CHAPTER - VI

INVOLVEMENT OF THE NSS IN THE PLANTATION WORK AT THE HIDKAL DAM, IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HEBBALLI FARM AND A FISHERMEN'S COLONY

In this chapter an attempt is made to analyse the work of the NSS in three separate projects. These projects were taken up by the NSS units at different times. The first project was that of plantation work. This was taken up at the Hidkal Dam, one of the large modern dams in India, situated in the Belgaum district of the Karnataka state. The second project was that of the Hebballi farm. This project centres round the Govankop village adopted by the JSS college of Dharwad and in the vicinity of Dharwad. The third project is that of a fishermen's colony near Karwar.

Involvement of NSS in Plantation Work at Hidkal Dam, Belgaum District

The NSS youth force has been found to be a well organised force for involvement in any project under the nation-building programmes. The officials of the government of India and Karnataka considered the matter of involving the NSS student volunteers for the ecological development project.
Instructions were issued to all programme coordinators of Karnataka and elsewhere in India to take up the issue at their levels. Accordingly the Programme Coordinator of the NSS at the Karnatak University, Dharwad, began to collect information from the various colleges affiliated to the Karnatak University having NSS units regarding the possibilities of organising eco-development camps. It was found that the Karnatak University was the first to accept the programme and went ahead to organise it by involving the local colleges of Belgaum.

Preliminary discussions were held with the Deputy Commissioner, Belgaum, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Belgaum, and the Superintending Engineer, Karnataka Irrigation Division, Hidkal Dam. Coordination meetings were held to enlist the required cooperation from the developmental departments.

University level and college level camps were organised to plant saplings in the barren land near Hidkal dam, one of the largest earthen dams in western India. About 250 students were involved in the various camps and plantation work was taken up on 40 acres of land. This created a lot of confidence among the Public Works Department officials and revenue officials. It was felt that there was a great scope for
the involvement of the volunteers and accordingly papers began to move briskly. The Assistant Horticulture Officer who was in charge of the developmental activities of the horticulture farm initiated a proposal for organising some more camps of NSS volunteers. The Assistant Programme Adviser, NSS, government of India, at Bangalore, was also convinced that the Hidkal Dam plantation work was worth giving a try as it could be developed into a model project. In the meantime the change of leadership at the NSS wing of the Karnataka University occurred. A new programme coordinator was selected. He was young and capable of undertaking challenging programmes at a short notice. The Assistant Programme Adviser took the bold step of proposing to organise a zonal level camp of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu. This was intended to show the volunteers of other states as to how the eco-development camps organised in the past had been followed up.

A fifteen-day motivational campaign conducted by the then Programme Coordinator and the Assistant Programme Adviser in the Karnataka University jurisdiction brought about a healthy change among the youths. The journey performed by these two officials from Karwar to Belgaum, Belgaum to Bijapur and Bijapur
to Karwar proved very useful and rewarding. It created an extensive support for the plantation programme at Hidkal.

In course of this background work, coordination committee meetings were held under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner, Belgaum. Principal D.A. Hegde and Professor Kakirde evinced much interest in the organisational matters. Ultimately it was decided to hold the zonal level camp from 14 to 23 October 1982.

This camp was aimed at educating the youth (students) regarding the factors affecting ecology and environment and involving them in the eco-development programmes and on-going projects of government like the installation of bio-gas plants etc.

Enabling the students to exchange their experiences and ideas of the NSS programmes and eco-development programmes by way of lectures and discussions etc. was another objective of the zonal camp. The other objectives were:

1. Spotting student talents for presenting theme-oriented cultural programmes.

2. Promoting national integration.
3. Planting saplings in another 80 acres of horticultural farm.

4. Ensuring the follow-up work of the previous NSS camps.

5. Creating awareness about the activities and programmes of other neighbouring states on the eco-development front.

This programme was intended to have a high educational value to the college youth. Besides it was expected to create an awareness among masses in regard to their role in maintaining the ecological or environmental balance.

