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Theme paper on NCRI

The National Council of Rural Institutes (NCRI) was born out of the programme of action on National Policy on Education (NEP)-1986. This Policy had visualised a well-planned programme for rural institutions and an organisation for promoting rural education for advancing rural livelihoods. These programmes would be composite in character, combining programmes from the primary and secondary levels to diploma and degree levels. The guiding principles of NCRI are:

- The rural institutions are not envisaged as traditional institutions, but rather as a complex of institutions which seek to integrate all aspects of education and training with productive and creative activities spread horizontally across disciplines of science and technology, humanities and social sciences.
- The National Policy on Education-1986, inter-alia, envisages that the new pattern of rural universities will be consolidated and developed on the lines of Mahatma Gandhi's revolutionary ideas of education so as to take up the challenges of micro planning at grassroots level for the transformation of rural areas. Institutions and programmes that reflect the Gandhian ideal of basic education will be supported through these programmes.

This theme paper, while highlighting the objectives for which NCRI has been set up, attempts to look at the gap between the objectives and achievements. Along with this, this paper would also consider the action steps required for taking NCRI forward towards fulfilling its goals.

The objectives for which the council is established are:

- (a) to promote rural higher education
- (b) to develop institutions engaged in programmes based on the Gandhian philosophy of basic education and Nai-Talim and consolidate their networking
- (c) to encourage other educational institutions and voluntary agencies to develop in accordance with the Gandhian philosophy of education
- (d) to strengthen teacher training facilities for Gandhian basic education
- (e) to design a variety of courses at the tertiary level around emerging rural occupations
- (f) to strengthen the curriculum of all these institutions with emphasis on science and technology
- (g) to encourage field-oriented courses of rural institutes
- (h) to promote research as a tool for social and rural development
- (i) to promote extension services to these institutions through micro level planning
- (j) to advise Government of India on all matters pertaining to rural institutes as may be referred by it from time to time

NCRI was established to develop existing Rural Universities and to establish new Rural Universities/Institutes throughout the country. While this idea has been put on the hold, NCRI has been funding

various proposals received from different rural institutions, NGOs, etc., This brings us at this stage to the debate as to what should be the pursuit of NCRI now and in the future.

NCRI's mandate places emphasis on the following:

- (a) Rural higher education: Concept of rural universities
- (b) Functional literacy
- (c) Vocational education
- (d) Gandhian studies
- (e) Micro planning
- (f) Entrepreneurship Development
- (g) Networking: Linkage with various training outfits engaged in promotion of rural enterprises

In essence the objectives focus on:

- (a) Promoting, encouraging and supporting rural education (both Higher and School education), research, training of teachers at school level and extension activities – based on Gandhian philosophy.
- (b) Applying Science & Technology for rural development through institutional support
- (c) Consolidating, developing, and networking with institutions offering Gandhian Basic education.
- (d) Advising the Government of India on matters relating to rural institutes when referred by it.

It does not preclude suo-moto advice to Government of India

The Council

- (a) Can review the broad policies and programmes of NCRI
- (b) Suggest measures for improvement and development of NCRI
- (c) Has power to frame and notify Rules for all service and disciplinary matters (clause 28)

Powers and functions of the Governing Body, inter alia, include

- (a) To enquire into the academic and financial needs of the Rural Institutes (item No. viii)
- (b) To establish and maintain nodal and regional centers in India (item No. ix)
- (c) To enter into collaborations with similar organisations in India and abroad
- (d) To frame regulations for the administrative and management of the affairs of the Council

Function of Standing Committee on Basic Education

To identify suitable elementary, secondary and post secondary Institutions based on the concept of Nai-Talim, for recognition and support and recommend their funding.

