

## **Prabudhata: The effort to establish the right of people over higher knowledge.**

Prabudhata is the common name of a revolutionary concept, formulated by the Kerala State Higher Education Council and a unique project, based on the concept, which is now being piloted in a daring manner in Karakulam Grama Panchayat, Thiruvananthapuram district.

### **The Concept**

All the public sector institutions and organizations producing/ transacting/handling higher knowledge, including our universities and colleges, are drawing financial resources from public exchequer. In other words, such institutions and organizations subsist and thrive on tax payers' toil. What does our higher knowledge institutions give to the common man in return? Does he have any right or claim over the fruits of higher knowledge? Are the studies and researches happening in our institutions good enough to address the needs, aspirations and apprehensions of the society? Are our knowledge centres trying to reach out to the communities amidst which they prevail? Does the knowledge produced by such centres percolate to the grass root level? Can these institutions contribute for the betterment of the life, well being, environment and vocation of common man? Are the common people aware of the influence higher knowledge can exercise in their daily life? Do they approach our knowledge centres for resolving the puzzles of their lives? Even if they show audacity to do so, are our institutions prepared to share vital knowledge to them in digestible form? Have our knowledge centres developed simple enough language and communication means to divulge higher knowledge to commoners? Do the higher knowledge centres have any role in eradicating superstitions from our society and foster scientific temper and spirit? Can our institutions go on to exist like bonsai trees in their secluded containers, without having any roots in real earth? Is such a secluded existence arresting the growth of institutions? Should there be a link between knowledge centres and community? Will such a link be beneficial both to the institutions and community alike? Do our local self governments have any bonding with higher knowledge institutions?

Prabudhata is a concept evolved from such reverberating questions. As a model project Prabudhata aims to make use of the might of local self governments and the potential of Kudumbashree CBOs (Community Based Organizations) to deliver the benefits of higher knowledge to the community and to garner, in return, inputs, themes, thoughts and ideas for

meaningful research and studies from the society. The project is to be comprehended as a harbinger of a new democratic knowledge culture, which will permeate throughout the country in due course. Or it is to be seen as an eye opener for centres of higher knowledge and our society alike.

### **Partners of Prabudhata:**

As hinted earlier, State Higher Education Council is piloting Prabudhata Project in Karakulam panchayat with the active support of the Local Self Government of the area, Kudumbashree Mission and Karakulam Grameena Patana Kendram, a vibrant NGO functioning in the panchayat. The aim is to evolve a replicable model for disseminating higher knowledge, its implications and benefits to common man and community at large.

Besides the foregoing primary partners, we are getting/expecting the patronage and support of an array of agencies, bodies and individuals for the implementation of the project, including:

- ❖ The Government of Kerala, hon'ble Minister for Higher Education and the Higher Education Department (In fact Prabudhata is a Council project declared by the hon'ble Governor in the floor of the State Legislature in 2017)
- ❖ Higher Education Institutions and Higher Knowledge Centres of both the State and Central Governments, situated in and around Thiruvananthapuram city (including the University of Kerala, College of Agriculture, Vellayani, APJ Abdul Kalam Technological University, Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and Environment, National Transportation Planning and Research Centre, Central Tuber Crops Research Institute, Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, Rajeev Gandhi Centre for Biotechnology, Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute of Medical Sciences and Technology, National Centre for Earth Science Studies, Kerala Bhasha Institute, Kerala Council for Historic Research, Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanical Garden and Research Institute, Science and Technology Museum, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology, CSIR-Indian Institute of Interdisciplinary Science and Technology and Government and Aided Colleges of the region, including College of Engineering Trivandrum etc.)
- ❖ Karakulam Panchayat Committee