With these gains in view instructions were issued to all participating volunteers. The gist of the preliminary instructions was as under:

a. The camp is of 10-day duration.

b. It is for male volunteers only.

c. The participants should bring their personal belongings except equipments for physical work.
d. The participants' boarding and lodging expenses at the rate of Rs.100/- per volunteer be sent.

e. Action photographs, publications, press clippings etc. bearing on the NSS activities should be brought.

f. A proper pre-camping orientation regarding the theme-oriented programmes be given to the participants.

g. The details regarding the persons to be contacted on arrival by the participants or contingents at the bus stand, railway station and airport etc. were given to the concerned persons.

Circular instructions were issued not only to the participating universities but also to the colleges that were affiliated to the Karnatak University. About 350 students were expected to participate.

Invitations to the guests and resource persons were sent. The Programme Coordinator and the Assistant Programme Adviser called on the Governor of Karnataka to be the chief guest for the inaugural ceremony. On account of his
pre-occupation he could not make it convenient to attend the function. However he wished the best of luck to the organisers. The choice of the organisers fell on the Chief Secretary of Government of Karnataka, Mr. Jayakumar Anagol, as he happened to be a native of the Belgaum district. But here too there was no luck.

Finally, both the Programme Coordinator and the Assistant Programme Adviser succeeded in getting Mr. A.S. Melkote, IAS (Indian Administrative Service), to be the chief guest. Dr. D.M. Nanjundappa, the Vice-Chancellor of Karnataka University, kindly agreed to preside over the inaugural function though, as it turned out later, he had to proceed to Delhi for an urgent official work. The inaugural function was so organised as to ensure that it was over within one hour. The Deputy Commissioner, Belgaum, Mr. L.B. Mannikatt1, was the guest of honour.

The Additional Secretary of the Department of Ecology and Environment, Government of Karnataka, Dr. D.K. Subramaniyan, and the Vice-Chancellor of Mysore University were invited for the valedictory function. Further it was decided to involve the legislators of Belgaum and accordingly Mr. S.B. Sidnal, MP,
was invited. Dr. D.S. Tiwari, Deputy Programme Adviser, Madras, was requested to be present. Distinguished resource persons were invited to guide the students.

The Programme Coordinator went to the Hidkal Dam to meet the Superintending Engineer, Mr. V.S. Patil, to ensure the preparatory arrangements. After a detailed discussion and inspection it was found that the tenting arrangements for stay would be difficult and allowing the students to stay in the different quarters meant for the staff at the different places was not convenient.

It was virtually impossible to house all the 500 participants in one place in the available dormitories. There was a garage wherein a number of bulldozers were parked (more or less) permanently. It was felt that if all the machines were removed, the place could be sufficiently accommodative. The estimated cost for clearing and rearranging the place for the camp threatened to come to more than Rs. 20,000/-. It was beyond the NSS budget.

It was a great dilemma for the organisers. The dates were approaching very fast. The arrangements for stay, food,
sanitation and bathing had to be made on a war footing within the limits of the finances. The prestige of the university and the officials of the Hidkal Dam was at stake. There were only five days remaining and no arrangements were made yet. The Programme Coordinator had to fix the guests, print the invitation cards, and have the camping arrangements finalised. Mr. Ashok Deshpande, a social worker, and Professor Kakirde of the Gogte College and the Programme Coordinator went to the Hidkal Dam area and impressed upon the Superintending Engineer the urgency and importance of dismantling the existing garage and employing all the machinery to keep the campus neat and clean.

All arrangements were made one day before and even the reservation of the circuit houses and quarters was finalised. The Health Officer of the Hidkal Dam was requested to keep himself ready to take care of the health and hygiene of the campers.

The camp commandant was surprised at the response of the various states and universities which deputed the student contingents. It was a big number of 500 students and 25 NSS programme officers and 35 resource persons that attended the first zonal ecological development NSS camp.
A press conference was called at Belgaum to create awareness about the programme. A team of press correspondents was requested to visit the camp site on the day of inauguration where they could see for themselves the over-flowing enthusiasm of the students.

