

HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

OPES(Organization for Protection of Ecosystem, Environment and Endangered Species) was formed during 1999 with a broad objective of protection of environment and species conservation. Dr. Ranjit Kumar Samantarai, the founder of this organization is the 4th sibling of Shri Parshuram Samantarai and Chandraprava Samantarai of village Karilopatna, district Kendrapada of the state of Odisha, India. He was then a young Vet serving at Nandankanan Zoological Park of Forest department on a temporary deployment from F&ARD department, Government of Odisha. The administrative approval was made by the then Commissioner-cum-Secy, F&ARD, Sj. Madan Mohan Mohanty, IAS, a reputed Indian Administrative Cadre Officer. Since Nandankanan was a sanctuary by its own merit, Dr. Samantarai got scope to deal with management and treatment of wonderful wildlives in both *in-situ* and *ex-situ* conditions.

Then, under Odisha Govt. sponsorship he was shortlisted to undergo higher studies in wildlife(Post Grad National Diploma) at Indian Veterinary Research Institute(IVRI), Izat Nagar, U.P. He then packed up and moved to IVRI, Izatnagar, Uttar Pradesh. IVRI was the Mecca of Veterinary profession with the deemed University status under its belt. During his studies, he was often visiting the Central Library taking special interests to read varied books and journals on Ecology and Environment in addition to Veterinary, Wildlife, Agriculture and Allied subjects. Then a catastrophe occurred in Odisha in the shape of Super Cyclone during December 1999. The entire costal Odisha was devastated by terror-stricken heavy cyclonic storms. Agricultural crops damaged, trees uprooted, buildings collapsed, large number of cattle & other pet animals died. There were severe human casualties. More so, one of the best zoo of the world, Nandankanan was devastated. Large number of wild animals died, cages broken, birds flew, huge plants uprooted leaving aside a cruel scene of a war affected zone. Since the founder represents a service organization, i.e. Rotary International, he got invitation from Odisha Govt. to support the Air dropping operation through supply of food and medicine. He was then undertaking his studies at IVRI, Izatnagar. For his urgent deployment, a letter of request from Odisha Govt. was sent to the Director IVRI to spare Dr. Samantarai for a couple of weeks for this important mission. Then the Director extended a special leave of two weeks to Dr. Samantarai to immediately proceed to Odisha for such a noble cause. He then came to Odisha and reported to govt authorities. Immediately, he was deployed to Khorda to be a part of the air dropping operations from Khorda to different parts of Astarang, Paradeep and Jagatsinghpur. It drew a strong impact to

him to do something to address the environmental issues as the earth experiences severe devastations in the impact of Global Warming and Climate Change. Back to Uttarpradesh, this person concentrated on studies and successfully completed the Wildlife specialization. During 2000, he returned back to Bhubaneswar.

Studying and dealing with wildlives also created a deep impact into his mind to serve for the cause of wild lives of Odisha and the sub-continent at large. But it was short lived. After completion of above course, when he came back to Bhubaneswar with rich expertise on wildlives, to his utter surprise, he found that he was under orders of transfer from Saheednagar to Betnati, Mayurbhanj. It gave him a big shock. This was ridiculous. Somebody went for higher studies on Wildlife for Government interests, duly relieved from Veterinary Hospital, Sahidnagar, Bhubaneswar leaving aside his family and children at a rented house, suddenly need to be shifted to Betnati, an interior place in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. In fact, he has served a long 17 years of at distant tribal districts of Koraput, Keonjhar and Sundargarh prior to proceeding for higher studies. Really, it was very painful for him. Hence, he decided not to leave Bhubaneswar and to fight for a genuine cause to be posted in any of the wildlife establishments of Odisha. For this, he had to struggle for six months without pay.

With earlier practical experiences from Nandankanan and rich knowledge from IVRI, during these boring forced leave days at Bhubaneswar, he got the idea to start an environmental organization related to conservation of nature and natural resources. During these six months, an idea hatched into his mind which prompted him to form an organization related to ecology; more so environment protection and wildlife conservation. Then he interacted with many youths of the capital city, who volunteered to address the burning issues of the state under his stewardship.

