

Background:

Patang has been running different innovative programmes for adolescents and young people in and around Sambalpur. Through our college programme Pathmakers, supported by National Foundation for India (NFI), we are working with student and non-student youth. Over the years, we have worked with hundreds of young people.

One of the feedbacks shared by our ex-volunteers is that Patang has instilled in them, a spirit of volunteerism and has taken them through a journey from indifference to influence. At the same time, they have also shared that Patang has been unable to provide them with the necessary support when they are keen on taking the first step and impacting the issues affecting them.

We were constantly reminded by our volunteers to fill this gap. In this background, we had a series of discussions with Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) and what followed from those interactions was more than encouraging. With support from VSO we decided to explore the possibility of promoting community-based volunteering in Orissa.

About the community- based volunteering project:

Patang with support from VSO India and implementing partner Pravah launched a pilot project in 2008 to promote community-based youth volunteering under VSO's National Volunteering initiative in Orissa. The pilot programme is now called "**Gunduchimusa/The Squirrel**". The programme encourages young people to volunteer and work in and with the community for a period of 3 months and implement a project.

In the pilot year we received 85 applications from 10 districts of Odisha and selected 12 volunteers through an intensive selection process. The Patang team provided the necessary support to the young volunteers in design and implementation of their projects. The projects were diverse and completely youth led.

The Squirrel programme:

The Squirrel programme encourages young people between 18 -25 years of age to volunteer and work in and with the community for a period of three months and implement a project. The young people are enrolled in the programme after an intensive selection process. Squirrel volunteers are encouraged to identify issues they are passionate about and develop projects to address those issues. The role of Patang is limited in the sense, that it only supports volunteers to think through the ideas and prepare a realistic plan of action. What makes this programme unique is that volunteers are placed in their respective communities and not with an NGO or an organization.

Why the programme is named 'The Squirrel'?

There is a popular story about the Indian Squirrel. According to a story from Ramayana, the great Indian epic, Ram was building a bridge to Lanka and a tiny squirrel joined the mighty army of Ram and started carrying some small pebbles to the sea. Ram was so touched by the gesture that he affectionately stroked the squirrel's back and the mark stayed forever for all to see. What appealed to us in this story is the **spirit of the Squirrel**. The love and dedication with which the Squirrel was engaged with the task, which was too big and challenging, inspired us very much. The motivation of the Squirrel to contribute without expecting any return made us to name the programme "The Squirrel".

We feel the young volunteers joining this initiative will carry the same motivation and spirit and will inspire others with their volunteering spirit and action.

The Squirrel programme design:

An outline of the programme design is given below.

Volunteer enrolment	Capacity building of volunteers	Volunteer placement of volunteers in the community	Visibility and advocacy of youth active citizenship	Alumni Network of volunteers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▣ Programme Promotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▣ Six – day long skill training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▣ Implementation of the Project in the Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▣ Publications ▣ Media coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▣ Creating opportunities to bring the volunteers together
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▣ Volunteer Selection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▣ Designing Projects ▣ Flagging off event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▣ Mentoring ▣ Mid review ▣ Four-day long skill training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▣ Newsletter ▣ Recognition event at the end of the programme cycle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▣ Providing learning and training opportunities

What the programme offers to the volunteers?

- ▣ A ten – day long training opportunity on lifeskills, project design and project implementation skills.
- ▣ A nominal monthly stipend of Rs. 1200/- for 3 months.
- ▣ A mentor during the placement period.
- ▣ Public recognition
- ▣ Interaction with like minded people and opportunity to build new relationships.

Strengths of the Squirrel programme:

- There are many young people out there wanting to volunteer and contribute to the society but are not getting a platform and necessary support to do so. The Squirrel programme provides them with soft and hard skills, nominal support to run the project, public recognition, guidance and most importantly the opportunity to interact and learn from likeminded young people.
- In most of the youth volunteering programmes young people are placed with an NGO. This programme is very unique in the sense young people are placed in their own community and are given an opportunity to undertake projects on issues they are passionate about.
- The programme design maintains a balance between reflection and action, and between individual journey and project delivery.
- The Squirrel volunteers get opportunities to hone their skills like – project management, report writing, budgeting, interpersonal skills, presentation skill, group work and leadership skills.
- This programme has the potential to revive existing youth groups and community - based groups. It also inspires people to demonstrate their active citizenship.
- The programme creates ample opportunity to engage with different stakeholders in society like media, parents, teachers, youth groups and youth programmes of the government like NSS and NYKS.

Conclusion:

Patang is running the Squirrel programme in orissa with support from VSO. However, this programme would have never been a success without the commitment of our volunteers and the support from parents and resource persons. Our sincere thanks to our local partners for promoting this programme and nominating suitable candidates.

We take this opportunity to acknowledge the trust and confidence VSO has shown in our work. Last, but not the least, congratulations to the Patang team for ensuring that justice is done to the programme design and delivery.

Thanks

Rita Mishra
For Patang

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“If our hopes of building a better and safer world are to become more than wishful thinking, we will need the engagement of volunteers more than ever.”

Kofi Annan

Large numbers of citizens who, day in and day out, through acts of volunteerism large and small, bring hope to so many of the world’s disadvantaged are never recognized. In this book, an attempt has been made to capture the journey of few such inspiring souls, who have contributed significantly to the well being of their immediate communities. We take lot of pride in introducing 12 such unsung heroes to you in the subsequent section. These young Squirrel volunteers who were part of the programme last year designed and implemented the following projects in Sundergarh, Sambalpur, Bargarh, Angul and Khurda districts of Orissa.

Projects undertaken by the Squirrel volunteers:

Sl. No	Squirrel Volunteers	Project Theme	Outreach		
			Direct	Indirect	Total
1	Nruparaj Mahananda	Creating awareness about Right To Information Act among young people	250	500	750
2	Siddharth Padhee	Setting up a Youth Resource Centre (YRC)	200	1000	1200
3	Jhasketan Bhoi	Improving academic performance through remedial teaching	100	700	800
4	Gourahari Chhura	Promotion of Alternate Magazines in the community	150	100	250
5	Uttam Padhan	Health care for domestic animals	2000	20000	22000
6	Ananta Mirdha	Awareness about Right to Information among villagers	150	500	650
7	Niranjan Hota	Sanitation - promotion of latrine use	300	500	800
8	Jauban Ku Bhoi	Setting up a library through a book donation drive	200	500	700
9	Sanju Mishra	Economic empowerment of women through SHG	400	1000	1400
10	Nirakar Mahakud	Awareness on Blood and Eye donation	1500	25000	26500
11	Nirmala Patel	Malaria prevention drive in the community	2000	2500	4500
12	Minister Barik	Promotion of Organic Farming	150	600	750
		Total	7400	52900	60300

It has always been difficult for us at Patang to quantify the efforts put in by a volunteer and explain what goes into making of a volunteer. We all know what it takes to work in our own community. Through the case studies given in the following pages, we wish to share the challenges, failures, achievements, learnings and excitement of these young people. When communities are breaking down, and there is so much unrest in the society, we hope you will find these true stories very refreshing, energizing and inspiring.

