

# Report on AAJ visit 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023

## **Objective:**

To test the assumptions related to centrality of women and children in Sustainable Ecological Governance in the light of practise.

## **Assumption :**

Valuation revealed by nature over historical passage of time quite different from short term valuation expressed by market in terms of price of commodities.

## **Hypothesis:**

Action research agenda on various fronts to translate approach/perspective into action to take advantage of the differential valuation that different Stakeholders particularly Women, Children and Farmers have for the natural resources.

## **Agenda:**

Review of progress over quarter from February to June. Presentations from Nandu Bhai on overall progress. Presentation from Sheela Ben on progress related to issues to be taken up by women. Presentation by Rajesh bhai on issues related to education of children.

Comments and observations by Dr Leena Gupta and flagging issues of concern to be addressed over next few days.

Perspective on Adi Shikshan Vidyapeeth by Ratan dada and flagging of issues to be taken up over next few days.

Discussion with women's group on report by Sheela Ben and issues flagged by Dr Leena. If necessary this meeting can be held in the village where women's group most active and responsive to the agenda (based on the issues flagged by Sheela Ben and concerns highlighted by Dr Leena.

Field visit to review key aspects related to monitoring of progress related to eco- restoration activities in the region.

Field visit continued

Programme with children, divided into four regions (three in Fenai Mata and one in MP). Children to prepare base map of their region, highlighting key features they want to highlight. River, mountains, agricultural fields, biodiversity. Each group has to make a presentation which covers these aspects as well as five key issues in their region ( +ve or - ve). An essay/ report covering these issues to be prepared by the four groups.

Discussion with children should identify issues/questions in each region that need to be followed up by them, how they will pursue them over next quarter.

Strategic discussions with Nandu Bhai, Sheela Ben, Rajesh bhai on organisational issues of importance in fulfilling agenda identified on day two and three.

How the above will help in the following

- a. Strengthening on programme with women and children.
- b. Identification of agenda to be pursued by farmer's forum in relation to organic/natural farming.
- c. Identification of key issues in pursuing agenda related to CFR and Ecological democracy.

Winding up discussion and way forward. Sharing and discussion with Ratan dada. Way forward - how agenda identified on day four will help develop agenda of Adi Shikshan Vidyapeeth..

Developing of key monitoring parameters to be pursued during next quarter. July to September.

## **Report**

The discussions were on all issues above but followed a different path for the following reasons.

- a. Report on progress was provided separately due to the cyclone, there was a delay in arriving at Bhekadiya hence this reporting was done away with. .
- b. Assessment on potential for working with women needs to factor in the fact that more than 40% families migrate for wage labour and hence do not have the same relation to the natural resources as required for systematic restoration. In lieu of the fact that market forces have dismantled most of traditional production systems and degraded the commons, how the threads could be built up slowly and integrated with the children's programme was therefore the focus of the discussions.
- c. Donor focus on provision of food etc means that the local food has a cost, while that supplied by donor does not. This has contributed a great deal to dismantling of the traditional biodiverse production system and makes production of local foods unviable as well.

## **Programme with women**

This discussion was mostly carried out with Sheela ben, Gita ben and Veena ben though others were involved as well. The gist of the discussion, highlighted the issue related to wage labour migration and other consequences as well. As a way out, it was decided that one day a month should be devoted to local foods, clubbed with a programme for children. This would depend on

local contributions by the community. These contributions would also be traced to the field/ common land and would form part of the investigative report being undertaken by the children as well. For now the existing programme of spice powder production, cotton thread by the women would continue Having received the FSSAI registration, AAJ is discussing with TRIFED how the products currently produced can be branded and sold with the help of TRIFED. .

## **Programme with Children**

The programme with children involved about 80 children from ten villages namely Kanalva, Aamsota, Samalvat, Bhundmaria, Umthi, Kunda, Harkot, Nani Kanas, Pherkua and Mandka. The children of these villages were asked to prepare the ecological map of their villages. The day long exercise helped the children put down their understanding of the land use, biodiversity and other natural resources in the village.



This programme will be followed up by regular monthly programmes that will help children detail the natural resources and social wealth within their village. Once the children are more confident and articulate about their issues, how this can be reported and mapped using google earth will be explored under the programme which is providing computer education to the children. The programme for providing children of the Ashram with local food once a month will

be dovetailed with this and an attempt will be made to see how this can help develop an action research programme for the 355 children in the Ashram coming from about 50 villages. In the meantime AAJ will profile the children and also store the documentation village wise in the library so that over time village wise dossiers can be made and assist the women's groups in micro planning for the village based on the local biodiversity.



### **Programme with Farmers**

To start with, this will be based on the circulation of Jeev Amrut from which more than 500 farmers have benefited so far. How this programme can be strengthened and expanded was discussed at length with Shanna bhai and Nandu Bhai

### **Adi Shikshan Vidyapeeth**

It was clarified that the three programmes above would help to build the research, curriculum and pedagogy for Adi Shikshan Vidyapeeth keeping in mind the need for following the principles of relative autonomy and control by the Adivasi community.

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