

land has been donated. Under various categories like *oorani*(pond), *salai*(road), footpath and cart road, there is a list of *poramboke* (common land) handed over to panchayats. She wanted to restore all the lands and wanted to use in a proper manner. First she decided to restore water paths to increase the water table in her panchayat. In her panchayat there is 7 kilometre length and 100 metre breadth long canal (*poovodai*). With the help of all members of the panchayat she decided to restore the canal. With their cooperation, she made presentation in front of local State Minister and insisted the need for government help to remove the encroachment. The minister himself not sure about the capacity of panchayat to restore the big canal. She took it as challenge. With the help of district collector she got sanctioned 25 lakhs under SGSY scheme. She also collected money from local jamat and the saudhi association for this work. They contributed Rs. 75,000/- for this work. She removed all the encroachments with the help of people and the district administration. The canal now has been desilted and deepened. She also made seven small inner tanks.

Case Study 2-- Preserving water Sources

There are three small water tanks and four big water tanks in K.Rayavaram Panchayat in Pudukottai district in Tamil Nadu. Two tanks belong to Public Works Department (PWD) and two tanks belong to Panchayat Union. Under Social forestry scheme trees are planted and a watchman employed by the Panchayat. In the tanks areas, trees planted and taken care to grow properly. As they trees grown and they were more than three years old, the Panchayat Union decided to auction the trees and approached Revenue Divisional Officer. Some officials expected bride. But Women President of this Panchayat refused. With her intervention, there was open tender to auction the trees. This fetched good amount to Panchayat for implementing few development work. At the same time, she cleared the encroachment in inlet channels by handling issues very carefully.

Case 3 --Issue of Sand Quarrying

The riverbed of the Amaravathi is located within a half kilometer from Appipalayam in Karur district in Tamil Nadu. The river sand of the Amaravathi is of a higher quality than that of the Cauvery, it is said. Hence, Hundreds of cart loads of sands illegally quarried from the Amaravathi riverbed near Appipalayam Village. The wells for drinking water are constructed on the riverbed. The illegal sand mafia did not spare even these areas. Unmindful of the negative impact on the system of drinking water supply as well as the system of irrigation they continued their illegal quarrying of sand. The then Women president of this Panchayat met the other Panchayat President in this area for which the drinking water wells are constructed on the riverbed and explained the scope of the damage to the percolation due to the sand quarrying. She succeeded in convening the *gramsabhas* (village council meeting) in four village panchayats including Appipalayam and a resolution was passed demanding the intervention of district collector so that the illegal sand quarrying could be stopped at once. The Collector came to spot and inspected the damage caused by illegal sand quarrying. The Public Works Department (PWD) officials informed that permission was given for quarrying only at Thalapatti Village which is far away from the wells of Appipalayam and so there won't be any problem. But, the Panchayat President said that though PWD officials restricted sand quarrying to a place, the selfish sand mafia never adhered to rules and regulations. Hence she and her villagers refuted PWD officials and pleaded with the Collector. When the Collector announced that at a depth of three- four feet, sand could not be taken, the villagers expressed shock saying that they would lie down before the vehicles and sacrifice their life instead of living as dead people without adequate source of water for drinking as well as irrigation. At last Collector agreed to stop all illegal sand quarrying and mining activities in the river bed of the Amaravathi near Appipalayam. The mass action became a success because of the determination and firmness of women leader.

(Above three case studies drawn from book written by G.Uma and others titled Change Makers at Grassroots Local Governance in Action)

9.10 ROLE OF CPR IN DISASTER PREVENTION- BIO SHIELD

This story is from the village of Thandavarayan Cholan Pettai, Chidambaram Taluk, Cuddalore District, Tamil Nadu. Bio shields like mangroves were grown in the village with support and guidance from the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation. This had completely protected the Panchayat from the killer waves of the Tsunami on 26th December 2004. Almost similar is the case of Madamedu, a costal village in Sirkali Taluk of Nagapattinam District. The impact of tsunami was very less compared to other places in this village because of the growth of casurina trees on the shores by the Tamil Nadu Forest Department. The stories do not end there. In Nallavedu village near Pondicherry, the M.S. Swaminathan Foundation has been running a Village Knowledge Centre having computers, early warning systems, internet connectivity through satellite, etc. Awareness and Warning System were placed at the centre of the village. Every time the Public Address System sounded on 26th December 2004, when the Tsunami struck the shores of Indonesia, Mr. Vijaya Kumar, a native of the village and the farmer volunteer at the Centre who was at that time working in Singapore heard the Tsunami news in Indonesia through Singapore TV. He telephoned the VKC of Nallavedu Village. The center immediately spread the news through the Public Address System. People were evacuated early enough to avert major destruction of life. The above case study clearly demonstrate that CPR can reduce impact of tsunami like waves. At the same time community participation is also important.

