



44

SHODHYATRA

Creative Gadchiroli: not just a land of disquiet

Gadchiroli is famous for many reasons. The extraordinary contribution of Dr Abhay and Rani Bang through SEARCH, Shodhgram in significantly reducing infant mortality and malnutrition and im[proving community health in Dhanora block of the District in the last two decades. It is also known for first time full assertion of the provisions of community Conserved areas under the Forest Rights Act, 2006. Several villages have taken full control of Forest conservation, harvesting of allowed MFP like bamboo and directly selling it as custodian of this wealth under the local leadership. It is also in news for leftists violence and conflicts around local resources. Walking through such a terrain was a very instructive experience for the shodhyatris who saw both, the deep-seated inertia in the way forest produce was collected and processed by tribal communities and innovations in pest control or some other areas of day to day life.

With the help of NIRMAN, a social development arm of SEARCH, Bee Network, GIAN and SRISTI organised 44th shodhyatra starting from SEARCH, Shodhgram till Mendha Lekha, Gadchiroli, Maharashtra, June 12-18, 2019. Amrut Bang, founder NIRMAN (2008) shared how youth from elite institutions like IITs but also from other less known institutions were empowered in social work through internship and volunteer training program at shodhgram.

Yatra begins

When a healthy person dies, you bury him/her and if a sick person dies, you cremate her. An eclectic practice like this is certainly not a sign of a so called backward and less developed community. We had noted this practice is come villages of Bastar (about 200 km away in Chhatisgarh) as well. Why should a body having germs of disease be buried if you respect the sacred mother earth?

Conserving forest and tribal rights under Scheduled Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 is a challenge. First time, two sets of communities

led by Devaji Tofa and Devaji Prada have succeeded in getting the rights transferred to the tribal communities fully and completely. They now earn money by auctioning tendu patta and bamboo and get about Rs 7-8 crores for village self-development. What has been the impact of this decentralisation and devolution of constitutionally permitted financial and forest rights- a serious check on extremist violence. Further, in almost every village, we walked through during 44th Shodhyatra, we found farm ponds



Canvas is not a constrain for this little artist

having been constructed by communities from the income they got under the Forest Rights Act. Many of the ponds built last year had water proving that water can indeed be stored in this dry region. Some of the villages in this region get cut off from the rest of the district due to excessive rain but the summer months have had water scarcity.

The people keep a joyful demeanour, no matter how hard is their life. The health services provided by SEARCH founded by Abhay and Rani Bang has had a very transformative effect on the health of the region. The maternal and infant mortality has been reduced drastically. But the strength of the formal system of medicine has inadvertently also led to erosion of local herbal healing tradition. Rabi Bang gave us a book in which she had documented 150 practices in Marathi used by women during pregnancy and child delivery. A very sincere effort to preserve and protect the local knowledge. This brings us to a continuing unfair and unethical exchange of knowledge and ideas between the formal and informal sector of our society.

We had pooled in Hindi several studies done by professional based on the knowledge of Gondi tribal in this region and published elsewhere. But these studies were never shared with local communities. SRISTI and GIAN worked hard to pool many such studies and share their summary in Gondi/Marathi/Hindi language. This is a task which should be done by every academic institution and professional who collects knowledge from local communities without ever sharing the findings in the local language with the knowledge providers. GIAN also distributed vegetable seeds developed by farmer breeders in different parts of the country for local experimentation.



Local language Poster exhibition in different villages besides video presentation in every village in the night (thanks to availability of good power supply) generated a lot of interest in trying some of the new ideas like Gopal Bhise's cycle plough for weeding, Shakimathan's pump for draining/irrigating paddy fields, tree climber, and a few other solutions.