FORMATION OF ORGANIZATION OPES

A general meeting of 17 persons in all was invited to form the ground work to open a non-governmental organization. Then, the proceeding was drawn for the first meeting where the objectives and the memorandum in line with the prescribed format for Inspector General of Registration(IGR) found place as a prerequisite towards formation of a new society. After a brain-storming session in the meeting, it was unanimously decided to keep the name of the organization as OPES (Organization for Protection of Ecosystem, Environment and Endangered Species) to be established at Bhubaneswar. After a month or so, the present logo was designed by the then artist Sri Dinesh Kumar Mohapatra from Media point Bhubaneswar which was later approved. He also prepared a nice leaflet with organization logo and the

objectives for wide circulation to general public. Then the leaflets were distributed at the city of Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and many different places of the state of Odisha. The organization's founder members had to pay Rupees 111/- each as membership fees to start the organization. Then the registration proposal was prepared and processed to the Registrar, IGAR Cuttack, through the Collector and District Magistrate, Khorda during January 2000. Then, OPES got registered under Societies Registration Act on 02.02.2000 with the working area of the entire state of Odisha.

PRELIMINARY FINANCE

In contemplation to nurture an Organisation, some working capital is very much required. As such the organization was struggling for funds to undertake different activities. In order to find the ways and means for raising fund, he convened a meeting on Dt. 17.04.2000 at his rented house(VIM-138) at Sailashreevihar, Bhubaneswar. Thanks to Sri Jyotish Tripathy of 'Computer Point' of Saheednagar to provide us 10 money receipt books (having 100 numbers each) free of cost to generate funds from benevolent people around. First, an amount of Rupees 2000/- was donated by a senior Rotarian and a businessman Er. Narendra Mishra of Sheednagar BBSR. The second patronage of amount Rupees 2000/-was provided by Er. Prafulla Kumar Swain, a young Civil Engineer of IRC Village, Bhubaneswar. Then we applied for NEAP(National Environment Awareness Program) assistance from environment wing of forest department. During the year 2000, we received Rupees 3000/-for environment protection awareness program from Govt. of Odisha. With all these funds, the organization undertook different environment programs through plantations, awareness rallies etc. and saved some funds too.

Later, to undertake social programs, extending physical presence was difficult for Dr. Samanatarai. Hence, he thought it proper to publish a scientific document (Souvenir/Journal) under the patronage of OPES. Then a meeting was held at Nandankanan Zoological Park with experts like Dr. Mihir Kumar Pattnaik and Mr. K. L. Purohit who assured to extend all kinds of support towards the publication. Later, Dr. Samantarai discussed with the then Director, Nandankanan Mr. Vinod Kumar, IFS to bring out a publication related to wildlife and environment. Being government officers, all made it a point that they should devote their extra time for the journal without least affecting their job. Then he met Dr. S.B. Mishra, Shree Subhakanta Padhi, Shree Tarun Kumar Smantray, Shree Jumar Das, Shree D. N. Biswal, Er. Kaushik Dhal, Ms. Angela Pattnaik and many other youths who extended support to become life members to OPES. They also joined hands to bring out the publication. In the meanwhile, Dr. Samantarai had sent a research article on "Control of Trypanosomiasis in Big cats of

Nandankanan Zoological Park” to the reputed publishing house “The Indian Forester”. The Editorial Board continually returned the paper thrice to satisfy their requirements. May be, they were right in their approach but this man was disheartened and dejected and met his boss, the Director Nandankanan and informed the happenings over delay in publication. Then he gave all kinds of assurances to Dr. Samantarai and instilled confidence to keep patience and modify this rare article as per the Reviewer’s comments. At that point of time, Nandankanan and Odisha were severely criticized internationally because of large number of white tiger deaths. It was a timely approach just to send a positive message round the globe through this international publication. In the meanwhile, although six months passed and there were requisite corrections, there was no hope of publication, it seemed. Dr. Samantarai became disgusted and completely broken and met Director, Nandankanan who was in his usual evening round of the Zoo and expressed his displeasure over publication. He told, Sir! Can’t we introduce a new scientific journal at Odisha to help and assist the budding researchers ? Mr. Kumar gave a broad smile and didn’t give any conclusive reply. Good cadre officers at such positions often don’t dishearten their officers interested to take up new challenges. But Dr. Samantarai sensed the expression of his officer to be a positive signal. With all these supports around, Dr. Samantarai later, invited a meeting on 17.07.2001 at his residence with participation of core members of OPES such as Subhakanta, Tarun, Jumar, Angela, Sanghamitra and others to give the name of the journal. From around 07 members, dozens of proposals on different types of names came to the forum. After a hectic analysis, one name that was shortlisted and suited everyone was that of ‘**e-planet**’. This name was proposed by Ms. Angella Pattnaik of Bhubaneswar. At that point of time, when ‘e-commerce’ was a very new concept, choice of name of ‘**e-planet**’ seemed very catchy and was unanimously selected and officially finalized.