The Planning Board

Inter alia, can recommend establishment of new Rural Institutes

Actions

- (a) Function as a 'Think Tank' on Gandhian philosophy of education, training and extension activities relating to sustainable rural development.
- (b) Prepare 10-year Perspective Plan for NCRI in envisaging at least Rs.100 Crores for the 11th plan.
- (c) Pursue technology capacity building for sustainable rural development through partnership approach involving Universities, Engineering Institutions, Industries, National R & D organisations, and Local Bodies.
- (d) Initiate project to network all major rural institutes via satellite and ICT applications for sharing of library and intellectual resources, and for working on Common National Projects.
- (e) Identify some major organisations – both in India and abroad for collaboration with NCRI
- (f) Establish linkages with UGC, AICTE, ICMR, ICAR, etc., for recognition of courses.
- (g) Evolve a sound administrative structure for the Council.
- (h) Strengthen the manpower/human resources and infrastructure of the Council.

Points for consideration

1. Redefining NCRI's charter
2. Defining the road map of NCRI in accordance with the changing milieu
3. Identifying, through a detailed exercise, institutions and NGOs involved in similar engagements
4. Circulating a new set of guidelines for project preparation among all stakeholders
5. Identifying such existing institutions of Gandhian basic education and Nai-Talim requiring support and encouragement and extend necessary support to give fillup to their activities and strengthening them
6. Promoting the setting up of new institutes to work towards rural higher education and livelihoods
7. Drawing up a 10-year perspective plan
8. Bringing about a reorientation in the approach and methodology of institutions so that they initiate proposals/take up projects with a focus on INCLUSIVENESS (While the institutions draw support from existing schemes and their own resources, any funding from NCRI should be for meeting innovative projects with inclusiveness as the main thrust. This requires a paradigm shift in the approach of the rural institutions).
9. A look at the various assistance programmes of NCRI (list enclosed) does not manifestly bring out examples of outcomes to examine the realisation of objectives, mainly due to lack of

information or feedback from client organisations. In the absence of a full time Chairman and staff, a schematic approach could not be evolved to conduct the affairs of NCRI in conformity with its objectives. As a result, ever since NCRI was set up in 1995, only a few randomly selected projects have been supported. *Ad hocism* ruled the roost. There is need for a systemic approach and well articulated strategy in guiding NCRI to achieve the higher ends for which it was conceived.

10. This approach also involves reaching a consensus with the obtaining the acceptance of various rural institutions to align with the network for building synergies with NCRI and to pursue and promote Mahatma Gandhi's guiding principles of education and development. There is also a clear need to sensitise people, notwithstanding several efforts in the past, to understand the efficacy and relevance of Gandhian line of thinking in our various approaches to development.
11. **Networking:** Implicit in the council's profile is the need for developing horizontal tie ups, interfaces and platforms for interaction with various institutions engaged in rural development. Such networking, besides providing feedback to the council about its own activity, would help in exchange of ideas, information, documentation etc. The council would be able to enhance its strength through networking. In a sense, networking goes beyond the present function of mere grants disbursement by the council; it embraces a catalytic role. To enable the council to perform this function, its role needs to be enlarged.
12. **Research:** There is a need to take up relevant research projects with a focus on action research. The findings of such projects will be helpful in fulfilling the mission of the council, especially in generating new knowledge and in promoting innovation. This will require strengthening of the organisation in terms of personnel and funding.
13. **Income generation:** There is also a suggestion from some quarters that the council should take up programmes to generate its own income, while continuing to support institutions through its funding mechanism. The suggestion merits further exploration.

Participants of First Round Table

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF RURAL INSTITUTE
SHAKAR BHAVAN, IInd FLOOR, FATEH MAIDAN ROAD
HYDERABAD – 500 004