Babu Ram Pada showing the ingredient of a herbal pesticide

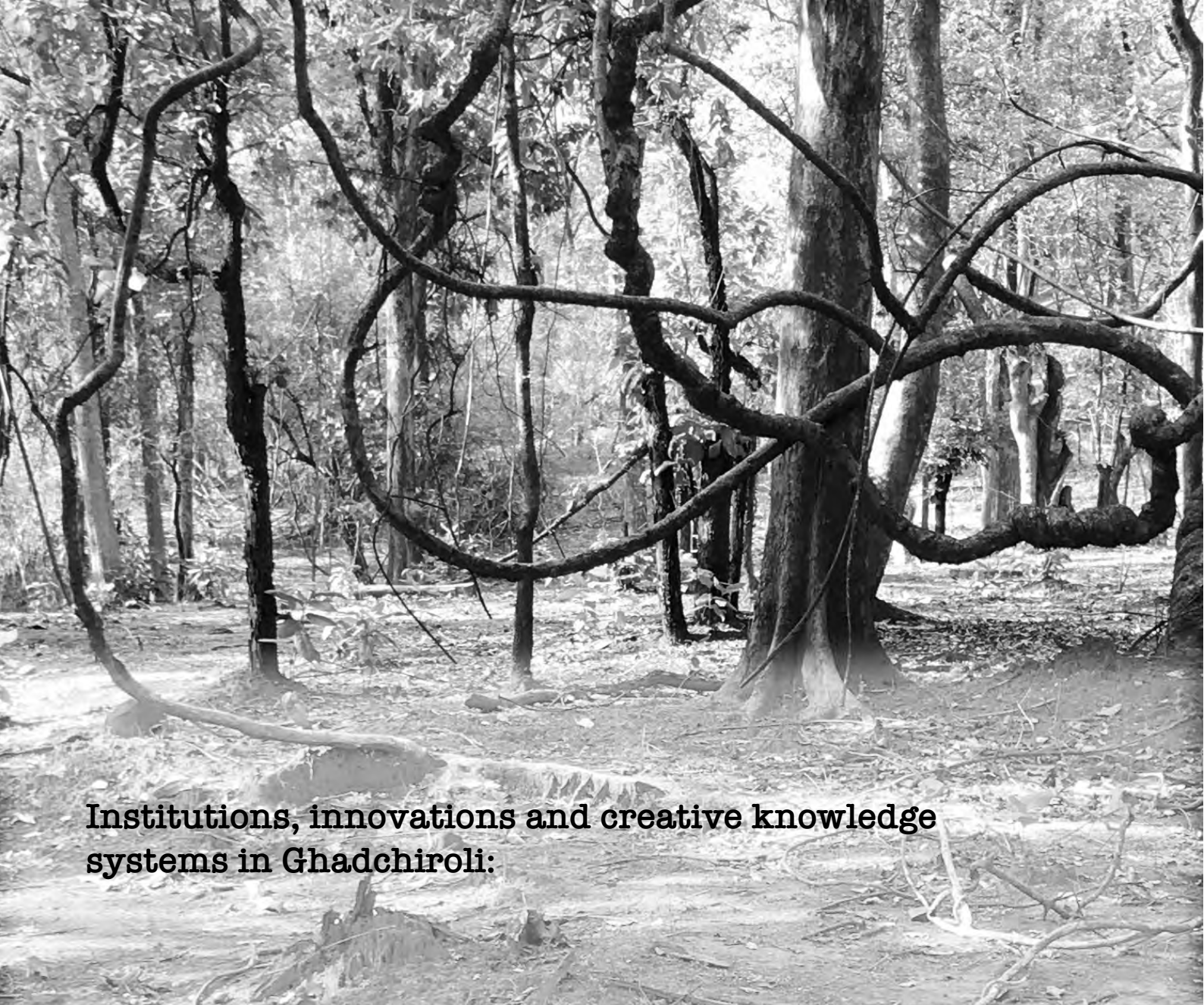


Gaurav and Ankush being felicitated for their innovation

By noon of the first day, we reached Khutgaon. Babu Ram Pada had mixed three different plants viz., neem fruits, flowers of calotropis and fruits of garadi (*Cleistanthus colinus*) to develop a herbal pesticide for controlling pests of paddy crop. Meeting an innovator on the first day enthused all the shodhyatris. Sukhdev Gawade Maharsj was very famous in the region for his herbal healing practices. For dealing with cramps in feet, he would advise crushing leaves of neem and Gloy (*Tinospora cordifolia*) mixed with jaggery formed into tablets. it was to be accompanied by a massage with oil of mustard, sesame and castor mixed together for 2-4 months depending upon severity of the problem.

