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Atmashakti to YOU

SHARED RESOURCES, GROUND KNOWLEDGE

Seeds of Life – Reviving Hope, Resilience, and Heritage

I never fully understood the true need for seeds until I visited rural villages and witnessed the struggles of farmers firsthand in India. When I asked them why they weren't growing a second crop after the rice harvest, the answer was simple: *"No water, no seeds, no money."* Many villagers shared how hybrid seeds had failed them, producing poor yields and leaving them with little hope for recovery. Some had spent over ₹1,000 per acre on moong seeds, only to end up disappointed. When I asked them why they weren't using the residual moisture in rice fallow lands to grow lentils like moong, they revealed another harsh truth: they no longer had indigenous seeds. The traditional, self-reliant seed systems of the past had been replaced by dependency on markets.

This realization hit me hard—how had we let these invaluable practices fade away? As I traveled across rural India, the sight of lush green fields during the monsoon transforming into brown, barren lands for six months of the year was a constant reminder of the untapped potential lying dormant. It was clear: these lands, if cultivated for the entire year, could spark *"Hariyali ki Dusri Kranti"* (The Second Green Revolution). We began to dream of turning these brown lands into thriving green landscapes for all 12 months of the year, giving farmers the opportunity to stay back in their pollution-free, biodiversity-rich villages and live with dignity as proud stewards of the land.

Unlocking this potential meant rediscovering local wisdom and resilience. In Odisha, where 80% of farmland is rain-fed, we began encouraging farmers to look inward, to rediscover what their ancestors once practiced. Odisha now ranks as India's third-largest producer of mushrooms, contributing over 9% of the national yield with an annual production of 25,000 metric tons. When one farmer proudly told me, *"We used to get mushrooms from Delhi, but now we send our mushrooms back to Delhi,"* it was more than just a statement. This surge in production has transformed local economies, enabling farmers to meet their own demands and supply to metropolitan markets like Delhi. Empowering farmers to recognize their own potential—what Atmashakti means by 'power of the soul'—was the key to this change.

Today, in villages like Bhalumunda in Odisha, and across states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh, we are witnessing a quiet revolution driven by the power of seeds. Farmers, empowered with pulse and oilseed varieties suited for zero-irrigation farming, are breaking free from the cycle of dependency and transforming barren fields into thriving ecosystems. In Bhalumunda, women farmers have reclaimed fallow lands through sheer determination and community spirit. In Chhattisgarh, the Mission Brown to Green Campaign is revitalizing rice fallow lands, while in Jharkhand, farmers are discovering the life-changing potential of cultivating protein-rich pulses. These stories of resilience highlight how farmers, with the right support, can reshape their futures.

Each of these narratives showcases the transformative power of seeds—not just as tools for cultivation, but as symbols of hope, resilience, and self-reliance.We invite you to immerse in these captivating stories, celebrate the farmers who are driving this transformation, and be inspired by their journey. Together, let us sow the seeds of a sustainable and equitable agricultural future, turning dreams of **"Mission Brown to Green"** into a reality for generations to come.

Warm regards,

Ruchi Kashyap

Ruchi Kashyap

Seed is Life: Farmers' Right to Seeds

Must be Maintained and Protected

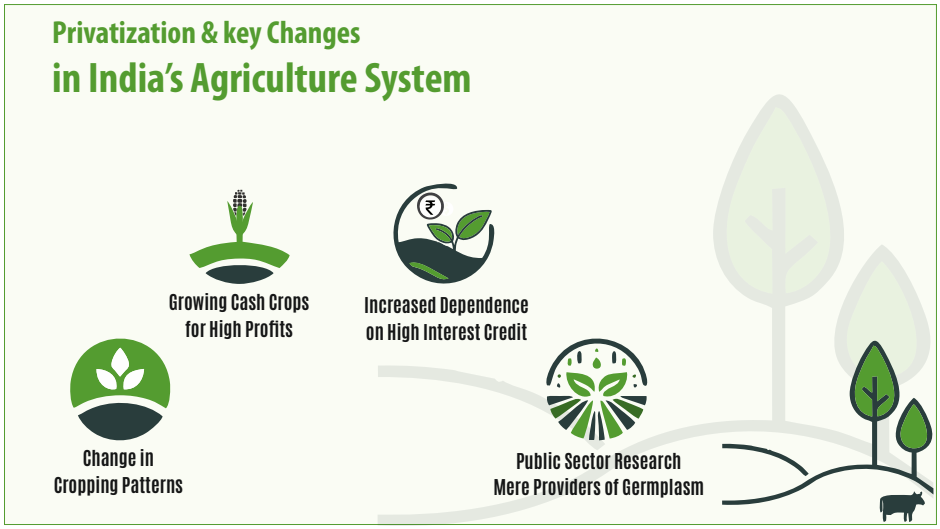
Seed has always been a common resource, a collective property. For centuries, farmers have been carefully breeding hundreds of crops and thousands of varieties within each crop to suit their ecological, nutritional, taste, medicinal, fodder, fuel and other needs.

