



## ICAR-National Rice Research Institute: Nostalgic Anecdotes

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Central Rice Research Institute was established on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1946 and started functioning in a state farm premises with a scenic landscape of 60 hectares. It is endowed with a rich heritage, holding unbelievable stretch of landscape beauty to its eastern side until river Mahanadi where the Sun rise in the morning to reverberate ecstatic assurance of faith and strength, orchards embracing varieties of fruit trees, two large ponds capable of sustaining irrigation to crops round the year, the intertwining red soil roads reaching every corner and a band of committed souls dedicated to explore rice science to sustain food security of the nation. This might sound like rapture but truly and yet enigmatically, this holy premise is considered the seventh heaven on earth. The Institute is surrounded by villages like Bhadimul, Kanheipur, Bidyadharpur and the inhabitants have displayed rare harmony for peaceful coexistence and integrated support. The beauty of nature can have a profound effect upon our senses, those gateways from the outer world to the inner feelings such as awe, wonder, or amazement. The staff irrespective of cadre (scientific, administrative, technical, supporting and casual) exhibit deep emotional involvement to manifold rice research activities to make everybody proud of its status as beacon of hope in the country. It is indeed a rare opportunity for all those who were and are privileged to serve this Institute. Due to paucity of residential accommodation, many staff members out of compulsion stay outside but the lucky ones are those who stay inside the campus. No need to say that staff staying in the campus are soon captivated and intoxicated to stay for their life in this paradise. It also helps scientists to out stretch their work in the lab beyond routine hours. The inmates of the campus live in empathy and fellow feeling. The author out of his 40 years of service lived in this serene campus for more than 25 years and at the end of the day still laments for another lease of life to stay here. In the process of growing in the campus, we unknowingly get sensitized to delicate ambiance of its air, water, wind, trees, animals, glimmering stars, sounds of frogs and many more astounding integrities. We also get indentified with every square inch of the campus like its gulguli, water drainage culverts near cigarette house, sluice gate for inlet of canal water, the drain passing through campus, Bhogamaba bodhi, the Taldanda canal, river Mahanandi and its embankments. We shall continue to admire the nature prevailing in the Institute and elsewhere but also remain grounded to our duties and responsibilities. Having remained glued to such unique experience, we have certainly become more and more valiant to fight for the environment, which have been strengthened over the years through



several projects on crop resilience to climate change – an undeniable testimony to understand better the interaction between crop and environment.

Soaked in memory, the author attempts in this write up to unravel a few of the nostalgic anecdotes to make the memory spicy and pleasant. There is a child in each of us and it is urged to read these anecdotes with the child's sense of inquisitive innocence. Of all the emotions, nostalgia, or longing for the past, is perhaps the most potent and crippling. Almost all of us, for some reason or the other, always leave a familiar place. We may not regret leaving it, but we always end up longing for it. The times we lived through, the people we shared those times with a cocktail of experience but each mix tells a story. Put them together, and they can add up to the story of a life. It is an inexplicable feeling, one that we can seldom put into words. The author only recapitulates some events for readers.

## 2. PT. NEHRU'S VISITS TO CRRI

Odisha's capital city Bhubaneswar celebrated its 70<sup>th</sup> Foundation Day on April 13, 1948 on which the first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had laid the foundation stone of the city. World renowned German architect and urban planner Otto Koenigsberger prepared the city's first master plan in 1948 for a population of 40 thousand. This day was also the Utkal Dibasa. Pt. Nehru visited Central Rice Research Institute for a while and scripted his message on the Visitor's book which was later ornamented for display on the front entrance lounge "*All good wishes to the Rice Institute.....*". Dr. K. Ramiah was the Director (1946-51).

His next visit was on January 3, 1962, en route to Paradip Port for the port inauguration. He preferred to take rest in the newly constructed Director's residential bungalow (present) for a while. He took a brief stroll in the colony, which was named as Nehru Colony and also visited the Childrens' Park that carried his name as Nehru Childrens' Park later. It was a hectic day for Pt. Nehru as he had to inaugurate and address the 49<sup>th</sup> session of Indian Science Congress at Ravenshaw College (now Ravenshaw University), Cuttack. However, there was a problem!