LIST OF PROJECTS SANCTIONED FROM 22.11.1999 TO 24.11.2007

1. For taking up innovative programmes for the revival of Nai-Talim activities in Sevagram.
2. For taking up project for non- formal application of Nai-Talim at Community School level.
3. For taking up project for development of Nai-Talim and study of the present status of Nai-Talim Institutions in Gujarat
4. For taking up innovative programme for skill development.
5. For taking up a comparative study of environment and science teaching.
6. Environment and development education programme in rural schools.
7. For taking up training programme at work as individual requirement.
8. For the project on capacity building and skill upgradation.
9. For compiling a dictionary of Nai-Talim institutions in the country.
10. For setting up of rural institutes for basic education and Nai-Talim.
11. For establishment of resource center and for running of Samaj Swasthya Shilpi Scheme.
12. For preparing guidelines for teachers for making curriculum locally contextual.
13. To see that all children in the age group of 5-14 are enrolled in the selected schools.
14. For 3 years B.Sc. degree in Sustainable Rural Development.
15. For organizing workshop for craftsmen.
16. For promotion of psychological development of rural school children.
17. To conduct survey in selected villages in Pravaranagar for establishment of Rural Institute.
18. For developing and consolidating an action research center for extending the meaning of school education.
19. For the project “CWC appropriate education programme & Mass Production Material.”
20. For the project to preserve and publish basic historical material on Nai-Talim.
21. A project for collective effort to enrich artisan through education.
22. For starting a PG Course in Rural Development and Management.
23. Visvabharati, Shantiniketan CARRER
24. National Centre of Excellence on Human values, work culture and personality development in Rural Area & Employment.
25. Establishment of National Centre on Peace and Interfaith.
26. Post Graduate Diploma Course in Trade Transport and Communication (PGDTTC).
27. Post Graduate Diploma Course in Bamboo Cultivation and Resource Utilisation.
28. Certificate of Home Nursing.

29. For running of courses of MSW and MA (Rural Development) in Rajiv Gandhi P.G. College, Kotwa-Jamunipur.
30. Centre for Atmospheric Sciences and Weather Modification (Cloud Seeding) Technologies.
31. Interdisciplinary Certificate & Diploma Programmes in Rural Tourism.
32. For Basic Education Rediscovery Project-Consolidation, Analysis and Dissemination- phase IV.
33. Enrichment of Nai-Talim or Establishment of the Institute for Rural Development and Management.
34. For Setting up of Vinobaniketan Grama Vidyalaya Rural Institute, Thiruvananthapuram.
35. For Establishment of Rural Institute at Rahata..
36. To preserve and Publish History on Basic Education and Nai-Talim of the Lokbharati Gramvidyapith, Gujarat.
37. Sampoorna Bamboo Kendra.
38. Setting up of Machla Nai-Talim Senior Secondary School.
39. Centre for Silk weaving, designing, training and production at Muri, Ranchi.
40. Revamping Yantra Vidyalaya, Bardoli – A Rural Engineering training Centre for Training artisans, landless labourers and unemployed tribal youths on Nai-Talim Concept.
41. (Shikho Aur Badho) Learn and Grow through setting up of a Training Center and Farm for earthworms, bees, carpentry, production of gum & sealing wax and gardening.
42. Safe Drinking water supply to Rural Areas and Flourosis Control.
43. Gandhian Approach & Rural Development – An Action Research Project in Telangana Region.
44. For setting up of Gramodaya Institute Thakkar Bapa Gramodyog Vidyalaya, Bishnupur.
45. For the project to complete and write an analytical history of the constructive programmes of Mahatma Gandhi.
46. Proposal for upgradation of Center for Rural Studies.
47. For skill development and capacity building of rural youth for creating sustainable livelihood.
48. Study of nutritional status of the primary school students of selected villages by giving need-based supplementary nutrition.
49. (i) Socio Economic development of SC/ST Community through HRD on Gandhian lines and empowering with modern S&T Skills
(ii) Promoting extension services to the community through Micro level planning.
50. Vocational job oriented courses in rural areas.
51. Training, awareness and networking programme of empowering the bee keeper & honey entrepreneurs of Western U.P.
52. Establishment of Viswakarma Gurukul, a Rural Training Institute for training artisans, women and tribal youths on Gurukul pattern.

**Round Table -I
Recommendations**



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF RURAL INSTITUTES (NCRI)

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Recommendations by the Round Table Meeting/Conference held on 7th January 2008 at NCRI, Hyderabad

With a view to deliberate on the objectives, accomplishments and perspectives of the National Council of Rural Institutes (NCRI), a Round Table Conference/meeting was organised on 7th January 2008 at NCRI, Hyderabad. Apart from critically reviewing the working of the Institute by way of introspection, the aim of the meeting was to spell out strategies for framing and implementing an action plan. Secondly, the meeting was convened to define the contours of the goals of NCRI to fit into the XI Five-Year Plan in the light of Gandhiji's philosophy and its significance in the context of globalisation.