Our next stop was Mendha Tola village, and like Khutgaon, the village too had its share of innovations to showcase. For instance, we met sanjivani Yadav Chichagare who specialized in making doormats using old clothes. Initially, she would make it by hand; however, it was a time-consuming task. She wanted to make more intricate designs and so developed a tool with a big nail that could hold the piece of cloth tightly. Three students, Piyush Rajiv, Piyush Ashok and Om Yadav managed to develop a mobile battery operated mini fan. Other women participants also showcased craft work made from paper and waste plastic. A few women community members, Sarita, Suman, Neeta, Sumda, and Kiran had also prepared local delicacies, which they shared with us during the meeting.

In Ushirpar village, we saw doormats from waste cloth, organic pesticides and local food items. Gaurav and Ankush, two children made a model of sprinkling water on the newly built road. They had seen a new road having been made up to their village. They were given a certificate of appreciation. First such recognition of their talent, at their door step.



Institutions, innovations and creative knowledge systems in Ghadchiroli:

We share the details of culinary creativity, crafts, agro-biodiversity, seed exchange, herbal traditional knowledge for human, and agricultural purposes, institutions and other traditions.

Culinary Creativity: There were more than 40 recipes shared by the local communities were tasted, and honoured during 44th Shodhyatra. On the second day of Shodhyatra, Anita Usendi, Rekhatola village prepared Mahua flower powder by crushing dried flowers of Mahua (*Madhuca longifolia*), said to be quite good for digestion and health.

Sarita Kirange presented a vegetable of Bamboo Shoot (*Bambusoideae*) finely chopped and boiled in water and then fried in oil with salt and spices.

We received maximum recipes in a day at Bhendikanhar village and honored 13 women for their creative efforts

including Jiji bai vadhe, Lali Bai Chandrakala Aatla Shantabai narwate Somi Bai, Kaushalya Jeevan Aatla Juri Bai Savitri Samru Parse Janku Bai Shogibai Vadhe Pandey Bai, Premila wade, and Shantabai narwate. They made recipes like Bathua ki sabji, Koyar ki sabji, Vasta and Batua ki sabji, Kohaka (in gondi language) ki Sabji, Shantabai narwate - Ambadi ki Sabji, - Wasta etc.

In every village we received recipes with some uniqueness in taste and ingredients used. Below is the list of other recipes-

Seed Distribution

Seeds of improved crop varieties were distributed to 140 farmers. Many farmer reciprocated our activities by donating us many varieties of seeds developed or conserved by them like- hundred-year old variety of paddy and Black gram from Jampi village. Dasharath

In every village we received recipes with some uniqueness in taste and ingredients used. Below is the list of other recipes-

