



'We make students social crusaders through NSS'

The National Service Scheme (NSS) Bureau of the Council of Higher Secondary Education, Odisha (CHSE), whose primary aim is to inculcate the spirit of social service among the Plus II students and build their character and personality through social commitments and nation building, hogged the limelight when it got the Indira Gandhi Award, 2015. It is the highest award in the country in this sector and as such, the recognition for the CHSE was not only a matter of pride for the council and lakhs of NSS volunteers and officials associated with the Bureau, it was also a big achievement for the State.

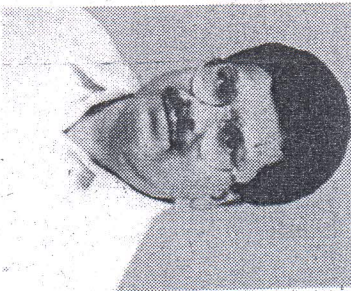
Srikanta K Tripathy of The Pioneer talked to CHSE NSS Coordinator Prof Ananta Kishore Jena, within just two years of whose tenure the CHSE Bureau achieved the milestone.

How do you feel after getting the award and who do you give credit to for the success?

It's a matter of pride for the whole State and the NSS Bureau in particular. I thank all the volunteers, NSS Programme Officers (POs) and officials for the achievement.

The award is important not just for the fact that it was given as a recognition of our works but because it was achieved for the first time in the last 24 years history of the Bureau, which was established in 1992. I took charge as NSS Coordinator in August, 2013 and ever since tried my best to give a fast momentum to the NSS works. I chose the best and efficient POs who led the volunteers in undertaking various programmes across the State. And, finally in 2015, we got the success. The award was achieved in recognition of the tremendous jobs undertaken by the NSS unit of Patimal Junior College, Pandua, Dhenkanal under the stewardship of PO Rashi Ranjan Dash.

What are the noteworthy programmes the NSS Bureau has undertaken in these years?



Prof Ananta Kishore Jena

We have taken up a host of programmes as per the NSS agenda. But more importantly, we have laid focus on environment which has earned accolades for us both at the State and national levels. We have encouraged people for kitchen garden which was a big hit. Similarly, the Bureau conducted two training programme for the POs for creating awareness on water conservation and rain water harvesting with aid of IITWM, Chandrasekharpur and

OSWM. Besides, we created an awareness drive for short term cash crop like watermelon, sweet corn and mushroom farming and undertook a massive plantation programme under which species like banyan, neem and palm were planted. We also worked for safety of elephants and wild animals which are fast getting extinct. We created Kia bush along the river and canal banks for the reviving habitat for several wild animals like jackals, squirrels and porcupines etc. Conservation of forest also formed an important part of our job.

How far has the NSS Bureau been successful in taking the Government-sponsored schemes to the grassroots people?
Yes, we have taken an initiative in this front as well since it also forms a key part of the NSS work. Through the NSS units spread across the length and breadth of the State, we undertook several awareness drives for common people in

interior and far flung areas to take advantage of the myriad schemes of the Central and State Governments like Jan Dhan, Pradhan Mantri Jiban Bima, Atal Pension Yojana, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao etc. This apart, we told people how to get the voter identity card rectified and get registered for Indira Awas, Old age, Widow and Madhubabu pension schemes.

Are you doing anything for driving out superstitious practices, especially in healthcare of the tribals?

Inter-college camps have been organized with special thrust on fighting tribal superstition and witchcraft. These camps were held in tribal prone areas. The result is, now people are going to hospital rather than seeing witch doctors. Besides, we also created awareness to wear tribals away from liquor habit and motivate them not to burn forests. We also took up special drive on AIDS, malaria, leprosy and environment in the tribal belts.