ଜାଗୃତ ଭୀମ



ଭୀମର ଶାଞ୍ଜ ଛୁକୁଡ଼ା ଶ୍ରେଣୀରେ ମହିଷିବାହୁ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ମନଦୁଃଖ ହେ ବସି କାନ୍ଦୁଛି ।

ହେ ଭଗବାନ ! ମୁଁ କିପରି ପଢ଼ିବାକୁ ଚୋରୁଛି ?
 ଏବଂ ଏହି ମାନକୁ ମୋତେ ଦେବାକୁ ଦାବି କରିବି ।
 କିଛି ଦିନକୁ ଭାବୁଛି କି ଆମକୁ ମିଳିବ ।



ଭୀମ ଭାବୁଛନ୍ତି ଶାଞ୍ଜ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ

ଭାବୁଛି ଥାଉ ! ମୁଁ କିପରି ଶାଞ୍ଜ ଚୋରୁ
 କି ମନ ଦେବି ? ମୋ ଆଉଁ ମୂଲ୍ୟକାରୀ
 ହିସାବ ମାନ କିଛି ଅଛି କି ?



ଏହି ଭାବୁଛି ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କୁ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କୁ କୁହୁଛି ।

- ପଢ଼ିବେଣା ଯଦି ଛୁକୁଡ଼ା ହୁଏ ।
- ଶୋଭା ହେବା ମାତ୍ରେ ଭାବୁଛି ଛୁକୁଡ଼ା ବ୍ୟୟମାନ ।
- ଚିକ୍ଚିକ୍ଚି ସମ୍ପର୍କରେ ଚାକା କରଣ ।
- ସୂଚକାରୀ ଗ୍ରୋହାହୁଏ
- ଭୁଲିତ ମାନର ଶାଞ୍ଜ ଛୁକୁଡ଼ା ଭାବନ



ଭାବୁଛି କି କଥା ମାନି ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ହେବାକୁ ଉପକ୍ରମ
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Uttam Padhan
 The Squirrel
 PATANG
 SAMBALPUR
 ORISSA .

Uttam Padhan



Uttam Padhan (26) hails from a small village called Tarakana of Bargarh district. After completing his graduation from Panchayat College, he decided to do his post graduation in social work. Very composed and confident, he has a creative mind and is full of energy.

Since his college days he was sensitive towards the problems faced by the villagers. He always felt a sense of responsibility towards them. He believes that good relationships and strong bonds create an atmosphere of happiness. He participated in many awareness campaigns related to health and sanitation in the vicinity of his village.

Says Uttam about his village: "Earlier our village was fractured. The people of one community were not participating in the social functions of others".

With the help of some of his friends he tried his best to bring back unity in his village. But it was easier said than done. Uttam could make out that first he had to make an effort towards breaking those shackles of stereotypes and prejudices and then help in creating an atmosphere of tolerance.

"In spite of the fact that 60 per cent people of my village are educated, they lack the knowledge of various issues related to health and sanitation. So I decided to do my best to generate awareness among the people," he says. While sharing these thoughts with his uncle, he came to know about Patang. His uncle Mr. Akshaya Nayak, who is the head of an NGO working in Bhatli, advised him to apply for the Gunduchimusa programme. Uttam made the best use of this opportunity and got selected as a volunteer. This became a stepping stone towards realizing his dream. On his first meeting with the Patang team he seemed very shy. But later on he grew more confident and responsible.

"The primary occupation of most of the villagers of Tarakana is farming and animal breeding. But majority of the villagers were unaware of various health hazards affecting their livestock. They had little knowledge about the animal health care centre and its utility".

The primary occupation of most of the villagers of Tarakana is farming and animal breeding. But majority of the villagers were unaware of various health hazards affecting their livestock. They had little knowledge about the animal healthcare centre and its utility. As a result, many of the livestock perished prematurely. Observing this grim situation, Uttam decided to conduct an awareness programme in the village. His

primary objective was to create awareness among the villagers about various diseases and to educate them of their preventive measures. He informed the villagers about the various nearby animal healthcare centres, importance of vaccination and how they could make the best use of it.

At the start of the programme, Uttam and other squirrel volunteers were given training for six days on project design and implementation. Here they were instructed how to carry forward various social research. He says: *“Instruction on ADDIE model and PSMART tool came very handy while doing the project.”* Then he planned his project and started his activities. He requested the villagers to assemble at one place and invited the block VS Dr.Dillip Panda to make the villagers aware on various issues related to animal health. Dr. Panda’s valuable tips on tackling various fatal diseases affecting their livestock were quite helpful to the villagers.

Uttam collected Rs.3500 from Patang and rest from the villagers and judiciously spent the money buying various medicines for vaccination and on check up of 600 village animals. The result was that the villagers were aware of various health hazards affecting domestic animals, and their remedies. Later on, as the conditions improved, villagers were keen on breeding of various animals.

Dr. Panda appreciated his efforts and encouraged him to organize such a camp again in his village. The future plan includes vaccination for all the domestic animals, making people aware of the significance of cleanliness, and raising a voice against atrocities being perpetrated on animals.

While dealing with all the above issues, Uttam not only displayed exemplary leadership qualities but also successfully influenced other youth of his village to undertake such work. In the process, Uttam has developed his confidence and social relationships. His efforts not only helped in nurturing better atmosphere for the animals but also led to discussions and co-operation among the villagers. The villagers now see Uttam as a person on whom they can rely upon.



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ମିମିକା ପଢ଼ିଲେ



Nirmala Patel

Nirmala Patel (21) is currently pursuing a course in nursing and draws her inspiration from the famous lady, Florence Nightingale. She did her graduation from Sundargarh Government College, Sundargarh. During her college years she participated in various social campaigns. But according to her, she realised her true potential when she came in contact with Patang, Sambalpur.

On her first contact with Patang, Nirmala says: "I got to know about it when I was at my friend's place. She was applying for Patang's Squirrel programme. When she was filling up the form, I casually asked her brother to give me a copy of the form. I sent my application and after few days there was a call for the interview. It was then that I met the Patang team." Before the interview she was quite apprehensive and worried. But when it happened she found it to be an overwhelming experience.

"I knew people would definitely say something to stop me but I also knew that I won't let it hamper my dreams whatsoever. Those stones on the way became milestones later on. And I am glad..."