Village	Name	Recipe	Comments	Reference
Fulbodi	Seema Kargami	<i>Vegetable of Flowers of Kuda (Holarrhena pubescence)</i>	they store the flowers after drying so that they can consume it throughout the year	https://www.mdpi.com/2218-273X/10/9/1341/htm https://www.phcog.com/article.asp?issn=0973-1296;year=2009;volume=5;issue=20;spage=407;epage=411;aulast=Bhattacharya
	Mangla Gopal Khargami	<i>vegetable of Patur(Amaranthus tricolor)</i>		https://ijpsr.com/bft-article/pharmacognostic-evaluation-and-phytochemical-studies-on-the-roots-of-amaranthus-tricolor-linn/?view=fulltext https://ijpsr.com/bft-article/exploring-the-potential-effects-of-amaranthus-tricolor-leaves-in-dyslipidemia-and-dyslipidemia-induced-complications-in-rats/?view=fulltext
Bhapada	Ranjana pada	<i>Vegetable of Koyar</i>		
	Manisha Naitam	<i>Vegetable of Kuda (Holarrhena pubescens)</i>		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holarrhena_pubescens https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11632-010-0409-3
Yedampayali	Lata Hichami	<i>Vegetable of Bamboo(Bambusideae)</i>		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bamboo https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4389303/
	Ranu Hichami	<i>Vegetable of Ambadi (Hibiscus cannabinus L.)</i>		https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S030881461400692X http://www.irphouse.com/ijert/19/ijertv12n12_59.pdf
	Manubai Hichami	<i>Vegetable of Bamboo (Bambusoideae)</i>		https://bmcecolvol.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12862-015-0321-5 https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12864-016-2707-1
	Surekha Hichami	Vegetable of Chawali (Amaranthus viridis) math	It is made by mixing bamboo in the vegetable of Ambadi	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amaranth https://www.cabi.org/isc/dataset/4654

	Sushila bai	<i>Vegetable of Ambadi (Hibiscus cannabinus L.)</i>		http://acaciaplants.blogspot.com/2017/09/ambari-hemp-bastard-jute-bimlipatum.html https://www.phytojournal.com/archives/2019/vol8issue1/PartF/7-5-442-631.pdf
Jappi	Lalita Hichami -	<i>Koyar ki sabji</i>		
	Minabai Hichami -	<i>Kudachi Sabji</i>		
Murgaon	Shewanta Madhawi -	<i>Koyar</i>		
	Geetabai Usandi -	<i>Kude ke flowers (Holarrhena pubescence)</i>		https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7565871/ https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5628520/
Gotta	Vimal Devram Durve	<i>Mohua (Madhuca longifolia) Ladoo</i>		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madhuca_longifolia https://www.apjtm.org/article.asp?issn=1995-7645;year=2018;volume=11;issue=1;spage=9;epage=14;aulast=Jha
Edasgondi	Sugi Dhanu Usendi	<i>Koyar ki sabji Suran (Amorphophallus paeoniifolius) ki Sabji</i>		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amorphophallus_paeoniifolius https://ccari.res.in/dss/elephantfootyam.html
Ghodezarri	Manki pada	<i>Mohua ki sabji (Madhuca longifolia) and Bamboo ki sabji (Bambusoideae)</i>		https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13880200902902513 https://www.ijlpr.com/admin/php/uploads/168_pdf.pdf

Hichami, Yedampayli village, gave seeds of a new variety of beans developed by him. Its high yielding and is sown after the first rain. It is resistant to pests and takes 120 days to grow. Bhaiku Daanu Parase, Fulbodi village shared local paddy variety seeds grown on the bank of water tank in the village in rainy season. It does not require any special efforts to sow.

Shankar Manu Hichami, Jappi village, gave us a few sample seeds of black and green gram seeds apart from a local crop called *Kurta*.

Art and craft – There is a rich tradition of local arts and craft especially made by bamboo. On the first day,



Paddy seeds by Bhaiku Daanu Parase, Fulbodi village

Shodhyatris met Shilpa Shankar Gedam Mendhatola and saw a beautiful doormat made by her from old and discarded saree.



Doormat made from old and discarded saree.

Rakesh Aatala, Ushirpar, made a small and beautiful decorative house, purses, and a basket from Bamboo.



Two little girls Shruti and Rameshwari made colourful butterflies from paper

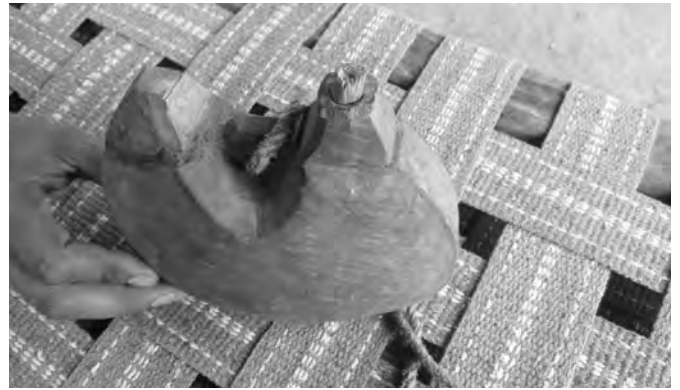


colourful butterflies by Shruti and Rameshwari

Mangu Senu Pada, 85, Ghodezarri had made a musical Instrument 'BESUN' from Bamboo and bottle guard. Mangu Senu played Besun with great enthusiasm and won the heart of all shodhyatris.