Dr. Richharia, the then Director (1958-66), got upset to know from the police escort party that Prime Minister's vehicle was prohibited to move back in reverse gear. But, the approach road from gate to the portico of Director's bungalow was too narrow that virtually prevented any 'U' turn compliance. Mr. C.N. Relwani, the then Farm Superintendent was summoned and on his call, surprisingly so many labourers instantaneously started working to build the road. The barbed wire fencing (not the present concrete compound wall) was cut to accommodate a gate and masonry work was completed to make two pillars urgently. PM's vehicle plied through this gate to Paradip via Kandarpur as the Paradip Express Highway did not exist then. The eastern side gate of



the bungalow that we see today had its genesis to January 3, 1962.

The Institute mourned the death of Hon'ble Prime Minister in 1964 with heavy heart and great dignity in the front lawn of the INS Hostel where all staff with their families came to pay their homage in front of his photo. This continued for about a week.

### 3. LABOUR STRIKE AND DR. I.C. MOHAPATRA

During late fifties, there were series of labour strikes at CRRI that resulted in frequent disruption in farm operations and cultural practices. Rice is a labour intensive crop and often these strikes target to disturb land preparation, transplanting, etc. Dr. Iswar Chandra Mohapatra, was the Head of Agronomy Division and was In-charge of all farm schedules who wanted to dispense with the problem. He was from an influential landlord (jamindar) family in Baudpur, Mayurbhanj who motivated some handful members of adivasi community and succeeded to bring a hoard of them. This community was not only a suitable alternative to overcome labour strike but also was comparatively much more resilient to undertake any hardship. They settled in huts around the embankment of Ratna (earlier Patnaika) tank. The labourers comprising of males and females settled down happily under the ambiance of orchards full of mango, guava, sapeta and litchi trees encircling the tank. They used to observe their holy rituals and amongst them *Makar-Sankranti* observed in January dedicated to Sun God was most prominent. Adivasis cook rice with sugarcane juice or otherwise and ferment it to make *handia*, a local liquor and get intoxicated more particularly on this day. Soon, their intoxication used to get translated in form of dance tuned to the drum beats. Many staff go and participate in the ecstatic wilderness of the ceremony. Noteworthy participation of Dr. S.Y. Padmanabhan, the then Director and Sri C.N. Relwani, Farm Superintendent used to be most spectacular who also danced with the adivasis (tribals) on the rhythm of drum.

The family of these labourers slowly grew and every year the number was found to be many fold of the original size making the space a problem. Additionally, open air defecation and some other vulnerable activities became a nuance. However, in course of time, the services of many of them were regularized while many more were absorbed in various supporting staff categories. That entitled them for quarters and thus they were evacuated to enable reclaim the land into productive experimental purposes.

### 4. ANTIQUE TRANSPORT SYSTEM

Once upon a time, bullock cart was the only option of transport in CRRI. The memory is still fresh to recapitulate that 2-3 carts fitted with automobile tyre-tube were engaged for various farm operations but more importantly bringing



fertilizer, cattle feed, etc. from Malgodown. There was no electricity then. The street lights were provided with kerosene lamps from OMP square to Chauliaganj and later extended up to Naya Bazar square. It was pitch dark from Nayabazar until CRRI and beyond. One won't find a single house by the side of the road from CRRI until college square. All these roads were covered with huge trees and their canopies making the environment more mystique. There were hardly any motor cycle or four wheeler plying in this route. Only bicycles were plenty but by traffic law they all had to fit kerosene lamps burning in the front hanging from the handle bar during evening hours. Our bullock carts used to hang lanterns while moving during evening hours. Under emergencies, these carts worked like ambulance and rescued patients saving lives.