Nirmala says that in 2007, she came to know from a health centre of the locality that about 50 people suffered from malaria that year. She set-out to find the real causes behind this health hazard. Nirmala was taken aback by the spread of the disease and decided to do her bit to stop it from spreading. That was the reason for which she titled her project 'Awareness on Malaria'.

Nirmala knew that things would not be as easy as they seemed. She will have to convince her parents and friends and take the initiative courageously. Stereotypes about girls and that they being the weaker sex was another issue she had to tackle. She was certain about her capabilities and potential. She wanted to explore them and do something for the society around her. She knew, it was only through her actions that she could convey the right message to the people. Apart from other challenges during her project, this was another challenge she had to deal with.

She visited the houses in the locality and interacted with different sections of society. She shared her ideas about the project she wanted to undertake. She discussed with doctors, Anganwadi workers, ASHA didi, Patang team and many others, about the causes and consequences of malaria. With the co-operation of Patang and others, she coordinated many meetings and health awareness camps. Prior to the meetings,

she would go to every village household and request the villagers to come and share their views on the prevention of the disease. Most of the villagers admired her for her hard work and dedication.

Some villagers however discouraged her and told her that it was sheer wastage of time. They said that the villagers were well aware of the causes and consequences of malaria and there was no need of doing something like that. Besides, when she discussed about the utility of using mosquito nets, some villagers discarded her views and made fun of her. Nirmala was quite sad and shocked when some of the doctors turned down her request to come to the awareness camps. It was unbelievable for her, how doctors could behave in such irresponsible and insensitive manner. They gave lame excuses and were reluctant to help the villagers.

Nirmala and other volunteers working under the Squirrel project were given a prior training for six days. For Nirmala this was a golden chance to learn many skills to deal with different issues prevalent in society. She learnt how to make use of cartoons to convey certain ideas. "By the use of cartoons, most of the difficult concepts can be very interestingly explained to even the uneducated masses," she says.

Talking about the success of her project, Nirmala says: "In contrast to the large number of persons suffering from malaria last year, only two persons have been identified to have the symptoms of malaria and my village is now enlisted under the government's malaria prevention programme." Nirmala is a totally different person now. She does not feel shy of raising her voice against any kind of evil practices and corruption prevalent in her locality. Her own efforts boosted her will power and confidence. Even for the villagers, she is someone on whom they can rely upon. She has also become a source of inspiration for other women-folk.



ଜୀବନ ର ମହ !



Siddharth Ku. padhee.



Siddharth Ku. Padhee

Siddharth Padhee is a young and energetic volunteer of Patang. He is the only son of his parents who live in Burla. On his life and education Siddharth says: "I have followed each and every sayings and words of my father. I have never gone against his will." Siddharth after his graduation wanted to do his post graduation in sociology. But his father wanted him to join an ITI and pursue a career in mechanics. Without having any interest in it, he joined an ITI in Burla, but his performance was not up to the mark.

When he was a student of NAC Collage, Burla, Mrs. Rita Mishra, the founder of Patang had conducted an orientation programme in his college. When Patang was formed Siddharth joined it with his fellow collegians. Being a volunteer he availed many opportunities and actively participated in various awareness programmes, like plantation, RTI, and gender equality campaigns, etc.

"All the members of the organization knew me personally and professionally, they had a lot of expectations from me; thus I decided to prove a point and not let them down."

On his experiences of working in the development sector, Siddharth says, "I got to know of various social issues and problems of people when I was a Pathmaker volunteer". In the month long exposure that he got working with MASS, Paikmal, he had an insight into the lifestyle of the tribals living in those areas. He became increasingly sensitive towards people living in those areas. He became more and more sensitive to the life of the differently able students after a visit to the deaf and dumb school at Burla.

When the office of Patang was at Burla, he used to be a very active volunteer. But later after the office shifted base to Sambalpur, Siddharth along with some other volunteers lost their flow they had earlier. But the Gunduchamusa programme again brought him in to the fold.

When he got a call from Malaya to apply for the programme, he responded with great enthusiasm. But in the meanwhile he was passing through a bad phase. He was mentally very disturbed. Nevertheless, he was selected in the interview. Siddharth on this says, "all the members of the organization knew me personally and professionally, they had a lot of expectations from me; thus I decided to prove a point and not let them down."

Till the end of the first phase of the six day training, he had little clue of the project. But after consulting Ms

Rita Mishra, he decided to work towards setting up a Youth Recourse Centre (YRC) at Bula. He was helped by Mr. Liam O'Leary, a VSO volunteer placed at Patang in designing the project. Before moving forward, he met his friends who were with him in the SMILE and the Pathmaker programme. After a lot of discussion he prepared a to-do-list for the YRC. Armed with the to do list he began interaction with youth and children of his community.

He set out with his friends and mobilized the students of NAC College, Burla. He also mobilized the youth who had dropped out of school due to various reasons. Initially it seemed to be an arduous task to bring different sections of youth under a single umbrella. Especially to take the girls into confidence was a tough job. Fortunately Bishnupriya, another volunteer of the organization helped out by convincing the girls to come to the YRC.

Children now are regularly coming to the YRC and are learning painting, drawing, singing, dancing, mask making, handicraft, recycling waste materials, like making paper bags, greeting cards etc. They do also participate in various social functions like Burla Lok Mohotsab etc. and are able to display their talents in various fora. These children are being recognized in society.

Now Siddharth has a respectable image in Burla town. People know him and recognise his talent. He feels greatly humbled when he listens about the achievement of the YRC. But his family members still have concern about the future of their son. Siddharth names this journey "from me to we", as he is actively contributing in the formation of an ideal society.



ମୋର କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ



Neuparej Mahananda
(Squirrel Volunteer) PATANG



Nruparaj Mahananda

Nruparaj was firm in his belief that he would not let the corrupt officials and service providers go scot-free. Such incidents which were commonplace in his village aroused Nruparaj's interest to know everything about RTI (Right To Information) Act. This led to his decision to spread awareness about the power of RTI Act, which would in turn bring transparency in governance leading to development in his village.

Nruparaj Mahananda, (21) is a youth hailing from a small village called Balitikira of Bargarh district in the backwater of Orissa. After primary education, he joined Navodya Vidyalaya for further schooling.

He is a budding poet having a great passion for dance. In his free time he teaches kids belonging to underprivileged families. He spends his leisure time indulging with them; listening to their problems and guiding them towards better tomorrow.

"There were many people like the ration dealer, contractor and public servants who were looting the public money. But, none of the villagers dared to raise their voice against the culprits. I was aware of the situation, but did not know what to do."