Istri Jeetu Parse, fullbodi

village made storage for tobacco



Istri Jeetu Parse, fullbodi village made storage for tobacco

Devaji Aatla of Pustola village is a farmer who has made a traditional design form bamboo to catch fish



Fish trap by Devaji Aatla of Pustola village

Mangala Sadhu Hichami, and many others in Yedampayali village make a Craft from leaves of Shindi plant.



Craft from leaves of Shindi plant by Mangala Sadhu Hichami

Dalsuk Hichami and Jugu Pushu Aatla, Bhedikanar made a small whistle of Palm fresh leaves and Mangesh Kuwashi (40), made a small box holder.



Small peepdi form Taad Plant by Dalsuk Hichami



Instrument 'BESUN' from Bamboo and bottle guard

Traditional Herbal Practices

Bubu Ram Mesoji Pada, Khuntgav prepared a herbal formulation for the Pest control in paddy crop. During our

conversation he told us about the herbal practices which he uses to prevent diseases in paddy crop. He brought us sample of Garadi (*cluster fig tree*), Neem (*Azadirachta indica*), Bhui Neem (*Andrographis paniculata*) and flowers of Aakde (*Calotropis gigantea*).

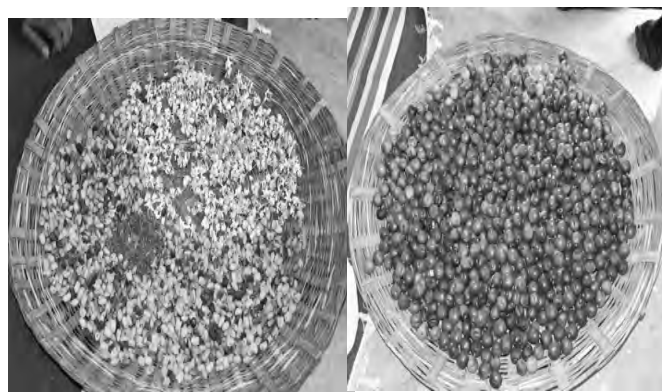
One of the practice that he told us was fermenting-

Ingredients	Amount
Finely crushed Garadi (<i>Cleistanthus collinus</i>) / cluster fig tree	5 parts
Neem (<i>Azadirachta indica</i>) fruit	0.25 part
Part of Bhui Neem (<i>Andrographis paniculata</i>)	0.1 part
Dried flowers of Aakde(<i>Calotropis gigantea</i>) flower	1 Flower
Fermenting in for 15 days.	

Then adding

Cow urine or <i>Gomutra</i>	0.5 part
Goat fecal	0.25 part
Mohua (<i>Madhuca longifolia</i>)	0.25 parts of
Nirma powder	Small amount

Spraying this on paddy crop can prevent diseases from various insects locally called as *maavatudtuda*, *berad* and *karpa* .



Babram Mesoji Pada

Babu Rao Pada was facilitated with a certificate and booklets containing prior literature on local knowledge about communities in Gadchiroli.

Sukhadev Gavde Maharaj also called as “Gavade Maharaj”, 61yrs, has been treating human diseases for the last 30 Years with his herbal formulations. He is very popular locally and people from different parts of the country visit him for the treatment. He is quite well known and even has patients in Japan.



Sukhdev Gavde Maharaj

Some of the practices that he suggested are:

Treatment for muscle cramps

Neem (<i>Azadirachta indica</i>) leaves Chrushed	1 part
Giloy(<i>Tinospora cordifolia</i>)	1 part
Jaggery	1 part
Make tablets of the mixture.	

