

GUFTAGOO



*Chalo, Sab Milkar is
Guftagoo ko Dilkash Banaye*

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मंज़िल चलने में है...
चलते रहो, यही है रास्ता, यही है सफर
रास्ता कटेगा तो बस चलते रहने से,
कदम बढ़ाओ, चलते रहो।
मौसम खराब है, हालत मुश्किल हैं,
फिर भी, चलते रहो।
धूप बरस रही है इन सूखे पेड़ पर,
अंधेरा टपक रहा है सिर के ठीक नीचे,
फिर भी, चलते रहो, बिना रुकें।
इस जंगल में सब जड़ हो चुके हैं, साहब,
सब थम गए हैं, सब ठिठक गए हैं —
लेकिन आप... आप चलते रहो।
कभी जब चलो, तो काफिला साथ हो,
मगर अब रास्ता अकेला है,
इस तन्हा राह पर भी...
बस चलते रहो।

FROM
GAZALA PAUL

Gpaul

MANAGING TRUSTEE

A MESSAGE FROM THE COO & GRANTS MANAGER

Dear Team Members,

As Chief Operating Officer (COO) and Grants & Finance Manager of Samerth Charitable Trust, it is our privilege to lead our dedicated team in delivering impactful programs and services. Our mission is to empower marginalized communities through Education, NRM, Disability and sustainable livelihoods.

At Samerth, we're committed to good governance, transparency, and accountability. We strive to ensure that our resources are utilized efficiently and effectively, maximizing our impact for the communities we serve. Our financial management practices prioritize prudent stewardship, ensuring that every rupee is leveraged to create meaningful change.



All our efforts are aligned with our vision of creating a just and equitable society where every individual has the opportunity to thrive. Our work is guided by our mission, and we're dedicated to making a lasting difference in the lives of those we serve.

We are proud of our progress and commitment to creating lasting change. Our work is made possible by the support of donors, partners, and well-wishers. Together, we're making a difference in the lives of those we serve.

COO & Grant Manager
Samerth Charitable Trust



FROM SCARCITY TO SUSTAINABILITY: COMMUNITY-LED PROGRESS IN KUTCH



At Samerth Charitable Trust, we remain committed to enabling communities to lead their own development journeys—with dignity, knowledge, and resilience. In the face of extreme climate variability and entrenched challenges, communities across Kutch continue to demonstrate that with the right support, localized solutions, and peer learning; long-lasting transformation is not only possible but inevitable.

Over the past quarter, we have had the privilege of walking alongside farmers, women, youth, and traditional knowledge holders across villages in the Rapar block. This newsletter brings to you a glimpse into the stories of change that continue to inspire our work.

COMMUNITY WATER TESTING FOR SAFE DRINKING WATER

With technical guidance from INREM Foundation, Samerth recently undertook an intensive round of water quality testing across the Gagodar and Balasar clusters. A total of 79 water samples were collected from four key sources of drinking water: community Narmada water storage tanks, wells, ponds, and bore wells.

To ensure accuracy and context-specific results, two samples were taken from each source—one directly from the source and another from a household using that source. These samples are being tested for both bacteriological and chemical contamination. Once results are analyzed, Samerth will be able to identify both safe and unsafe sources, understand the types of contaminants present, and design targeted interventions such as filtration, purification, or source protection. This is a critical step in building long-term water safety and health security in the region.



STRENGTHENING GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP: TRAINING VILLAGE LOCAL CADRES

One of our most significant efforts this quarter has been the formation of a village-based resource cadre—individuals from local communities who are being trained to serve as connectors between government systems and citizens. These cadres will gain conceptual clarity on groundwater, climate-adaptive agriculture, gender equity, animal husbandry, and importantly, their constitutional rights under the Panchayati Raj system.

In our first capacity-building sessions across Gagodar and Adesar clusters, 31 participants engaged in Panchayati Raj Training that demystified topics like panchayat functioning, budget planning, and scheme convergence. These sessions are not only building technical understanding but also restoring a sense of agency and participation in local governance.



CELEBRATING WORLD WATER DAY: CONVERSATIONS THAT SPARK CHANGE



On World Water Day, Samarth convened a participatory event in Gagodar with representation from 11 villages and 9 vaandhs. The event focused on practical themes such as rainwater harvesting, water safety, and community stewardship.

Using interactive demonstrations and group discussions, the event encouraged communities to adopt safe drinking practices like boiling water and to explore traditional and new rainwater harvesting techniques. Guest speakers from the Gujarat Water Board, INREM Foundation, and village leadership reinforced the message that water is not only a technical concern but a community responsibility.