Seed is the first link in the food chain. It is the soul of agriculture; a nation's agriculture is as strong as its seed system. Seed is both an input and an output in agriculture, a unique feature where one seed can produce hundreds of seeds, over successive seasons. They yield crops and crops yield seeds. Good seed yield good crop and good crop yield good seeds. Additionally, it has been the lifeline and source of sustenance ever since organised agriculture came into existence. Seeds also have religious and cultural significance. In most parts of India, rice is an essential component of most religious festivals.

Seed has always been a common resource, a collective property. For centuries, farmers have been carefully breeding hundreds of crops and thousands of varieties within each crop to suit their ecological, nutritional, taste, medicinal, fodder, fuel and other needs. India's small farmers continue to produce, use, reuse, save and exchange a range of traditional native varieties, perennial and sustainable seeds which self-seed indefinitely. The local seeds not only make farmers self-sufficient leading to seed sovereignty in the region but also reduce the input cost and keep farmers out of the debt trap.

With the advent of industrial agriculture and the green revolution, seeds have become the private property of a few transnational corporations (TNCs) that monopolise seeds and dominate seed sector research, breeding and marketing. In the year 2000, the top 10 seed companies controlled 40% of the world's commercial seed market. Twenty years later, just the top 2 seed companies - Bayer of Germany (which acquired Monsanto in 2018) and Cortiva of USA (formed after a merger between Dow and DuPont in 2018) - were controlling 40% in 2020.

Privatisation of seed sector has induced key changes in our agriculture system - (i) change in cropping patterns, from mixed cultivation based on internal inputs to monoculture of hybrids based on external inputs; (ii) change in the culture of agriculture - instead of growing food and maximising ecological and food security, farmers are lured to grow cash crops for high profits, without any assessment of risks, costs and vulnerability; (iii) shift from a public system approach to a private sector approach in agriculture resulting in increased dependence on high interest credit, pushing sales of hybrid seeds and agri-chemicals as a substitute for public sector seeds and agri-extension services; (iv) the public sector research establishments



became mere providers of germplasm and parental lines for further development and refinement of the private sector seeds. Seed genetic materials are made freely available to private-sector breeders. As a result, the public sector including the State Seed Corporations started supplying the private sector hybrids.

With the introduction of high-yielding and hybrid seeds, governments around the world (including India) started promoting seed replacement programmes, which meant replacing indigenous seeds owned by farmers with seeds produced by TNCs. In other words, our farmers tested, biodiverse, affordable and reliable seeds are replaced with TNCs costly, uniform, monoculture, unreliable and self-certified hybrid seeds. Inter-cropping and multi-cropping were replaced by mono-cropping. In this process, our great genetic diversity of crops are replaced and eroded by a narrow genetic range of crops. India has witnessed erosion and contamination of hundreds of indigenous cotton varieties by the introduction of genetically engineered (GM) Bt cotton. In India, failure of company seeds has become rampant, indebting large majority of farmers, forcing several thousand into committing suicide. Since 1995, more than 300,000 farmers in India have committed suicide and a large majority of them in the cotton belts. Despite wide outrage against GMOs in India, many GMO seeds and crops are at the various stages of trials. India has already introduced GM crop in the food sector, by allowing environmental release of GM mustard (the DMH 11) on 18 October 2022. Within a month, the Supreme Court of India ordered a status quo on its environmental release and on 23 July 2024, a two-judge SC bench in its split judgement asked the government of India to formulate a national policy about GM crops for research, cultivation, trade and commerce.

