

One Day Consultation on Issues Of The Impact of New Economy Policy on the Senior Citizens

Supporting Organisations- SANSAD, HELPAGE INDIA, GLOBAL GANDHI FORUM.

Venue: SAMIRDHI, Gram Niyojan Kendra

Date: 23/05/2012.

SANSAD drew a programme on the problems of senior citizens, in which it was decided to organize 7 consultation programmes, out of which 4 were to be held in cities and 3 in villages. Last month in Gaziabadh district a one day consultation was organised by Gram Niyojan Kendra and it was decided there that one consultation will be held in the village. This is why we travelled all the way from New Delhi to Bharatpur.

Programme was inaugurated by Niruttam Prasad Sharma, Principal of the School, run by SAMRIDHI. He welcomed the people like Sri Babulal Sharma, Sri Anil Singh. He introduced Sri Babulal Sharma and said that he will throw light on the problems of the old people.

Babulal Sharma: This is our first travel to this village. Since we had planned to hold one programme here in Gaziabad. Just like here, people there had also come from the rural areas. Since last 20 years a lot of changes have come in the lives of the old people and the children in villages and towns. Traditional occupations have ended and new occupations have started. The expectations of the daughters and daughters in law have increased. They don't want to live their lives like their grandmothers. They also want to be self dependent. You give education to your children so that they may do either good work or job after completing their education. New generation's interest in agriculture has been declining. Those people who are in possession of land, are not getting labour, and the labourers do not have land.

In the wake of new economic policy money is being repatriated from foreign countries. New policies are being formed. Banks have been accumulating a lot of money and that is making the people indebted. Besides these, new seeds policy is making the farmers indebted. About 40-50 years from now the average age of your grandparents was around 40-50. Now the average age is 56. The developments in medical sciences have brought diseases under control. This has increased longevity. Our lifestyle and food habits have undergone massive changes. People are becoming aware- good food, clean water, regarding sanitation. Along with these developments the average age of the people have increased and as such the number of the old people have

increased. The old people account for about 8% of the whole population. 8 crore people are above 60. 2-3 crore people are above 80. There is an adage that the old age is in itself a disease. Life longevity has increased, but at the same time problems have also increased. Earlier there used to be joint family, now that has been replaced by nuclear family. Now there is no one to look after them and their needs. There is no one to look after their food needs and medicine. They have earned the treasure trove of experience in life, but since children don't stay with them, therefore, where and with whom they will share their treasure of experience? Your physical strength will keep decreasing, and whatever you have earned, you spend that on your children-education, marriage, land. The interest rates of banks have also come down. You fall victim to double jeopardy.

Family size has been decreasing. The generation gap is increasing. Tension inside the household are on the increase. On the other hand, people in the society want to wrest property from the aged people. Servants are killing their masters. Children are killing their parents. Government is also aware that the problems are increasing. Education, health and job are our fundamental rights, still we are surrounded by problems. NREGA, ANNA PURNA schemes are being run by government, but even these schemes are not very effective.

The purpose of our meeting is to know the problems faced by you. Some of you are Pradhan, some of you are Sarpanch. We want to hear your problems from you. After the discussions, we want to submit a memorandum to the government so that government may decide about a respectable amount for pension, which may help the aged people in leading a decent life.

Anil Singh: how many of you have come to this meeting? How many of you are 60 years old? Achha, tell me what is my age? Male 1: Physical structure gives indication. 3 women guessed below 50. 5 male guessed above 55. Sri Anil Singh said 57 years. This is such thing that every body wants that he should neither be seen old, nor be called as old. Longevity has increased on account of improvements in food and medical facilities. Japan has the largest number of the aged persons. Job goes after 60 and after that they start feeling that they don't have any work to do and they are worthless. The children also start viewing them as burden. One person is seen capable of working till 59 years of age. Just after one day he is not deemed to be fit for working. This exerts bad influence on mindset. People also start saying that you devote your time to Bhajans. I say that they have knowledge, they have skill sets. For example, Principal sir is offering his services to the school after retiring. We should also think along that line.

There is no system of immediate retirement in the foreign countries. It comes gradually. After 55 years 6 hours; till 60 years 4 hours and for 60-65 years 2 hours. Thus they retire gradually. The system of retirement is called for in society. This gives opportunity to the youth in society. 80 crore people out of the population of 120 crore have mobile phones. This harms the public. Government has decided that everything will be decided by business houses. Everything will be run by the business houses. If you set up a factory, land will be given by the government. If the farmers are unwilling to part with land, the state will resort to lathi charge. Government is giving

subsidy to the companies. Prices of petrol and diesel are increasing. Government is increasing tax rates and the companies are not yielding their profits. All this is making agriculture very costly. We grow wheat and the price is determined by the government. The farmers are not being able to fix the price of their produce. Why?