- ❖ CDS of Karakulam Panchayat
- ❖ NGOs of the region, including PTAs, Resident Associations, Youth Clubs, Purusha Swayam Sahaya Sanghams and Libraries
- ❖ NSS Volunteers
- ❖ Academic fraternity, including students and teachers and their unions
- ❖ Political leadership of the State
- ❖ MPs and MLAs of the State
- ❖ Opinion leaders from all walks of life
- ❖ Cultural leaders
- ❖ Local Self Governments
- ❖ Information and Public Relations Department
- ❖ Print and Electronic Media
- ❖ Social media and media activists
- ❖ Educationalists and experts from the field of science and technology

Possibilities and potentials of convergent community action, academic volunteerism, development journalism, reach of social media and social pressure are harmoniously harnessed together for the effective implementation of Prabudhata in Karakulam panchayat. Though the epicenter of the programme is Karakulam, impact is now palpable throughout the State.

### **Implementation:**

Prabudhata is entirely a unique project, first of its kind, conceived and implemented in India or elsewhere. Since there is no prior model to emulate, the functionaries of the Council have cut a new path to go forward with the project. The strategy and process of implementation have been formulated through collective thinking and brainstorming. Time and again the process has to be re-casted and recalibrated in accordance with several factors, including the responses & feed backs of the target community and stakeholders who are supporting the project.

Though the strategy and process are constantly changing, the central theme of Prabudhata is as follows. The Kerala State Higher Education Council has empowered the people of Karakulam to frame and raise questions (*knowledge questions- questions based on higher knowledge, each of the higher knowledge centres is producing/transacting/handling*) to the higher knowledge centres in

and around Thiruvananthapuram city, with the active support and involvement of Kudumbashree Mission, Panchayat Samithi, CDS and NGOs of the area.

A volunteer team has been formed to disseminate project objects and ideals in the community. Besides the Facilitator engaged by the Council, representatives of the grama panchayat, Kudumbashree CBOs, representatives of NGOs & PTA and NSS- student volunteers are there in the volunteer team. Council and Kudumbashree Mission have jointly imparted training to the volunteer team. The volunteer team is raising pertinent questions in the community to arouse interest among common people regarding the implication of higher knowledge in their day to day life. Now, the community itself is identifying and enlisting questions, which it wants to place before each centre of higher knowledge.

In the next phase, the questions framed and garnered by the people of Karakulam would be sent as open letters by the Panchayat to the knowledge centres with the request to answer them in an interaction meet to be held in the panchayat on a specific date. As this would be an open challenge, centres of higher knowledge cannot but appear before the community at the venue fixed by them for interaction (*social pressure at work*). Communication tools prepared for the project and media coverage have already attracted state-wide attention for the concept and the project.

Heads of higher knowledge centres who participate in the interaction events organized at the panchayat would invite the community to visit their institutions on specific dates for having first hand information about the knowledge areas they are occupied with (*Open day*). Members of the community will visit institutions on specified dates for garnering information and their rightful share of higher knowledge.

Though foregoing is the central theme of the Prabudhata project which is being piloted in Karakulam panchayat, several other concepts and activities are integrated to it like:

- Social rooting of higher knowledge centres (establishing perennial and mutually beneficial bond between community and institutions)
- Academic Pilgrimage to Karakulam (Experts from higher knowledge centres visiting the Panchayat to offer knowledge based services to the community)

### **Communication Strategy:**

Instead of the run of the mill publicity modes and tools opted for most of the Government funded programmes, a unique & catchy communication strategy and appealing tools are adopted for

Prabudhata project. Following are some of the components incorporated in the communication strategy frame work.

