Dignity, Respect and Income

The Interview with S. Harikishore, Executive Director Kudumbashree, Director I&PRD

You have been leading probably the world’s largest women organisation meant for women empowerment for over four years. How do you evaluate this experience?

My four years stint with the Kudumbashree has been a fulfilling experience. Being a vast system, sustaining its...
momentum was important. We have 3 lakh neighbourhood clusters, 43 lakh members, over 1000 CDS chairpersons, 20,000 ADS chairpersons and 3 lakh Neighbourhood presidents.

Kudumbashree got the opportunity to be part of the operations of Kochi Metro, probably the only metro being run by women in the world. Our steps in waste management, efforts to rehabilitate destitute families, finding jobs in Buds Schools, Agri and Animal husbandry sectors were all challenging tasks.

Now we are training women in 20 states. We went to Azerbaijan, Tajikistan & Uganda to train women. Some African countries have sent their people to get trained here. We are the Nodal agency for 7 Central Government projects. We are also into Geriatric care. Our members constitute the Haritha karma sena. Management of railway parking, KSRTC ticket booking - our foot prints can be seen in several sectors. Kudumbashree is contributing to the hopes of thousands. It makes us happy.

**Kudumbashree has been part of the poverty alleviation programmes for over two decades. How do you see this journey?**

We have succeeded in attaining many of our goals. Our network is our strength. Our connect with the Local bodies have been mutually beneficial. If a panchayath decides to become fallow land free, their immediate resolution is entrusting the task with the Kudumbashree.

The 825 ‘Janakeeya hotels’ we started during lockdown are providing meals at Rs. 20. Here 5,000 people find work. As part of women empowerment initiatives like ‘Snehitha’ centres are focusing on the protection of women in distress with giving them counselling and short - stay facility. Being the National Resource Organization, Kudumbashree mentors go to other states to train the people there.

As part of evolving into an organization which can deal with future challenges, we are converging with 30 Government departments. **During the Covid pandemic, the role played by Kudumbashree has widely been appreciated. Could you explain the activities you have undertaken these days?**

When there was a scarcity for masks, 70 lakhs cloth masks were arranged through 350 tailoring units. Out of the 1300 community Kitchens opened during the lockdown we were managing 1100 of them.

Under the Government’s 100 days programme, Kudumbashree is finding job for 15,000 people. In association with the KSFE, we plan to bring laptops at Rs.15, 000 to each family.

Under the Chief Minister’s “Sahayahastham” scheme 25 lakh women have availed the loan of Rs.8,000 each. Under the Rebuild Kerala initiative also we could avail Rs.250 crore for rehabilitation. During the flood we implemented Rs.1600 crore loan scheme. ”Muttathemulla” was another scheme to bring money to the beneficiary’s door steps to help save women from private money lender’s exploitation. Rs.300 crore was disbursed as loans.

Kudumbashree’s own Plan fund has grown to the size of Rs.600 crore. Since the outbreak of Covid, we started 300 Buds schools. 9000 mentally challenged children study there.

**is its net worth? What is the percentage of repayment on the loans?**

For us, women empowerment includes economic empowerment. Our Neighbourhood’s savings in bank amount to Rs.4,000 crore. We have Rs.12,000 crore worth internal lending. Live bank linkage is Rs.5,000 crore. Rs.2000 crore loan sanctioned during Covid time at 4 per cent interest or for no interest has economically empowered the women to a certain extent. The repayment on bank loans is 98 per cent.

**Adding to one’s dignity is integral to the real empowerment. How do you plan to empower educated women?**

While finding local jobs through self -employment, many of the youngsters are for wage -jobs. For them, we plan 150 job-oriented courses under Centre’s DDU –GKY. Already we have funds for skilling 30,000 or more people. Already 1 lakh members have enrolled for these courses.

Political empowerment happened among Kudumbashree members these years is remarkable. 7000 of the 20,000 elected local body members are from Kudumbasree. 330 Local body chairpersons out of 1000 are Kudumbasree members.

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