



ANNUAL REPORT

2024-25

Defence Colony, Bhabinarayanapur Road, PO- Narendrapur, Berhampur, District- Ganjam, Odisha, India.
Email: readngo93@gmail.com, Website: <https://www.readodisha.org/>, Phone: 06811295600

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From the Secretary's Desk.....

As I reflect on the year 2024–25, I am filled with a deep sense of gratitude and pride for all that the READ family has accomplished together. This year has been both inspiring and challenging a year that reaffirmed our shared belief that meaningful change is possible when people come together with compassion, commitment, and purpose.

Our journey across villages and communities has been guided by the collective strength of our dedicated team, the trust of our partners, and the unwavering spirit of the people we serve. Each program, each activity, and each story of transformation is a testament to the tireless efforts of our field staff, volunteers, and community leaders who continue to walk hand in hand with the most marginalized and voiceless.

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to our supporters, donors, and well-wishers for their faith in READ's mission. Your encouragement and generosity make our work possible and meaningful. A special word of thanks goes to the Dhvani Foundation for their continued partnership and guidance, which have helped strengthen our systems and vision for sustainable impact. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all the government line departments of our target blocks and districts, the PRI members, and community leaders. Their continuous support and guidance have been instrumental in strengthening our women and target groups both economically and socially. They have always stood as the pillars of our success.

My sincere thanks also to the Governing Body for their thoughtful leadership and to every member of the READ family for being the pillars of our progress.

As we move forward, let us carry this spirit of togetherness and empathy, reaffirming our commitment to build an inclusive, equitable, and empowered society.

With warm regards and heartfelt appreciation,

Manjulata Sahu,

Executive Secretary,
Rural Educational Activities for Development (READ).
Berhampur, Odisha.



About READ:

Rural Educational Activities for Development (READ) is a grassroots, non-governmental organization committed to empowering marginalized and vulnerable communities through education, livelihood promotion, gender equality, and social justice. Established with a mission to create a just, inclusive, and self-reliant society, READ has been working for over two decades in the southern districts of Odisha primarily Ganjam, Gajapati, and Rayagada reaching some of the most disadvantaged populations including widows, tribal women, small farmers, youth, and children.

Our Vision

Establish a love, peaceful and just society where people live a dignified life.

Our Mission

Empowering the core target group, building people's collectives at local and larger levels, strengthening CBOs and local governance for enabling participatory development, pro people policies, working together with relevant stakeholders

Core Focus Areas

- **Women Empowerment & Gender Equality:** Strengthening Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Gender Vigilance Committees (GVCs), and Gender Resource Centres (GRCs) to promote women's leadership and rights.
- **Livelihood & Entrepreneurship Promotion:** Supporting rural women, widows, and small farmers in developing micro-enterprises, skill training, and income-generation activities for economic independence.
- **Education & Child Development:** Ensuring access to quality education, reducing child marriage, and encouraging girl-child education through awareness and community participation.
- **Governance & Rights Awareness:** Promoting participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), and sensitizing communities on rights, entitlements, and legal provisions.
- **Environment & Sustainability:** Encouraging climate-resilient livelihoods, waste management, and sustainable agricultural practices.



Our Approach

READ believes in a bottom-up, participatory approach, where communities identify their own needs and actively participate in planning, implementing, and sustaining development initiatives. By combining capacity-building, advocacy, and partnership with government and civil society, READ has successfully built a strong network of empowered women and community institutions.

Our Achievements

Formed and strengthened over 400 Self-Help Groups, including 118 widows' SHGs engaged in livelihood activities.

- Established Gender Vigilance Committees (GVCs) and Gender Resource Centres (GRCs) to address gender-based issues and promote equality.
- Supported hundreds of women leaders to participate in local governance and decision-making processes.
- Implemented sustainable livelihood models such as mushroom cultivation, goat rearing, vegetable farming, incense-stick making, and fish farming.
- Partnered with reputed donors like Manos Unidas (Spain), Dhvani Foundation, and government line departments under Mission Shakti and other schemes.

