



Pachim Bharath Janjatiye Khadhaya Anym

# Beej Suraksha Mela

3rd and 5th April 2015

Ratanpura, Aanandpuri, Banswara, Rajasthan

Seed the basic input, is the lifeline of agriculture. Local farming communities have preserved and reused their diverse indigenous seed varieties over generations. It is with this art of preserving and reusing all the agricultural biodiversity and our heritage maintained and developed.

Our farmers have been the conservators of our local seed varieties. The present agriculture system has led to rapid plant genetic erosion, considerably narrowed our traditional crop diversity and farmers' knowledge. The dependence on monocultures of hybrid crops and synthetic inputs has increased.

Beej Suraksha Mela is a celebration of seed diversity and culture. The main programmes are Traditional Seed diversity exhibition, Rajasthan Seed Savers meet, display and sale of books, organic products and seeds, film shows, Tribal song and dance and SeedEXCHANGE..



## COMMUNITY AND PLACE

Imagining life without seeds is practically impossible. Thus, it is very important to study and know about seeds in depth and save the seed diversity. The seed forms the basic input/ lifeline of the Agriculture. As the world progressed, population increased enormously, due to which there has been a constant pressure on developing high yielding, productive and efficient seeds. The continuous usage of such hybrid variety seeds has resulted in rapid erosion of bio-diversity of our country. Fortunately, a small fraternity of farmers have preserved and re-used their diverse indigenous seed varieties over generations. Kudos to these farming communities for having contributed in maintaining and developing our agricultural heritage and diversity. Not many of us are aware that India has one of the richest germplasm collections in the world.

The most awaited Pratham Paschim Bharat Jan Jatiya Khadya, Krishi Avam Beej Mela was organized at the bank of Anas river in Ratanpur village, Anandpuri block of Banswara district from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> April 2015 by VAAGDHARA - was a grand success! Several farmers, seed savers, grassroots organizations and activists from two states i.e., Rajasthan and Karnataka, of India showcased, for public awareness, over 280 varieties of different species of grains, pulses, tubers, vegetables, medicinal plants and uncultivated/ forest food.

The ambience of the fair was riots of colors and an enthralling display of posters was welcoming. The surrounding of the place made it more attractive; open blue skies, green surroundings and the bank of the river. On the entrance a colorful Rangoli made from the locally available seeds of pulses, grains and vegetables was displayed as a symbol of rich biodiversity of the area. Perfect for the occasion and the convivial gathering it attracted!

### Highlights of Festival

The festival was inaugurated by Mr. Mahendra Jeet Singh Malvaiya, MLA with large crowd of Tribal Farmers. The inaugural ceremony bears “**Mitti Poojan**” where soils came from different regions from Tribal Framers and helped to revive their tradition knowledge and importance of soil soverginity.

Through this, It was also followed with **Dharti Mata Katha** as words quoted by MLA, Mahendra Jeet Singh Malvaiya “**Every Human has two mothers, one who gives birth and the other who provides food and shelter i.e., Dharti maa (land/soil)**”. Dharti Mata Katha was organized to make them understand about the seed soverginity, soil soverginity and also helped to understand on nutritional crop diversity which are rarely they adopted. More than 10,000 farm families listened the Dharti Maa ki Katha and developed their interest on different nutritional diversity, food soverginity through indigenous food items. It pioneered the movement of seed saving, which began in response to the crisis of agricultural biodiversity. Through



this, they realized that conservation of agricultural biodiversity is impossible without the participation of themselves who have evolved and protected the plants and animals that form the basis of sustainable agriculture. Land is the most important element of agriculture and food production, though it needs to worship and prevent from excess usage of fertilizers and Pesticides and route towards the indigenous practices.



**Figure 1 Highlights of SHOW**

Formation of Seed Savers Forum was the highlight of this event as **Beej Swaraj Manch**. The objective of the seed Savers forum to include the farm families on larger platform to working towards seed diversity and its sovereignty. Through the first meeting, Farmers developed an understanding that Seed is the central part of the future and we need to conserve our own seeds. The elder generation of ours has the knowledge of traditional farming system and knows the advantage of

that. Every seed has pattern of growing. The use of hybrid seeds has increased as an impact of Green Revolution. After green revolution government has provided the opportunity of business to the various companies. To increase the yield in the fields, use of hybrid seeds has been promoted. Initially government has distributed the hybrid seeds and chemical fertilizers free of cost to the farmers and then gradually they have to purchase the seeds every time of sowing as the crop of these genetically modified varieties don't have seeds. If one uses the local variety of seeds, we can save the seeds for next time and can reuse it in another sowing season.

To increase the awareness of people on use of local seeds and organic farming various documentaries and movies were played during the festival, which people enjoyed with great interest. Each of the days four different documentaries were played focusing on Agriculture and Sustainable Integrated Farming System. At Night for the entertainment and learning purpose movies like *Swadesh* were also played.

## **PARTICIPATION FROM NGOS**

The various NGOs marked its presence in the alive event which was first ever going in Southern Rajasthan. Some of the NGOs and the Stalls which are enlisted below:

**Rastriya Guni Mission** from Udaipur setup the stall of Natural Herbs in which different varieties of natural herbs were presented which were cultivated through organic farming. The products prepared from the herbs were also displayed on the shop. A few of the herbs and products displayed were: Indrayad ki Jad- Stomach ache, constipations, Khata limba (jangali angoor)- for rejoining of bone, Giloye, Musli, Safed Musli, Semal ( a variety on the verge of extinction)- used to eat and cotton is also obtained from this

*Sustainable Integrated Farming System in which Amrat Jal and Das Parni (organic pesticides) and calendar containing information on how to use these pesticides were displayed. Apart from that different varieties of indigenous seeds were displayed in which Maize, wheat, Juar ,Mal, cotton, different varieties of vegetable were also displayed over 150 varieties of seed of different species were showcased in two other stall of VAAGDHARA that were collected from 756 seed savers .*

**GVNML, Lapodiya** has setup second stall of the fair, they are working on conservation of local seed since last year, the items displayed were moong ,sarsu, chana (gram), wheat, Neem ki Nibori, jwar, udad , ber ki ghutli and Hingora.

