

This story of Patora, a village in Nuapada District, Orissa shows how unscientific developmental activities can almost kill areas once known for their scenic beauty. Located on the banks of River Jonk, Patora, once had lush green hills interspersed with waterfalls and mesmerising scenic places. The village is situated 4 km from the district headquarters and is also the dam site for the Upper Jonk Irrigation Project. All these made Patora a place of tourist importance. The boom in tourism is transforming once the beautiful Patora into a eye sore with garbage dumped all over the place.

In order to halt this change and to help Patora regain its attractiveness, the NGC schools across the district undertook a massive campaign in 2005. First, a plastic free campaign was launched at district level in which about 1000 students from 23 NGC schools and five NGOs participated. Through a series of film and talk shows, eco club students educated other students about the harmful effects of plastics on the environment. This was followed by a rally wherein students held placards and shouted slogans to promote awareness about the ill effects of plastic on



Yogeshwar Temple

their health and generally on environment. Rally stopped at Rajiv Udyan, one of the important tourist destinations in Patora village. Modelled on the same theme as the Brindavan Gardens in Karnataka, this scenic park attracts a large number of tourists. Students spread themselves across the park and in groups they spoke to the visitors and sensitised them about the ill effects of plastic bags. They also urged tourists to keep the park and other places of tourist interest clean. The rally then continued and culminated at the Yogeshwar temple, another important tourist destination in Patora.

Following the rally, students undertook cleaning at the Patora dam site. Students collected about 8 kgs of waste including polythene bags, tetra packs and other trash in this process of cleaning. The waste collected was later on handed over to the rag pickers. An action plan also was chalked out to free Patora from trash and to sensitise visitors on the importance of keeping tourist sites clean. A team was formed for this purpose. The team comprising of District NGC coordinators, master trainers, nodal agency representatives and some of the teachers in-charge of several eco clubs of the district met to execute the action plan. As a first step the team approached the executive engineer of Jonk Division for dustbins and glow signs. These materials supplied by the engineer were installed at appropriate places in the tourist spots by the team members. The team now supports regular rallies undertaken by the eco clubs for visitor / tourist education and help in their regular cleaning operation carried out on Sundays in various tourist places. Patora is slowly but surely regaining its old charm by this persuasive initiative of the young brigade. Seeing the success of this initiative, the team plans to extend this programme to other places, particularly tourist destinations in Nuapada district.

This case study is an effort of the NGC schools, district NGC committee of Nuapada and the State nodal agency of Orissa . It is an example of how a collective action can help reverse a destructive process and restore the ecological balance.



Views of Rajiv Udhyan

