

## Educational and professional partnerships between the Indian state of Uttaranchal and France's Ministry of Agriculture

*M.J. Guezennec*

Thanks to its immense economic, technological and human resources potential, India is taking great steps forward. Evidently, in the current context of globalisation, the subcontinent is carving out the lion's share for itself on the international scene. No one can be unaware of the fact that knowledge and human resources are the bases for such dynamism and blossoming on such a large scale. Thus education and the sharing of knowledge and know-how are crucial tools in terms of heightening young people's awareness of the values of a constantly evolving world. In this sense, India is increasingly becoming a favourite destination, not only for tourism, but also for students and young researchers anxious to understand the facts and the real assets of this distant country, which is constantly drawing nearer to us. And while there are "many germs lying undeveloped in man", as stated by philosopher Immanuel Kant, it is up to teachers and trainers "to make these germs grow, by *developing his natural gifts* in their due proportion, and to see that he fulfils his destiny" (*Kant on Education*).

### **Uttaranchal: a top student destination**

It is to Uttaranchal, a destination both geographical and humane, which over the last few years has been chosen secondary and tertiary students from establishments attached

to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries to carry out their training course or the validation for their degree in agronomy. In March 2004, then in April 2006, two BTS GEMEAU classes (aquaculture and water management) of the lycée of La Canourgue, Lozère, organised under the leadership of their English teacher, JC Ygrie, two-week study trips in the Himalayan state of Uttaranchal. Carrying out many visits in specialist establishments, they became interested in the essential of water management in this Himalayan region. The students also examined the issues specific to sustainable and rural development, forest management, organic agriculture and ecotourism, all of which the economic and tourist policies of the state of Uttaranchal support and promote. One of the highlights of their trips was getting to spend a few days with farmers living near Binsar and sharing their daily lives; in this idyllic region of Kumaon, there are large mountain chains, such as the Nanda Devi, which peaks at 7,430 metres, dominating the Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary (2,310 metres). The experience left the students with warm memories of generous hospitality. As this was so enriching is so many ways, a new educational experience is being organised for March 2008 with another vocational training certificate class from the lycée of Lozère.

In December 2005 and January 2006, a group of a dozen student engineers (in the

fifth year of Rouen's agronomy school) also chose to organise their three-week study trip in the Himalayan region of Kumaon in Uttaranchal. For this educational and professional experience, which made up part of the validation of their degree, they stayed in the Corbett ecotourism centre, located near the famous Jim Corbett National Park.

The project was headed by Rajiv Bhartari, director, Corbett National Park and the Corbett Ecotourism Centre, an expert in environment, conservation and management of the parks in the Himalayas, who was also a very valuable guide and organised several visits during the entire length of their stay.

### **Student exchanges between India and France**

Since the summer of 2004, the students of the ENESAD engineering school in Dijon undertook a six-week course in Uttaranchal in order to study forest management, the specifics of mountain agriculture in comparison with plains agriculture as well as botany and medicinal plants. They also worked with the Corbett ecotourism Centre and at The Corbett Foundation.

Other ENESAD and vocational training certificate students (water management and national parks management) opted for the region of Mukteshwar (2,287 metres), further north in Kumaon, to get to know about - with the guidance of the NGO Central Himalayan Rural Action Group (CHIRAG) - mountain agriculture and work on the construction of calibrated watersheds as well as the setting up of organic agriculture projects. Since June 2005, fruitful educational exchanges have taken place between the aquacultural lycée of La Canourgue and GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology in Pantnagar, Uttaranchal, where the partners have set up student exchange programs aiming to welcome, each year, a few student trainees from both establishments. Two Indian university students were welcomed for three weeks on La Canourgue site in March 2006 and four French students set off to the Indian university in June-July 2005 and 2006. While Pantnagar is

### **Students from ENSAD (Dijon) in Uttaranchal**





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a very well-known agronomy school in the Himalaya region, the lycée in La Canourgue (Site Louis Pasteur) is equally well known in France because of its very modern aquaculture equipment and innovative teaching methods in terms of student training placements abroad and international exchanges.

### Professional and educational aquaculture partnerships in Kumaon

Following the November 2004 visit of Professor AP Sharma, head of the aquaculture department of GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology Pantnagar to the lycée in La Canourgue, professional partnership projects, with a heavily educational bent, were set up by the administrators of both establishments and their teaching teams.

Last October, Franck Lapray, head of La Canourgue lycée, and a few teachers and pro-

fessional from his establishment went to Pantnagar for two weeks, visiting various regions of Uttaranchal in order to study and set up partnerships and educational cooperation projects in the subject of aquaculture with the university there. The projects are set to get off the ground later this year.

The team also presented its projects and explained the orientation of their educational approach to officials from the state of Uttaranchal, who gave them a very warm welcome as they saw in these initiatives founded on the sharing of experience and skills solid opportunities to kick-start certain sectors that they prioritised as part of their development programme, such as the protection of ecosystems, ecotourism and rural tourism.

Thus the qualifications of students and future professionals, now enriched by this growing awareness of the international dimension, will be able to contribute to progress and the development of local and village communities. This promising mission is fully supported in France by the Ministry of Agriculture in order to share and exchange - at various levels - the knowledge and skills in a manner that is based on common civic values. ■

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