The following educationists, activists, thinkers and administrators were invited to share their views on how to go about charting NCRI's future course of action.

- 1) Shri P.V. Rajagopal, Member of the Governing Body and the Council
- 2) Dr. T. Karunakaran, former Vice-Chancellor, Gandhigram Rural Institute
- 3) Dr. Sudarshan Iyengar, Vice-Chancellor, Gujarat Vidyapeeth
- 4) Shri Sunil Kumar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India
- 5) Dr. S. V. Prabhath, Chairman, NCRI
- 6) Shri K. Satish Nambudiripad, Member Secretary, NCRI.

II. The deliberations of the meeting were centered around the following:

- Assess the work of NCRI and redefine the road map in the present context.
- Deliberate on the enlargement of scope of activities of NCRI.
- Consider steps to further enhance NCRI's support to revitalise rural institutions.
- Examine the need to set up new institutions.

III. Initiating the discussion, Dr S. V. Prabhath, Chairman, NCRI, welcomed those present and thanked them for accepting the Council's invitation and making it convenient to attend the event and explained, in a nutshell, the objective of the proposed Round Table. Stating that he had taken over recently, he said that he would be grateful to have guidance and proper guidelines for chalking out a roadmap for the Council for the coming years.

Dr. Prabhath explained the salient features of the Theme Paper that he had prepared and circulated. The impact of the projects supported till now needs to be studied for drawing new methodologies and approaches. He further pointed out that the functioning of Gandhian institutions, which were created in large numbers, was quite off the mark as their activities were being diverted and there is no patronage for and among them. In the current scenario, there is a need to create a database of good and credible NGOs and other Gandhian institutions working in the field of Nai Talim and related areas so that NCRI could network with them. The main objective of this meeting is to prepare a perspective plan for the next 10 to 20 years approximately.

IV. Initially, the idea behind NCRI's establishment was to set up a chain of rural institutions, strengthen their confederations, initiate their networking, and even set up a rural university. In the changed circumstances, the NCRI, should, in his opinion, take up the **4-Es**: Education, Entrepreneurship (development), Employment (generation activities) and Extension Service. The question of income-generating activities for the Council is another suggestion that needs consideration. The Chairman hoped that a similar interactive meeting which JNTU, Hyderabad, proposes to hold, on rural technology and related issues, would also provide valuable inputs in this regard. The NCRI, he said, is also planning to organise a national seminar of Vice Chancellors of all major Universities and educationists at Delhi in February 2008 to take the agenda further. The present meeting is being organised to debate the following questions and to arrive at feasible solutions :

What should be the road map for NCRI? Can the road map be viable if its scope is wide? or will it be rational for the Council to take up some identified projects and go ahead with them? whether the Council can attempt revival or resurrection of some existing institutions? or whether new institutions are to be set up?

Dr. Sudarshan Iyengar

After the introductory remarks by the Chairman, Dr. Sudarshan Iyengar, Vice Chancellor of Gujarat Vidyapeeth put forward his views. He pointed out that, as a stakeholder, NCRI should work not only for the rural people but also for those who have or have not benefited from NCRI.

Throwing light on the current situation in Gujarat with regard to Nai Talim, Dr. Iyengar said that there are around 600 schools, including residential schools (the basic character of Nai Talim is in the form of residential schools), and some similar institutions outside Gujarat also. The suggestion to constitute a separate board of examinations for all the Nai Talim institutions mooted earlier is yet to be accepted. However, there is a separate sub-head under the grant register for Nai Talim in Gujarat. But for that (separate sub-head), not much of Nai Talim is prevalent in Gujarat. There are still around 100 institutions which are doing good work in this area. Lok Bharati is one such institution, which at one point in time was being supported by NCRI. It is interesting to know that Lok Bharati had once refused to accept the grant. The students trained by Lok Bharati have become very good extension workers in the Gujarat Government. Apart from about 25 Gram Vidyapeeths, there is Gujarat Vidyapeeth, the only Deemed University in this area. But mainstreaming has spelt doom for these institutions. Even the B. Ed. colleges, which were supposed to produce teachers for Nai Talim, were not doing so. At the same time, politicisation of Nai Talim is another prevalent problem. They have reduced themselves to being schools of 120 students where each student gets a government grant of Rs. 410. Successive Governments support their proliferation due to reasons that are well known.