Our Core Values

- Transparency and Accountability
- Equity and Inclusion
- Community Ownership
- Gender Sensitivity
- Sustainability



Agricultural Livelihood

Agriculture continues to be the backbone of rural livelihoods in our operational areas, particularly in the districts of Ganjam, Gajapati, and Rayagada. Recognizing its central role in ensuring food security and sustainable income, Rural Educational Activities for Development (READ) has been implementing a comprehensive Agricultural Livelihood Program aimed at empowering small and marginal farmers, especially widows and women, through capacity building, promotion of sustainable farming practices, and livelihood diversification.

Objective

The program seeks to strengthen the economic resilience of rural households by:

- Enhancing knowledge and skills on sustainable agricultural practices.
- Diversifying income sources through allied activities such as animal

husbandry, horticulture, and agroforestry.

- Encouraging women's leadership in agricultural decision-making.
- Promoting environmentally friendly and climate-resilient farming models.

Key Interventions and Activities

1. Skill Development and Capacity Building

- Organized training sessions for widows' SHGs and small farmers on improved cultivation practices, soil management, organic composting, and integrated pest management.
- Conducted field demonstrations on sustainable vegetable cultivation, groundnut farming, and nutrition gardens.
- Promoted the use of organic inputs and bio-fertilizers to reduce dependency on chemical fertilizers.

2. Market Linkage and Entrepreneurship Development

- Provided guidance on micro-enterprise planning, market assessment, and local value addition.
- Linked trained groups with government schemes such as Mission Shakti, Horticulture Department, and OPELIP, for leveraging technical and financial support.

3. Watershed management

- Provided guidance and facilitate to manage water resource management
- Facilitate to create linkages with different government institutions to access agriculture implementations and avail water resource for agriculture.

Impact and Outcomes

- Enhanced agricultural knowledge and confidence among over 500 women and marginal farmers, enabling them to make informed farming decisions.
- 90 Livelihood Resource Persons facilitate training on organic agriculture practices.
- 6 nos. of Farmers Producer Groups are formed and actively working.
- Increased 80% household income levels through diversified agricultural and allied activities.
- Improved food security and nutrition through promotion of homestead and nutrition gardens.
- Strengthened collective action among SHGs, promoting group-based entrepreneurship and shared learning.





Social security remains one of the most crucial pillars for ensuring dignity and protection among vulnerable and marginalized communities. Recognizing this, Rural Educational Activities for Development (READ) has made sustained efforts to facilitate social security coverage for poor households, particularly widows, single women, persons with disabilities, and elderly individuals across its operational areas in Ganjam, Gajapati, and Rayagada districts of Odisha.

Through this program, READ works to ensure that every eligible person in the community can access government welfare schemes, entitlements, and rights that guarantee economic and social protection. The organization has become a trusted bridge between marginalized communities and government institutions, helping people to claim what is rightfully theirs.

Objectives

- To increase awareness among rural households about government social welfare and insurance schemes.
- To support vulnerable groups in securing access to pensions, housing, and health insurance benefits.
- To strengthen community-based structures to monitor and ensure timely delivery of entitlements.
- To encourage for inclusion of widows, single women, and marginalized families in all social protection frameworks.

Key Activities Undertaken

1. Awareness and Information Drives
 - Conducted village-level meetings and awareness camps on social protection schemes such as Madhu Babu Pension Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), National Family Benefit Scheme, Ration Card, Health Insurance (BSKY), and Widow Pension Scheme.
 - Distributed simplified IEC materials in Odia to help community members understand eligibility criteria and application processes.
2. Facilitation and Support Services
 - Assisted 312 eligible widows persons in applying for and receiving government pensions during the year.
 - Supported 16 families to access housing benefits under PMAY.
 - Linked 78 households with BSKY Health Insurance Cards, ensuring access to free medical services in empanelled hospitals.
 - Provided handholding support for online applications and follow-up with block and panchayat-level authorities.

3. Capacity Building

- Trained Gender Vigilance Committee (GVC) members and SHG leaders on tracking social welfare entitlements and ensuring inclusion of left-out households.
- Conducted interface meetings between community representatives and government officials to resolve pending cases and improve transparency.
- Promoted community-based monitoring mechanisms to ensure beneficiaries continue receiving their entitled benefits without interruption.

4. Inclusion of Widows and Single Women

- Special focus was given to widows and single women, helping them access multiple benefits under Mission Shakti, Widow Pension, and Skill Development Schemes.
- Facilitated inclusion of over 300 widows in SHG federations and encouraged their participation in decision-making forums to strengthen their collective voice.