In the final year of his graduation, Ashit, one of his friends informed him about Patang and persuaded him to attend a meeting organised by Patang. During the initial days with Patang he was very confused and could not open up. However, various activities like workshops, meetings and camps at Patang led him to self introspection and he decided to go for a month long exposure visit. The experiences during the visit with Antodya, Kalahandi were the golden moments of his life, in his words "those memories are still vivid and colorful in my mind".

From the various meetings that he attended in Patang, he had gained considerable amount of knowledge on RTI Act. He was also aware of the fact that the majority of the villagers knew nothing about the Act. Some had not even heard about it, while some had very little knowledge about it. He shared his concerns with the Patang team and explored possible ways to address them. During the course of the discussion he was motivated to work on the issue of accountability.

It was Nruparaj's innovations and missionary zeal that made things easier and appealing. With the help of cartoon strips, screening of films on RTI and street plays and folk songs he could reach out to the villagers and young people in colleges easily. These activities became mediums to kickstart debates and discussions and to spread awareness among the youth. He visited different colleges in Sambalpur and organized

meetings, workshops, etc. At the outset, he was slightly nervous and apprehensive of addressing the college students. But, gradually, as the visits became more frequent he grew in confidence and it turned out to be an experience in itself.

During the course of the journey he had to face many challenges, which he says, “are part and parcel of any learning process.” On the contrary he became more resolute in his resolve. A major hiccup occurred when the village sarpanch tried his level best to stop Nrupa on his track. In order to de-motivate him, he visited Nrupa’s parents to complain. Nrupa explained the matter clearly to both the sarpanch and his parents. Nrupa’s parents were very proud of their son’s initiative.

A similar incident happened, when he went to the BDO office at Barpali to file a RTI application. The officials there tried their level best to misguide him. He was asked many irrelevant questions. One by one, he approached all the officials for redressal of his grievance but in vain. After a long tiring day finally his effort bore fruits and he was attended by the BDO himself. Nruparaj expressed his concern and explained about the plight of the villagers. The BDO then realized that, Nruparaj was misguided and unsuccessfully bribed by the officers. Within a week’s time his RTI application was filed.

All these incidents strengthened his morale and gave steel to his confidence. Nruparaj continued to strive hard and did all he could to stop the irregularities taking place in and around his village. He became a source of inspiration to the community who later joined him in this noble cause and in other similar activities for the betterment of their village. Nruparaj is presently doing an internship programme with Samabesh, Bhopal after being selected in the YFD programme of Pravah, a Delhi based NGO. He is doing a research on school dropouts and on children living in the slums of the urban areas.



ବହିର ମାହୂର



JAUBAN BHOI
SBP



Jauban Bhoi

Jauban Kumar Bhoi (18) is a student of G.M. College, Sambalpur. He is pursuing his graduation in economics. In the first year of his graduation, he got an opportunity to attend an orientation programme, organized by Patang. He met like-minded people and shared his ideas. Later, he joined the “Pathmakers programme” as a volunteer. During his association with Patang as a volunteer he learnt about the newly launched Squirrel programme for young people. .

Jauban had a dream to set up a library for the underprivileged students, where they could read, discuss and share books. Jauban recalls, “Initially, I had no clear idea about the project, but the team members of Patang helped me in coming to a conclusion on this.” He sets his primary goal to collect 3000 books by visiting different colleges, organizations and individuals. His unwavering determination and profundity always led him to the fore. He would go to different schools and colleges in Sambalpur and share his idea of setting up a library. He would then try to convince them to donate books, magazines, journals, etc.

“They were thinking that I would take the books and sell them to the kabadiwala.”

Prior to the project, he discussed his idea with his friends and parents. Everyone was happy with the idea. But his parents were apprehensive about his studies. However, Jauban assured them that he would give equal attention to both studies and his passion. Schools and colleges provided lots of help and admired his endeavor. He remembers how motivated he felt when he was applauded by Mrs. Prathiva Devi, a teacher of Town High School, Sambalpur. People donated magazines, old books and some even purchased new books for the library.

The path was not as easy as it seemed. There were many hurdles that Jauban came across. Initially, when he went to Guru Nanak Public School of Sambalpur, the authority told him to come afterwards. On his second visit, they did not give him the permission to even interact with the students. But, Jauban never let his spirit down. In other instance, some of the people whom he visited were doubtful about his truthfulness. Jauban sadly reminisces, “They were thinking that I would take the books and sell them to the kabadiwala.”

He tried to convince them in all possible ways, but his efforts seemed futile then. Jauban says, “I was prepared for these kinds of obstacles since the beginning of the project.” For him these setbacks gave him new zeal and allowed ample opportunity to improve. Jauban also visited different hostels of colleges and universities situated in and around Sambalpur. “In some of the hostels the boarders listened to my views

patiently, while some did not even pay heed to it.” In one of the schools one student came with an interesting book. Jauban was greatly impressed with that gesture. His efforts not only encouraged others but also sparked out his own creativity. To encourage the students he used cartoons and leaflets. Besides, he also distributed one pen each to the students who helped him in collecting books!

Initially, Jauban had many doubts in his mind. “Will I be able to collect the required number of books? What will I do if no one gives me any book?” All these questions left him perplexed. But, he was encouraged by the Patang team especially by Bhumi and Liam. Throughout his journey, Jauban got a chance to build his social skills. He became more confident, sensitive and creative.

Within two and a half months he collected about 2000 books. It was really a joyful moment for him. He then started looking for an appropriate place to set up the library. After discussing with his friends, he decided to establish the library at Burla. The library is now attached with Siddhartha’s (another squirrel volunteer) project ‘Youth Resource Centre’. It is a lively place now. Jauban brought new hopes for many like him. It was not just the books that led him to success but his commitment, sensitivity and passion that made his dream come true. His ability to lead others and to motivate them towards sharing brought about a significant impact in the community. The library has now become a hub for many youngsters. It has become a source of learning and entertainment. In words of Sandra Day O’Connor, “We don’t accomplish anything in this world alone ... and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one’s life and all the weavings of individual threads from one to another that creates something”

Jauban is still engaged with Patang team and the journey continues.....



ପ୍ରଗତି ଆଡ଼କୁ



Saryu



Sanju Mishra

A lot has been said on women empowerment but I wonder, 'Are women really empowered?' What we need to do to empower our women. I believe that imparting education is very essential but more significant is the empowerment of their thoughts and personality. They should be self-reliant. They should have equal rights during decision making process in the family and in society. Some people think that household work is no 'work'. I disagree.... In fact, managing household chores and child bearing and rearing is a very responsible task. They should be valued, respected and loved."