9.10 SUMMING UP

The national resource bases of this country cannot be sustainably developed without the participating of the masses through grassroots level action and the only devise available for such mass action is Panchayati Raj System. Unless the environment and resources are monitored, protected, developed and judiciously used at village level no macro level government programme at national level can save this country from starvation and decay. As Dr. M.S. Swaminathan says, “Business and industry by the large adopt a short term view with reference to the

exploitation of natural resources. Our life support systems are in distress and there is little political interest in making scientific land and water use mandatory. The emergence of Panchayati Raj and Nagarapalika Institutions may provide an opportunity for adopting a new land and water ethic, provide an opportunity for adopting a new land and water ethic, provide an opportunity for adopting a new land and water ethic, provided there is political will for their ecological empowerment". Gram Sabha has given an opportunity for the peoples to directly participate in the decision-making process and there is a great scope for the revival of the common property resource management through Gram Sabha. Non governmental agencies, activists and other public interest groups must motivate people to successfully use this opportunity to protect the CPR for their own benefit.

9.11 GLOSSARY

Panchayati Raj Institutions: The panchayati raj in India is a system of local self governance. It is the oldest system of local government in the Indian subcontinent. The word "panchayat" literally means "assembly" (ayat) of five (panch) wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the local community. However, there are different forms of assemblies. Traditionally, these assemblies settled disputes between individuals and villages. Modern Indian government has decentralized several administrative functions to the local level, empowering elected gram panchayats. Gram panchayats are not to be confused with the unelected khap panchayats (or caste panchayats) found in some parts of Northern India.

9.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Interest in the study of common property resources was started in west with the publication of a famous article in 'Nature' in the year 1968 by Garrent Hardin titled 'the tragedy of commons'. Hardin an environmental scientist of Darwinian and Adam Smithian school strongly argued for the privatization of common natural resources held by the state to save them from environmental degradation or 'the tragedy of common'. Number of studies emerged in support or against the theory of Hardin all over the world. Living models of management of common resources by the traditional system came in to time light as an alternative to Hardin's model. Models of community management of

resources are found even in Western cultures and in countries like Canada and U.S.A. As a result powerful theories are formulated to highlight the concept meaning and importance of common property resources. Now, common property resources are considered as one of the essential and the most fundamental requirements for the survival of our planet. Even though there are number of definitions for CPR it is very difficult to give one single definition acceptable for all. One possible definition of common property resources is “resources accessible to the whole community to which no individual has exclusive property rights”. “Common property resources are the resources managed by community organizations (traditional, modern or elected) for the use of the members of community under certain rules, regulations and restrictions. Common properties are not ‘no one’s property’ or state property or private property. Modern Western legal systems can generally understand only two types of property regimes, private property and state property. But in practice a large portion of resources in the traditional societies are still managed by community systems even through these resources may be legally owned by the state. Villages in India are still rich in common property resources even though they are being eroded very fast. Some of the resources are village tanks, fisheries, grazing lands, thrashing lands, *parombok* lands (Common Lands), footpaths etc. All these resources are owned by government. But the local communities play the most critical role in the protection and use of these resources. In other words, state, however it may be powerful or efficient, is not fit for management of certain resources spread over the country without the active imitative involvement and participation of local community. Certain resources can only efficiently managed by the local community and no outside agency can manage such resources as efficiently as local. Certain resources and communities are totally inter-dependent and one cannot survive without the other. So there is need for institutional arrangements to transform the theory of CPR in to a reality. These institutional arrangements can link peoples and resources, translating interests into claims, claims into rights. In short common property regimes are forms of management grounded in a seat of accepted social norms and rules for the sustainable inter-dependent use of collective goods such as forests, grazing grounds fisheries and water resources etc.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1. Some of the Sections Mostly Affected by the Declines of CPRs

Women: Affected by scarcity of drinking water, non commercial fodder, fuel, grazing area, non commercial food items like greens, nuts, vegetables, fruits, tubers etc. (rearing of cattles as additional income become more difficult with the declines of grazing lands).

Craftsmen: Affected by decline/scarcity/loss of raw materials like bamboo, grass, fibers, wood, clay, sand, minerals etc.

Poor, specifically SC/ST Affected by decline/scarcity/loss of materials required for food, fuel, fodder, housing materials, grazing land etc.

Marginal farmers: Affected by decline of ground water, neglect of irrigation systems, inability to maintain cattles depending on CPRs etc.

9.13 REFERENCES

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9.14 QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND PRACTICE

1. What are the constitutional provisions given in the 73rd constitutional Amendment Act to safe guard Common property Resources?
2. Discuss the role of panchayats in safe guarding Common property Resources with suitable examples.