During Dusherra festivals however, the carts along with its passengers projected a funny scenario. Special 2 numbers of long benches used to be fitted facing each other. It would carry 5-10 persons in a festive mood for site seeing all the way from CRRI to Chowdhury Bazar and back. But the Mother deity at Chowdhury bazaar was yet to be decorated with silver (Chandi) ornaments.

During the 1950's and early 1960's, the children of the campus used to go to the school i.e., Stewart School and St. Joseph's Convent situated about 10 km from the Institute by Bullock Cart. During the later part of 1960's, the Bedford bus (popularly known as blue bus) was acquired by the Institute for the school going children. In 1972, the institute procured a full body Ashok Leyland Bus for the school going children and subsequently one more was added.

## 5. DIRECTOR'S OFFICE IN THOSE DAYS

Dr. R.H. Richharia, the then Director (1958-66) had his office inside the farm quadrangle (1954-55). Few buildings were only available while taking over the campus from the state government. The summer season was never as hot as these days. But, one of our labourers, Sri Kanhu Panda used to operate the overhead fan. The mechanism dates back to British regime where a huge long mat supported with wooden structures on top use to hang and strong ropes were tied at both ends for its swinging. Sri Kanhu Panda sitting outside the office used to operate the fan but often found to nap and snore. The Director never disturbed him whatsoever.

Dr. Richharia was one of the leading experts on rice in India. He documented and collected an amazing 19,000 rice varieties during his career. As per his estimation, India was home to 200,000 varieties of rice cultures. During his tenure, many societal segments such as Consumers Cooperative Society, CRRI Milk Society, Dairy Farm and CRRI Recreation Club were founded. He entrusted the Cooperative Association to take care of two tanks, Puja (earlier Kanhori) and Ratna tanks for pisci-culture. The revenue so generated could be spent on approved social work and functions.



## 6. DR. S.Y. PADMANABHAN, EX DIRECTOR AND HIS PHOTOGRAPHY

Shri S.Y. Padmanabhan, Mycologist of the Institute, was awarded merit promotion to the post of the Director of the Institute during the year 1966 for his outstanding work in the field of Mycology and Plant Pathology. There were number of milestone achievements during his tenure. CRRI was projected as the beacon of hope for rice consumers. Among many visits abroad, his earliest were to Russia and China. He ensured to take the most advanced Kodak camera with him to Russia and snapped various important activities. On his return, he asked Mr. Gowalikar, the then Photographer of the Institute to develop the film. The film was developed only to find the entire film blacked out with no sign of any photo. Mr. Gowalikar was afraid of the situation and requested Mr.P.J. Jachuk, Breeder to resolve the issue. Mr. Jachuk asked the Director, if he had removed the lens cover before shooting to which innocent response was that he was not aware of this protocol.

## 7. BONHOMIE AT CRRI

The bonhomie amongst the staff members dates back to its very inception. There was a time during the 60's, 70's and 80's when in the absence of any other medical hospital, only option for any treatment was the SCB Medical College and hospital. Any staff suffering from minor to major ailments, had to take treatment from there. The Doctors and Nurses by seeing the number of attendants accompanying a patient could tell that the patient was from CRRI only. A Bedford school bus of the Institute used to take the attendants in batches of 10 to 12 and all day and night. Casual to serious patients were voluntarily supported and that too round the clock.

Dr. S.Y. Padmanabhan once in early 70's fell seriously ill with incessant blood stool. He was taken in an ambulance and was admitted in SCB Medical College. He was in dire need of blood for survival. Guided by Dr. S.N. Pattnaik, next to Director, Shri S.K. Nayak loudly informed all scientists and staff working in field. Magically soon after, it was a sight to be seen at Central Red Cross Blood Bank where there was a never ending line of CRRI staff mainly comprising of labourers ready to donate blood. More particularly the labourers shouted to Red Cross bank staff in a frenzy that let them take the last drop of their blood but save Padmanabhan, their *Bhagwan*. The staff of Blood Bank were not only surprised by this rare spirit but also found difficult to control the donors. Only 10 bottles were taken in the first installment while the queue was holding more than 100 persons. Despite the appraisal by Shri S.K. Nayak, the eager donors were waiting day and night to donate blood in case the 2<sup>nd</sup> installment was necessary. It was a phenomenal love and respect for Dr. Padmanabhan who recovered well in a fortnight time. Most delighting episode followed that was never revealed by Shri Nayak who was at least invited twice