Consuming 2 tablets per day for minimum one and a half month to 4 months along with Masaj of warm mixture of 200 mL of mustard oil (*Brassica nigra*) + 100 mL of Caster oil (*Ricinus communis*) + 50mL of sesame oil (*Sesamum indicum*).

To prevent malaria

The vegetable of Kuda flowers (*Holarrhena pubescence*) can be used, if it is eaten regularly in rainy season. It also is

used to treat acidity and fever (to be verified clinically).

Treatment of Worms in stomach for children

Take seven leaves of Aakda (*Calotropis gigantea*) on either side of hot iron plate .The hot liquid/latex that oozes out is directly applied on stomach for the treatment

At Sakheratola village we met a farmer Maruti Usendi who told about the herbal practice that he use in rice crop.

Powder of mixture Oil of Mohua (*Madhuca longifolia*) seed + Garlic (*Allium sativum*) + Onion (*Allium cepa* L) + leaves of Bailey (*Piper betle*) + bark of Mohua (*Madhuca longifolia*) when sprayed in paddy crop can control diseases in the crop.

A farmer, Sonu Patavi who also use herbal practice to trap fish out of water

Leaves of Garadi (*Cleistanthus collinus*) + juice of Mauj (*Butea monosperma*) plant can make fish numb and thus making it easy to catch them.

Rajiram pada mixed powder of bark of Garadi (*Cleistanthus collinus*) mixed with Leaves of neem (*Azadirachta indica*) boiled in water for 1.5 hours then diluted, 1:10 and sprayed on paddy crop to reduce disease attack in the crop.

Istri Jeetu Parse, fullbodi village, told that eating Stem and branches of Palm/*Taad* (*Borassus flabellifer*) tree, could be used to cure ear pain (to be clinically verified).

Parshuram Musandi Bhapda boils leaves of Garadi (*Cleistanthus collinus*) in water and sprays the extract on paddy crop to prevent diseases.

Many villagers wash old rice with salt water twice to clean infected seeds.

Shankar manu Hichami, Jappi village, uses (*Garadi ki chhaal* (*Cleistanthus collinus*) + *Neem* (*Azadirachta indica*) + 10 lit water+ cows urine, 5 lit) to spray on the paddy to prevent crop diseases.

Outstanding achievers

Shodhyatris met several outstanding achievers and also learned about such people were honoured by the communities. Raju Kargami, a talented sportswoman in Fulbodi village reached state level in wrestling. Dinesh

Hichami, was a state-level volleyball champion at Yedampayli village.

Darli Mura Gavade, a 100-year-old lady, Gotta village, surprised Shodhyatris by her agility and vigor.



Darli Mura Gavade, A 100-year-old grandmother in Gotta village

“Jay Seva” is the common term which they use to greet each other. Whenever we entered the home of any villager, we were greeted with warm hospitality.

Culture

Usually they celebrate marriage for 4 days. First day is termed as *Khodveraki*. On this day all the bride’s family members gather at her place and all the groom family member gather at his place and they sing their traditional



Mandap and Mundha

songs and celebrate. On second they construct and establish *Mundha* in the central part of Mandap. Mundha is a rectangular pillar with a height of about six feet above the ground. Its upper half portion is carved with geometrical design and in the lower portion four sides are carved with picture of Sun, Moon, guns and many other things. Also at second day bride arrives at grooms place and both the family come together and celebrate till late night. On the third day they perform *Teeka* ceremony. After this ceremony they are officially considered as husband and wife. During this whole ceremony they plant Mohua near Mandap and they worship it.

The village has a tradition that was also observed in bastar region, when a sick person dies, they cremate her body, but when a healthy person dies, they bury her body. Also after the death of any respected person of the village, they make a small structure and secure his personal belongings there as a matter of respect

Structure to secure personal belongings of dead achiever to pay community respect.

References available in web version