(The following is the write up that Dr. Iyengar has made available since then)

Dr. Iyengar made the following observations:

- Redefining NCRI's charter: The present charter is relatively well set. However, looking at the points down the line, concurring with some of them would lead to redefining the charter. The present charter lays more emphasis on higher education, whereas the Nai Talim concept should

be implanted from the school level. The report of the Working Group set up by the NCERT on Education to take the considerations further after the 1992 changes in the 1986 Education Policy, is worth considering. I would recommend that the Council organise a two-day Round Table on the Report and request Prof. Anil Sadgopal to make a presentation. The discussion would further help in redefining the Council's Charter.

- Defining the roadmap of NCRI in accordance with the changing environment: The milieu in our country has changed because of the development course that was chartered after Independence. It was a significant shift, but was farther from the Gandhian perspectives on development. Hence, we need to first settle the perspective issue and then assess the milieu, and only then try to define the road map.
- Identifying, through a detailed exercise, institutions and NGOs involved in similar engagements: Gujarat Vidyapeeth is already in the process of identifying institutions and NGOs. The Council and the Vidyapeeth should complement their efforts with each other.
- Circulating a new set of guidelines for project preparation among all stakeholders: This will automatically follow once the three above-mentioned points are settled.
- Identifying such existing institutions of Gandhian basic education and Nai Talim that require support and encouragement, and extending necessary support to give fillip to their activities and strengthen them: The efforts need to be made at two levels. One is identifying and supporting them through grants and helping them to conduct a thorough evaluation. The second, and perhaps more important, task is to hold consultations with the State Governments' Departments of education. It is the State Departments that have never bothered to lend support to basic education institutions, let alone promote further thinking.

Shri Sunil Kumar

Shri Sunil Kumar, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of HRD, Government of India, congratulated the Chairman for his initiative in organising the Round Table saying that humility and modesty are the basic requisites for any institution engaged in furthering Gandhian ideals and philosophy. He said that the purpose of the Round Table should be kept in mind while debating the points. "The purpose of the Round Table Conference is that we must draw up what is practically possible to achieve. However, the Round Table should not become a substitute to the Council", he said. Looking at the list of the projects sanctioned by the Council in the past, he opined that most of them are not even relevant to the aims and objectives of the Council. One reason could be the natural process of derailment that any institution encounters over a period of time, which the process of mid-course correction is expected to look into and rectify. A more serious reason could be the dearth of ideas which is unpardonable, as they are from institutions dealing in Gandhian thought, ideology and action plans. He gave an example of a proposal made by one of the Vidyapeeths that came up with request for grants. The institution could have obviously approached UGC or other institutions. He said that greater concern is of not being able to come up with revolutionary ideas.

Intervening in the discussion, Dr. T. Karunakaran pointed out that NCRI has completed 22 projects so far, of which many could have been funded by the ICSSR. While some of them were

related to artisans, 2 pertained to rural development centres, 7 related to Nai Talim and 8 were concerned with PG courses. In this regard Shri Sunil Kumar suggested a proper valuation based on well-defined quality parameters of the projects that have been sanctioned by NCRI and that a note needs to be prepared on what those project studies have been all about.

Shri Sunil Kumar further opined that there is no point in NCRI duplicating the efforts of other (similar) organisations. Very often NGOs approach more than one source for funding and as such care must be taken in awarding financial sanction. NCRI should be extremely exclusive and no projects which could be supported by other agencies need be sanctioned by NCRI. The Council should limit itself to handholding activities. It should not think of taking up projects on its own. Instead, it should get the projects implemented by extending the financial support or through outsourcing. Shri Sunil Kumar cautioned: “There is no point in internally strengthening yourself beyond a point because there is a cost involved in it and it is better to leave it to activists and outside agencies all those which can be got done through them.” He also said that the Plan size of NCRI was purposely kept small so that the number of applicants is maintained to a minimum. The bigger the size of the cake, the more the number of moths trying to get a share of that, he remarked.

