

From Migration to Settled Life



SARADA LAHANGIR

A few years ago, Punne Tappo, 55, a tribal of Gailjore village in Meghdega panchayat under Jangarpalli block of Sundergarh district, was a migrant

labourer but now he is a farmer in his own village. He ekes out a living by doing cultivation and collecting minor forest produce. He grows about three quintals of paddy a year; along with this he also grows vegetables and pulses. His children are happily married. Life is now smooth for him. All this has been possible after getting a plot of land under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006.

The Act has brought about a great change in his life and livelihood after 2010 when he got the ownership of the plot. Earlier, life was hard and bitter for him.

"I used to go to Goa in search of work. I found work in a fish processing unit. When people were spending time, sitting on the sea beach and enjoying the surroundings, I had to dare the heavy storms and sweat my blood in fishing to get something to feed my children. I had to spend for months together in a trawler to catch fish. Sometimes the owner of the trawler paid well; sometimes he exploited me. I could not raise a voice of protest because I was an outsider there. I had to spend six to seven months a year in Goa. As a result, I could not send my children to school. I had many bitter experiences as I did not have any land of my own," Punne recalls the hardship he went through.

Manohar Pradhan (65) of the same village also suffered a lot because he did not possess a plot of land which he could claim his own.

"Though we have been living here since ages we were branded as encroachers, frequently beaten up by the Forest officials. Very often they would destroy our paddy. With no means of livelihood and with regular threats from the Forest officials, we had no option except to migrate to other places to eke out a living. The most unfortunate thing was that we had no identity of our own. Without identity proof we could not even obtain the caste certificate which we needed to avail the Government benefit for our children. Our children were deprived of their right to education. Now things have changed.

"With no means of livelihood and with regular threats from the Forest officials, we had no option except to migrate to other places to eke out a living. The most unfortunate thing was that we had no identity of our own. Without identity proof we could not even obtain the caste certificate which we needed to avail the Government benefit for our children. Our children were deprived of their right to education. Now things have changed. Land patta has not only checked migration, it has given us a source of living and an identity," says Pradhan

Land patta has not only checked migration, it has given us a source of living and an identity," says Pradhan. There are many like Punne and Manohar in Gailjore village, who used to migrate to Goa before 2010; they are now growing crop and vegetables in their own land and leading a peaceful life.

Gailjore, one of the small revenue villages of Meghdega gram panchayat, is situated six kms away from the panchayat headquarters. The village comprises four hamlets, namely Bamdiadera, Dungalala Mirdhadunga and Dhabadoli. From old times, the hamlets have grown up on Reserve Forest Areas. One hamlet Bamdeidera is located high up the hills. Nearly eighty families have built their permanent homes on this hilltop settlement. Incidentally, all houses except three stood on encroached forest land in the Reserve Forest Area. By virtue of their isolation, people lived the life of the old forest dwellers. Almost all families depended on NTFP collection and daily wages. With fewer livelihood options available to them,

economic hardships were a common occurrence in every family. There was also regular harassment by Forest officials during the fetching of NTFP items and firewood. They could not avail themselves of houses under Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), as they did not have any revenue land in their name.

"The NGO SEWAK began working in the area from 2005 by way of implementing the Panchayatiraj Abhiyan programme. Our volunteers generated awareness among people on schemes like MGNREGA, Right to Information and Food and Social Security.