PRESERVING TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOODS: CHARCOAL-MAKING WITH THE PARKARA KOLI COMMUNITY

In an effort to revive traditional crafts and diversify income sources, we facilitated hands-on training on sustainable charcoal production with the Parkara Koli community. Led by local expert Ratna Bhai and supported by Samarth Charitable Trust and IDRF, this initiative combined traditional kiln construction with improved techniques for wood selection, moisture control, and packaging.

This training has not only revived a near-lost skill but also provided participants with a market-ready, environment-conscious livelihood option. The work is a reminder that traditional knowledge—when valued and supported—can offer sustainable pathways to economic self-reliance.



Peer Learning in Practice: Exposure Visit on Horticulture Farming

As part of our strategy to promote diversified and climate-resilient farming, Samarth organized an exposure visit to Ramji Bhai's horticulture farm in Gagodar. Thirty-one farmers from Gagodar and Balasar clusters participated in this peer learning event, focusing on apple bor cultivation—a water-efficient fruit well-suited to the Kutch region.

Participants engaged in hands-on learning on land preparation, composting using Jeevamrut, and effective drip irrigation practices. Insights were also shared on navigating markets and understanding long-term profitability. The peer-to-peer format created a vibrant environment where farmers could share challenges, ask questions freely, and return home equipped with the confidence to begin new experiments in their own fields.

SHARING MY LIVED EXPERIENCES WITH BAIGA COMMUNITY IN CONTEXT TO MAHUA AND TRIBAL ECONOMY IN CHHATTISGARH.

Over the past two and a half years, I have been closely associated with the Baiga community, classified as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG), in the states of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. The Baiga's live in remote, forest-rich, hilly regions and remain largely disconnected from mainstream society. Deeply rooted in forest-based traditions, they rely primarily on agriculture and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) for their livelihoods.

Among other forest produces Baigas actively protect and conserve Mahua tree, both in their agricultural plots and forest areas as it holds special cultural and economic significance & also plays a vital role in their rituals and cultural ceremonies, particularly as a traditional offering to guests in the form of locally made liquor. It also serves as a symbol of promoting social capital in which relatives and colleagues' gift mahua liquor to families who have social gathering for the attendees at the event to strengthen social bonds.



BY- RITESH SHENDE
SAMERTH CHARITABLE TRUST, BODLA

In March & April they collect and store Mahua flowers and use them throughout the year based on their needs. Usually, they sell surplus Mahua to local middlemen or barter it at village shops in exchange for basic groceries. Remarkably, even in 2025, this barter system persists, with Mahua being exchanged not only for goods but also small treats like ice cream or soft drinks from traveling vendors.

However, once their stored Mahua is depleted, they often find themselves buying it back at inflated rates ranging from ₹60 to ₹70 per kilogram compared to the ₹30 to ₹40 they receive when selling it to traders. Initially, I found this dynamic puzzling. But upon closer observation and discussion with community members, I came to appreciate the resilience and originality rooted in their circular economy.

For example, from one kilogram of Mahua purchased at ₹60, a household can produce approximately four bottles of liquor. They may retain one bottles for personal use and sell the remaining three at ₹100 each, earning ₹300 in total. In this way, a ₹60 investment yields both sustenance and significant income and the process continues.

However, in recent years, climate change has significantly impacted Mahua flowering and production. The yield is no longer as consistent or abundant as in previous years, threatening the sustainability of this unique circular economy. This emerging vulnerability calls for urgent attention and action to safeguard both the ecological balance and the economic well-being of tribal communities like the Baigas.

I believe this lived example offers a powerful lens to understand indigenous circular economies. This system, though informal, illustrates a deeply rooted and functional circular economy adapted to the community's context and needs. It is a remarkable example of how traditional knowledge and local practices contribute to economic resilience among tribal groups like the Baigas in Chhattisgarh.



SAMERTH INNOVATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM:

↘ Enhancing Caregiver Well-being Through AI: CRC Ahmedabad's Study on Healo AI Therapy Tool



The Composite Regional Centre (CRC), Ahmedabad, in collaboration with Infiheal, is conducting a research study on the effectiveness of the Healo AI Therapy Tool, an AI-based mental health chatbot designed to support parents of children with special needs. This tool aims to reduce caregiver burnout and improve overall mental well-being by providing personalized, on-demand guidance. A total of 60 parents from Samarth Talim Kendra (STK) have enrolled in the study —30 parents are using the Healo AI Tool, while 30 are part of the control group not using the tool. The study runs from May to July 2025, with a dedicated WhatsApp group created for parents in the intervention group, where Infiheal team members actively support usage and engagement.