These are the inspiring words of 23-year-old Sanju Mishra who strongly feels about the importance of gender equality and the vital role it can play in everybody's life. Sanju belongs to Bargarh district. She works with the 'Krushak Sangathan' and actively participates in various social campaigns like migration, Jal Jiban, Jangal Bachao Abhiyan etc. She is the youngest in her family, who courageously voices her thoughts and challenges the stereotypes of male dominated society.

From a very young age she could clearly observe the discrimination happening between a boy and a girl. Somewhere in her heart she knew that this inequity was impeding the overall growth of a girl's personality. The girls deserve respect and encouragement from their family and society.

Lingaraj dada, a farmer leader of Bargarh, is a great source of inspiration for her. He guided her through thick and thin. It was from Lingaraj dada that she got to know about the Gunduchimusa programme. Earlier Sanju was quite prejudiced about NGOs and the kind of work they do. She believed that most of them are making money and are not working for the real cause. But when she came to know about Patang she looked forward to meeting the team. Sanju recalls: "Lingaraj dada told me that Patang is an organization which works for the development of the youth and is actively initiating programmes on youth development issues, so I decided to apply for the programme."

When she came to know about the selection for the squirrel programme, she immediately decided to work on the skill development of women of her community, which she had planned earlier. The ten-day long training conducted in two phases by Patang enhanced her skills in dealing with different situations. Besides, she also came in contact with a group of young people who were enthusiastic and ready to take on the new challenges. This gave new ray of hope and she began her work.

She decided to work with the women of Khuntpali and Gobindpur villages of Bargarh district. Those women did not have the freedom to go out and work or socialize. The community was male dominated and the men folk did not really respect them or pay heed to them. Their only task was to manage the house, bear

children and cook for the family. The educated ones, also, never dared to step out of the house. They were not allowed to participate in decision making on issues related to their community. They even did not know the names of other female members of the community who lived in the neighbourhood.

Sanju found it really sad and overwhelming. She wanted to do something for them. She wanted to break those fetters of chauvinism and create an atmosphere of freedom and respect for one another. Her first step was to talk to those women at individual level, listen to their thoughts, help them in articulating their views, befriend them and make them recognize their true potential. She hoped that they would realize their true identity and that they play an equally important role in societal affairs, as men do.

Initially, she was challenged by few male members of Khuntpali village, who, not only made fun of her but discouraged her efforts. Nonetheless, Sanju was quite sure about the way she would try to redress the problem. She visited door to door and tried to convince the head of the family of every household. She shared her views with them and encouraged them to reflect.

She organized meetings and discussed with women on various topics. Initially, she had to break the ice, so that women could freely talk among themselves without any hesitation. The frequent meetings with the members gave her an idea about their life style and their opinions on different matters. Gradually, those meeting became a routine and a bond developed amongst them. They interacted with each other, contemplated and shared their problems.

Sanju then, thought of giving them some vocational training which could enhance their skills and boost their self confidence. She trained them in making different things like soaps, coconut oil, papad, etc. She invited some trainers who taught them to make various household articles. Such training helped them in learning a talent, which later became a source of income for them.

Later, she wanted to exhibit their work in the village and make them feel appreciated for their hard work. She decided to organize a mela in the community. It turned out to be really good. Many people gathered at the school play ground of Khuntpali village. She invited Gramya Bank, State Bank officials, Anganwadi workers, ASHA didi, and many others. The whole school staff including the students applauded the leadership and courage of Sanju.

Presently she is engaged with Kishan Sangathan and in future she wants to work on issues around health and education.



କରତବ୍ୟ

ନିଲୋଚ୍ଛ ପାଠି ଚାଁ ହୁ

ଆହେ! ଦେଖିବେ! ସାଙ୍ଗି ଭ...
 ଛୁଆମାନେ ଖାସି ଖେଳୁଛନ୍ତି ସବୁବେଳେ
 ଭିନ୍ନ ହେଲେ ଭିନ୍ନ ଭିନ୍ନ ଭିନ୍ନ
 କେତେ ହେବା...?



ଯେତେବେଳେ ସବୁ ସାଙ୍ଗିମାନେ ଚଳୁଛନ୍ତି ସେହି

ଆମେ ସବୁଦିନ ଦେଖୁଛୁ ନେ,
 ଯି ଛୁଆମାନେ ପଢ଼ିବାକୁ ଯାଉଛନ୍ତି ସାଙ୍ଗି
 ଖେଳୁଛନ୍ତି । ତି ଆମେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଫାଁ ବାପା
 ସାଙ୍ଗେ କଥା ହାଲୁମା, ନେହେତ ସେମାନେ
 ବହୁବଦ୍ ହୋଇଥିଲେ ।



ଆଜ୍ଞା ନଗସ୍ଥା, ଆମେ ଛୁଆମାନଙ୍କୁ
 ହିସ୍ତୁ କେନ୍ଦ୍ର ନାହିଁ ପଠାବା, ଯଦି
 ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ହେବା ତାହେଲେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ
 ଭିନ୍ନଭିନ୍ନ ହୋଇନା ।

ଛୁଆମାନେ ଚଳୁ
 କରୁଛନ୍ତି !



ମାଁ, ବାପା ଛୁଆମାନଙ୍କୁ ହିସ୍ତୁ ପଠେଇଛନ୍ତି ।



Thasaketan Bhoi
 [SQUIRREL VOLUNTEER - PAPANJ]



Jhasketan Bhoi

Jhasketan (20), a young graduate from Larambha College, belongs to a farmer family in Nileipali, Bargargh in the state of Orissa. He is a dynamic and energetic youth with compassion for the downtrodden. When he heard about Patang and its work, he felt it was something that might interest him. In between, he came to know about the Squirrel programme from his cousin who was associated with Patang. After going through the programme overview he became very excited and decided to apply for the programme. Before that, he was looking for a job. He found the selection process innovative and interesting and during the process decided that if he gets selected, he will not miss the opportunity.

Jhasketan is a great drummer and he spends his leisure time by singing and dancing. He is a strong believer in the saying, "Live and let live". He says: "This value was inspired by the headmaster of my village school and thereof sometimes volunteering in school without any purpose."

According to him the village school was awfully under-staffed. A single teacher used to shuttle between several classes. The students were abysmally poor in their academics. But what disturbed Jhasketan the most was the total callousness of the parents and peers towards the plight of their wards. He was very keen to do something for the children. At this very juncture he was picked up as a Squirrel volunteer and immediately decided to use the programme to ameliorate the academic condition of his village.

The training opportunity at Patang helped him in his mission. He was able to design a concrete project on the academic improvement of the children with the knowledge gained from ADDIE and PSMART modules. He also learnt how to involve young people from the community in the project. He feels the sessions on leadership style and team work came very handy in this regard.

