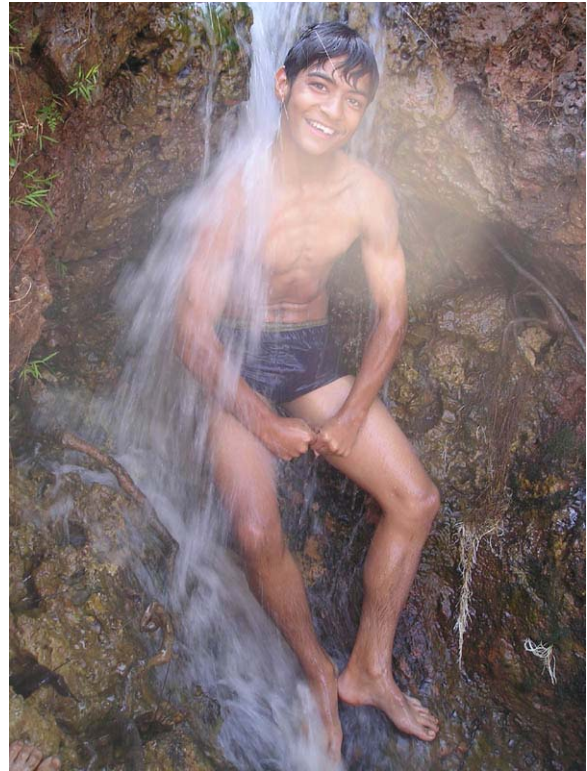


teachers, namely Rabindra, Srinath, Sulochana, Sangeeta, Niharika, of Mirambika School, New Delhi. Camp certificates were given by Shri Subash Hota, IAS, Secretary, Department of Tribal Development, Government of Orissa, in the valedictory function.

Adventure Youth Camps : During December 2008 and March-April 2009, four adventure youth camps were conducted for participants from K.V.O. Mumbai (34 participants), The Mother's International School, New Delhi (two batches of 25 and 35), and Birla Public School, Pilani (50 participants). Activities of the camps included bouldering, rappelling, swimming, rowing, trekking, asanas & pranayama, keep-fit exercises, talks & workshops on health, western folk-dances, shramdan, meditation, and interactive talks on value based topics. Dr. Nirankar Agarwal from Sri



Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi Branch, and Mr. Jayanta Pal from Kolkata were among the resource persons. Some pictures are included to illustrate the myriad activities of the camps.





2. Plantation, Horticulture, Farming

Plantation: Tribal people have been cutting and selling wood from the forests to provide for their meagre living expenses since distant past. For they have no means to support themselves. The result is that the land is practically denuded of the forest cover.

Since its inception, AMSS has been continuing to educate the local populace about the dire consequences of deforestation. Perhaps the best education is by example. AMSS carries out massive ongoing plantation on its own land employing tribals so that they have a direct perception of the methodology and benefits derived from implanting myriad fruit bearing and other plants which apart from monetary gains also impede soil erosion. Following tables list its efforts in this direction:



Name of the Fruits	No. of Plants	Success	Cause of Failure
Patience	100	Yes	
Lichi	100	Yes	
Mango	50	Yes	
Sapota(Chiku)	50	Yes	
Anaar	189	Yes	
Lemon	200	No	Naked root of Plants
Guava	200	Yes	
Rose Apple	45	Yes	
Orange	53	No	Naked root of Plants
Naspati	50	No	-do-
Grapes	10	No	-do-
Strawberry	220	No	-do-
Karmanga	5	Yes	

Medicinal Plants on its own land:

Name of the Plants	No. of Plants	Success	Cause of failure
Stivia	150	Yes	
Aloevera	250	No	Heavy rain at the time of plantation
Lemongrass	300	Yes	

Other plants on it own land:

Name of the Plants	No. of Plants	Success	Cause of Failure
Silver oak	100	Yes	
Teak	25	Yes	
Banyan-tree	5	Yes	

Bamboo	200	Yes	
Shisham	100	Yes	
Jacaranda	100	Yes	
Ashok	25	Yes	
Neem	5	Yes	
Gulmohar	15	Yes	
Drumstick	5	No	High Speed Wind & Termite
Flowers planted on it own land:			