Male 1: The farmers don't have unity, and resources. Under such circumstances what can we do? If we study, we can earn lakhs. Being a farmer earning one's livelihood is difficult.

Anil Singh: One part of society is becoming very rich and another section of society is gradually becoming very poor. Mukesh Ambani has constructed 35 storey houses for 6 persons.

Niruttam Prasad Singh: the astrologer has said that the new construction is not worthy of inhabitation. Now they want to leave it.

Anil Singh: This policy is not in the interest of the common people. The new economic policy was introduced during the premiership of Narsimha Rao. Manmohan Singh was the finance minister. Under new economic policy the market has been given the right to determine everything. Due to it, everything, be it education, health everything has turned dear. Earlier people used to receive education in Rs 1, 4 anna. Now the fees of many of the school run into thousands of rupees. Earlier the treatment used to be done in the government hospitals, now the treatments are being done in private nursing hospitals. This has made the treatment costly. Now the boys have started migrating to the larger towns and even foreign countries in search of employment. They have started thinking about their own families. in the initial stage even parents feel good that the children are going to foreign countries. As of today the old people are living under the shadow of fear in the cities who knows when somebody will murder them? In recent times old people are being murdered at the hands of the servants and maids. The tension is on increase in the families. why does the son say today that father is not thinking right? Today talkings are mostly on mobile, no need is felt for meeting. When we say those children worthless and we show our power because of being elder, the children also do not heed to us.

So many of doctors, engineers, policemen are sitting idle after retirement. Why don't we make the retired policeman security in charge of our locality? So many cases are pending in the court. We can recruit retired lawyers and we can take definite steps towards solving these pending cases. We send our children to coaching. If we send our children to the retired doctors and engineers and teachers, the fear inside the psyche of the children will also come to an end that it is so difficult to be a doctor or engineer. The children will get good quality education. The cost on education will come down. The old people will also feel good that they are doing something worthwhile. Out of this the children will also develop sense of respect towards the elder citizens of society and they will become responsible citizens of society. We can establish networks of such people and the children should be associated with these networks. It will make work available to lakhs of the old people. The children will also develop the sense of service towards the society. We can create a better network by using the telecommunications facilities. This will

save millions of rupees being spent in the name of welfare of senior citizens. These days networks like Helpage India networks are being run.

Male 1: Panchayat Sachiv checks if any old person has any son, he does not give pension to him. Those who are widows, can get pension only when they are old.

Anil Singh: yes you are right. There is large scale irregularity in the filling up the form for BPL.

Male 1: There is lack of sufficient land, but if you have a pucca house, you will not be considered for BPL. There are so many ineligible people in the category of BPL. In the census form they filled everything, land, house, family size, but still we did not get BPL Status. In present time, who has the income below Rs 5000? But BPL is given to persons earning less than this.

Anil Singh: There are so many cases before us where ineligible persons are in the category of APL/BPL. I am recounting one incident. In one village some youth formed a team and they used to write on the walls of the houses of those persons who had managed to get their names included in the list of BPL, though they were well off, that these persons do not belong to BPL technically, but they are taking advantage of BPL. Everyday the houseowner used to erase the writings made by the youth brigade from their walls, and everyday the youth brigade used to write on their walls. Finally, feeling pressurized under the sustained campaign, they withdrew their names from BPL list.

There are surely shortcomings in the government schemes, as the eligible persons are left out from the benefits of the schemes. At many places the pension amount is just Rs 150-200. Rs 1000 in Delhi, but in UP Rs 200 only. These are the differences, because at different places governments come up with different mentalities. There is need for mobile hospital in every village, where there is provision for all tests and medicines. This will save money both from the government as well as the public. Such buildings should be constructed in the village, where all kinds of facilities like tv, telephone should be there. There the villagers should sit to settle the village level disputes. This is possible only when you meet Sarpanch and raise your demands with him.

Female 2: I had two children. One died. One is labourer in Delhi. I also work as labourer. The old man also earns. Out of these earnings, I am rearing the children of my dead son. I get Rs 500 as pension. They don't recruit old persons in work related to NREGA.

Female 3: If there are 50 labourers, 20 get work, 30 don't. If we go to ask for work, we are said that government has not sanctioned money, from where should we give work?

Anil Singh: Under NREGA work has to be given within 15 days since applying, otherwise government gives unemployment allowance. Money is embezzled by BDO and Mukhiya. If they make excuses like lack of work, rainy season, then they are wrong. There should be no

discrimination based on age and gender. Wages will be deposited in the bank. if roads are built, if ditches have been dug, in that condition work will be done in the private lands also for cultivation, irrigation under NREGA.

