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A Grassroots Innovator & a Forest Officer could change their lives forever!

## Jadoli (Gogunda) to Devla (Kotda) Udaipur, Rajasthan

It was second Shodhyatra in Rajasthan, earlier we had walked in Alwar district in collaboration with Tarun Bharat Sangh (8<sup>th</sup> Shodhyatra, Bhikampura to Nilkanth, Rajasthan, December 24, 2001 to January 1, 2002. Previously, we walked in North-east part of the state, this one was in southern tribal region. Having covered all the states of India once, we were now walking through second or third time in different states. Purpose is to search for knowledge, creativity, and innovation at the grassroots-level and share innovations scouted from other parts of the country. By reaching the remotest corners of India, we try to understand how hardships and challenges of the immediate surroundings motivate creativity and innovation among local communities.. Shodhyatra can also be defined as a journey that entails mutual exchange of knowledge. We pool the knowledge, insights and perspectives gained over the years and share these with the villagers during the various shodhyatras. This journey also aims to spread green consciousness by conducting various competitions for women and children to display their ecological, culinary and social creativity. We look for odd balls In these yatras, we also look for those who have solved a problem through their own experiments. The forty-third shodhyatra was organized from Jadoli (Gogunda) to Devla (Kotda), Udaipur, Rajasthan from February 9-15, 2019. Read on...

### Our Journey

The damage to gram (chickpea) crops by the cold weather had dismayed the farmers. Some of the the farmers irrigated their crops using traditional Persian Wheel, operated by the bullocks. This stretch had a slightly undulating terrain, hilly in parts with scrubby vegetation was a low productivity semi- arid region.

during a the walk of more than 70 km in six days.

### Gulal producing unit at Jadoli

Under the guidance of Divisional Forest Officer, Mr O P Sharma, a Gulal producing unit making four different colors of gulal has been set up in Village Jadodi: :

1)Rang palash: made from the flowers

of palash (*Butea monosperma* Lam.)2) Rang gulaab: made from the rose flowers 3) Rang amaltash: made from the flowers of amaltash (*Cassia fistula* Linn.) and turmeric 4) Rang hariali: made from the leaves of cactus and jatropa

These gulals blend together with organic and natural extracts from fruits, leaves, flowers and herbs, have an excellent

aroma, and are completely safe for use by any age group. The village unit had received order from Australian Embassy and many other institutions. While normal colours sold for about 40-50 Rs per kg, herbal gulal was sold for 160 Rs/kg. Increasing demand of such colours showed that a new model of poverty alleviation can emerge by adding value to local resources and knowledge for urban green consumers.

### ***Incense stick producing unit at Gatanadi***

The shodhyatris had an opportunity to visit an incense stick processing unit, where the empowered tribal women use machines to produce incense sticks. The village also has other processing units for Aloe Vera juice, gel, and soaps. Besides, the community members also collect and sell in the market minor forest produce such as honey. The forest activities are carried out under the guidance of Shri Om Prakash Sharma, Forest Development Agency (FDA) of Udaipur (north). The activity exemplifies how the sustainable use of forest resources can be used to empower and uplift tribal communities.

He was keen to understand the root causes of the problems faced by the people and, accordingly, suggest the way forward. In fact, this is the very purpose of all shodhyatris, i.e. strive to look for solutions that local communities have developed on their own, through first-hand experience. Shodhyatris also identify, diagnose, analyze local problems and offer solutions developed by other grassroots communities by blending creativity, collaboration, and compassion.

### ***Use of natural pesticide***

During the course of the journey, the shodhyatris identified a weed known



*The Shodhyatris*

as Vevan (*Lantana camara* L.), which was a serious cause of concern to the farmers. The weed was harmful for both the cattle and crops to the extent that cattle died on consuming it. The Shodhyatris offered them a solution in the form of an organic pesticide which was prepared by boiling 5 kg of lantana leaves in 10 liters of water. After filtering, 500 ml of the solution, was mixed in 15 litres of water. Sprayed over the affected crop. This organic pesticide could be a viable solution for the farmers' woes as it not only eliminated the need for chemical pesticides, and reduced lanata weed, but also helped to preserve both cattle and crops. The professor further added that the villagers could use any leaf or weed, not consumed by cattle, as an alternative to Vevan (*Lantana camara* L.)-a lesson he had learned in Kutch Shodhyatra, a long time ago.

### ***Wisdom of herbal treatment***

The shodhyatris further realized that the villagers were alive to the medicinal uses of various natural ingredients commonly found in their immediate surroundings and used them to treat various ailments

and diseases. For example, a root of a plant "goya" was used to treat cough and cold; and the wild grape was used to treat bone fractures. A combination of kerosene, petrol or sesame oil was used to treat foot and mouth disease (FMD), locally known as "khurva", in animals.

Further, they also found that the nomenclature of the vegetables changed from one village to another, so vegetables such as chili, gundi, hibda, tumbi, puhar, kuliari, etc., had different names in several of the villages they visited.

### ***Meeting the Master***

In Tejavaas, the shodhyatris got the opportunity to meet the master craftsman, Shri Jamnalal Kumhar, who lives in Molena, Rajsamand. For the last 1600 years, his ancestors had been creating artwork from terracotta. Jamnalal had been honored by an award by the President of India. He had also been invited to teach at various institutes including the National Institute of Design and other institutions abroad. The quality of his crafts was extremely exquisite.

### ***Hardships and Local delicacies***

The shodyatris covered an average distance of 10 to 15 kilometers daily, spanning three to four villages. They came across villages that still did not have electricity connection. The shodhyatris interacted with school students and gifted globes to all the schools they visited in order to kindle curiosity among children about our inter-connected world. Besides, they also showed them various videos and posters of innovators to develop in them a spirit of creativity. The yatris were also served traditional Rajasthani food which included dal-dhokla, dal-baati-churma, sabji-makki di roti, etc. on the last day. Information on local vegetables and medicinal herbs was exchanged which could benefit the villagers in improving their lives and also augment rural development opportunities.