Name of the Plants	No. of Plants	Success	Cause of Failure
Hibiscus	15	Yes	
Lilly	7	Yes	
Rajanigandha	5	Yes	
Ekzora	4	Yes	
Almanda	5	Yes	
Tenery	1	Yes	
Gardenia	4	Yes	
Sujana	1	Yes	
Rose	20	Yes	
Zarbera	2	Yes	
Tikoma	1	Yes	
Salvia	2	Yes	
Dahlia	20	Yes	

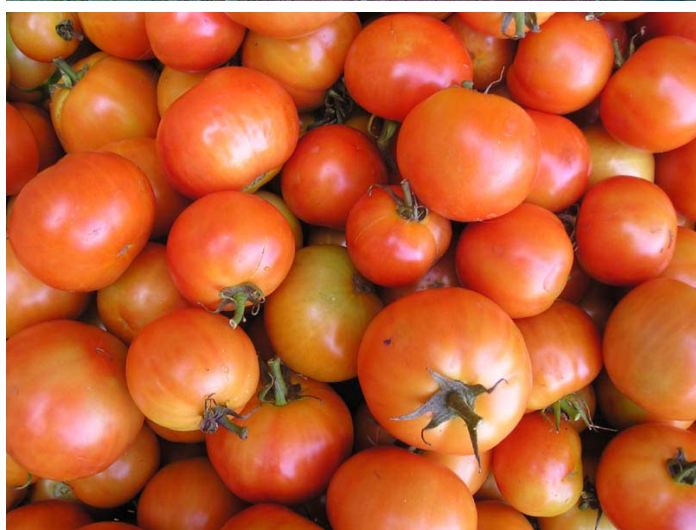
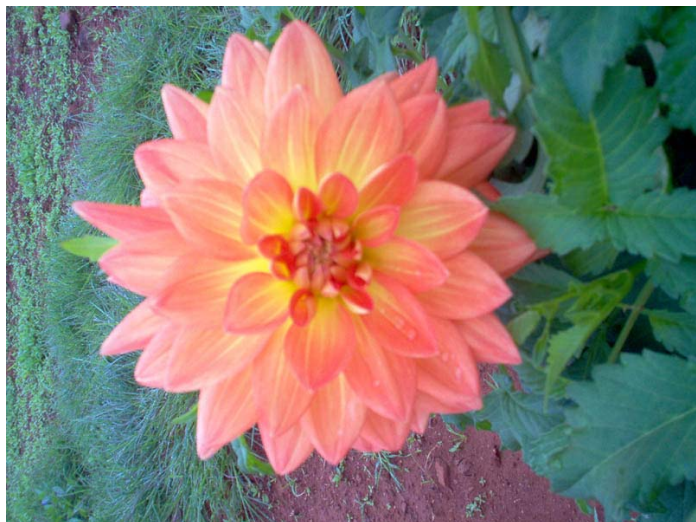
Plants distributed to the villagers

Name of the Plants	No. of Plants
Jackfruit	30
Blackberry	38
Mango	22
Others	200

Silver oak distributed to the villagers:

Name of the Person	Name of the Village	No. of Plants
Nakul Gauda	Girila Guda	100
Ravi Gauda	Girila Guda	50
Rabindra Gauda	Girila Guda	50
Purna Gauda	Girila Guda	50
Trilochan Gauda	Girila Guda	25
Bhagaban Jani	Lediguda	50
Purba Pukia	Lediguda	100
Rama Jani	Janiguda	150
Sunadhar Pukia	Janiguda	100
Taka Muduli	Ratamatiguda	150
Dambu Deulia	Ratamatiguda	100
Kesab Muduli	Ratamatiguda	100
Ravi Nag	Ratamatiguda	100
Padlam Muduli (Jr.)	Ratamatiguda	100
Balaram Muduli	Ratamatiguda	400

3. Kitchen Garden: Employed on daily wages, in addition to flowers, tribals help raise crops of green vegetables and spices for the use of AMSS volunteers and the meals of school children. This way



villagers learn to cultivate vegetables for their own need as well. Vegetable and spices grown on AMSS land include *ginger, turmeric, red chili, pumpkin, radish, brinjal, tomato, onion, bitter gourd, bottle gourd, papaya, cucumber, palak, cabbage, cauliflower, turnip etc.*

4. Bio Fertilizer:- As a matter of policy, AMSS uses only bio-fertilizers to grow their crops and plants. It makes an effort to train the villagers in the preparation and use of these. One formula of preparation from local farm materials is as follows.