He conducted a baseline survey with 22 students from VI standard. He used different creative methodologies for their academic improvement. He shared that Debashis and Malaya helped a lot in this endeavor for innovative teaching. Bhumi conducted a few sessions that helped in the teaching learning process.

To instill a sense of social responsibility among children he organized activities around safe and clean environment. He organized a door to door campaign with students on the importance of education. He met with parents whose children had dropped out of regular schooling. According to Jhasketan, the post test

showed a positive movement in the academic performance of the children. There has been a marked improvement in their confidence level. Now they are able to ask questions in the class and interact with teachers. They are taking part in different activities in the school and village. The most important thing is that through his intervention he has been able to build the confidence of senior class to teach their juniors. The students have passed VI standard and have fetched good marks. Now they are motivated towards higher education.

Jhsketan feels the journey has changed him in many ways. He says, "now I am gender sensitive and much more comfortable in talking with girls. He says, "because of the confidence and skills I have gained from Patang, I was able to get my current job as a medicine representative on my first try."

We hope he will remain an active citizen forever and volunteer his time and skills for the betterment of the society.



ପଢ଼ିମଳ ସ୍ଵପ୍ନା ଜୀବନ ରାସା



Néranjan Hota
(Squirrel volunteer) PATANG

Niranjan Hota



Niranjan Hota (21) from the Kundanali village of Angul district loves writing satiric poems, listening to songs and reading books. He will remind you of the famous Orissa poet Faturananda. For his entertaining qualities, he is hugely popular amongst his friends. On the other hand, he nurtured a deep sense of love for his village and is greatly sensitive towards various problems of his village. He writes and recites poetry to create awareness on health issues, especially sanitation. He is an engaging speaker and highlights difficult issues in a simple but effective manner.

Niranjan, right from his childhood, was active and carefree. During his graduation in Kishornagar College, Angul, by associating with the NSS, he had acquired skills and knowledge about various social issues. For his dynamic leadership and activism, he was awarded as the best volunteer in the college. It was then that he came in contact with Bhumi didi and Sachi dada (Patang team members) who were there to facilitate some sessions in an NSS camp. From that day onwards, he kept in touch with Bhumi didi. One day, he was informed about his selection for the Gunduchimusa project. He says: “It was really a pleasant surprise, as there were many candidates available who were more qualified and experienced than me”. He then zeroed in on a burning issue facing his community – sanitation - and decided to work on it through the project. He could observe that the villagers owing to their illiteracy and abysmal economic condition were ignorant about the basic need of sanitation and consequently were oblivious to the lurking danger of serious diseases. The entire village was using the vast open field surrounding it as their toilets except the rich few who had latrine in their houses. But, for the poor, having a latrine was a distant dream. Forcing them to use the open field, which was not only embarrassing but also causing pollution. This was the cause of various diseases afflicting the villagers. He decided to educate the people of the significance of using latrine and consulted the team members of Patang. The NSS team of his college had already done some ground work on making latrine in his village. Niranjan visited his college to interact with teachers and friends. His next step was to bring the village womenfolk into the loop. As part of his plan, he associated a SHG group of Biluasara, a neighboring village and with the help of sanitary mission, Athmallik and the local sanitary information officer, allocated responsibilities to the villagers.

“It was really a pleasant surprise, as there were many candidates available who were more qualified and experienced than me”.

Initially, he planned constructing 100 latrines in his community but thought it was not feasible within the stipulated time of only 3 months. Then he reviewed his plan and reworked his strategy to meet the deadline.

To convey the desired message lucidly to the villagers, he organised meetings, held demonstrations. However, paucity of fund was a huge constrain. He informed the villagers of the various government run schemes under which the BPL families of the village could get monetary assistance from the block office and various banks. The villagers needed to contribute their manual labour only. With the effective use of cartoons, he was able to successfully convince the villagers about the absolute necessity of toilets in their houses. He along with the willing lot of his villagers, consulted the contractor and block officials and started work. About 32 latrines had already been constructed so far with his inspiration.

The project gave him a platform to hone his skills and build his confidence. Besides, it helped him in eradicating a major problem of his own village. Niranjana had the requisite skills and knowledge but needed a lot of guidance and mentoring which were duly provided to him by Patang. It gave him an opportunity to visit different government departments and to interact with like minded people working in their own communities.

The villagers got in Niranjana, who helped them in shaping their lives in a better way, a friend, philosopher and guide. They realized the value of leading a safe and healthy life which they thought to be out of their reach not long ago. Niranjana is now a well known face in his community.



ବିକଳ ପତ୍ନୀ-ଜୈବିକା କୃଷି

ପୁରୁ ପୁତ୍ରୀଙ୍କୁ ଶାନ୍ତ ଭାବେ ମଧୁ ଆଧୁନିକ ପ୍ରଣାଳୀରେ ଉତ୍ପାଦନ କରିବାକୁ ଚଳା ପାଇଁ ଯୋଜନା କରା ଯାଏ ।

ମଧୁ ଆଧୁନିକ ଚାକ କରୁ ଉତ୍ପାଦନ କରୁ ଯାଉ ତ ଚାଷ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଣାଳୀ କରା ହେଲେ ତଥାପି ଯଥାକ୍ରମେ ସୁଖିନୀ ଦେଖି ଆସିଲା ନାହିଁ ଶୋଷଣ... ..

ଏହାକୁ ଭଲ ଭାବେ ନାହିଁ । ବ୍ୟାଙ୍କରେ ଚଳା ଚାଷ୍ୟ ପାରିବାନାହିଁ କିଛି ବିନା ପଣେ ବ୍ୟାଙ୍କ କର୍ମଚାରୀ ମାତ୍ର ମା ସୁଖେ ।

ମଧୁ ପୁତ୍ରୀଙ୍କୁ ଉତ୍ପାଦନରେ ଉତ୍ସାହ ଦାସ କରି ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟରେ ତା ପରିବାର ସହିତ ହିସାବରେ ପୁରା ଆଧୁନିକ ଉତ୍ପାଦନା ଆସନାକୁ ଯିବି ଯିବୁ ଦେବା ଯା ସୁଖେ.....

MINISTER BARIK



Minister Barik

Minister Barik (26) has keen interest in organic farming and is very much sensitive towards protecting the environment. He loves to read books and journals related to farming. He lives in Sulsulia village of Bargarh district. He thought of making people aware of the dire consequences of modern day farming where they use chemicals and fertilizers in huge amount. In other words, he promotes organic farming in his community.

He is quite social in nature and loves to interact with people around him. He believes that whatever he does should be useful to the people around him. During his college days, he participated in various NSS camps and had gone out for collecting old clothes, books, etc. for the needy. Besides, during emergency situations like flood, he visited the flood affected areas and had distributed ration, clothes, etc. to the needy.