Agribusiness corporations increasing inroads into the seed sector instigated noticeable changes in the legal and public policy structures around seeds, initially pushed by the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) under the WTO (World Trade Organisation) and later by the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) through the UPOV (International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants). These global institutions force countries like India to reshape their national legal framework and facilitate privatisation through the grant of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) over seeds and related technologies. FTAs are not just about tariffs but they demand partner countries (as in the case of the EU-India FTA which is under negotiation) to accede to the UPOV 1991. The FTAs also impose major changes in partner countries' regulatory frameworks and force them to allow import of GM seeds and crops. India is not a UPOV member. However, if India decides to join UPOV, it could be a disaster for our seed system because UPOV severely restricts the customary rights of farmers to save, exchange and reuse farm-saved seeds. UPOV would also criminalise thousands of India's seed savers conserving agricultural diversity for our future generations.

To resist the privatisation and monopolisation of seeds and to face increasing challenges resulting from climate-induced stresses, our farmers must continue their efforts to save, exchange, sow, resow and revive traditional varieties of seeds. Community seed banks and community seed festivals need to be encouraged to conserve, preserve and promote our local varieties in order to ensure seed sovereignty and food sovereignty in our country. ■

Farming Future: Bhalumunda's Journey Towards Agricultural Sustainability

" Managing 3 acres of land has been challenging. However, after registering on the Farmer's Portal with help from Mahila Janakalyan Sangathan, my fortune changed. They assisted me in obtaining 4 kg of green gram seeds, which I planted on a half-acre land. To my amazement, I harvested 60 kg! This allowed me to save 10 kg for next year's planting and keep 10 kg for our grocery needs. "

- Papan Pradhan, Bhalumunda Village

In the heart of Odisha's Deogarh district, where forested hills guard the village of Bhalumunda, a quiet transformation is taking place. Once a village of barren fields and migratory survival, Bhalumunda is now sowing the seeds of hope, resilience, and prosperity. This revival showcases the immense potential of grassroots action and the catalytic role of seeds.

Home to 172 households, primarily Scheduled Tribes, the village depended solely on monsoon paddy cultivation, leaving fields fallow for the rest of the year. Migration became a survival strategy as farmers lacked the knowledge and resources to plant a second crop. For decades,

the land held promise, but the tools to unlock it were missing—until a woman farmer, Papan Pradhan, took the lead.

A Woman Farmer's Transformation

Papan's story is one of determination and possibility. **"*Managing 3 acres of land has always been challenging,*" she shared. She further added, "*But after registering on the Farmer's Portal with help from Mahila Janakalyan Sangathan, everything changed.*"** Papan received 4 kg of green gram seeds and planted them on half an acre. To her amazement, she harvested 60 kg of pulses. She saved 10 kg for next year's planting, kept another 10 kg for her family's grocery needs, and sold the rest to cover medical and household expenses. "*Dal is now a staple food in our meals,*" she said, a luxury that was once unaffordable.

Papan's success is not just about a good harvest—it is about empowerment, self-sufficiency, and the transformative power of seed

support. With every meal, every seed saved, and every neighbor inspired, she embodies the resilience of women farmers driving change.

The Role of Seeds and Climate Resilience

Papan's story highlights the crucial role of seed access. With minimal external inputs, green gram—well-suited to residual moisture in fallow lands—has turned a barren half-acre into a thriving source of nutrition and income. This practice aligns with climate-resilient farming, improving soil health, reducing dependence on chemical fertilizers, and fostering long-term sustainability. Yet, access to quality seeds remains a barrier for many like Papan.

Scaling Up: A Call for Collaboration

Imagine replicating Papan's success in other villages. In Odisha alone, 80% of farmland is rain-fed, and similar interventions could transform thousands of communities. The Mission Brown to Green Campaign, spanning five states, is already demonstrating how rice fallow lands can be revived. However, to scale this impact, collaboration is essential. Stakeholders, donors, and policymakers have a unique opportunity to invest in seed distribution, empower women farmers, and scale sustainable practices.