- Reverse way of implementation (Natural instinct would be to prompt the institutions to disseminate their knowledge in society. But we decided to mobilize the community instead and empowered common people to approach the institutions for their due share of knowledge.)
- Handbook on Prabudhata, prepared in simple Malayalam for training and propagation purposes.
- Shri. Murugan Kattakkada, one of the most popular poets in Kerala wrote and recited the theme song of Prabudhata in his unique and enchanting style. Audio and video versions of the theme song is used as one of the tools for propagating Prabudhata.
- *Prabudhata installations (thinking man)* at Karakulam and Palayam campus of the University of Kerala with inbuilt question boxes (*Prabudhata Chodya Petti*)
- Street Plays (*Theruvu Natakoms*) prepared and enacted by Grameena Kala Kendram, Karakulam
- Prabudhata *Kala Jadha* organized by Grameena Kala Kendram, Karakulam.
- Prabudhata Ayalsabhas and Gramasabha organized by Karakulam Grama Panchayat.
- Special sessions on Prabudhata in more than 1000 NSS camps organized in December, 2018.
- *Opinion leaders first* approach to popularize the ideals of the concept
- Direct mailers to Ministers, MPs, MLAs, Political Leadership, Local Body Chairpersons, University Authorities, Syndicate Members, College Principals, Student Unions , Academics, top officials
- Effective use of social media (Prabudhata theme songs, questions, events, clippings etc. are propagated through social media, including YouTube, Facebook and Whatsap.)
- There is a whatsapp group for Prabudhata, named *Team Prabudhata*, in which over 200 members are there, including vice chancellors, officials of higher education department, including Principal Secretary, Higher Education and PS to Minister, Higher Education, Syndicate Members, Executive Director, Kudumbashree, district collectors, office bearers

of teaching and non-teaching organizations, Prabudhata partners of Karakulam and officials of the State Higher Education Council. News, events, request for action etc. relating to Prabudhata are posted on the group and concepts, opinions, suggestions are collected from among the members.

- Judicious use of conventional media

### **Prabudhata in 2018-19**

If 2017-18 was more of a formative year of Prabudhata, 2018-19 was the actual implementation year. Particulars of the step by step progress of Prabudhata during 2018-19 are given below in bullet points.

- Selection of Karakulam panchayath for the piloting of Prabudhata project.
- Brainstorming meeting held at the Training Centre of Grameena Padana Kendram, Karakulam on 04/05/2018.
- One day Training programme for faculty cum volunteer team of Prabudhata held at the Board Room of the Kerala State Higher Education Council on 21/05/2018.
- Theme song of Prabudhata got done by Shri. MurukanKattakkada, the famous Malayalam poet.
- Discussion with Costford team (formulation of Installation concept) held at the Board Room of the Kerala State Higher Education Council on 09/08/2018.
- Implementation timeline discussion held at Karakulam Gramapanchayath on 26/09/2018
- Preparation of street plays for disseminating the ideals of Prabudhata in KarakulamPachyath.(by Grameena Kala Kendram, Karakulam).
- Half day training programme for CDS-ADS office bearers of Karakulam CDS of Kudumbashree held at the Board Room of the Kerala State Higher Education Council on 09/10/2018.
- Half day training programme for the Students of different Colleges held at the Board Room of the Kerala State Higher Education Council on 17/10/2018.
- Pre-launch meeting held at the Board Room of the Kerala State Higher Education Council on 20/10/2018.
- Putting up of Prabudhata installations with inbuilt question boxes at the Palayam campus of the University of Kerala and Karakulam junction.

