

## 2006-07 REPORT ON KORAPUT (KECHALA) PROJECT OF AUROMIRA SOCIETY

The Kechala Unit of the AuroMira Service Society (AMSS) was started in 2003.

Kechala is a conglomeration of several hamlets of purely tribal populace numbering some 1,400 souls spread over quite a wide region. Since the creation of a dam on the Kolab River, an extensive reservoir surrounds numerous pockets of rugged hilly terrain. The area was so backward that essential infrastructure for sustenance of basic life needs was non-existent. Thus no proper roads, no electricity, no potable water, no school, nor any healthcare facility whatsoever existed in the region when AMSS decided to adopt the village as its field of *karmayoga*, a necessary component part of the Integral Yoga *sadhana* of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Of course, the area is abounds in natural scenic beauty and clean unpolluted & bracing air.

The work and activities in Kechala can be summed up by the word KECHALA itself – K for knowledge, E for Education, C for Communication, H for Health, L for Livelihood and A for Awareness.

### K – KNOWLEDGE

As part of providing basic knowledge of their rights as citizens of India and as members of scheduled tribes, AMSS since its inception, has tried to make the village people of Kechala aware of their Rights, such as Human Rights, Children Rights, Women's Rights etc. Informed and encouraged by this sustained effort, the tribals have now begun to approach various government departments and to petition them for those benefits, per existing laws and statutes, to which they are entitled.

### E – EDUCATION

There is no School in or near Kechala. Everybody in Kechala is illiterate. Parents were not willing to send their children to school even in principle and even if they wanted to, they could not send them to distant schools because of the paucity of funds.

After sustained efforts by AMSS, some parents agreed to send their children away to boarding schools. AMSS approached Sri Aurobindo Education Society (SAES), New Delhi, which sponsors education of over a hundred children nationwide. Every year a few children from Kechala and nearby localities are being sponsored by SAES to study in Sri Aurobindo Integral Education Centres (SAIEC) with hostel facilities. All expenses for each child are paid SAES. The number of children at each school is given below:

1. SAIEC at Indravati , Nabarangpur – 11 (8 boys + 3 girls)
2. SAIEC at B. Malliguda, Nabarangpur – 11 (5 boys + 10 girls)
3. SAIEC at Banijhola, Raygada – 7 boys

Mr. Padlam Muduli, father of Sundru Muduli, village Kechala. "My child is doing his studies at Sri Aurobindo Integral Education Centre, Indravati, Nabarangpur. This time my child has stood second in standard II. I am very proud of my son. I am also thankful

to AuroMira Service Society as I feel that it is only because of the Society and the grace of the Divine Mother that all this has become possible. I am very happy.”

The Principal of SAIEC, B. Maliguda, Mr. Dasarathi Majhi, says : “All the children coming from Kechala are doing well. They are very disciplined and also adjusting. I am confident that they will do well.”



A sponsored child of B. Maliguda, Madan Muduli, s/o Balram Muduli says : “I am very happy here. The atmosphere is very good, teachers are friendly and the quality of food too is very good. Also, I like the teaching style of our teachers. I promise to do well.”

AMSS has also begun an adult education programme and hold evening classes for the villagers of Kechala. The focus is on their learning alphabets so that they can sign documents .

### C – COMMUNICATION

When the AMSS volunteers started working in Kechala, conditions for communication through transport were very poor. Kechala is a hilly area and by road it is at a distance of 80 kms. from the Head Quarters of Koraput Distt. The condition of the road is not good but has improved from before. There was a Ghati (valley) of about 2 Km near Kechala which was most dangerous for four wheeled vehicles. AMSS took the responsibility of building a 500 meter stretch of road and approached the Choudhury Trust (C.T.) for financial help. The C.T. was kind enough to provide necessary the same to AMSS volunteers. Now it is in good condition and is being used by tractors and trucks for transport as per the need.

Normally, the people of this area use rowing boats to reach the town for shopping and healthcare. But in cases of emergency where every minute counts, this mode is too slow. At AMSS’s reuest for funds to acquire a motorboat, the C.T. willingly came forward. The village people are very happy to have access to this potentially life-saving facility at their disposal.



### H – HEALTH

Residents of Kechala lack healthcare facilities due to their remoteness. Because the village is in the deep interior and reaching it is difficult, the

Govt. Health Deptt. tends to neglect it. It is not possible for the workers of the Health Deptt. to take care of the health of the total village, if they come only once or twice a month and go back the same day.

To improve the health conditions of the villagers, the Society has been providing First Aid Service for 24 hrs. daily free of cost. Also free medicines are distributed in case of spread of Malaria and other such diseases.

Every year, Health Camps are being conducted. This year it was held from Jan. 1, 2007 to Jan. 6, 2007. Team of experts included Dr. Debnath, Dr. Pradhan, Dr. Ishwaran and several volunteers from the Mother's Health Centre at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi Branch, New Delhi. The camp was started with a *havan*, a vedic process of purifying the environment. Nine villages were covered including Kechala. The no. of patients was 700 and the entire cost of treatment and medicine was borne by the Society.



The following villagers were covered :

- (i) Pondi, (ii) Putkaranga, (iii) Chenda, (iv) Nanjiput, (v) Karangen, (vi) Gulelput, (vii) Sirshi, (ix) Kechala.



Our eyes are one of the most important organs of our bodies. For people living in cities it is easy to take care of their eyes from the beginning because Doctors and Hospitals are easily available. But what about the rural people ? It is very difficult for people in remote areas, particularly such as Kechala.