According to Shri Sunil Kumar, the three things on which Gandhian education hinges are:

- i. the training of the intellect for the purpose of vocational education,
- ii. training of the body to acquire the skills of vocational education, and
- iii. training of the spirit.

Referring to the stress that the Gandhian stream of education had made on character-building, teachers as true role models and on teacher education itself, he suggested that NCRI should enter into a dialogue with NCTE (National Council for Teacher Education) to take up teacher education in a major way as teacher education is a basic kernel of Gandhian education. NCTE should be persuaded to take NCRI on their board to exert influence on matters of policy intervention, curriculum development, etc. Similarly, areas where NCRI can intervene, e.g., in Sarva Siksha Abhiyan or in the proposed Rashtriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyan (RMSA), also need to be identified. “You can also train and develop human resources for civil society working in the rural areas for running of Gandhian institutes, strengthening opportunities belonging to SCs and STs and empowering those activists,” he said.

Finally, he said that the Round Table should not become a one-time exercise. The process of consultation should go on and opportunities like the JNTU seminar and the one proposed at New Delhi, as mentioned by Chairman, should be properly utilised.

A document needs to be prepared on the basis of today’s Round Table that should be a living document, which NCRI should continue to draw inspiration from.

Dr. T. Karunakaran

The former Vice-Chancellor of Gandhigram Rural Institute, Dr. Karunakaran, said that the existing framework will not allow rural institutions’ work to flourish. The 14 rural institutes conceived and proposed by the Radhakrishnan Commission in its report were conceived as not to have any truck with the university system which was pursuing the Macaulay plan. However, out of the 14 rural institutes

so set up, Gandhigram is the only one which has been able to withstand the pressures of the changing times. Reviving similar other rural institutes could be one of the activities/ideas that could be taken up by NCRI. Preparing them for the changed times based on the requirements of the rural areas/experience and developing necessary course material could be taken up by NCRI. UGC shall not fund them as they do not form part of their pedagogy. Instead, NCRI should do that, he said.

Dr. Karunakaran also made a Power Point presentation. The salient features of his presentation are as follows.

According to him, there are three main issues:

- a) The globalisation challenge to rural products/agriculture. How does the knowledge sector intervene (S&TEM intervention)?
- b) Encouraging entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs to play a role in the rural sector, along with designing tools of micro planning linkages, and
- c) Inclusive approach: where to get started and what should be the delivery system.

The possible approaches, according to him, could be i) Knowledge connectivity model for rural economic zones (REZ); ii) Learning via Entrepreneurially Associated Practice Schools (LEAPS) as a learning model, and iii) Thinking in terms of agro-climatic zones – pick up the most backward region.

He also spoke at length about Rural Economic Zones, Bio Regional Community (federating 5 to 10 Panchayats), GLKC cluster level knowledge connectivity, and rural industrial clusters, (Panchayats Cluster or Growth Centre) for total employment and on the need for connectivity, physical e-connectivity, and energy business technology. Environmental monitoring and collaboration, SHGs and their federation, Cluster Administration, Precision Cultivation and value addition trades and other service trades also found a place in his presentation. According to him, the four-year vocational stream (could be five years as well) should have a technical skill component (like the Australian model) and the vocational stream is to be given preference over professional education and mobility across streams, as in Australia.

Strongly advocating the concept of a 'People's University' or a 'Regional Development University,' as against a 'Rural University', Dr. Karunakaran said that the word 'rural' is increasingly losing its meaning, as 50% of Gujarat and nearly 70% of Tamil Nadu are becoming urbanised. What is required in this regard are micro level planning, local resources to employment, techno-managerial cadres and innovative people's education technology (even for the unlettered). 'We need to understand the HR needs for industries and services and what is needed is semi-skilled labour at post-basic parallel vocational school, skilled labour through HS vocational streams and techno managerial cadres through university programmes. Along with the four tiers of education, as advocated by the Radhakrishnan Report, such as Basic Education (0-8 std), Post-basic (secondary) Education (9-12 std), Higher Secondary Education (11-12 std) and College or University education thereafter, a fifth level is also required, which may be called People's Education, which is currently missing. The present model of activity-based learning (as in Tamil Nadu) could be fine-tuned. True experiments with child labour alternative schools as followed by the Tamil Nadu-based businessman, Mahalingam of Shakti Sugar, is worth mentioning in this regard. The Farm School concept to fight avoidable mechanisation coupled