As we dream of "***Hariyali ki Dusri Kranti***" (The Second Green Revolution), stories like Papan's remind us of what is possible. Seeds are not just inputs; they are symbols of resilience, dignity, and hope. By supporting farmers, preserving indigenous practices, and unlocking the potential of fallow lands, we can transform barren fields into thriving ecosystems—enabling communities to stay in their pollution-free, biodiversity-rich villages and live with dignity. ■

UPDATE

Cultivating Change: Piloting Second-Crop Initiatives in Rice Fallow Lands

It has been an inspiring journey as we push forward with Atmashakti Trust's initiative to promote second-crop farming in rice fallow lands across seven states. This effort addresses critical needs for nutritional food security and livelihood enhancement, and the progress so far has been both encouraging and insightful.
Across Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh, our team has worked tirelessly to mobilize the support of line departments to procure seeds of pulses. In Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, collaborations with local NGOs have added strength to the initiative, enabling us to promote sustainable farming practices tailored to the regions.

In regions where seeds are procured through the line departments, *"Kisan Mitras"* engaged directly with farmers, identifying their needs and consolidating demand from panchayats. The demand, submitted to the *Gaon Sewak*, is approved by the panchayat and forwarded to the Agriculture Extension Officer.

Certified seeds from the State Seeds Development Corporation are distributed through the block Agriculture Office based on the approved demand.
For partner organizations, the approach involves sourcing seeds through vendor quotations, ensuring the best price and timely availability for farmers in their regions.
In Uttar Pradesh: 610 farmers have received Chana, Masoor, and Matar seeds at 5 kg per farmer.; Madhya Pradesh: 500 farmers received Masoor seeds at 4 kg per farmer.; Chhattisgarh: 831 farmers benefited so far; 172 farmers in Jharkhand got chana and masoor dal seeds at 5kg per farmer.

Every seed we distribute carries the potential to transform lives, ensuring food security and strengthening rural livelihoods. Real-time data collected from diverse regions on productivity, economic benefits, and adoption rates, provide evidence to advocate the value of scaling up second-crop initiatives in rice fallow land across India. ■

Mission Brown to Green:
A Case of Transformative Stakeholder Engagement

"This initiative is crucial for reviving agricultural activities in our region, and I encourage all farmers to register through the NCCF portal to access these valuable resources. In Village Boria Thakedari, 15 determined farmers are stepping up to cultivate gram in designated fields, showcasing resilience despite previous challenges. Together, they are taking decisive steps toward securing a successful harvest and revitalizing their farming livelihoods."

*- **Mr. Sameer Bisen,** Regional Extension Officer, Agriculture Department, Mohla Manpur*

In the challenging terrains of Chhattisgarh, where the rhythms of tribal life often clash with the harsh realities of unrest and poverty, a remarkable initiative is unfolding. Mission Brown to Green, launched in July 2024, is more than an agricultural revival—it's a testament to the power of collective action. By transforming barren rice fallow lands into productive fields, this campaign exemplifies how strong stakeholder engagement can reshape lives, restore ecosystems, and redefine agricultural practices.

The vision was ambitious but grounded in collaboration. Drawing from Odisha's successful rice fallow management practices, the National Consortium to Combat Malnutrition (NCCM), Chhattisgarh's Agriculture Ministry, and grassroots organizations like Atmashakti Trust united to launch this initiative. Recognizing that no single entity could tackle the challenges alone, the campaign brought together government, NGOs, research institutions, local community-based organizations, and farmers to co-create solutions. The mission was clear: convert neglected fields into thriving green landscapes, improve soil health, and enhance farmer livelihoods through sustainable pulse cultivation.

Government at the Helm: Leading the Charge

The government played a pivotal role in this transformation. It started with listening—understanding what farmers needed and acknowledging the barriers they faced. Meetings between campaign leaders and policymakers brought urgent issues to the forefront: timely seed delivery, market access, and

protection from cattle grazing. These conversations turned into action when the Seed Development Corporation stepped in, ensuring the availability of pulse seeds like green gram and mustard.

Recognizing the potential of the campaign, the central government prioritized pulse cultivation in tribal and Naxal-affected districts such as Rajnandgaon, Jashpur, Bastar, and Mohla Manpur. This policy shift infused the campaign with renewed energy, aligning resources and strategies to empower farmers. The government's support didn't just provide seeds—it legitimized the campaign, inspiring local leaders and farmers to participate actively.

Building Networks for Change

Mission Brown to Green thrives because of its collaborative approach. Networks of NGOs, grassroots organizations, and community leaders became the bridge between policy and practice. Atmashakti Trust and NCCM, drawing on their experience from Odisha, mobilized local collectives and facilitated critical dialogues between farmers and officials. Field visits and discussions with community uncovered untapped potential in rice fallow lands and highlighted the need for climate-resilient cropping practices.