With 'Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers' Recognition of Forest Rights Act, 2006' coming into effect from 1st January 2008, a new hope was kindled in the heart of the villagers. Meanwhile, the district administration took a proactive step to involve us in the implementation process of FRA. It proved to be of great help to us. SEWAK's volunteers facilitated villagers in filling of forms, collection of evidence and coordination



with Revenue and Forest officials for joint verification. In terms of the Government notification, the village constituted its Forest Rights Committee (FRC) on 16th March 2008. Since its first sitting, the FRC started receiving individual and community claims for forestland. Once the process of receiving of forms was over, the FRC sent intimation to the Tehsildar and Welfare Extension Officer of Tangarpali Block. Consequently, in September 2008, the Forester and RI came to the village for joint verification. The villagers made a last minute review of the claims in a Gram Sabha and in December 2008, submitted all the claim forms before SDLC, Sundargarh. Meanwhile, the SDLC officials lost all the claim forms, but fortunately, the claimants had the photocopies of all relevant documents, and the forms were submitted to SDLC for a second time in April 2009. After a gap of 10 months, in November 2010, fifty claimants of the village got FRA entitlements," Pradeep Brahma, Secretary of SEWAK explains the journey.

"The event was received with much cheer and delight as acquiring of land title promised a new world of opportunities. Now, from time to time, we are linking them with different Government projects to support them and to improve their life," he adds.

Ramchandra Majhi, a sixty-year-old beneficiary of the Forest Rights Act-2006, is now visibly relieved. He says, "We had land but it was of no use. Because we did not have the legal right over the land and fearing that someone may come and claim its ownership and as a result our hard work may go in vain, we would cultivate very less, sometimes even less than our requirement. Since work also was not available everyday for everyone, we found it really difficult to get food three times a day. We really reeled under poverty. But after getting the land patta in 2010 we could breathe easily. Most of our villagers who were migrating earlier have now stopped going out in search of livelihood."

"We were provided money to develop our land for better cultivation and dig a pond to supply water

to the land. Now we are able to cultivate paddy independently; we also grow different kinds of seasonal crops. The Forest Rights Act has not only relieved us permanently from the oppression of Revenue & Forest Officials but supported us to live a life with dignity," he adds.

In addition to the implementation of the Forest Rights Act-2006, 60 families got pucca houses under Indira Awas Yojana. In a short period, 3 tube wells have been dug in the village. Apart from these, electricity which was a dream for them, is being provided. Under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 4 concrete roads were constructed in the village. People have stopped migrating to other places. Now they have decided to be in the village and live there by cultivating paddy and seasonal crops or working under the MGNREGA. The picture of the village has changed.

The author is a senior journalist and researcher presently working under Inclusive media-UNDP fellowship.

New national carriers and foreign carriers looking for access to the Indian market should be encouraged to operate on routes which have been shunned by the traditional carriers. Development of market demonstrates entrepreneurship of new carriers. It is advisable to organize a national level conclave of stakeholders to give a final shape to the civil aviation policy

VIVEK PATTANAYAK

THE attempt to revisit the existing civil aviation policy is a welcome step of the new government at the Centre in the context of the forecast of ICAO that the international traffic will double in two decades, increasing realization that emission from aircraft contributes tangibly to the atmospheric pollution, steady growth of cargo traffic by air, rising middle class throughout the world more particularly in Asia, the present decline of fuel cost, volatile demand from the States to start more air services particularly international services, rapid growth of low-cost airlines, need to enhance tourist traffic both domestic and international and worrying safety oversight mechanism of the country. The recent downing of a Malaysian aircraft over the Ukrainian airspace and the mysterious disappearance of another Malaysian aircraft over the Indian Ocean have given rise to global concern. All these have to be viewed in the background of importance of viability of airlines, particularly in the context of return on capital of promoters.

Civil aviation has been in India for more than a hundred years. During this period, technology in the world of aviation has moved from propeller driven single piston engine aircraft to four engine wide bodied jet aircraft. It has moved from speed of sub-sonic to super-sonic level. Now, no longer is there harping only upon hypersonic aircraft to make dramatic reduction of travel time; but there is also consideration of sub-orbital flights notwithstanding disastrous test flight of Branson's Virgin Galactic.

Air traffic and air navigation services have moved from the days of Non-Directional Beacon (NDB), Distance Measuring Equipment (DME), Very high frequency Omni Range (VOR), and Instrument Landing System (ILS) to primary radars and secondary radars and then to satellite navigation system based on Communication Navigation System/Air Traffic Management (CNS/ATM).