Arrangements for bathing with a long pipe with 25 taps and sanitary facilities for 50 people at a time marked the background work of the camp. It was felt that no student should be allowed to take bath in the canals of the Dam to ensure safety of life. The stage arrangements for lecture and discussion programme and for the cultural activities were made. The elaborate arrangement for the display of the action photos of NSS brought by the various volunteers of the participating universities and its inauguration by Father Cecil Saldana were quite impressive.

It may not be an exaggeration to say that the success of a camp depends upon the food arrangements. It was a great task to feed the students with a variety of food habits. It was decided to provide a common menu to all the students with a buffet arrangement. The idea of handing over food arrangements to a contractor was not approved and hence this task was taken
up by some NSS officers under the leadership of Professor Navalgatti of Athani. The participants accepted the food served and relished the food of this part of the country.

The theme-oriented cultural activities were presented. The team of the Mysore University received acclamation from the guests. It was a feast not only to the volunteers but also to the people of the Hidkal Dam. The items propagated the concepts of afforestation, pollution, alternative sources of energy and so on.

The Hidkal Dam project is well remembered in the history of the NSS of the Karnatak University for the reason that it attracted two Vice-Chancellors, two state level Secretaries, a Deputy Commissioner, ecologists, environmentalists, NSS top level personnel, experienced NSS officers and dedicated NSS volunteers.

The physical project included the plantation of saplings in the 80 acres of barren land. Three trucks, two jeeps and one car were employed to carry the volunteers from the camping site to project site which was at a distance of about 6 kms. The untiring youth completed the plantation work by planting
The Horticulture Assistant Officer said in an informal chat with the visiting press correspondents that the NSS spent Rs.65,100/- on the organisation of the camp but the volunteers turned out the work of about/85,000/-. The camp had the following three positive features:

1. It completed the task in the stipulated time.
2. It has created awareness among the students about the ecology and environment and love for plant life.
3. It strengthened the feelings of national integration.

The press-men made detailed enquiries about the project. They interacted with the participants and enquired about the food and stay arrangements, project work and other aspects. The media recorded its sense of satisfaction over the arrangements made to run the huge camp.
NSS Develops The Hebballi Farm

Govankop is the adopted village of the JSS College, Dharwad. There was a slum near Govankop on both sides of the main road approaching Dharwad, at a distance of 4 kms. It is in front of the farm, an area of extension work, of the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad. The residents of the slum were engaged on the farm or they went to the nearby fields as daily wage earners. Their huts stood on both sides of the road. They had been staying in the huts for the past sixty years. No social organisation or government agency came forward to look into the needs of the slum dwellers. There were almost fifty families residing in the slums.

The educational and economic standards were low. There were hardly any literates. There was no leadership among the slum dwellers. They could not organise themselves and put up a fight with the relevant authorities for better housing, for example. They just had no time to think on these lines as they were busy earning their daily wages.

One Mr. Ulavappa, a resident of Raviwarpeth area of Dharwad, approached the then Programme Coordinator of NSS, Captain B.C. Kalmath, with a request to take up NSS work in
"The Forty-eight Janata Houses Project" of the NSS at the Hebbali farm, near Dharwad. The NSS volunteers busy with the construction work.
this area. The Karnatak University, on its own, could not take up such work. When the Programme Coordinator went for inspecting the special camping programmes of the various colleges, he found that the JSS College was ideally situated to take up the project. Captain Kalmath was familiar with the college. He had been closely associated with its activities. The principal himself was one of the NSS Programme Officers. Against this background, the college was bound to make a success of the project.

Captain Kalmath persuaded Principal Vajrakumar and Professor R.K. Koppar, the then Programme Officer, to initiate efforts to rehabilitate the slum dwellers. He assured all assistance and guidance from both the university and government agencies in this regard.