The involvement of local community-based organizations ensured that the campaign was rooted in the realities of the people it aimed to serve. Farmer groups shared their lived experiences, while community leaders provided insights into traditional farming practices. This two-way flow of knowledge created solutions that were not just effective but also culturally and contextually relevant.

Farmers at the Center

For the farmers, Mission Brown to Green represented a chance to reclaim their fields and their dignity. Initially skeptical, they raised concerns about grazing threats and the viability of a second crop. Through targeted outreach, field demonstrations, and technical guidance, the campaign helped farmers see the benefits of pulse cultivation. Green gram, thriving on residual moisture, emerged as a symbol of possibility.

A farmer from Bastar shared, "We had no idea our fields could yield a second crop. Now, not only do we have more income, but we're also saving seeds for the next season. It's a cycle of hope."

A Ripple Effect of Resilience

The impact was immediate. Families who once migrated to cities during the off-season now stayed back, engaging in meaningful agricultural work. The introduction of pulses improved household nutrition, reduced input costs, and revitalized the soil. Communities began collaborating, sharing seeds and knowledge, and finding collective solutions to challenges like cattle grazing.

Beyond individual farms, the campaign created a ripple effect. Neighboring villages expressed interest in adopting similar practices, and discussions about collective market access took center stage. Farmers started envisioning a future where their produce could reach larger markets, ensuring better prices and financial stability.

A Model for Collaborative Success

Mission Brown to Green showcases the power of stakeholder engagement in driving meaningful change. By bringing together government resources, grassroots networks, research expertise, and farmer resilience, the campaign has created a replicable model for agricultural transformation. It emphasizes that when the government listens to the needs of the people and partners with local organizations, they can deliver tailored solutions with lasting impact and bridge systemic gaps.

Policymakers gained invaluable insights into the needs of tribal farmers, NGOs strengthened their advocacy, and communities reclaimed their role as custodians of the land.

A Vision for Green Landscapes

Aligned with the dream of **"Hariyali ki Dusri Kranti"** (The Second Green Revolution), Mission Brown to Green is not just about turning fields from brown to green. It's about turning challenges into opportunities, dependency into self-reliance, and policy into practice. It's a vision where stakeholders unite to transform neglected lands into thriving ecosystems, enabling farmers to stay in their biodiversity-rich villages and live with dignity.

The journey of Mission Brown to Green reminds us that when people, policies, and partnerships align, the potential for growth is limitless. Across Chhattisgarh's once-barren landscapes, a quiet revolution is taking root—and its green shoots hold the promise of a brighter, more resilient future. ■

Cultivating Sustainability:
Sonbhadra's Seeds of Change

"I used to grow only rice because seeds like chana, masoor, and matar were not available. But with support from Sonbhadra Vikas Sangathan, Now I can cultivate a variety of crops, improving both my yield and income."

- Ramsaran, Bhawar Village, Sonbhadra

In the heart of Sonbhadra, Uttar Pradesh, where five blocks—Dudhi, Chopan, Mayorpur, Kone, and Babhani—are home to marginalized tribal communities, a quiet yet powerful transformation is taking root. These communities, often overshadowed by the larger narratives of tribal-dominated states like Odisha and Chhattisgarh, face their own unique challenges. Low-yield seeds, entrenched poverty cycles, and limited access to government resources have kept these regions in a state of perpetual struggle, leaving farmers with little hope for change.

But 2024 marked the beginning of a new chapter. Driven by the efforts of the Sonbhadra Vikas Sangathan (SVS), a committed civil society organization (CSOs), the seeds of change were sown—both literally and figuratively.

A Unique Struggle

Unlike other regions where tribal voices are better represented, the tribal farmers of Sonbhadra have long been overlooked. Their lands often lie fallow after the monsoon rice harvest, as low-yield seed varieties and the high cost of quality seeds prevent them from cultivating a second crop. These cycles of underutilized land and economic stagnation exacerbate the challenges of poverty, malnutrition, and lack of education.

Advocacy in Action

Recognizing the urgency of the situation, SVS mobilized local communities, organizing meetings where tribal farmers shared their stories of struggle and aspirations for change. Through small group discussions and surveys, the organization identified 1,100 farmers ready to embrace a second crop if provided with the right resources. These efforts culminated in a comprehensive proposal advocating for free seed distribution.

