

Xavier University Bhubaneswar

University Dialogue Series (UDS)

Date: 15 September 2017 **Time:** 3.30 pm **Venue:** Class Room 129

Grassroots Leadership: Powering Your Purpose

Speaker:

Dr. Madhavi Panda

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The eastern region of the country including states of Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha, and Jharkhand is viewed as a nucleus of economic backwardness, deprivation, and poverty even today. Despite the presence of vast natural resources, which have benefited a few industries, there are vast sections of the population that continue to remain laggards. The problems cited are aplenty – historical neglect by governments, weak governance, political violence, general tardiness, poor topography, remoteness, exploitative landlord class, poor land quality and low agricultural productivity. These, in turn, are said to lead to hunger, malnutrition, and poor health, less literacy, unemployment, and persistent poverty. Who are the stakeholders that are supposed to address the vicious cycle of poverty? The stakeholders are many but on the ground, there are very few public sector undertakings, the private sector, international donors, national agencies and local government programs targeting poverty alleviation have limitations. This scenario is true of the entire region, with few pockets of exception.



My talk is meant to initiate a dialogue on the theme and take it to a country-wide and even a global debate. Why do some regions continue to lag and what can we do as citizens, in our individual capacities, and through our work/jobs, to alleviate the conditions of the poor. My talk focuses on grassroots leadership, social mobilization and community organization as cornerstones of sustainable efforts over the long haul. The hallmarks of success at the bottom of the pyramid have been self-help groups or women's collectives in a small yet impactful way. The catalytic role of civil society organizations and ordinary folks who have made extraordinary efforts in

shaping a sustainable future of our fellow citizens will be discussed. The need to look beyond the contemporary, beneath the surface and immerse ourselves in partaking of poverty alleviation, in order to create the self-awareness and consciousness in minds of the people in the poor and marginalized communities and ignite passion among the humanists is a key core area of the presentation. The talk is informed by the extensive interactions and experiences of community skill-building efforts by our organization in the region.

The talk will be a starting point for a lifelong dialogue and reflection among students, researchers, academicians and development practitioners.

Key Words: Poverty Alleviation, Grassroots Leadership, Social Mobilization and Self-Reflection.

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