JOURNAL PUBLICATION

It was decided to publish the journal **e-planet** twice a year(bi-annual) with 40 to 50 pages contents. The then core members Dr. Samantarai, Mr. Pattnaik and Mr. Purohit had a meeting at Jyoti Graphics, the printing press at Sahidnagar and decided to collect and contribute scientific papers, research, review and short articles to start the journal publication. Also for popularization, news and views were included. For initial two issues, request was made to many researchers and different scientific bodies to contribute articles. Core members of OPES also contributed articles of their own in each issues. Team members of OPES resolved that Dr. R.K. Samantarai being the senior most with rich experience in the field of wildlife, ecology, environment, agriculture and allied sciences should handle the journal as

the publisher, printer and Editor-in-Chief. He was initially hesitant because he happened to be a government officer but with many persuasions, he agreed to become publisher and printer but not the Editor-in-Chief. That apart, he didn't have any bleak idea over editing experiences. Hence, he proceeded to meet a wildlife stalwart Dr. L. N. Acharyo at his Baramunda residence, Bhubaneswar. Dr. Acharyo was known to him because he was appointed by government as the Technical Committee member of Nandankanan Zoo to monitor wildlife issues of the zoo inmates. His answer was a big no. He categorically told; Dr. Samantarai ! it is not a matter of joke to publish and edit such a scientific journal at your level and standard of thinking. Then, wittfully, Dr. Samantarai offered him to become the Editor-in-Chief of the journal for initial years and then in due course he may transfer the responsibility to the upcoming scientists after training them. Then also, he negativated. Dr. Samantarai returned empty handed. He then preferred to become the Editor-in-Chief respecting the earlier resolution. He then processed the documents accordingly and started the publication process as decided. For editing preliminary issues, there were sleepless nights for him and his team. With strong support from Sri Suvakanta Padhi, the founder secretary and Sri Tarun Kumar Samnatray, the Vice President, OPES, journal **e-planet** publications continued under the Chief Editorship of Dr. Samantarai. Director, Mr. Vinod Kumar, Mr. Kamal Purohit and Dr. Mihir Patnaik and many of his Nandankanan colleagues extended a strong support. During 2002 Volume.I issue 1& 2 were published at "Media point" Saheednagar, BBSR.

INAUGURAL PROMOTION OF JOURNAL

For better promotion of the journal, we decided to have the inaugural function and launching of **e-planet** at hotel Keshari, Bhubaneswar on 14.02.2002 inviting frontline environmental experts, researchers, academicians, students and film personalities. Odia film heartthrob Dolly Jena was the Chief Guest. We had to organize the evening function with dinner arrangement as a matter of courtsey. The function was a great success. After the function, the billing amount of the city hotel was Rupees 15000/-. It was then a big amount. We were not having sufficient funds in our accounts to pay for the bills. The hotel manager was little considerate to gave us some time for settlement of bill becoz of our Rotary connections. But, later, the same manager put tremendous pressure for settlement of the bill within next couple of weeks. Even Dr. Samantarai didn't have that big amount to settle the bills and a very sad things happened then. Dr. Samantarai had to mortgage his wife's ornaments in the bank to take the requisite loan to pay the hotel bills. There might have been those temporary problems but things were settled in due course. But the journal got a nice

recognition and a kind of facelift in the city of Bhubaneswar and the state of Odisha as well. Then onwards, the journey of **e-planet** made a leap and continued to taste success with many ups and downs.