The Public Health Centre (P.H.C.) is at a distance of 80 kms and the Hospital is also 12 kms. away. Therefore, the Society has been holding Eye Camps every year since 2004. The last was conducted in the winter of 2006 – 2007 during Nov. Dec. and Jan.

Testing of the eyes was done by Dr. Bijaya Kumar Acharya of NALCO Hospital,





Damonjodi, Koraput. Out of 42 cases only 22 were selected and of these only 14 were willing to undergo operation. Dr. L. Satapathy and his team from NALCO Hospital performed the operations and all expenses of boarding, lodging, travel and medicine were made by C.T. Follow up after the operation was done by Dr. Bijaya Kumar Acharya.

### L – Livelihood

In today's world one needs to generate income to sustain life. This remote area is extremely poor and as a beginning to help the residents of Kechala to earn their livelihood, a Self Help Group (S.H.G.) was started. The members of the S.H.G. are being shown how to save money by cutting down frivolous expenses, and how to invest their savings to boost their earnings. AMSS is also supporting them in the following ways :

1. AMSS is providing them with employment on its own projects.

2. Rather than growing paddy alone, we are also helping them to grow vegetables and then selling the same in the urban markets.



3. AMSS also provides the villagers facilities for starting Plant Nurseries and buys the plants back.

4. In this connection, we are also helping in afforestation through tree plantation. Under this programme, the Society provides to the villagers all the necessary inputs such as seeds, poly packs, Spraying Equipment etc. Also at the time of planting, the Society pays them on a contractual basis for digging and planting.

5. This year, with the help of Choudhury Trust, AMSS arranged for six hand pumps to be constructed in nearby hamlets of the village Kechala making drinking water available to the residents.

In all these different ways AMSS is trying to help the villagers in improving the quality of their lives. Naturally it is only a beginning.

### A – AWARENESS

From the start of its activities in Kechala, the Society found that the villagers being mainly tribals, the level of awareness among them was very low. They did not have the facilities of modern life such as electricity, phones, radio, T.V., clothes etc. Therefore, an Awareness Programme was started for them.

### 1. Use of Clothes :

The Society began by providing the villagers with clothes and then training them in how to wear them. But even after the training they wear the clothes in a funny manner.

### 2. Cleanliness & hygiene :

The volunteers of the Society themselves, with help of the villagers clean the roads, thus training them in basic cleanliness; advising them to wash their hands with soap before partaking their food; wearing chappals when going for toilet to protect them from worms and using boiled water for drinking purposes.

### 3. Use of Organic Compost :

Proper and regular training is being given to the villagers in preparation and use of Organic Compost on our own land and instruct them as to why this fertilizer is better than artificial fertilizer. Through discussion, they learn how to meet their own requirements of compost.

Apart from working for the development of rural areas, we are also developing ourselves by organizing and participating in other kinds of programmes as well.

The Society has been regularly conducting Value Education Camps for the teachers of Sri Aurobindo Integral Education Centres of Orissa.

A camp of 8 days was organized in Jan. 2007 by the Kechala Unit of the Society and the following people from Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch acted as Resource Persons:

1. Mr. Baren,
2. Mr. Pranjal,
3. Mr. Manish.

Other Activities of the Camp were :

1. Yogasana,
2. Shramdaan,
3. Swimming,
4. Rock Climbing,
5. Rappelling
6. River Crossing

The Objectives were :

- (a) Sensitivity to the Environment
- (b) Awareness of using waste material in teaching–learning process.
- (c) Dignity of labour
- (d) Self awareness and consciousness through meditation, introspection ‘question–answer session.
- (e) Integration of Values in Subject Teaching – courage, confidence, etc.



The activities included were :-

- (i) demonstration of how to teach creatively,
- (ii) how to develop values in students,
- (iii) how to involve and educate parents,
- (iv) Meditation, Drama and Role Play,
- (v) Environmental awareness through Campus Cleaning,
- (vi) Avoiding use of Polythene,
- (vii) Promoting of Arts and Crafts, Singing of Rhymes etc.

Normally, every year, groups of students from various schools come to spend their summer and winter holidays. This year too, a group from Mirambika Free Progress School, Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch, New Delhi, came and spent 7 days at Kechala.



Their activities were :

1. Shramdaan,
2. Trekking,
3. Meditation,
4. Games,
5. Awareness

All of them enjoyed and several times made good remarks about Kechala.

#### Visitors to Koraput (Kechala) Project during 2006-07

Foremost among the many visitors during this year was the two day sojourn of Prof. Manoj Das from Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. He conveyed his appreciation of the good work being done for the underprivileged and exhorted the young workers to keep the ideal of selfless work within the context of the Integral Yoga.

Also from Pondicherry Ashram, the visit of Shri Promesse Jauhar and Ms Vandana Gupta was very encouraging. They had some constructive suggestions to make as well.

A group of 20 persons from the distant Andaman Islands came to Kechala for a day to see the development work going in such a remote locality.

From Kolkata came Shri Shantanu and Kavita (a former student of SAICE, Pondicherry) to spend a few days in the bracing air and natural beauty of Kechala as also to observe first-hand the progressive work being done in this poverty-stricken area.

Another group from the Sri Aurobindo Integral Education Centre, Banijhola, distt. Rayagada came to spend one day. They participated in various activities in and around Kechala and left around 5 p.m. after tiffin.