The authorities of the college had been visiting Govankop for the previous three years but it had not occurred to them that they could take up the project. Anyway they took up the project now. The NSS Programme Officer held a series of discussions with the residents. On enquiry it was found that the slum dwellers had bought some land a few years ago by contributing some sum per head. The plots were not distributed
At Govankop near Dharwad, the Janata Homes under construction at the hands of NSS volunteers.
yet. Nor could they initiate any construction activity. There was some dispute among the dwellers and the owner of the land. There was of course the shortage of funds.

In the meanwhile the Deputy Commissioner of Dharwad was also in a mood to help these unfortunate dwellers. He instructed the Block Development Officer, Dharwad, to initiate some steps in this regard. The officer brought to his notice that the area did not come under the Rural Development Scheme since it was almost part of the Hubli-Dharwad Municipal Corporation. The Deputy Commissioner insisted that some via media should be found. The revenue authorities were formulating some plan for supporting this scheme. Against this background, the Block Development Officer approached the NSS unit of the JSS College to see whether the project of rehabilitation could be taken up by the college.

While this was going on, the slum dwellers approached the Principal and requested him in writing to bless their efforts. They promised to contribute additional money, if required, to complete the construction of houses. The government authorities insisted that the building project could be handled by the HUDCO (Housing and Urban Development Corporation) and that the owners
Another view of the NSS volunteers busy with the work of the Janata houses.
of the respective houses should contribute ₹500/- per household towards their share in the project. There were three problems to be tackled: firstly, the dispute between the owner of the land and the tenants had be resolved; secondly, it was to be seen whether any government agency could finance the project; and thirdly, it was to be seen whether the house owners could keep their premises. It was expected that if the three problems were solved satisfactorily, then the rehabilitation project could take off, the NSS chipping in its labour.

The NSS volunteers, under the leadership of Professor R.K.Koppar and Captain B.C.Kalmath, arranged a discussion between the owner and the dwellers. The owner was persuaded to donate the land instead of selling it as some complications were involved. He happily agreed to part with the land and a peaceful settlement of the dispute was reached. Finally the following decisions were taken:

1. The government should release the stipulated grants for constructing the Janata houses, i.e., ₹2,500/- per house.

2. The owner of the house should either pay ₹500/- or donate his services in lieu of the payment.
3. Services of the architect, one Mr. Keshavachar, be obtained free of cost.

4. The NSS should provide the labour component.

5. Skilled labourers be employed for the construction work.

6. It was decided to use bricks for the walls and cement plastering was to be done on both sides.

7. Asbestos sheets should be used for all Janata houses for roofing.

8. The construction and other finishing work should be completed within two months.

9. The NSS volunteers should be involved in the project from the beginning, i.e., from the demolition of the huts, laying the foundation for the Janata houses and assisting the Goundi (mason) in supplying mud, bricks, cement etc. till the stage of fixing the roof.

Finally, it appeared, all troubles were over and the project could be launched on the day of Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary. But at the last minute there was a shocking
hurdle. As per the rules of the "Janata house construction," the scheme would be applicable only to the houseless and landless. The slum dwellers were neither. They had the combined ownership of the land. One formula was evolved to save the situation. The land owner should donate the land to the government and the government in turn should allocate it to the slum dwellers. There was also the problem of ownership records. Ultimately the situation was resolved. It took almost two months to clear the mess. The actual work was started on 4 December 1979 though the foundation stone-laying ceremony was held on 2 October 1979 with Professor S.S.Wodeyar, the then Vice-Chancellor, as the chief guest on the occasion.

The building construction and technology section of the college assisted and supervised the various stages of the work. The services of the department were free of cost and technical knowhow was provided. The staff members and students of that section coordinated their assistance with the NSS volunteers.

Cost

The cost of a house was estimated at ₹3,000/- The government sanctioned ₹2,500/- and expected the house owner to contribute ₹500/-. The labour component was provided by
the NSS volunteers and in view of this the dwellers were given additional facilities of plastering etc.