Their advocacy campaign brought the issue directly to the attention of local government officials, including the District Agricultural Officer and elected representatives. By presenting the economic and social benefits of providing quality seeds, they created a compelling case for action.

A Promise Fulfilled

After months of persistent efforts, SVS achieved a significant breakthrough: the local administration committed to distributing free seeds to tribal farmers under the PM Kisan Yojna. This was not just a policy win—it was a lifeline for Sonbhadra's farmers.

The organization ensured the commitment translated into action by facilitating seed distribution workshops. Families who once struggled with subsistence farming began reporting higher yields, increased incomes, and improved access to education and healthcare.

A Vision for Tailored Solutions

The success of the Sonbhadra initiative underscores the need for context-specific solutions that address the distinct challenges of each region. It emphasizes the importance of advocacy-driven change, where CSOs act as bridges between marginalized communities and government systems.

From Regional to National

This story is more than just a local triumph—it's a blueprint for systemic transformation. By focusing on the unique struggles of tribal farmers, empowering them with resources, and amplifying their voices through strategic advocacy, the initiative demonstrates how government, civil society, and local communities can come together to create meaningful change.

In Sonbhadra, the seeds of hope have been planted—and they are already bearing fruit. ■

Natural Farming: A Path to Resilience and Sustainability in Madhya Pradesh

"Rich, natural farming practices of tribal society—developed over thousands of years—are crucial for our health and sustainability. While hybrid seeds have increased food production, they lack the vital nutrients inherent in chemical-free, indigenous practices and natural farming. It's time to revive these methods for a healthier future, and we are dedicated to leading this vital movement by implementing it through the organization."

- Mukesh Chauhan, Farmer, Kundwat, Alirajpur, MP

Nestled in the rolling hills of Jhabua and Alirajpur districts, the *Jahabhil, Bhilala, Barela, and Patalia* tribes have long cultivated their lands with a wisdom passed down through generations. Their farming methods, deeply intertwined with their cultural identity, have not only sustained their livelihoods but also preserved the delicate balance of the ecosystems they inhabit. This story is about their journey—a story of resilience, challenges, and the hope to protect what makes their practices unique.

For centuries, these communities have relied on indigenous seeds, organic fertilizers like cow dung, and crop rotation to enhance soil fertility. Their diverse cropping patterns—including pulses, oilseeds, and seasonal fruits and vegetables—have ensured food security and a nutritious diet for their families. Every harvest tells a tale of harmony with nature and respect for the land, reflecting a farming culture that is as much about sustenance as it is about tradition and identity.

The Threat of Modernization

Yet, this way of life faces mounting challenges. The encroachment of modern farming techniques, driven by hybrid seeds and chemical inputs, threatens to erode their practices. The high costs of modern farming have pushed many farmers into cycles of debt and despair, disrupting a system that once thrived on sustainability. Indigenous seeds, the backbone of their resilience, are being replaced by costly hybrids, leaving farmers dependent on external markets and vulnerable to risks.

This is not just about agriculture; it's about the erosion of biodiversity, the loss of cultural identity, and the displacement of a way of life that values the land as sacred. The broader ecosystem—one nurtured by these tribes' practices—is now at risk, underscoring the urgency of preserving their knowledge.

A Culture Woven into Farming

Despite these challenges, the tribal communities of Jhabua and Alirajpur hold fast to their cultural roots. Their festivals, celebrated with vigor, strengthen community bonds and honor their rich heritage. Their languages—*Bheeli, Bhilala, Barela*, and others—serve as repositories of agricultural knowledge, offering insights into their practices and history. These cultural traditions are as integral to their farming as the seeds they plant.

The story of these tribes highlights a critical balance between tradition and modernity, showing how preserving indigenous practices can offer a roadmap for resilience in a changing world. Their farming methods not only sustain their communities but also serve as a model for climate-resilient agriculture that the world can learn from.

A Call for Collective Action

This story is more than a celebration of the past; it is a call to action for the future. By investing in programs that support natural farming, preserving indigenous seed varieties, and protecting the cultural practices of these tribes, we can address the pressing challenges of malnutrition, food security, and sustainability.

