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Bend It Like MASM: Justice & Fraternity Football Tournament, Pallahara (Odisha)



Football has been one sport, loved widely by the Adivasi youth of the tribal region of Pallahara (Odisha). SRUTI Fellows' sangathan **Malaygiri Adivasi Sangharsh Manch (MASM)**, a Ho and Santhal Adivasi collective, tapping on this interest, has fervently been organising football tournaments in the region. The collective in the last 2 years has riveted its efforts towards strengthening awareness and understanding of the constitutional values through sustained and creative initiatives like movie screenings, village meetings, training-workshops, sports, theatre, and other cultural activities.

Bringing these efforts together, the Sangathan organised a 3-day **"Justice & Fraternity Football Tournament"** from October 14 to 16, 2022 in Rangiyapal village and a 2-day tournament (October 15 and 16) in Baghuatola village. Both tournaments observed participation of 16 teams from the Sangathan's work area, as well as teams from adjoining districts of Sundargarh and Deogarh. The Sangathan charged no entry/participation fees for the events and even provided football jerseys for the finalist teams as tournament prize.



MASM, has been working in Pallahara block of Angul district (Odisha) since last 10 years. Sangathan has been advocating for the rights of local Adivasi communities on several issues, including local governance, livelihood, youth perspective and capacity building and education, as well as conservation of forests and the environment.

The Covid-19 pandemic left a lasting impact on rural and Adivasi communities, the consecutive lockdowns and ensuing restrictions shrank spaces of opportunities for people to socialise. Weaning of from its impact, this event helped not only bring people together but also created an atmosphere of unity, and community cheering for teamwork and sportsmanship spirit exhibited by the players.



Often one observes that with each elimination, the losing teams begin to return to their homes. Thinking differently, MASM went ahead and set-up pandals for everyone to stay back and enjoy the entire tournament together. As all teams stayed in pandals, MASM karyakartas took this as an opportunity to talk with the young sportsmen about their day-to-day lives, issues impacting them and their struggles.

The opening and closing ceremonies of the tournament were graced by senior karyakartas of the Sangathan who briefly spoke about the Constitution of India, it's Preamble and the values enshrined in it. A festive mood prevailed




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