It was from Lingarj dada, a farmer leader of Bargarh, that Minister came to know about the Gunduchimusa programme of Patang. It was he who inspired Minister to visit Patang team and share his ideas with them.

“Since I belong to a farmer’s family, I by all possible means wanted to eradicate the wrong farming practices among the villagers and guide them towards better cultivation and living. The squirrel programme gave new light and vigour to my enthusiasm and brought out the best in me.”

“Since I belong to a farmer’s family, I by all possible means wanted to eradicate the wrong farming practices among the villagers and guide them towards better cultivation and living. The squirrel programme gave new light and vigour to my enthusiasm and brought out the best in me,” he says.

Minister is an avid reader. It was from various articles published in “The Samadrushti” magazine, that he developed an interest and sensitivity towards organic farming. He wanted to share with the villagers that the need to protect our environment should be the priority for all. He says, “The changing food habits and the crop quality are severely affecting health conditions.”

For successful implementation of his project, he first visited those places where people were already practising organic farming and other environment friendly farming practices. He interacted with them and developed his knowledge on the subject. Then he made a plan to implement the project. He had developed a three-tier plan under which he discussed with the farmers the demerits of modern day farming methods

where people use chemicals, pesticides, etc. People who were working and advocating organic farming like Sudam Bhoi and Prafulla da came and addressed the villagers. To organize a meeting in the village was not an easy task. Patang gave financial help to him which he used in making banners for publicity. Similarly he made an announcement in the village so that people would come to know about it. On the second day of his programme, he organized a training camp where Prafulla da, came and trained farmers on organic farming.

Gradually the farmers got to know the benefits and techniques of organic farming. They also became aware of the side effects of pesticides and chemicals. On the last phase of his project, he took 15 villagers for a field exposure to Nisarga Nivas, Paikmal, where people were cultivating various food grains, vegetables by using organic materials. By all these means he not only conveyed the message to the villagers but also demonstrated them practically how organic farming could save them from various health problems and also yield better harvest.

In this journey Minister had to face many hurdles. Some of the villagers felt that he was engaged with some corrupt organization and wanted to have money. While some of them felt that it was his trick to lower down their crop yield. But, Minister, through his leadership skills and courage, gained the confidence and trust of the villagers. He met other likeminded people and volunteers and formed a group. These people were keen to promote the organic farming methods in their own communities.

Not only did he inspire his own village members but also motivated others to follow the best farming practices.



ରକ୍ତାଭାବ ର ପରିଣାମ

ଦିନ ବାହାନ୍ତ ରୁଣି ମାଉସୁଣା ।



ବାହାନ୍ତ ମାଉସାଂ ରୁଣିଂ accident ହୋଇଗଲା ।



ରୁଣିକାକୁ ହସ୍ପିଟାଲ୍‌ରେ ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ୱ କରାଗଲା ତ ଠାଏ ଚିକିତ୍ସା ପ୍ରକାରେ
ହେବା କିନ୍ତୁ ତାକୁ ଉତ୍ତମ ଚେତି ଚିକିତ୍ସା ଦେବା ।



ଯଦି ମୋ ପୁଅକୁ କିଛି ଚିକିତ୍ସା
ଦେଇଥାନ୍ତା ତାହା ମୋ ପୁଅ
ନହୁଁନାନ୍ତା ।



NIRAKAR MAHAKUR



Nirakar Mahakud

Nirakar like most of the Squirrel volunteers was very shy in the beginning of the programme. But his implementation of the project in his community has showed what Nirakar is capable of achieving. Nirakar Mahakud (25) from Dulahmpur village of Bargarh district dreams to be a social entrepreneur. He has been an active NSS volunteer and currently he is pursuing his M.A in Sociology.

When asked about the topic that he had chosen, he says, "There are many people around us who are not capable of enjoying the natural beauty and see the world through their eyes. Having the capacity to see and enjoy the world around us, we can very well imagine the plight of the visually challenged people". But thanks to the developments in the field of science and technology; we can bring light in their lives by donating eyes. However, the superstitions associated with organ (eye) donation have been a big barrier in this regard. Leave alone the eye donation; people are not even coming forward for blood donation.

Nurturing all these noble thoughts in his mind Nirakar started his project on - eye and blood donation. As a beginning he organized an awareness camp on blood donation among the college going youth in his village.

"It had been a transformational experience for me. I am no more that shy Nirakar, now I can talk to anyone and am more confident about myself. I am a changed person. Others around me also find lot of positive changes in me".

During the three month long Gunduchimusa project Nirakar contacted various local doctors, experienced and influential persons working in the field and collected necessary information. He personally interacted with the college going youths, villagers, school teachers, local doctors, village Sarpanch, and the members of the milk society and discussed with them the benefits of donating blood and eyes. It was very encouraging for him, when people he had deeply engaged with were spreading the message for blood and eye donation. He visited the blood bank and the eye bank of his area. He later held a meeting with the SHG group of his village.

To make people aware of this cause, he not only personally interacted with them but also organized blood donation camps in his own village. In the meeting organized in his village, 13 people donated their blood and near about 200 people came to know their own blood group. Many more were interested to donate blood, but due to lack of infrastructure they could not. Similarly in Larambha College, 28 youth came to donate blood. He with some of his old friends and community members organized a street play in the local

market on blood and eye donation, to make people aware of the significance of blood and eye in somebody's life. He rejuvenated the dormant SHG in his village and named it as 'Astha' so that this group can help him in his work.

It was not that his work was always admired and encouraged. In some of the places, few people came and tried to disrupt his activities. They were not at all interested to join any such meetings and proactively discouraged others from doing so. Besides, some people were very superstitious about donating blood. Some had the misconception that by donating blood, body would become weak. They restricted their family members from donating blood. However, Nirakar very calmly discussed with them the significance of blood and eye donation.

He says that while doing this project, he learnt a lot. Talking about the success of his project, Nirakar shares that in the three months, he organized two blood donation camps where forty one people donated blood and the blood groups of 411 people were identified. Taking initiative and playing the role of a leader, he has successfully involved 600 people and has also contacted 80 persons working in the field. When asked to share about his journey with the Squirrel team, he says "it had been a transformational experience for me. I am no more that shy Nirakar, now I can talk to anyone and am more confident about myself. I am a changed person. Others around me also find lot of positive changes in me".