Impact and Achievements

- 312 individuals received widow pensions through READ's facilitation.
- 16 families were successfully linked to housing schemes, improving their living conditions.
- 78 households accessed health insurance services, reducing out-of-pocket medical expenses.
- Enhanced awareness among over 1,000 community members about available social welfare schemes.
- Strengthened collaboration between community-based organizations and local government offices, resulting in faster and more transparent service delivery.

Success Story: A Journey from Despair to Determination:

Mrs. Sandhya Rani Naik, a 35-year-old single mother from Chandrapada village, once faced a world of darkness after the untimely death of her husband. Left alone to raise two young children, she battled deep emotional pain, social stigma, and financial hardship. With no support system, she worked as a daily wage labourer, earning barely ₹1,500 a month just enough to survive.

In 2017, when READ began its initiative for single mothers in her village, Sandhya saw a ray of hope. She joined the group with enthusiasm, attended various trainings and workshops, and slowly began to rebuild her confidence. Through READ's support, she enrolled in a tailoring training program, where she learned stitching skills. Recognizing her dedication, READ provided her with a sewing machine to start her own small business.

Today, Sandhya earns between ₹5,000–6,000 per month from tailoring. Alongside this, she prepares and sells phenyl locally, adding another ₹4,000 to her income. Her hard work has transformed not only her own life but also that of her children.

Now a proud President of the Jayama Bharati Self-Help Group (SHG) and the Gram Panchayat Level Federation under Mission Shakti, she earns an additional ₹2,000 per month and serves as a role model for other women.

Empowered and fearless, Mrs. Sandhya dreams of ensuring education for orphaned and dropout girl children. She is determined to challenge the negative perceptions surrounding single mothers and inspire others to rise with dignity, hope, and strength.

Alternative Livelihood



Sustainable livelihoods are central to ensuring long-term social and economic stability, especially for marginalized rural families who are vulnerable to seasonal income fluctuations, natural disasters, and loss of traditional employment opportunities. Recognizing these challenges, Rural Educational Activities for Development (READ) has been implementing an Alternative Livelihood Program that aims to diversify income sources and empower widows, single women, small farmers, and youth to lead secure and dignified lives.

The program supports community members to identify and adopt non-traditional, low-investment, and locally feasible livelihood options. It complements READ's existing agricultural and women empowerment initiatives by strengthening the economic base of poor households and building resilience against social and economic shocks.

Objectives

- To promote diversified livelihood options for income generation beyond traditional farming.
- To build the capacity of rural women and widows in skill-based and home-based enterprises.
- To link community members with government schemes, microfinance, and market opportunities.
- To strengthen community institutions such as Self Help Groups (SHGs) for collective entrepreneurship and sustainability.

Key Activities Implemented

1. Skill Development and Capacity Building
 - Conducted skill training programs for 58 SHG leaders on various Income Generation Activities (IGAs) such as mushroom cultivation, nutrition gardening, vegetable cultivation, fish farming, groundnut cultivation, goat rearing, incense stick making, and poultry management (chick rearing).
 - Organized 3 exclusive training sessions for SHGs on floriculture (flower cultivation) as a profitable alternative livelihood option for women farmers.

- Developed easy-to-follow training modules and demonstration units to enhance practical learning and sustainability.
2. Promotion of Micro-Enterprises
 - Supported 54 women SHGs with start-up assistance for small-scale enterprises in kewda flower processing, goat rearing, fish farming, incense stick making, and petty businesses.
 - Facilitated exposure visits to successful SHG-led enterprises to inspire innovation and learning among participants.
 - Encouraged women to reinvest profits into collective savings and asset creation at group level.
 3. Market Linkage and Value Chain Support
 - READ facilitated linkages with local markets, vendors, and cooperatives for sale of produce such as vegetables, mushrooms, flowers, and incense sticks.
 - Collaborated with local government departments and Mission Shakti federations to access microcredit and revolving funds.
 4. Sustainability and Follow-up Support
 - READ's field team provided continuous mentoring and business planning support to SHG members.
 - Encouraged diversification of livelihood activities to balance income throughout the year.
 - Promoted eco-friendly practices such as organic manure use, integrated farming, and backyard animal husbandry.