Parents using the tool have reported positive early feedback. They feel more equipped to handle their children's needs and are able to ask both personal and parenting-related questions through the chatbot, receiving immediate, thoughtful responses. This has led to better emotional regulation, improved parenting confidence, and a noticeable reduction in daily stress. The Healo AI Tool is helping parents create a more structured and supportive home environment. Usage patterns and benefits will be analyzed by Infiheal after the three-month period, and comparative results between the user and non-user groups will be shared in August 2025. This initiative marks an important step by CRC towards integrating innovative mental health solutions into family support services for children with special needs.



EMPOWERING YOUNG MINDS - SAMERTH'S COMMUNITY SUMMER CAMPS 2025

In May 2025, Samerth Charitable Trust organized Community-Based Summer Camps across eight Community Centres, engaging 340 students through creative, educational, and environmental activities. The camps focused on key themes like rainwater harvesting, environmental awareness, and the importance of books and trees. Interactive group discussions, hands-on demonstrations, poster-making, and drama sessions helped students understand sustainability and responsible living. Centres like Fatehwadi and Suez Basti used storytelling and artistic expression to convey strong messages about nature, reading, and community values.



Activities such as tree plantation at Lambha and Laxmipura taught children the ecological role of trees, while book-based sessions encouraged imagination and cultural connection. The camps successfully enhanced life skills like teamwork, creativity, and communication, and providing children with a meaningful and joyful holiday experience.

ENHANCING CLASSROOM IMPACT - TEACHERS' TRAINING ON CREATIVE PEDAGOGY & MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES



Samerth Charitable Trust's Urban Program successfully conducted two Teachers' Training sessions at A-One School, Navrang School and Brighton School, focusing on Creative Pedagogy and Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. A Thematic Expert designed the content and presentations to ensure relevance and practical application in classrooms. Alongside theoretical insights, two experienced Core Team members led hands-on sessions using Math Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs), providing teachers with strategies to enhance subject-specific instruction, address diverse student needs and implementing creative pedagogy in the classroom.

A total of 35 teachers participated and shared highly positive feedback, appreciating the training's clarity and practical relevance. The sessions deepened their understanding of differentiated instruction and inclusive classroom practices. Teachers highlighted the immediate usability of strategies learned, especially in applying multiple intelligence theory. The integration of pedagogy with real classroom tools strengthened teaching methods and boosted confidence in day-to-day teaching.

Additionally, training on Art and Craft was also conducted for 12 teachers at Gul International School, focusing on creating decorative token of appreciation for students and guest, classroom decoration during festivals, and integrating these activities into the curriculum.

SUCCESS STORY: *From Hesitation to Confidence - The Transformational Journey of Dayama Ifra*

Dayama Ifra Imtiaz Bhai, now 8 years old and studying in Grade 3 at Pranam Primary School, faced major challenges when she first came to the Shastrinagar Community Center in Balwadi. With no prior exposure to anganwadi or early learning activities, and coming from a less-educated family, Ifra was unfamiliar with a classroom environment. She would cry often, was reluctant to join group activities, and showed signs of low confidence and fear of interaction, leaving her far behind in both academic and social skills.

Recognizing her struggles, educator at the center provided her with a safe, nurturing space. They patiently engaged her using Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) like the Moi box for counting and the variable alphabet box for language. Initially seated close to the educator for comfort, she was gently encouraged to participate. Gradually, Ifra began learning, engaging with peers, and taking part in activities. She developed language skills through storytelling, sentence writing, and songs, while also mastering basic math using hands-on tools.

Over time, Ifra transformed into a confident, eager learner. She started taking initiative, helping others, answering questions, and even demonstrating leadership. Her parents observed a remarkable improvement, noting that her strong foundation at the center enabled her to smoothly transition into school. She earned A grades in Grades 1 and 2 and is currently in Grade 3. Ifra's story is a testament to the impact of early, inclusive, and supportive education in changing the trajectory of a child's life.



*By Mrs. Hava Dayama, Parent of
Sankalit Nagar Community Centre*



FROM DISTANCE TO DETERMINATION: BRINGING MAHUATOLA'S CHILDREN BACK TO SCHOOL



In the scenic village of Sivnikala, nestled amidst the Maikal mountain range and located 35 kilometres from Bodla block in Kabirdham district, both a primary and a secondary school operate for the children of the village. The primary school of Sivnikala has 76 enrolled students, supported by Two dedicated teachers. The village is divided into four distinct neighbourhoods, with most children coming from Chhote Para and Bade Para. However, these two neighbourhoods also face the challenge of high irregularity and dropouts among children.