1 Kg cow-dung + ½ liter cow's urine + 50 g jaggery, are mixed in 10 liters of clean water. The mixture is put in a clay-pot for 72 hours; 100 liters of water are then added to the mixture. This manure is used within 72 hours. Application of this fertilizer improves the yield as well as the quality of the vegetable crop.

Villagers who have adopted this preparation are very satisfied with the results.

5. Pesticides: - The other major component of organic farming is the utilization of non-chemical insecticides and pesticides. AMSS, therefore, uses and promotes the use of neem cake, neem oil, neem leaves, powder of tobacco, as well as other locally available natural pesticides.

6. Irrigation: - To conserve the resources of water and energy, since 2006 AMSS has continued the utilization of *drip irrigation* method rather than the comparatively wasteful mechanical techniques of spraying. Clay pots are buried next to the plant with only the rim of the pot above the ground. The pots have a tiny hole at the bottom. Pots are filled with water every few days. The plant sucks water through the hole as and when it needs it. No spilling, no waste!



7. Basic Health Care

AMSS stocks homeopathic and allopathic medicines for the use of its own personnel as well as the residents of the surrounding hamlets. This facility is available on a 24x7 basis. During the fiscal year, about 900 villagers used these facilities for myriad conditions such as cold, cough, fever, itching, loose motions, spasmodic abdominal pain, wounds, etc. The school children of course are treated for any basic conditions.

8. Sanitation and Hygiene

For the past 2 years, AMSS has targeted the surrounding community to develop awareness about sanitation and hygiene. The tribals are exhorted to wear footwear instead of going barefoot and to use designated places for excrement. It is mandatory for school children to wear footwear, and they are required to follow hygienic practices. The example of children is beginning to have a positive effect on the parents and other village dwellers. Much, however, remains to be done in this respect, and this is an important ongoing focus of the staff of AMSS.

9. Potable Water

Villagers had no recourse but to drink the water from the Kolab River Reservoir. AMSS undertook the provision of good drinking water on priority and helped install bore-wells with hand pumps in all the hamlets of the surrounding villages. As an ongoing necessity, AMSS gets all bore-wells cleaned before the commencement of rainy season.

10. Transport

Ever since the construction of Kolab River Dam and the Reservoir, many villages including Kechla have been cut off in procuring their meagre requirements from the town of Koraput. AMSS has provided one motor launch for general use by the villagers. An extra motor boat engine was bought by AMSS for a boat.

11. Telecommunication

AMSS uses cell phones for communication since there are no telephone lines to the remote area of Kechla. This facility has been made available to the villagers on basis of actual cost and a villager, Mr Shyama Pukia, is assigned to coordinate this task.

12. Alternative Energy and Electrification - Solar Lights

Being one of the most backward regions of Orissa, Kechla does not have electricity lines either. Observing the installation of solar panels and lights in AMSS building, the villagers naturally became desirous of lighting their homes, too. On AMSS's wide representation and solicitation, a beneficent Ms Krishna Sapru agreed to fund 120 solar lanterns for the residents of Kechla. Kechla certainly looks different at night now. AMSS is continuing its efforts to procure solar lights for more homes.



13. Clothes distribution – One truckload of clothes for free distribution were gratefully received by AMSS, Kechla, from Sri Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi Branch. These were duly given away to the villagers of Kechla on 12th May 2008.



14. Assets / Infrastructures

- In the month of November 2008 a solar street light was installed on the society's land.
- In the month of February 2009, two new boats from Vishakhapatnam were delivered for the use of AMSS.

15. AMSS's Future Plan

- Irrigation system for the plants on the Society's own land.
- Dairy and Full Poultry farming with the villagers on the Society's own land.
- Construction of a common toilet for the villagers and daily labour.
- T.V. viewing room for the old people in the village.
- Compilation of tribal folklore, customs, physiognomic data.