Empowering women is central to the vision and mission of READ. Since its inception, READ has been working to build an equitable society where women, particularly widows and marginalized groups, can live with dignity, confidence, and independence. Through various interventions such as Self Help Group (SHG) strengthening, leadership development, skill enhancement, gender sensitization, and economic empowerment, READ continues to transform the lives of rural women in the districts of Ganjam, Gajapati, and Rayagada of Odisha.

The Women Empowerment Program of READ focuses not only on improving income but also on ensuring that women have equal access to rights, opportunities, and decision-making platforms—at the household, community, and institutional levels.

Objectives

- To promote gender equality and women's leadership in community development.
- To enhance women's participation in economic, social, and political decision-making processes.
- To reduce gender-based discrimination and violence against women and girls.
- To strengthen community-based institutions such as SHGs, Gender Vigilance Committees (GVCs), and Gender Resource Centres (GRCs) for sustainable empowerment.

Key Activities Implemented

1. Formation and strengthening of SHGs
 - READ facilitated and strengthened over 118 SHGs comprising widows and women from marginalized sections.
 - Each SHG was supported with training on group management, record keeping, financial literacy, and collective decision-making.
 - Many SHG members have now emerged as community leaders, representing their groups in various forums.
2. Leadership Development Training
 - Conducted 7 leadership training programs across Ganjam and Gajapati districts, benefiting over 430 women leaders.
 - Training focused on communication skills, confidence building, women's rights, gender equality, and decision-making.
 - Women leaders were encouraged to take up roles in village-level committees, Gram Sabhas, and PRI institutions.
3. Gender Sensitization and Awareness Building
 - Organized community meetings, IEC campaigns, on gender issues such as domestic violence, child marriage, gender discrimination, and women's rights.
 - Distributed 1,500 copies of IEC materials (leaflets and posters) on gender rights and legal provisions for women and girls.
 - Conducted quarterly review meetings of Gender Vigilance Committees (GVCs) in 4 clusters, each comprising 25 members (both men and women).
4. Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Support
 - Provided start-up support to 54 widows' SHGs to initiate small-scale businesses in kewda flower cultivation, fish farming, goat rearing, incense stick making, and petty trade.
 - Facilitated skill development training for 54 SHG leaders on various Income Generation Activities (IGAs), such as mushroom cultivation, vegetable farming, fishery, goat rearing, and poultry.
 - Promoted micro-entrepreneurship among women through market linkage and financial inclusion initiatives.
5. Formation of Gender Vigilance Committees (GVCs)
 - Established 4 cluster-level GVCs, each comprising 25 members representing multiple villages.

- GVCs actively addressed and mediated gender-based issues at the community level, providing early resolution mechanisms.
- The committees also began the groundwork for establishing a Gender Resource Centre (GRC) to offer legal guidance and resource materials on gender rights.

Impact and Achievements

- Over 1,192 women directly benefited through leadership, skill, and rights-based trainings.
- 430 women leaders actively participating in local governance and community development platforms.
- 118 SHGs functioning independently with improved savings, credit management, and income generation.
- Increased awareness on gender rights and reduction in gender-based violence cases in target villages.
- Widows and marginalized women gained greater social recognition and confidence in public participation.



Empowering Change:

Mrs. Santoshini Nayak, a resident of Kaliabali village in Chatrapur Block, Ganjam District, Odisha, is a shining example of how determination and opportunity can transform lives. Once entirely dependent on her husband's income, Santoshini struggled to meet the needs of her family and educate her two children. With the family relying on a single source of income, they often had to borrow money from local moneylenders at high interest rates, which further deepened their financial stress.

Her journey toward empowerment began when she joined the **Maa Jagruti Self-Help Group (SHG)**, formed by **READ**. Through READ's support to SHGs for income generation activities, Santoshini found a chance to rebuild her life. She realized she already possessed a valuable skill — stitching leaf plates. With a small loan of ₹5,000 from her SHG, she started her own leaf plate-making business. Her hard work soon paid off, and she began earning around ₹2,500–3,000 per month.

Not stopping there, Santoshini expanded her efforts by producing turmeric and chili powder, which she now sells to local shops, earning an additional ₹1,500 each month.