a week by Madam Padmanabhan to the residence and was fed with fruits and dry nuts with the belief that Shri Nayak was instrumental in systematically organizing blood that primarily saved her husband's life. Otherwise also, she was an epitome of motherly persona to one and all.

All the pujas were observed/held jointly by all the staff members in the staff recreation club followed by dinner for everyone at the backside of the club. The scientific fraternity used to hold a 'Moonlight Dinner' in the threshing floor of the Farm Division. Five/six families used to be entrusted with the responsibility of preparing one particular dish. Similarly, other groups of five/six families used to be asked to prepare different dishes each. All used to bring the prepared dishes to the Farm Section where the 'Moonlight Dinner' used to be held with great fanfare with songs/poems by groups/individuals.

## **8. WHO RESCUED DR. M.J.B.K. RAO, THE BREEDER?**

Dr. M.J. Bala Krishna Rao (called as BK) was married to conventional rice breeding rather than to Dr. Mrs. Suprava Mohanty who was also a scientist but preferred to be a homemaker after marriage. Dr. Rao was a gifted breeder who believed in conventional breeding. Some of his reigning varieties were Bala, Krishna and Padma. Most of the time, he was absent-minded for which he became quite familiar with all. He had a motorcycle (Rajdoot) and the couple often went to college square for marketing. Normally, madam used to shop while BK would wait outside. All on a sudden, he would assume that his wife was already seated on the pillion and he would drive home (CRRI) only to realize the misfortune. However, he would hurriedly recover madam from where he left. This happened for number of times after which madam preferred some other alternative for marketing.

One day while visiting field, he fell down into the irrigation concrete channel and sustained injury. It was midday and nobody was around (lunch break) except his faithful dog. The dog ran to his house and dragged the saree of Madam who realized the message and followed the dog. The irrigation water was flowing and BK was lying flat in the channel. Madam shouted for help and he was rescued with prompt support. So many of his colleagues desired to know how he fell down, did he slip or anything else? He ascertained that he was taking a morning walk in his garden and he did not know how landed in irrigation channel. A very versatile breeder but .....

## **9. INITIAL SPORTS ACTIVITY (1966-67) AND ITS STATUS QUO**

Sports and other welfare activities among the staff of all central government offices were held annually under the banner of 'Central Government Employees' Welfare Co-ordination Committee (CGEWCC). It was statutory that the highest salaried Director among all the Directors became the Chairman



of the CGEWCC. Accordingly Dr. S.Y. Padmanabhan was the Chairman who in 1967 asked Sri S.K. Nayak, the then Sr. Res. Assistant to coordinate and take the team in capacity of Manager. Only Volley Ball competition was approved and only the CRRRI team represented the CGEWCC in Lal Bahadur Sastri Stadium, Hyderabad, where the meet was conducted. Soon after, the ICAR became autonomous (1966) and CRRRI was no more considered under CGEWCC but since then in annual sports meet of ICAR, several times till date CRRRI has been dominating in Zonal as well as Final meets and have bagged a plethora of laurels. Kabbadi championship is almost a monopoly of NRRI. The number of awards exceeded the space in Director' office chamber and only recently (2019) Dr. H. Pathak, present Director arranged the display in the corridor to auditorium. Other than victory insignia in sports, the array of decorations also includes several other prizes on significant and distinguished achievements. It emanates a spring of joy to all staff members and visitors. Now, one can feel them.