16. Visitors at Auro-Mira Service Society, Kechla

- May 22, May 2008 Mr. Subash Hota, I.A.S (Secretary, Department of Tribal Development, Government of Orissa.)
- July 4, 2008, Prof. Chandra Sekhar Rath.
- August 1, 2008, Ms Kari Bohr from Swizerland.
- August 1, 2008, Architect Manoj Joshi from Delhi
- August 4 2008, Mr. Rishi Kapoor, From Auroville.
- August 10, 2008, Mr. Arvind Kumar, From Bihar.
- September 7, 2008, Mr. Trevor from California, US.
- November 22, 2008, Mr. Manikando, from Auroville.
- January 4, 2009, Students from Jeypore College.
- January 1-5, 2009, Devendra Khuntia, from Sri Aurobindo Ashram Delhi Branch, New Delhi.
- January 16, 2009, Mr. Yog Raj Malhotra (Eng.), from Saharanpur.
- February 26, 2009, Mr. Tapan Kumar Sahoo (Eng.), from Angul.
- April 4, 2009, Mr. Achyut Das, from Agrabamee.

INSPIRATIONS

O Sweet Mother,

We intensely aspire for electricity, a school and a relic-centre to come up soon in this area, and may this place blossom beautifully.

– Shanti Pattnaik, Bhakta Niwas, Gandhi Nagar, Jatni, Khurdha, Orissa

This place is superb. I sincerely pray to the Almighty to bless Mr. Pranjal and his team, for a smooth implementation of his projects for the socio-economic development of the local inhabitants.

O Mother, I sincerely pray to you to encourage Mr Pranjal and his team.

– Subash Chandra Hota, Deputy Director-cum-Deputy Secretary
ST & SC Dev. Dept., Govt. of Orissa (Retd.)

This organisation has taken education to the cut-off areas of Koraput Block. They have also taken the local people on trips outside the state. They are training them to develop a forest in this area. I hope that within five years, this area will become a beautiful place.

– Balkrishna Hota, D.M & Collector, Koraput, Orissa

The selection of this place for the service of its poor inhabitants is really appreciable. It impressed me very much. I pray to the Mother to bless the team for still better achievements. All the members are indeed affectionate and hard working.

– Jayakrushna Jena

The maintenance team of the complex is highly dedicated, sincere, dynamic and devoted. They offer hearty hospitality to the visitors. The spirit of harmony, unity and cooperation is visible in their working. They exemplify the Mother's words: "WORK ITSELF IS YOGA IF IT IS DONE IN A SPIRIT OF DEDICATION AND SURRENDER".

The complex wakes up at 5.00 am with prayers, which continue till 6.00 am. Also, the evening time from 6.30 to 7.30, is devoted to singing and listening to *bhajans*, *mantras*, the Mother's Music, Savitri recordings, and sometimes, silent meditation. I enjoyed my stay and have been benefited by the

environment. I pray for the material and spiritual progress of the maintenance team and also of the surrounding population. I also pray that the development and progress of this backward tribal area may become an example to others.

– Y.R. Malhotra, Sri Aurobindo Bhawan, 42 Raj Vihar, Saharanpur (U.P)

During the short period of my stay here, I enjoyed the company of the sadhaks. The beautiful landscape, and the high and tranquil hills inspired my soul. It seemed to me that these hills aspire and await the advent of a new life upon earth. During this period, the magnificent way of the divine's working on earth (to some extent), was revealed to me. I pray to the Divine Mother to descend and manifest here with her full might.

– Tapan Kumar Sahoo, Quarter No. M-I / 15, Tamrit Colony, Angul – 759 122, Orissa

Kechla reminds me of a line from Savitri:

“All can be done if God touch is there.”

I feel obliged to the Divine Mother whose presence is felt everywhere in this place. I wish I could be of some use to this place.

– Prasad Tripathy, Matrubhaban, Cuttack – 753013, Orissa

Here is the living presence of Divine Mother.

– Brajamohan Behera, Coordinator N.L.E.T, Cuttack, Orissa

It is just wonderful. A beautiful and planned miracle of the Mother.

– Surendra Nath Dash, Coordinator South Zone, N.L.E.T, Orissa

When men created reservoir to separate Kechla from the mainland, The Ashram joined souls with its uniqueness. Marvellous efforts!

– Ch. Santakar, Correspondent, *The Hindu*