Employment

Skilled labourers, NSS volunteers, staff of building construction and technology section, architect Mr. Keshavachar were employed in the construction of the houses.

Special Features

All 48 Janata houses were accommodated systematically in the same survey numbers. Uniformity of construction was maintained. In each row, 10 houses, with twin-house construction, were planned and executed. Each house had a kitchen and one drawing room with an area for a kitchen garden.

Foundation

The excavation work of 2' x 2' was done by the NSS volunteers. The ground was strong. There was no need to go deep, beyond 2 feet. In some places the masons advised to stop at 1' or even at one foot only. Stones and mud were put in the foundation and stone construction was raised up to plinth level. After the doors and windows were erected the brick walls were raised. Specifications for the windows, doors and width
of wall were all provided by the engineer of the Block Development Office. Mud was used for raising walls and plastering and finishing were done with cement. Tiles were used in place of zinc sheets or asbestos sheets as this was specifically requested by the residents and this change was also reflected in the estimates. Now they could not change (the change) as that would delay the settlement of bills in question.

There was a plan to finish the work within two months. As we said, the inauguration of the project took place on the Gandhi Jayanti day, 2nd October 1979. The Vice-Chancellor, Karnataka University, was the guest on the occasion. Captain B.C. Kalmath and some dignitaries were also present. Some government officers raised doubts about the completion of the project. The work could not continue the next day on account of some technical problems. Actually it gathered momentum in the first week of December 1979.

A special camping programme was organised by the college. The university NSS unit sanctioned a strength of 150 students to support the project. The camp began on 19 January 1980. The forty-six Janata houses were completed on the last day of the period. The completion of the other two
houses and cement plastering took almost a month. The Vice-Chancellor, Karnataka University, Dharwad, the Superintendent of Police, the President of the Taluka Development Board were present on the last day of the camp. The stone inscribing the name of the college completing the task was unveiled by the President of Taluka Development Board. The Block Development Officer performed Pooja for digging a well and the Vice-Chancellor inaugurated the colony.

Opposition to this project continued even after it was complete. There was sharp criticism of the project. Some people who had paid the initial contribution for the purchase of the land could not get a house. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, they did not register their names for the Janata house and secondly, they could not come forward to contribute the additional money for the construction. These people protested. In fact, they created a nuisance. They filed a complaint in the police station alleging that the demolition of their huts was unlawful. A few people also approached the then Deputy Commissioner and spoke against the college. They alleged that the NSS officer was collecting extra sums from the beneficiaries. The police and administrative inquiry was held against the NSS officer. The enquiry did not reveal anything against the NSS officer.
Ultimately the colony came up. The people got their houses. It was a great experience for the people who ran helter skelter to a good shelter. The NSS Programme Officer had a tough time to prove his honesty and enthusiasm. The people and some government officers did take time to be convinced of his honesty. The completion of the colony meant so much credit for the efforts and sustained interest of the NSS officers and students. Professor L.R. Shah, Programme Adviser of NSS to the government of India, paid a visit to the project and recorded his appreciation for the work.

Fishermen's Colony.

Karwar which is a district headquarters in Karnataka is situated on the sea shore. It is a big fishing centre. It has ideal climate with the temperatures remaining between 15°C to 35°C, round the year.

Karwar has a most attractive natural green belt with a large mass of moving water of Arabian sea. A seat on the top of a small hillock near Karwar overlooking the vast expanse of the sea and the rising greenery had once fired the poetic imagination of Rabindranath Tagore. The majestic and serene flow of rivers when they descend in the plains from
their hectic and swift flow across the deep ravines and hills with their banks lined up by graceful coconut and palm trees presents a grand spectacle. It was no exaggeration when an Englishman remarked that nothing more beautiful is to be seen than the coast of Canara on the western side of India.

At the very nose of such a beautiful city a small hotch-potch slum-like locality, popularly known as Bangladesh colony existed before 1975. It is 2 kms. away from the Karwar city. It is just opposite the Divekar College.