## 10. RICHHARIA FOOTBALL CUP & OTHERS

During the middle 1960's, CRRRI started organising a prestigious Richharia Football Cup wherein the top club/official teams of Cuttack used to participate. This tournament was held in the CRRRI playground once every four years. A large number of staff of this Institute have been very good sportsmen during their heydays. Some of the prominent names includes: Sangram Keshari Nayak (Orissa State Badminton Team & National Umpire), Sharad Kumar Mathur (Junior State CK Nayadu Cricket Trophy), Basant Kumar Sahoo (Coach, Orissa Kabadi Team), Sanatan Baral (All India IFA Cup, Junior National Camp for Asian Youth Football Championship), Narayan Panda (All India IFA Cup), Narayan Das (All India IFA Cup), Sunil Kumar Sahoo (Junior State Football Championship), Pradeep Parida (Orissa State Kabadi Team) and Prasant Kumar Jena (Orissa State Kabadi Team).

## 11. JAPANESE SCIENTIST IN TROUBLE

Many scientists, students and visitors from abroad such as USA, The Netherlands, South Korea, Japan and China regularly visited CRRRI with a specific objective of learning. International Training Course for rice technicians was also organized (July to December, 1966) as a part of India's contribution towards the International Rice Year. Research workers from Burma, Thailand, Guatemala, Hungary and Ghana, in addition to those from India, participated in the six-month training course.

A Japanese scientist came to CRRRI on deputation to collect wild rice germplasm and acquire relevant literature. He stayed in Inter-National Students' Hostel (INS). One fine morning he took a brisk walk in his adventure on wild rice hunting. He visited banks of Taldanda canal and every other



place *en route* for exploring a new vista of wild rice treasure. He reached All India Radio Transmission Center at Fakirpada, which was about 5-7 km from CRRI gate. Out of his quest to explore wild rice, he entered the prohibited premises inadvertently only to find a guard chasing him. The guard caught hold of him and physically forced him to meet the officer. Soon there was a crowd to see the funny looking man shouting in a funny language. Both the parties had hot exchange of words without understanding each other because there was a mismatch in Japanese, Oriya, Hindi or English. The authority finally decided to hand him over to police when the matter reached CRRI. Dr. P.J. Jachuk's brother Sri I.J. Tachuk was an IPS officer who was in Cuttack intervened and rescued him. The Japanese scientist could not however assimilate his wild rice hunting had such wild consequences.

## 12. FOUNDATION DAY CELEBRATION OF CRRI

Dr. K.C. Mathur, the then Director (1995-99) started the Foundation Day Celebration in 1999. Initially it was celebrated on April 9 coinciding with the first visit of Dr. Ramiah to CRRI to establish the Institute. Later, the date was shifted to April 23. This was the date when first circular was issued by ICAR to establish the Institute and thus the Central Rice Research Institute (CRRI) was setup on 23 April 1946 at Bidhyadharpur, Cuttack, Odisha. There was also a suggestion to observe the Day on April 22, coinciding with the 'Earth Day'. However, for last several years, Foundation Day of NRRI is celebrated on April 23 with a few exceptions due to unavoidable circumstances.

## 13. SUPER CYCLONE DISASTER (1999)

On October 29, 1999 a super cyclone with a wind speed of 300 mph or more had struck Odisha, making it probably the greatest cyclonic disaster ever recorded in the last century. Coastal districts of Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Puri and Ganjam were badly affected. Eye of the storm was Paradip while Ersama and Balikuda in Jagatsinghpur district (southwest of Paradip) experienced the worst hit. The India Meteorological Department anemometer at Paradip failed to record the force of wind that gushed for 36 hours at 300 km per hour or more. The storm witnessed a surge of 7-10 meters of ocean water level resulting in ingress of 12-20 km in coastal areas. Life at CRRI campus was miserable due to unprecedented water inundation not only due to high rainfall but the campus accumulated heavy amount of drain water as it was the terminal end of the city and all the accumulated water get evacuated to the river Mahanadi through antique Gulguli sluice system. The river Mahanadi was in full spate and its higher water level compared to the campus level refused any water exit compounding the misery. Entire campus including the Nehru colony was submerged. The deep bore wells those were engaged for irrigation of experimental fields were overflowing like water fountains aggravating the inundation.