- Launching of Prabudhata campaign by Dr. K.T Jaleel, hon'ble Minister for Higher Education at the Palayam campus of the University of Kerala on 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2018. (On that evening, people of Karakulam came over to the Palayam campus of the University of Kerala in a procession under the leadership of Mrs. Anila, their Panchayath President. They were received at the campus by the Vice Chancellor, syndicate members, teachers, students and officials. They convened a meeting there, in which Dr. K.T Jaleel, Minister for Higher Education formally launched Prabudhata campaign. An installation had been erected on the campus in the shape of a big question mark with a question box integrated to it. After the inauguration ceremony, the people began to raise questions –*knowledge questions*- one after another, using mike, which were to be answered by leading higher knowledge centres of Thiruvananthapuram. They put their questions in the built in question box of the installation. That was the formal launching event of Prabudhata).
- Prabudhata leadership Seminar held at the Training Centre of Grameena Padana Kendram, Karakulam on 04/12/2018
- Inauguration of Prabudhata installation at Karakulam by Dr. A. Sampath. M.P
- Intense campaigning in Karakulam panchayath and framing of Prabudhata questions started. (Prabudhata volunteers worked in Karakulam panchayat and propagated the ideals of the project. It became a topic of discussion in NHG, ADS and CDS meetings of Kudumbashree. Purusha Swayam Sahaya Sangams, Karshaka Sangams, Youth Clubs, Resident Associations also took the initiative seriously, thanks to the involvement and interventions of Grameena Patana Kendram.0
- Inspired by the concept, *academic pilgrimage to community*, the Geology Department of the University of Kerala started a study in Karakulam (on availability and quality of ground water in Karakulam) under the leadership of Prof. E Shaji.
- Convening of Prabudhata Ayalsabhas.
- On 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2019 a special Prabudhata Gramasabha of Kachani ward was held and the Gramasabha passed a resolution on behalf of the people of Kerala to emphasis and assert the right of common people over knowledge. (The motion was moved by Shri. Vikas Divakaran, Member of Kachani ward)
- Continuation of the campaign and question framing activity.

- Evolving of concept like SARK( Social Angle in Research and Knowledge Production) and KDR (Knowledge Dissemination Responsibility ) and adoption of the same as indicators for assessing the performance higher education institutions under SAAC (State Assessment and Accreditation Centre).
- Evolving of KAD (Knowledge Assimilation& Dessimination) as an offshoot of Prabudhata.

**Further actions planned:**

Piloting of Prabudhata in Karakulam is in its final phase. Questions are now being framed/garnered by the villagers of the area.

- Soon these questions would be sent as open letters of the President of the Panchayat to various institutions and knowledge centres.
- Prabudhata day will be celebrated at a convenient venue.
- Heads of various institutions would be invited participate in the celebrations and to interact with people.
- Villagers of Karakulam would visit various institutions for collecting first hand information.

**Outcome:**

Even though Prabudhata is piloted only in Karakualm Panchayat, its impact and reverberations are perceptible throughout the state, thank to the cogent communication strategy. Following are some of the major outcomes of the project.

- New awakening in the community with respect to its right over the fruits of higher knowledge
- Attitudinal change that occured in academic/scientific community
- Betterment of the life and vocation of common men through knowledge dissemination
- Genesis of a new democratized knowledge culture
- Social audit of the centres of higher knowledge
- New impetus for community oriented knowledge production
- Preparation of kits and means for knowledge dissemination

- Books, pamphlets, brochures etc. produced by centres of higher knowledge to introduce themselves to the society
- Launching of new extension activities by institutions.
- Evolvement of a simplified language to introduce higher knowledge to common people
- Social Angle in Research and Knowledge Production (SARK): a new parameter to assess the efficacy, relevance, worth and usefulness of researches and studies.
- Knowledge Dissemination Responsibility (KDR): a new criterion to gauge the social commitment and extension drive of colleges and other higher education institutions.
- Adoption of SARK and KDR by SAAC as indicators for assessing the performance of higher education institutions.
- Evolution of the concept - KAD (Knowledge Assimilation and Dissemination) as an aftermath of Prabudhata.
- Prabudhata is getting replicated (The University of Kerala has decided to implement Prabudhata model projects at one Pachayat each in Alappuzha and Kollam districts.)
- Special Prabudhata sessions were organized in over 1000 NSS camps, conducted during December, 2018.
- Geology Department of the University of Kerala is conducting a study *on availability and quality of ground water in Karakulam* as a part Prabudhata project.
- The Kerala State Higher Education Council is planning to take up Prabudhata model projects in one Panchayat each at Central and Northern Kerala.
- KAD Project is going to be implemented in one Government college each in all the 14 districts of the State.

Prabudhata may not be a giant leap. But it is definitely one firm step forward in the direction of socializing higher knowledge. (Of late Prabudhata has been nominated for SKOCH Awards, 2018.)