**Rajasthan Bal Kalyan Samiti ,Dungarpur** displayed the manufactured Amla products such as Amla Pickle, Amla juice, Candy (Salty and Sweet both),Amla Murabba that were produced by Vagad Producer Company under JSB brand

**Samarthak from Udaipur** is working on Laghu Van Upaj, in fair they displayed the posters and pamphlets on the products such as Jamun, Sirka and Sahad etc.

**Khadya Avam Poshan Pradarshini** of VAAGDHARA contain various raw item of nutritious food and fruits that include tubers, forest fruits, local vegetables and uncultivated food item that are rich in nutrition. For eg, Timdu (a local fruit), bathua, etc.

**Seva Mandir from Udaipur** setup the stall of Indigenous seeds, presented the various varieties of Maize and Sorghum such as Mallan Macca, Satthi Macca, Pili Gazar Macchi, Kabra Macca. Apart from this different varieties of pulses were also displayed such as Tuar daal, Udad dal, Tilli and Kulti etc.



*Many of dry edible item, like biscuits, snacks and Namkeen prepared from the maize and other items were also displayed by the participants (HOD and one of the Faculty) from the Home Science University, Maharana Pratap Krishi Vigyan Anusandhan Kendra, Udaipur. The visitors gathered there, taste it and were asking how the biscuits and snacks were prepared through the maize.*

**Sahaja Samrudha (Organic Farmer Association, Karnataka)** displayed different varieties of Millets, Mini Millets, Mal, varieties of Maize .

Apart from this another separate stall of Khakhara Tea was also installed. The tea was prepared from the flowers of Khakhara and served to all the participants and visitors and the benefits of the tea were also mentioned to them by the representative of the stall and through the

posters and pamphlet placed at the stall

### **PARTICIPATION OF GOVERNMENT**

The government participation always an encouraging part of the event. Through this event, many of the government institutions like Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Agriculture Department, and Home Science College took participate and provided different indigenous nutritive products from Indigenous food items which easily available in Tribal Farms.

**Dr. Mohan Lal Dodiya, Sajjangarh, Banswara** has setup a stall on Ayurvedic herbs. Herbs such as Handyai desi, Malhendi, Sadiyara, Pandi Kathar, Hahachar, Hojdi, Marchiya, Billi ki Saal, Tindari Handvai etc

Home science college of Udaipur and Delhi **Ms**

**Renuka Mogra and Ms Latika vyas** have participated and displayed their stall on the various nutritive products like biscuits and snacks manufactured through the maize and other products.

Krishi Vigyan Kendra displayed a few varieties of wheat and pulses.



**Figure 2 Ingenuous varieties of seed by Krishi Vigyan Kendra**



**Figure 3 The Nutrition Man**

## LEARNING AND REFLECTIONS

Over 20,000 people have visited during the three days of the fair. Through the exhibition of various varieties of seeds, nutritious food items, products prepared from them and cultivated or uncultivated varieties of locally available edible items the visitors have learned and recalled the knowledge of traditional agricultural practices and food items that are rich in nutrition. Not only this they also shared their knowledge regarding the edible items and seeds of the local varieties they are cultivating or their grandfathers used to grow.

A wide variety of indigenous seeds of paddy and millets are collected. Over 280 varieties of seeds were collected from the community itself.

Apart from this knowledge on various nutritious fruits and vegetables present (cultivated or uncultivated) has been earned, for eg. Air potato, Luni, Kandgola etc. These nutritious food items are locally available and will be very helpful in eliminating the malnutrition among the children of the community. These items can be consumed in various ways such as in raw form, by preparing curry of it or some of them can be consumed as raita or chatni.

### Some of Grassroot Voices

*खाखरा नी पाने नी सा आजे पीदी आटली गुणकारी है आ वात अमने खबर नी अती।*

*The tea prepared from the flowers of Khakhra is this much healthy, I was not aware of this.*

*अरेण्डो आटलो उपयोगी नी गुणकारी है आजे खबर पड़ी।*

*Today only I came to know about the advantages of Arendo (Air potato)*

*आ बीज तो अमारे दादा नी पुर्वज उगावता हता,अमने केता आना आनाज में घणी ताकत हैं,पर आजे आ अनाज बीज जुवा तकाद नती मलतु।*

*Our grandfather and ancestors used to cultivate these seeds. These grains contain healthy components while the seeds in today's age contain a very less health*

## Way Forward



The exhibition aimed at educating people, especially those linked with or involved in the field of agriculture, towards bigger steps of using, reusing and preserving the indigenous seed varieties. The seed exhibition in total was an educative one and managed to attract a heterogeneous crowd.

- To ensure the spread of Knowledge of traditional agriculture and of the locally available edible, nutritious items the organization will take a follow-up of this at regular required time period.
- The knowledge collected during the fare on various locally available nutritious items will be used in eliminating the malnutrition from the community. And as an followup of this nutrition camps will be organized at villafge /gram panchayat level in which the knowledge earned will be shared with the panchayat and villagers and the material prepared containing the details and the recipes and nutritious values of different edible items will be presented and shared.
- To maintain the diversity of the food items the diversity plots will be generated at the fields on pilot basis first with a few farmers.



Figure 4 Different Indigenous Varieties stall