with earnings to the pupil's family (from NREGP), while learning is the need of the hour,' he said. He also spoke at length about the Denmark experiment, the Gandhian mode of vocational education and OTOP (One Tomo (Village), One Product). He also made a small presentation on Gandhigram Rural Institute of which he was the Vice Chancellor till recently.

Shri P.V. Rajagopal

While giving an insightful and incisive narration of the larger social realities facing the nation, Shri P. V. Rajagopal, in the true style of an activist, stated that as far as the larger scenario is concerned, two groups of people are demanding or fighting for the same set of resources – forest, land and water: Poor people for their livelihood and the corporates for profit. A veritable Mahabharata is taking place, he said. As far as the Government's own statistics goes, 172 districts are Naxal-affected and in another 100 districts, farmers are committing suicide. Out of 602 districts, in one-third of them, people are either killing or are getting killed. Soon their number may go up to 300. 40% of India is outside our purview, he said. Talking about the just-concluded Janadesh Yatra of nearly 25,000 people marching on foot to Delhi, he said that after 28 days of walking on road and living on the road, the Government finally says 'yes' to land reforms. There is tremendous scope of non-violent means of conflict resolution. Non-violence still works. Today we have responsibility to help and stand by non-violence to stop exploitation. But we need to reconsider the term National Interest. Whose National Interest? With the present model, where the native inhabitants are moving out of their localities in search of livelihood in cities, while multinationals take over their land, poverty cannot be eliminated by 2050. We are a land of hardworking people and abundant resources. Why not put these two together?

Education is the only way out; it should create a dignified space for livelihood. We cannot run a university without a school. Four of the most prestigious institutions – Vishwa Bharati, Kolkata, Banaras Hindu University, Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi – had their origins in basic education centres (schools). In this regard, his suggestion to universities was that each university should start a primary school under its charge. 'How can you impart higher education if you cannot run a primary school properly?' was his question.

NCRI should address the poor people. For this, a lot of resources are required. An Adivasi is asking for only three things: implementation of laws, proper running of welfare schemes, and finally, permission to keep his own land and resources. We also need to help and support institutions that are trying to promote economic development within the framework. It is suggested that NCRI may institute awards to institutions by way of recognition of their innovative interventions in rural development. The support need not be always financial; it can be done through documentation also. We need to interact with intellectuals, engage and consult them in the whole agenda of re-looking at national priorities. Places like Sevagram should become lighthouses of Nai Talim because they practice Nai Talim. If one or two centers can be developed like Sevagram for Nai Talim, we can have a base for meeting and taking the issues further.

Another important issue is that of positive reporting. Newspapers and journals need to be told about the positive things that are taking place and convinced to report about them. News reporting is not all about crime, violence and the lives of the glamorous. In this regard, he mentioned a recently-held

workshop for journalists from the South Asia. 'We got 20 journalists in all and they wrote about it.' NCRI too should work with journalists in similar fashion, he said.

Dr. Iyengar intervened to say that NCRI should take up policy advocacy in a major way. NCRI may get 95% of its work done through others. The rest, i.e., 5% of policy advocacy, should be done by NCRI, he suggested. Shri Rajagopal added that we could identify a few areas like networking, advocacy, etc., and according to our capacity and interest, we should take responsibility for running them. In this regard, it was suggested (by Dr. Karunakaran) that Shri. Rajagopal may identify 50 hot spot places and identify NGOs, which can be helped with their current activities. Wherever such NGOs are not available, effort should be made to nurture them.

Finally, Shri Rajagopal said what could effectively be summed up as the message of the Round Table: No use making suggestions and going back. But take something back and take it forward.

The meeting ended with Vote of thanks by the Member Secretary.

K. Satish Nambudiripad,
Director (MHRD) and Member Secretary, NCRI
January 14, 2008