Aligning with Atmashakti's mission, this narrative emphasizes the need for a multi-stakeholder approach—one that brings together government support, grassroots organizations, and research institutions to empower these communities. By combining traditional wisdom with modern policy frameworks, we can help these farmers not only preserve their heritage but thrive in the face of modern challenges. ■

Harvesting Hope: Empowering Tribal Farmers for Food Security in Jharkhand

"Every year, I cultivate rice during the monsoon, but after the harvest, my fields would remain barren. I didn't have irrigation or seeds for a second crop. This year, with 5 kg of free Moong seeds provided by the Agriculture Department, I harvested enough pulses to feed my family and even saved seeds for next season. It's a new beginning for us."

- Nagen Soy, Dalaikela, village, Seraikela

In the heart of Jharkhand, a transformative initiative is helping tribal farmers turn fallow lands into fields of promise. Across rural districts like Seraikela-Kharsawan and East Singhbhum, where rice monoculture has long been the dominant practice, farmers are learning to reclaim their agricultural potential by growing protein-rich pulses and oilseeds. This shift is not just about improving crop yields—it's about empowering communities, improving nutrition, and building resilience against poverty.

The Nutritional Crisis
Jharkhand faces some of the highest malnutrition rates in India. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), 45% of children under five are stunted, and 67% of women aged 15-49 are anemic. In tribal-dominated areas, these figures are even more alarming, exacerbated by low agricultural diversity and limited access to nutritious food. Farmers traditionally rely on a single rice crop during the monsoon, leaving their fields barren for the rest of the year and contributing to food insecurity.

A Community-Led Solution
Recognizing these challenges, Atmashakti Trust and its partners initiated a campaign to promote second cropping practices, focusing on pulses like Moong dal and oilseeds that thrive in rice fallow lands with minimal water. By leveraging government schemes and mobilizing grassroots collectives, the initiative has already provided access to seeds for over 400 farmers in Kuchai and Kharsawan blocks.

Building Food Security Through Nutrition and Income; Impact

Improved Nutrition: Pulses like Moong dal are rich in protein, iron, and essential nutrients. They play a crucial role in addressing anemia among women and children, as well as improving overall dietary diversity.

Additional Income: Farmers who previously relied solely on rice are now generating income from the sale of surplus pulses. This is helping families invest in education, healthcare, and better living conditions.

Resilient Agriculture: Pulses and oilseeds enrich the soil with nitrogen, improving its fertility for future crops. This reduces the reliance on chemical fertilizers and strengthens sustainable farming practices.

Key Outcomes So Far:

- 400 farmers have accessed free seeds in two districts, with an average yield increase of 30%.
- 60% of participating farmers have saved seeds for the next Rabi season, creating a self-sustaining cycle.
- 100 additional women farmers have joined local collectives to advocate for better access to resources and government schemes.

Scaling the Initiative
This model of empowering farmers through second cropping is a replicable solution for tribal communities across India. By maximizing the use of fallow lands, the initiative addresses multiple challenges: malnutrition, rural poverty, and unsustainable farming practices. Collaboration with state and central governments ensures the availability of resources like seeds and irrigation, while grassroots collectives advocate for their effective utilization.
As the campaign continues to grow, it serves as a reminder that the fight against malnutrition starts with empowering farmers. By focusing on nutrition, income, and agricultural sustainability, Jharkhand's tribal farmers are cultivating more than crops—they are cultivating hope for future generations. ■

Global Collaboration: Enhancing Indigenous Healthcare Systems

In an era where healthcare inequalities remain stark, the Towards Unity for Health (TUFH) initiative and its Communities of Practice (CoP) offers a transformative approach to improving healthcare for indigenous populations globally. With a clear focus on developing clinical guidelines and actionable recommendations, this initiative aims to ensure indigenous health receives the specialized attention it deserves within diverse health systems.

Why Global Collaboration Matters

The unique health needs of indigenous communities often stem from their geographical isolation, socio-economic barriers, and cultural specificities. Addressing these challenges requires not just localized interventions but a coordinated global effort to:

Bridge Knowledge Gaps: Indigenous health issues often remain under-researched and under represented in mainstream healthcare systems. Global collaboration allows for the collection of comprehensive data and the sharing of best practices to address these disparities effectively.