RNI REGISTRATION

Then proposal was submitted to RNI (Registrar of News Papers of India), New Delhi through the Collector & DM, Khorda with necessary documents and first 2 copies of journal during 2003 for registration of **e-planet**. After a couple of months, the entire documents were returned back to OPES office (make shift office chamber at rented quarter of Dr. Samantarai i.e. VIM-138, Sailashreevihar, Bhubaneswar) from RNI office with the views that the name was not understandable and also the objectives need to be clarified elaborately. We complied accordingly. Then interestingly, during 2004, the RNI gave the recognition and allotted the name to "JOURNAL OF ECO-SYSTEM ENVIRONMENT AND ENDANGERED SPECIES" as per their own understanding. However, we could not be convinced the name of journal to be such a large one and did not go by our decision. Then we have had innumerable correspondences to RNI authorities to convince them to allot our decisive name 'e-planet' with all justifications. But that also did not work. In the meanwhile, we struggled for 1 and half years to get the proper registration. But, amidst all these controversies, we continued publications. Then the organization OPES sent its Vice President to Delhi to expedite the matter. Tarun tried his best to convince the dealing assistant from Bihar at office of RNI and still things were not materialized. Finally, the Editor-in-Chief Dr. Samantarai himself had to proceed to Delhi, stayed few days, convinced the authorities to accomplish the job. At last, during 2005, RNI allotted us the name to '**e-planet**' with the registration number ORI ENG/ 2003/ 15643/ Dated 22.11.2005 with retrospective effect.

OPENING OF WEBSITE

By start of 2005, we have had 4 authorized issues, although we missed 2 earlier issues published during 2002 which were not officially counted since we got recognition from 2003. We further decided to enhance the pages from 40 pages to 60-70. Then to make our journal open access and internationalize, we opened a website. To our good luck, we got our own name at google space i.e. www.e-planet.com. To have it with less budget, we contacted to some Computer Students of NM Engineering college, who had created their own software enterprise and working for different firms. Then with negotiations, they first opened our website during 2005 and maintained it till 2007. By that time, we turned more professional and approached bigger enterprises. By then, the journal was completely converted into clean research journal. We switched from NM Students'

domain to M/S 'Suryanandan.co.in' at Nilakanthanagar, Bhubaneswar. We made it open access and uploaded the entire data of OPES including all issues of **e-planet** in pdf in the publication section of the said website. The journal as a whole was displayed freely and prominently with free access to all viewers including download facilities.

NAAS ACCREDITATION

During 2006 we came in contact with the Vice chancellor of OUAT Prof. Dr. Khageswar Pradhan. We presented him all copies of journal **e-planet**. Then he gave us the idea that for better global promotion, we need to apply to NAAS authority with requisite documents and latest issues of journal so that we may possibly be considered for NAAS ratings. He was the person who inculcated academic spirit into our mind with his strong support. For the first time, on 01.01.2007, NAAS recognised us and allotted its rating to 3.0 in 10 point scale. It was a huge achievement for the members of OPES and the scientific community of Odisha. Since then, we have never looked back. Thereafter, we have been continuously publishing our dear journal the '**e-planet**' and routinely applying to NAAS for updating of ratings on each three years gap. With many revisions of ratings over the years, we have been maintaining the status of accreditation of NAAS till now with the present rating of 3.76.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM NM GROUP OF INSTITUTIONS

Although we got NAAS accreditation from 2007, it took almost ten years for us to be under consideration of ICAR(Indian Council of Agricultural Research), Govt. of India for necessary financial assistance. In spite of the fact that we were having name and fame, the OPES struggled very hard financially to continue its publication from 2007 onwards. One significant thing happened here. In fact, during 2004, Dr. Samantarai came in contact with Dr. Ramesh Chandra Parida, Chairman, NM group of Institutions, Sijua, Patrapada, Bhubaneswar. A strong friendship also developed between them later. By that time, completing his studies from Delhi University he had opened NM tutorial at Cuttack, a new concept of private coaching for the youths towards building their professional career. As usual, EIC used to present a complimentary copy of each issue of **e-planet** to Dr. Parida, making it a point to visit his corporate office at Saheednagar minimum twice a year just to hand over the copies in person. Receiving research journals continually from a small struggling body from this friend, he was feeling restless. Being at the helm of affairs in academics and a successful entrepreneur, he has started thinking to extend support to this journal financially. Because of a strong friendship with Dr. Samantarai and that apart his usual helping nature, he could not bear that OPES will drop its