Today, her family lives with financial stability, and her children are happily studying in Class 8 and +2. Encouraged by her success, Santoshini now dreams of opening her own shop in the local marketplace to grow her business further.

Her story stands as an inspiring testament to how self-help, skill utilization, and timely support can empower women to achieve economic independence and dignity.



Gender Inclusion

Gender inclusion lies at the heart of Rural Educational Activities for Development (READ)'s mission to create an equitable society where women and men enjoy equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. READ firmly believes that sustainable community development is only possible when both genders participate equally in social, economic, and political spheres.

Through its various interventions across Ganjam, Gajapati, and Rayagada districts, READ has worked extensively to break down gender barriers, address systemic discrimination,

and empower women especially widows, single women, and marginalized groups to become active decision-makers in their families and communities.

The Gender Inclusion Program seeks to ensure that gender perspectives are mainstreamed into every stage of development from planning and implementation to monitoring and evaluation thereby fostering a just and inclusive society.

Objectives

- To promote equal participation of women and men in all spheres of community development.
- To eliminate gender-based discrimination and harmful social practices.
- To strengthen institutional mechanisms such as Gender Vigilance Committees (GVCs) and Gender Resource Centres (GRCs) for promoting gender equality.
- To encourage for women's rights and inclusion in governance, education, and livelihood systems.

Key Activities Implemented

1. Formation of Gender Vigilance Committees (GVCs)
 - Established 4 cluster-level GVCs, each comprising 25 members (male and female) selected from village-level committees.
 - Members represented their respective villages and collectively addressed gender-related issues through community-based dialogue and resolution.
 - The GVCs also conducted sensitization meetings to prevent gender-based violence and discrimination.
2. Gender Sensitization and Awareness Campaigns
 - Conducted village-level awareness sessions, and discussions on topics such as domestic violence, child marriage, gender equality, and women's rights.
 - Distributed 1,500 IEC materials (posters, leaflets, and brochures) on gender rights and legal provisions for women and girls.
 - These activities helped bring positive behavioural changes and strengthened gender-sensitive attitudes within the community.
3. Leadership Development for Gender Inclusion
 - Organized leadership and rights-based trainings for over 430 women leaders, focusing on participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), local governance, and decision-making processes.
 - Encouraged male engagement sessions to promote shared responsibilities in families and communities, building allies for gender equality.
4. Economic Empowerment and Inclusive Livelihoods
 - Provided start-up support to 54 widows' SHGs and skill development training for 54 SHG leaders in various Income Generation Activities (IGAs) like mushroom cultivation, goat rearing, fish farming, and incense stick making.
 - Promoted inclusive entrepreneurship models where both men and women contribute to household income and economic decision-making.
5. Initiative for Gender Resource Centre (GRC)
 - Conducted consultation meetings with 100 cluster-level GVC members to plan for the formation of the GRC, which will serve as a hub for legal support, counselling, and gender education.
 - Although the formal establishment of the GRC was delayed due to FCRA-related constraints, the groundwork and community readiness have been successfully achieved.

Impact and Achievements

- Increased awareness and participation of women in community decision-making forums and local governance.
- Formation of inclusive community structures (GVCs) that address gender issues collectively.
- Reduction in gender-based discrimination and violence through consistent sensitization efforts.
- Greater acceptance of widows and single women in community and family spaces.
- Strengthened partnerships with government departments like Mission Shakti, PRIs, and local institutions for gender mainstreaming.

Story of Courage and Transformation:

Mrs. B. Jamuna Patro, a resident of Ghadaghadapalli village in Chatrapur Block, Ganjam District, Odisha, is the President of the Jaibir Hanuma Self Help Group (SHG). A separated single mother of three children—two daughters and one son—Jamuna faced immense hardship after her husband abandoned the family. With no financial or emotional support, she struggled daily to ensure her children's survival and education.

Her life began to change after joining the SHG promoted by READ. Through various trainings, workshops, and exposure visits, Jamuna not only gained knowledge but also the courage and confidence to face the world. She began to believe in her own strength and capabilities. Skilled in tailoring, she took a small loan from her SHG to purchase a sewing machine. With dedication and hard work, she now earns between ₹5,000 to ₹6,000 per month from stitching clothes.