Empower Healthcare Professionals: One of the initiative's pillars is creating a course that enhances the skills of healthcare and social care professionals, especially primary healthcare workers. These professionals are often the first point of contact for indigenous communities, making their training crucial.

Influence Health Education: By encouraging institutions to adopt global competency standards, the initiative ensures that health professionals worldwide are better equipped to understand and address the unique challenges of indigenous health in both public health and primary care settings.

Linking Knowledge to Action

While gathering information is vital, the real change lies in linking this knowledge with actionable solutions and connecting with the right stakeholders:

Engaging Decision-Makers: By involving policymakers, healthcare educators, and practitioners, this initiative ensures that research and insights translate into effective programs and policies.

Reaching the Marginalized: Indigenous communities often face systemic barriers to accessing healthcare. Through targeted strategies, this collaboration aims to break down these barriers and ensure equitable healthcare access.

Creating Impactful Networks: Collaboration with global institutions, NGOs, and community organizations ensures that the findings and recommendations are amplified, creating a ripple effect in healthcare systems worldwide.

A Path to Lasting Change

The TUFH initiative is more than an academic exercise; it is a call to action. By integrating research, education, and advocacy, it builds a foundation for systemic change. Linking data collection with impactful collaborations ensures that the benefits reach those who need them most. When the right players come together with a shared vision, the promise of equitable healthcare for indigenous populations is not just a goal—it becomes a reality.

By connecting knowledge to action, the TUFH initiative paves the way for healthcare systems that are inclusive, culturally competent, and truly universal. ■

UPCOMING

The Indigenous Yatra: Reviving Wisdom, Shaping Futures

In a rapidly changing world, preserving indigenous knowledge is essential for sustainable development. Atmashakti Trust, in partnership with the National Consortium to Combat Malnutrition (NCCM) and 50 grassroots organizations, is spearheading the Indigenous Yatra, a transformative journey across 300 tribal communities in 11 states, including Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Madhya Pradesh. This initiative aims to document, protect, and promote traditional practices in agriculture, nutrition, and cultural heritage.

LAUNCH 10 DECEMBER 2024

Why it Matters

Indigenous communities, comprising 8.6% of India's population, face challenges like malnutrition, loss of traditional farming methods, and cultural disconnection. The Yatra seeks to:

- Revive indigenous agriculture by mapping traditional seed varieties and promoting organic farming.
- Address malnutrition by advocating for climate-resilient food systems.
- Celebrate tribal art and traditions, fostering pride and intergenerational knowledge transfer.

The Vision

By integrating local wisdom into development frameworks, the Yatra aims to influence policies and inspire communities to embrace their heritage while adapting to modern challenges. It will promote sustainability for over 12 million tribal households, ensuring food security and preserving biodiversity.

Join the Journey

The Indigenous Yatra calls for collaboration—financial support for community mobilization, partnerships for research and policy advocacy, and global awareness to amplify its impact. Together, we can ensure that the wisdom of India's tribal communities lays the foundation for a resilient and inclusive future. Let's walk this path together and transform collective heritage into global change.

Stay Connected for All the Latest on the Yatra!

Atmashakti Trust acknowledges the contributions of its team members from the ground who cover 'Stories of Change'. BHALUMUNDA'S JOURNEY : Gitanjali Mohanty, Deogarh, Odisha; BROWN TO GREEN CAMPAIGN: Viswash Tripathi, Raipur, Chhattisgarh; CULTIVATING SUSTAINABILITY: Dhame Dhankar, Sonbhadra, UP; NATURAL FARMING: Tushar Gohate, Bhopal, MP; HARVESTING OPPORTUNITY: Vera Kerketta, Ranchi, Jharkhand.
SEED IS LIFE: **Afsar Jafri** has been working on agricultural issues for years. He has been associated with farmers´ groups in South Asia and involved for a decade with the grassroots organisation Navdanya.

Atmashakti TRUST

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Atmashakti, *meaning* **"power of the soul,"** *reflects our belief that the strength of a community lies in its collective spirit. Registered in 1995 and actively working since 2009, we've been channeling this inner power to unite and empower marginalized communities, with a focus on reaching 10% of the rural poor, especially among Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. As a catalyst for change, we build/facilitate community's agency within these communities, enabling them to assert their rights, influence policy, and ensure their voices shape inclusive development. Through collective action and shared agency, Atmashakti transforms grassroots strength into powerful, transformative change.*

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