Towards a holistic civil aviation policy

The concept of privatization has entered from ownership of airline to airports and even provision of air navigation service including radio services. Regime of system of exchange of traffic rights on bilateral basis has been impacted by plurilateral, multilateral and even international regimes. Philosophy of open sky is the present élan of the global liberalism.

Aviation safety and security is no longer within the exclusive national cover-



eighty; now it is subject to international audit and supervision. Downgrading of DGCA's oversight mechanism by US FAA, a national outfit of a member State of ICAO, and the mandatory ramp inspection by the European States based by the dictates of the European Union, urgings of Joint Airworthiness Authority (JAA) of Europe and support of the European Safety Agency are the new trends which have to be factored into while crafting well-designed modern aviation policy of the country.

A policy of this complexity while the process of finalization takes place cannot remain exclusively within the precincts of Rajiv Gandhi Bhawan, the HQ of the Civil Aviation Ministry. The Ministry must take it into account the views of all stakeholders such as national carriers, both low cost/budget carriers and large carriers, whether in the public sector or in private sector. It has to consult foreign carriers whether they are flying or having plans to fly including IATA. Consultation should include airports both private and public. Input from Airport Council International will be helpful. In order to optimize air space utilization to make flights more fuel efficient and also making routes more direct to save duration of flights and achieve less fuel burn civil use of military airspace can be explored with very close consultation with military authorities, both air force and navy, and possibly army and even coast guard where needed.

International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Association (IFATCA) and Council of Air Navigation Services Organization (CANSO) should also be consulted. In addition, the States in India aspiring to have international flights and to have master plans for their internal aviation development programme must be kept in the loop. Since international aviation opens up the country to tourist traffic, consultation with the Ministry of Tourism along with travel agents' associations, and tour operators' bodies must take place before giving it a final shape.

Policy cannot ignore inbound and outbound air cargo traffic as it will have significant impact on foreign trade both import and export having effect on foreign exchange inflow

and outflow. This will mean consultation with Ministry of Trade and Commerce, cargo agents, freight forwarders, chambers of commerce and industry, etc.

The facilitation of passengers at the international airports must take into account national security and health concerns knowing very well how India has been under constant danger of terrorist attack and flow of traffic from abroad infected by Ebola, swine fever, HIV, SAARS, etc. Ministries of Home and Health have to be taken on board while finalizing the policy.

Ever since India became a member of ICAO, which was even before her independence, she has been on the Council of ICAO guiding policy internationally and providing technical assistance through ICAO's Technical Cooperation Bureau. Indian experts are available in different parts of the world serving the global aviation community. Hence policy formulation should include participation from ICAO both from HQ at Montreal and also from the Regional Office of ICAO in Bangkok to take into account compliance (or lack of it) of nineteen annexes enacted by ICAO, Procedures of Air Navigation (PANS) and supplementary procedures (SUPPS), and Regional Procedures and different manuals and circulars and Regional Plans of the Asia Pacific Planning and Implementation Group (APANPIRG) developed and issued by the global aviation regulator for safety, security, efficiency and economical transport.

In the light of the global concern of environment as expressed through Kyoto Protocol and Copenhagen Conference, EU's stance on market based measures (MBM) and concept of polluters must pay, the Ministry of Environment have to be taken on board while finalising civil aviation policy.

All stakeholders must be conscious that the world has moved from old traditional exchange of traffic rights. Now traffic movement is no longer confined to first, second, third, fourth and fifth freedoms. It has embraced sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth freedoms. Future policy should take into account these hard realities to be relevant and be in tune with global trend. New national carriers and foreign carriers looking for access to the Indian market should be encouraged to operate on routes which have been shunned by the traditional carriers. Development of market demonstrates entrepreneurship of new carriers. It is advisable to organize a national level conclave of stakeholders to give a final shape to the civil aviation policy.