In addition, Jamuna utilizes her small plot of land to collect Kewda flowers, earning an extra ₹4,000 monthly. Her efforts have brought stability to her family—her elder daughter is married, her younger daughter is pursuing higher secondary education, and her son is studying in Class 8.

Recently, when Jamuna learned that her married daughter was facing domestic violence, she immediately sought support from her SHG. The members stood by her, showing the power of women's solidarity and collective strength.

Jamuna's story is one of resilience, empowerment, and hope—an inspiring example of how determination and community support can transform the life of a single mother into one of dignity and leadership.

INSTITUTIONAL BUILDING OF THE READ:

The READ entered into a strategic partnership with the **Dhwani Foundation** during this reporting period, which marked a significant milestone in strengthening the organization's institutional systems, governance mechanisms, and operational efficiency. The collaboration focused on enhancing the organization's financial management system, policy framework, and self-assessment practices, aligning them with national-level NGO standards for accountability, transparency, and sustainability.

Within just three months of partnership, remarkable progress was achieved. The organization successfully developed and implemented a robust financial management system, introducing systematic processes for budgeting, accounting, documentation, and expenditure tracking. The Dhwani Foundation has determined to ensure the capacity building of its partner organizations in the following 8 components like **Finance & Accounting, Governance, HR, Compliances, MIS & Technology, Leadership & Strategy, Program Planning & Management and Fundraising & Marketing** of 175 parameters. These reforms have not only ensured greater transparency and compliance but have also enhanced financial planning and resource utilization across all project operations.

In addition, a comprehensive organizational self-assessment tool was designed and adopted with the technical guidance of Dhwani Foundation. This tool now enables READ to conduct periodic internal reviews to measure institutional performance, identify areas for improvement, and strengthen governance practices. It serves as a practical framework for continuous learning, performance monitoring, and evidence-based decision-making within the organization.

Another major achievement of this partnership has been the revision, development, and formal adoption of key organizational policies. Several existing policies were updated, and new ones were developed to ensure compliance with current statutory requirements and donor expectations. These include policies on Finance, Human Resources, Procurement, Child Protection, Gender, and Safeguarding, among others. All revised and newly developed policies have been reviewed, approved, and formally placed within the organization for implementation.

Overall, the partnership with Dhwani Foundation has been a transformative experience for READ. It has not only strengthened the internal systems and institutional accountability but has also equipped the organization with tools and frameworks to ensure long-term sustainability and effectiveness in serving marginalized communities. This collaboration has reaffirmed READ's commitment to building a transparent, efficient, and learning-driven organization capable of delivering high-impact programs with integrity and professionalism.

SUSTAINABILITY & FUTURE REQUIREMENTS OF ORGANIZATION

The sustainability of Rural Educational Activities for Development (READ) is built upon its strong foundation of community participation, partnerships, and people-centered development. Over the years, READ has evolved as a trusted grassroots organization dedicated to empowering rural and marginalized communities through education, livelihood promotion, gender equality, and environmental conservation. Its programs are designed to ensure continuity through local ownership, capacity building, and participatory decision-making processes. READ emphasizes forming and strengthening

community-based institutions such as Self-Help Groups, Farmers' Collectives, and Village Committees to sustain interventions at the ground level even after project completion.

Financial sustainability has been achieved through various funding sources, including partnerships with government departments, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and donor agencies, but has not been successful in achieving the required results. READ also promotes internal resource mobilization and encourages contributions from beneficiaries in cash, in-kind and volunteer services, to strengthen community responsibility and accountability.

Institutionally, READ invests in staff development, transparent management systems, and technological integration to enhance efficiency and adaptability. Environmental sustainability is embedded in its agroforestry, natural resource management, and climate-resilient livelihood initiatives, ensuring harmony between development and ecology.

Looking ahead, READ aims to strengthen its impact by scaling successful models, establishing a resource and training center, and enhancing digital capacity for program monitoring and outreach. The organization seeks strategic partnerships, long-term funding collaborations, and capacity support for data-driven decision-making and innovation.

With a clear vision and community-driven approach, READ is poised to continue its mission of empowering the rural poor and fostering sustainable, inclusive development that endures well into the future.



FINANCE



A circular library stamp with the text "R. P. A. D. * GANJAM * BERHAMPUR" around the perimeter. The word "GANJAM" is prominently displayed in the center.



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