Dr. K.C. Mathur, Director and Dr. S.B. Lodh mustered courage to restore the awkward situation. Many young volunteers were lined up to provide drinking water by using mobile tankers pulled by tractors and pump houses were run by diesel generators to enable lift water. Sri S.K. Nayak, on priority basis arranged distribution of drinking water at every doorstep of campus residents. Temporary shelters were given at International Students Hostel and the CRRI Welfare Association prepared one time food for destitutes. In collaboration with State Relief Department rice was distributed to families whose houses were damaged. Sri Chandrababu Naidu, the then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh urgently deployed a team of experts with materials like electric poles and arranged restoration of electricity by dragging electric lines. Electric poles were bent like hairpins but the team came with special machines to set right the damaged poles wherever was possible. It was a herculean task to normalize the plots, which were contaminated with drain water, as well as other plots under various treatments were also badly affected. The courage and forceful will power of staff enabled resumption of normalcy in appreciable time period.

#### **14. FLOOD OF 1982 IN RIVER MAHANADI AND THE AFTERMATH ORDEAL**

Orissa experienced yet another tragic and devastating flood in 1982 and hardest hit was Cuttack district. Incessant rain beyond the holding capacity of Hirakud dam jerked the opening of all gates that compounded the terrifying torment downstream affecting 10 million people. CRRI was no exception. There was heavy inundation in the campus which was aggravated not due to rain water alone but the heavy gush of city drain water. The water through gulguli could not be evacuated as the Mahanadi flood water level on the other side was higher and almost touching the brim of the embankment bund prohibiting any relief. The bund was under vigilance by police as it was vulnerable for collapse at any point. It became essential to raise the bund height by putting sand bags along the 1.0 km long bund (Kanheipur to Chhota dokan via Bhogamaba). Huge dunes of sand stocked by Mr. Sadhu Nayak, the then contractor helped to arrange hundreds of sand bags. The time for entire operation of stacking the sand bags on the bund was brisk, our tractor drivers were only two Mr. Bata and Mr. Yudhistira that was supplemented by Mr. Sanatan Baral, Foreman. It was panicking to see that in fact water level was higher than the bund at many places but water could not ingress due to timely piling of sand bags. It actually saved the Institute as well as the city in time and the ordeal continued until the water receded. The breakage of Dalei Ghai affected thousands of families and lakhs of hectares of cultivable land but incidentally drained out lot of water giving some solace. The people of in and around villages were given shelter in half constructed buildings of Library and upper floors etc. Despite the imminent tragedy, people in large number were gathering on the risky bund, which was



soon controlled by police and CRRI volunteers. It was panicking to feel the thunderous vibration of the bund threatening to collapse any moment. A siren was arranged to blow enabling the villagers to run to the high places immediately in case of any eventuality. Many families residing in INS Hostel lead by Miss Omna prepared cooked food and distributed in shelters. Pumps were engaged day and night to evacuate water stagnation but appeared to be in dismal against the vast water of ocean inside the campus.

## **15. THE PLIGHT OF PH.D. STUDENTS & CANTEEN**

Central Rice Research Institute besides its continuing glorious service dedicated to nation's food security is also a centre par excellence for dissertation work. Many Ph.D. students register under able guides (scientists) of different disciplines and successfully complete their work. Starting from a few numbers in the long past, now the size of Ph.D. students has grown into a school. Now the facilities are befitting but Dr. Mayabini Jena recollects good old days of 1979 and earlier to be comparatively difficult as a canteen was not available then for lunch. She daily joined with 4 or 5 of her classmates who would eagerly wait for Mr. Indramani Mohanty, a mobile vender on cycle to serve them Dahi bara, bara, piagi, alu-dum under the shade of a tree to appease their hunger. Soon a contractual canteen was available in a thatched house inside the quadrangle that appeared like a floating boathouse during rainy season. The canteen owner Mr. Bishnu Behera used to put some bricks as stepping stones for the customers. It continued until we had our canteen in the new building.