publication because of financial deficiency. He did not allow that to happen. By that time, Dr. Samantarai and his organization have already been completely drained financially. He has exhausted his own resources i.e. membership from friends and institutions, advertisements from known companies and friends etc. "There has always been a silver lining amidst all clouds" as the saying goes. One fine evening, EIC was invited to his Saheednagar office chamber, of course keeping in mind to address a pertinent issue. Over the cup of tea, he asked Dr. Samantarai that since he has been doing a very great and noble job for the students, researchers and farmers, he just desired that if any kind of support from him and his NM group of institutions need to be extended to OPES and **e-planet**. Dr. Samantarai was speech less and started thinking that in max, Dr. Parida would extend some financial support to recover the institute from the financial debts of the previous year and support publications for the coming year i.e. a kind of support publications of 4 issues for its sustenance. Within that period, he and his team might try their best to recover fast to continue the publications. Dr. Parida repeated- why do you remain silent 'Samudi' as their family relation goes ? Dr. Samantarai thought, since he happened to be his relation and a good friend, it was in fact impossible for him to open up his mouth on these financial issues. Then, he could drag courage to express him the present crisis of OPES leading to closure of the journal for all times to come. The reply from Dr. Parida was very straight. Since ours is a big organization and we spent a good sum on advertisement each year, we will not hesitate to extend funding for the entire publication of this upcoming journal not for one or two years but till the organization recovers. Dr. Smantarai was dumbstruck and his eyes were wet. Then, he and his OPES team under blessings of NM gp of Institutions have not looked back and the journal survived.

INTERNATIONALIZE OF E-PLANET

Things rolled on. In the meantime came one messiah, a renowned Forest Officer Dr. Arun Kumar Mishra joined at Nandankanan as Asst. Conservator. He extended significant financial support to Dr. Samantarai to uplift the journal standard. Dr. Mishra introduced him to his scientist friend Prof. Dr. Umakanta Behera, the then Principal Scientist, Agronomy, IARI(Indian Agriculture Research Institute), Pusa, New Delhi. Dr. Samantarai frequented to Delhi and met top rated scientists and publishing houses at Pusa Campus, IARI, New Delhi. It was then Prof. Dr. Behera came up in a big way to support EIC's stay, logistics and the journal's publication at Delhi itself. He was the pioneer to publish this journal in an international standard and to start the publication from Delhi itself. He gave us the ideas to improve it's design, quality and content so that **e-planet** could match to

its international counter parts. He also arranged most of the stay of Dr. Samantarai at the guest houses at IARI and NAAS campus most often. Then he made correspondences to different international institutes and universities. Finally Prof. Dr. James France, Director at Guelph University, Canada, Dr. Frank Niranjana, Principal Scientist, Council of Agriculture Research, Colombo, Srilanka and Prof. S.H.R. Sadeghi, Tarbiat Modares University, Mazandaran, Iran gave their consent to serve for us as a part of our International Board. Then we enhanced the number of research and review articles to 12 per issue and enhanced the total pages to 90 to 100. During 2014 and 2015, number of times Dr. Samantarai camped at Pusa, Delhi where large number of publishing house on International Journals are there, to acquaint with the art of edit, review and publication in line with the international standard. He got 4 issues of 12th and 13th Volumes of ***e-planet*** printed at Delhi with local collaboration. Once again, he backed his publications to Bhubaneswar publishing houses for financial savings and started publishing the 14th volume from 2016 onwards at Bhubaneswar by a reputed printer i.e. 'PRINTECH'. Maintaining all formalities, then he applied for ICAR financial assistance to societies with necessary documents to fund our own society OPES towards publication of journal ***e-planet***. For the first time, we got financial support to the tune of R.s. 1 lakh as a matching grant during 2017. The organization tasted success then. From the next year onwards we received the enhanced matching grant of R.s. 1.5 lakhs per year. Because of continued publications, proper documentation, timely audit, recognition from planning commission, we constantly availed funds from ICAR from 2017 till 2020 uninterruptedly.

STRUGGLING OF PUBLICATION

Then, suddenly from 2021, OPES has been facing many shortcomings. Since our NAAS rating was enhanced to 3.76 w.e.f. 01.01.2021 and just could not reach 4.0, as per the latest guidelines of ICAR, we missed to avail funding support in a small margin against the bench mark of 4.0. Later as a matter of great shock, we lost our beloved Chief Patron Dr. Ramesh Ch. Parida of NM gp of Institutions who stood by us in bad days and was the pillar of strength. Now the publication is running becoz of small amount of savings that we had saved in earlier years.

Now, that the journal has missed the financial support from ICAR(Govt of India) and again the untimely demise of our Chief Patron Dr. Ramesh Ch. Parida, once again the organization has been struggling financially to sustain the continuance of its further publication. Since, OPES, Bhubaneswar is a registered society working constantly for the cause of environ, ecology and livelihood, may we appeal to researchers, scientists, industrial houses and benevolent persons to extend financial support to

OPES, Bhubaneswar towards the continuity of publication of this upcoming journal which will be duly acknowledged.

TO BE CONTINUED FURTHER.....