The NSS unit of the college adopted it for its all-round development. The Principal of the College, Professor G.V.Bhat, who took initiative in this matter, has been the backbone of the accomplishment. It has been generally found that the NSS programmes have been successful in those places where the local principals have provided direct involvement at all levels. Reconstruction of the Bangladesh colony into a Sarvodayanagar* or fishermen's colony is a testimony to the leadership and initiative provided by the Principal. Now the people of the colony do not go to the police station or court

* Sarvodayanagar means a city where everyone can seek his development or progress.
for the settlement of their differences. They approach the Principal for justice and his word is law to them.

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<td>Age group 11 to 15</td>
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The colony consisted of 99 families. Majority of the people are fishermen and their main business is to work as coolies for the Rampanees (big fishing nets) or catch fish independently. These folks did not pay much attention to the education of their children. When the survey revealed the figures of the school-going children, the department of education and the social workers were startled.

Out of 71 children below the age group of 10, only 34 were going to school, the remaining were either assisting their parents or were found in the streets playing. Out of the 72 children of the age group of 11 to 15, only 2 boys were going to school. The reason for the large dropout or disinterest was very simple. The school was at a distance of half a mile.
There is a stream on the way. It is risky to cross it especially during the rainy season. During the winter and summer the male children between the ages of 8 to 9 join their parents in earning livelihood and the female children look after the young brothers and sisters or assist the mothers in cooking. The elders found it convenient to engage the children in these ways. Motivation for sending the children to school was very weak and the colony suffered in these ways educationally.

Illiteracy among adults was almost natural. There were 234 adults above the age of 16 years, out of whom 72 males and 20 females were literate. The adults were interested in joining literacy classes provided they were arranged in the leisure time and convenient places.

Captain B.C. Kalmath, the then Programme Coordinator of NSS, Karnataka University, Dharwad, provided all assistance and guidance to the college authorities for taking up the project. Principal G.V. Bhat represented the case to the university authorities and several government and non-government agencies, requesting support for developmental activities in the colony. As far as the NSS involvement concerned, it may be pointed out that special attention was paid and additional facilities
were given and in fact some provisions were relaxed to help the colony in a special way. For example, there is a rule that only 50% of the total strength of the college should be involved in the special camping programme. When the question of granting strength to the camping programme of the college came up, the University was considerate enough to grant 100% strength to the college. The college advanced the proposal for securing 100% strength and since the projects were to be accomplished within the stipulated period of 10 days, it was essential that the University sanctioned the 100% quota. The camps run in the colony were worthwhile. The projects were completed. The regular activities of the NSS ensured the follow-up work. Surprise visits of the programme coordinator revealed that there was honesty of purpose. A sustained interest was shown by the NSS volunteers. The change in the leadership of the unit did not pose any problems. All the set goals were continued as the Principal was a cementing factor.

About 15 camps were organised in the colony. The Divekar College was the only college in the Karnataka University to have adopted a village for such a long period. This is in conformity with the provisions of the NSS guidelines. If these are adhered to, the NSS can bring about a total change
in the adopted village or area. The Divekar College has done exactly this.

The work in the locality commenced with the construction of a school room. The revenue and development departments were kind enough to make a special provision in the budget. The service organisations also came forward to assist the college in accomplishing the task. The members of staff and students of the college took a lot of interest. It was almost a collective venture. The residents of the colony were convinced that the college is capable of fulfilling the promises. They extended full support to the implementation process.

All five rooms of the school, with necessary infrastructure, are now ready. A spacious playground and teaching aids and facilities were provided at the initiative of the college. The education department did not lag behind; it gave the necessary permission. The community hall, electricity, health care, legal aid, transport arrangements etc. are the happy features of the colony. The NSS unit has taken care to plant fruit tree saplings like those of mango and coconut. This was done with the motto of "Each one plant one." Plantation has beautified the locality.