## **16. REHABILITATION OF COASTAL FARMING AFTER SUPER CYCLONE DISASTER**

The NRRI campus soon after the super cyclone (October 29, 1999) recovered from ravages to full life. The submergence due to incessant raining during the cyclone coupled with gush of wind at 300 km per hour upset the field infrastructure but with motivated zeal and zest, the recovery was also astounding. Dr. Baij Nath Singh, joined as the Director, CRRI who was full of innovative ideas and spirit to give a new dimension to the ongoing and many new research projects. He visited the coastal belt of Paradip and focused on Astaranga and Ersama blocks those were the eye of storm and were damaged beyond assessment. The people were bereaved of their belongings, houses and were like refugees despite the support extended by the State Government and others for quick rehabilitation. He convened a preparatory meeting that was participated by staff of CRRI, Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT), Department of Water Resources, all KVKs, Orissa State Disaster Mitigation Authority (OSDAM) and others. The contingent plan was consolidated into a 100 crore holistic project format that was approved by the



ICAR urgently. All the scientists, technical staff of CRRI and resource persons of OUAT and State Departments were deployed to lend their expertise and strengthen the farmers to resume their trade with more productive knowledge, output and income. The rice-fish farming of CRRI was adopted by farmers community, rice varieties (Lunishree, Sonamani) suitable for saline track were introduced, vegetable growing was one of the most enthusiastic ventures, goatery, poultry, etc. were lavishly inducted. It was a dream come true episode. Such a team spirit proved our effort and potential to recover from tragedy so soon and rehabilitate to lead a decent life with true entrepreneurship.

### **17. EXTREMELY SEVERE CYCLONE 'FANI' STRUCK NRRI (2019).. CRUSHED BUT NOT DEFEATED**

On May 3, 2019, 20 years after the super cyclone (1999), another Extremely Severe Cyclone 'FANI' struck Odisha and other parts of Eastern India. It made landfall near the city of Puri. Bhubaneswar, Puri and Cuttack experienced wind speed up to 250 km per hour. It caused extensive damage in the NRRI campus with uprooting of large number of decades old trees; damaging rainout shelters, poly-houses, glass houses, climate change installations and other research facilities; crops, properties and disrupting the telecommunication and power infrastructure. Many parts of the campus were waterlogged. The entire ground floor housing the main office, Director's office and several laboratories could be saved by timely and valiant efforts of Mr. Abhishek Meena (T-3), Dr. M.J. Baig (Principal Scientist), Mr. Manas Kumar Behera (Security staff) and Dr. H. Pathak (Director), who defiantly came out in the open facing the cyclone at its peak to clear the blockage of drains with spade and shovel. Large volume of water, accumulated in the quadrangle, drained out so that the offices and laboratories were rescued from inundation. Once the cyclone ceased in the evening, main roads were cleared in few hours with voluntary support of the staff and students. Water supply was restored in next few hours with generators. Electric supply and other activities, however took a few days to come to normalcy.

### **18. EPILOGUE**

One can go various other places in the journey of life, one may live on the other side of the world but you can't escape the memories of the place where you worked so dearly for so many years of your life. The past is like a candle at great distance; too close to let you quit, too far to comfort you. These bunch of fond memories are exclusive rights of senior staff members who are now 70 years or more. They are very special editions who conserve these delicate and passionate memoirs for dissemination in appropriate time like this. The author took care to contact such reservoirs but not all and therefore feel some chunks might be missing. However, it offers readers some nostalgic events for



interesting reading and imagine the scenarios narrated. As observed very rightly by Kris Kristofferson “I’d trade all my tomorrows for one single yesterday”.

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