There are 10 crore old people. If they decide not to vote for any particular government, the government will fall. You should recognise your power.

Babulal Sharma: He is not talking against any particular person, he is talking against the unjust system.

Niruttam Sharma: Teach your children.

Babulal: There is no fixed age limit for studying.

Anil Singh: There is school for the old people. Ask your Sarpanch.

Female 2: My husband passed away 11 years ago. I am widow. I have not been getting pension.

Female 1: we should get wages in proportion to our hard work. That will be sufficient.

Harpreet Kaur: Tell your problems. Only then we will be able to know about them. People have come from so far places.

Babulal: Does any company come here to disburse loans or for something else?

Villagers: No. So far they have not come.

Anil Singh: Do you eat chips or drink cold drinks? *Koi gadha hoga, jo uncle chips khayega, 2 rupee ke aloo ko 180 rupees me bech raha hai.* See how they are looting your money, and in how many ways? It is not that we did not use to prepare potato chips in our homes. We stopped preparing them and instead started eating Uncle Chips. They use advertising in such a powerful way that we start eating them. Government is not prioritizing in proper way and instead allocates land and electricity. Just imagine for example the money involved in elections. For example the election for MP involves Rs 80 crore on an average. After becoming MP, he makes Rs 80 crore. After this he will save Rs 80 crore for next election. Thereafter he will save for his children. From where all this money come? One liter coca cola involves the use of 40 liter water. The waste water is released in the field. It is turning thousands of hectares of land into barren land. If the peasants oppose, they face bullets.

The government is serving its purpose, but common man is being exploited. Middle class peasants are being encouraged by the MNCs to sow the seeds of soyabean and cotton by taking loans, but in lack of remunerative prices, they are unable to sell the crops. And when the Moneylenders pressurize them to pay up the loan, they are left with no option but to commit suicide.

Today every Panchayat gets Rs 2 crore. But no work is visible. You seek details under RTI, and exercise your rights.

Babulal: There is need to be aware about our rights. We need to know about our rights as well as responsibilities. If there is any old person in your village, who don't have any source of income, collect information about them. So that pension should be arranged for them.

F 2: why widow pension is not being made available?

Anil singh: There is a Gram Sewak in every village to give information. If he is not available, ask the Panchayat where he resides. Why Rajasthan is considered poor? Why Bihar is poor? Why Gujarat and TamilNadu are rich? Because people there are aware about which schemes are running, whether teachers are coming to schools or not. If we don't understand our rights and responsibilities, we will remain backward. We don't understand our responsibilities and we throw everything at the doorstep of government.

“When I passed intermediate exams, I asked for money from my father to go to Delhi to study. But he flatly refused. Thereafter I broke the lock of box and took Rs 15. Some friends also helped. I passed entrance and today the result is before you. I also tried to a lot to educate my brothers, but they could not study. They remained under the illusion that my brother is a big man, what is the need for study”

Babulal: what conclusions have you derived from all the topics discussed here? We are trying to awake you. If this is the problem, what solutions have you thought for it? Whatever facilities have been planned by government for us, that should be made available to us. It is not that we should go to the government for those facilities. You should collect information regarding all the schemes running in the village from the organisation.

Ravindra/ supervisor thanked every person and then gave information about the schemes and programmes run by Samriddhi. Among them child care centre for children 4-6 sponsored by Plan India, NFC sponsored creativitiy centre for children 6-14. Coaching centres for educationally weak children. Besides these mother meetings are convened from time to time, to make them aware of the rights.

Harpreet Kaur: Please tell us what is Samriddhi doing in the village?

Male 3: they are running school in the village. under SHG women are taking loans and doing business.

Guddu: they are working on the problems of the village. the main work relates to spreading awareness in the village. there is a law here that the widow who has a child above 18, will not get pension. Old persons 60-65 who have earning sons or land and other resources, they will not get old age pension. This provision of government is wrong. The children form a separate family

after marriage. The old persons are in no position to work. Under such circumstances government rules are not right.

Anil singh: you 10 persons go to the paper correspondent. When the news gets highlighted, the government will take notice.

Harpreet Kaur: We had started work among children through our organisation. We have so far reached among women. We have not thought about the old persons. Now we have started thinking about the old persons. The people living in towns save some money for themselves. But we villagers keep some deposit in the bank or we manage some money by selling foodgrains to buy some necessary items. We are unable to save money. When we turn old, we are without resources. We pay taxes to the government, this is why government pays us pension after turning 60. This is our right.

Niruttam Prasad Sharma expressed thanks to the honoured guests and the audience.