ଚିନ୍ତା ଗଲା

ସିଦ୍ଧାପଲ୍ଲୀ ଗ୍ରାମର ଟଙ୍କା ବଡ଼ ମା' ଯିଏକି କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ଷମ ହେଲା ତାହା ୬ ମାସ ହେଲା ତା'ର ପକାଣ୍ଡି ହେଲେ କହି ଖାଇଲ ନାହିଁ ।



ଜଣେ ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛାସେବୀ ଯୁବକ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ସହିତ କଥା ହେଉଛି ।



ସୂଚନା ଅଧିକାରୀ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ସୂଚନା ମାଗିବା ପାଠ୍ୟ



ସୂଚନା ମାଗିବାକୁ କିଛିଦିନ ପରେ



ANANTA MIRDHA
PATANGI - Sambalpur



Anant Mirdha

Ananta Mirdha (21) feels deeply for the problems of his small village Mirdhapali, in the Bargarh district of Orissa. This is a small village where farming is the occupation of the majority. The first thing which touches you in his village is the simplicity and innocence of villagers. However, these traits have also led to ignorance especially in the domain of their rights.

They are literally away from the local governance and whatever associations they have had so far with local officials and government machinery have left them with only unpleasant memories. The villagers are ignorant about various welfare programmes initiated by the government. If the village is denied of any facilities or privileges that they are entitled to, they think it is the responsibility of the government and they cannot do much about it. But Ananta thinks differently. As an educated youth, he had the knowledge about the magic of RTI Act. He knew that under this act, everybody has access to information. During the course of the conversation he reminded one of the official advertisements of the government on the television which proclaims “being responsible citizen of the country and as tax payers we should know how and where our money is being utilized.”

Some villagers ridiculed him saying “you are a small boy and do not know anything about the real life”. Few tried to divert him from his work by saying “do not take him seriously, he is just making noise and falls promises’.

However, Anant had witnessed corruption at various levels. As most of the villagers were simple and illiterate, none had the courage to ask questions on various development works. Ananta decided to take this as his own responsibility to make people aware of their own rights. But he lacked sufficient knowledge and necessary information to move forward. At this critical juncture, he came to know about the Gunduchamusa programme being run by Patang. This, he thought will be an exciting opportunity to take up the cause he feels closed to his heart.

When Anant came to know about his selection to the Squirrel programme, without wasting any time he contacted Sachidananda, a programme coordinator, at Patang. His determination and inherent ideas got a fillip when he participated in a six-day long training camp. During the camp he consulted fellow participants and facilitators and started developing a project on RTI. His grandparents encouraged him and felt proud of their grandson’s initiative when they learnt about his project on RTI.

Initially, he was apprehensive about the implementation of the project. But valuable guidance from Sachi helped him to move forward. He was a victim of cynicism. Some villagers ridiculed him saying “you are a small boy and do not know anything about the real life.” Few tried to divert him from his work by saying “do not take him seriously, he is just making noise and falls promises.” Some villagers discouraged their children from joining him in this endeavour. But Ananta did not lose heart. His friends along with few villagers showed interest in his initiative and supported him in all possible ways.

In the beginning of the project he used to gather people at the village club which was in a dilapidated condition. He invited villagers to join the meetings. He prepared a leaflet on this theme and started distributing it to everyone in the village. His friend Nruparaj, who was also working on RTI, went to his village to extend support to the cause and facilitate a discussion on this theme.

On the next phase of his journey, he along with 28 women from his village marched to the block office in Barpali to file RTI applications. He wanted to demonstrate the influence of an act like RTI on governance, to the village women. On the first day the BDO was not in the office and other officials did not cooperate with him at all. However, later seeing his enthusiasm and hard work the BDO provided him with all the necessary support.

And it was then that the small boy stood tall in the eyes of the villagers. During the course of his journey Ananta grew in confidence and developed the art of public speaking. The secretary of his village Panchayat advised him to take up similar work in future. The RTI awareness project turned Ananta from a timid youth to a community champion.





Gourahari Chhura

Gourahari (23) lives with his parents and two younger brothers in the busy locality of Budharaja in Sambalpur town. His father is a rickshaw puller and mother is a homemaker. Coming from the lower economic strata of the society he has seen poverty from close quarters and has experienced the ugly side of life. He has never succumbed to poverty, on the contrary he has always maintained a never say die attitude. He started supplementing his family income from his school days by doing various part time jobs like newspaper distribution, helping in catering services etc. His struggle had taught him many lessons in life and had motivated him to do something for others.

He came to know about Patang when he was doing his graduation in the NSCB College, Sambalpur. It was one of his friends who informed him about the different programmes at Patang for young people. His very first visit to Patang office was so impressive that he has been a regular volunteer with Patang since that day. Being a regular volunteer he got many opportunities and participated in different awareness programmes, camps, exposures and workshops facilitated by Patang.

"Most of the news published in the mainstream magazines and the newspapers are biased. The media is turning into a profit-making industry. Newspapers are not covering real issues affecting the common man".

When asked to share about his exposure to Anandwan, Maharashtra Gaura says, "I spent a month at Anandwan and worked with people affected with leprosy. It was really a great learning opportunity for me. Staying in such an environment and spending some time with a legend like Baba Amte was a watershed in my life".

However, it was the Gunduchimusa project, which gave him an opportunity to grow as an individual. After getting selected for the programme, Gaura thought of teaching poor children in the slums. At that point he thought, as he hails from such a background, he understands the problems of children staying in slums and therefore can work well with those children. He wanted to motivate them to attend the school. But such a project was already being run by Jhasketan, another volunteer of Patang. Therefore, he thought of promoting the alternate magazines and periodicals among people in his locality.

The concept of promoting an alternate magazine grew in his mind when Debashis told him about the role of media in creating an informed society. He understood the value of these alternate magazines in giving different perspectives on social issues. According to him, "Most of the news published in the mainstream

magazines and the newspapers are biased. The media is turning into a profit-making industry. Newspapers are not covering real issues affecting the common man". This scenario motivated him to work on this project.

After consulting his friends and team members of the Patang he set out on his journey. He went from shop to shop, visited house to house to encourage people to read magazines of such kind where they can find the inherent truth of their own community and various social problems facing it. He promoted alternate magazines like 'Panira dagara', 'Samadrushti', 'Bikalpa bichara' etc. in his locality. He bought above magazines by paying money from his own pocket and from the donation received from Patang and distributed them among the people. In this way, he tried to create awareness about different issues facing his locality.

This journey was never so easy for Gaura. To convince people to go through something which did not have 'Masala' (Spicy news) and devoid of gloss was very difficult. Sometime even his own parents and friends told him to do something worthy and valuable, so that he could earn something for his family. Gaura also had some kind of hesitation in his mind about the nature of work that he was doing as on the one hand he had to support his family and at the same time he had to pursue his own dreams. But as he went along he felt that he had taken the right decision by associating himself with such a programme. Because of these problems he thinks that he could not give his best to Patang, which has contributed in making Gaura what he is now.