Two kilometres away from the primary school lies a small hamlet known as Mahuatola, which houses just three families. Among them are two children, Deepak and Chhabibal, who had not attended school for the past four months.

In August 2024, the Samerth team observed a significant decline in school attendance and took the initiative to understand the reasons behind it. They discovered that the children's homes were far from the school, their parents were impoverished and dependent on forest resources, and the parents themselves were illiterate. Furthermore, there was no local system in place to monitor the children's education

To address this issue, the Samerth team, in collaboration with the school teachers, decided to convene a School Management Committee (SMC) meeting on August, 2024. During the meeting, irregular attendance and dropouts were discussed in detail, and responsibilities were assigned to committee members to take proactive steps.

Subsequently, an education awareness meeting was also organized in Mahuatola. During the meeting, residents of the hamlet were sensitized about the importance of education, the benefits of sending children to school, and the various facilities provided in schools. Parents were informed about why education is crucial for their children's future and how schools create a supportive and joyful learning environment.

The Samerth team also highlighted the availability of a Learning Resource Centre (LRC) in the school supported by AIF, where children engage in activity-based learning. They shared how an engaging and enjoyable atmosphere is created through drawing, singing, and dancing activities. After understanding these points, the parents of Deepak and Chhabibal decided to send their children to school regularly.

Since then, both Deepak and Chhabibal have been actively participating in the daily activities of the school and LRC. They are now involved in educational as well as co-curricular activities, such as singing, dancing, and drawing.

This success story is a testament to the efforts of the Samerth team, who worked tirelessly to address the challenges faced by irregular children and reintegrate them into the education system.



समर्थ चैरिटेबल ट्रस्ट ने HIMWSP 2.0 के साथ कन्वर्जेंस मीटिंग का आयोजन किया।



HIMWSP 2.0 कार्यक्रम के अंतर्गत कबीरधाम जिले में समर्थ चैरिटेबल ट्रस्ट द्वारा जिला पंचायत सभागार में एक महत्वपूर्ण कन्वर्जेंस मीटिंग का आयोजन किया गया। इस बैठक की अध्यक्षता जिला पंचायत के CEO श्री अजय कुमार त्रिपाठी ने की, जिसमें MGNREGA, कृषि, उद्यानिकी, मत्स्यपालन, पशुपालन, SRLM, CREDA, वन विभाग समेत सभी प्रमुख विभागों के अधिकारी व कर्मचारी शामिल हुए। समर्थ टीम द्वारा HIMWSP फेज 1 की उपलब्धियों और फेज 2.0 के उद्देश्यों को साझा किया गया। बैठक में विभिन्न विभागों से सहयोग करते हुए साझा कार्ययोजना बनाने, जल संरचनाओं का निर्माण, योजनाओं के प्रभावी क्रियान्वयन और महिलाओं की आयवृद्धि जैसे मुद्दों पर व्यापक चर्चा हुई।

इस बैठक में समर्थ ने सभी विभागों के बीच समन्वय को सशक्त करने में अहम भूमिका निभाई। विभागीय अधिकारियों ने समर्थ की क्षेत्रीय उपस्थिति और कार्यों की सराहना करते हुए योजनाओं में मिलकर काम करने की प्रतिबद्धता जताई। कृषि, पशुपालन, उद्यानिकी, मत्स्य व CREDA विभागों ने अपनी योजनाओं की जानकारी दी और HIMWSP से जोड़ने की मंशा जाहिर की। अंत में CEO श्री त्रिपाठी ने सभी विभागों को मिलकर कार्य करने का निर्देश दिया एवं MGNREGA शाखा को निर्देशित किया कि वे समर्थ टीम के साथ प्राथमिकता से DPR तैयार करें और मासिक जिला व ब्लॉक स्तरीय बैठकों में समर्थ को शामिल कर योजनाओं के बेहतर क्रियान्वयन को सुनिश्चित करें।

ट्रेन के कूपे में मेरे सहयात्री थे — शिवरीनारायण के एक संयुक्त परिवार की कुछ महिलाएं और बच्चे। समय बिताने के लिए वे ट्रेन में 'चिड़िया उड़' खेल रहे थे। खेल के दौरान जैसे ही बच्चों की माँ ने कहा "गिद्ध उड़", बच्चे अपनी उंगली ऊपर नहीं ले जा पाए। वे बोले, "ये कौन-सा जानवर है?"

यह सुनकर उनकी नानी समझाने लगीं, "रामायण में जटायू जो रावण से लड़ पड़ा था, सीता को बचाने के लिए — वे गिद्धों के पूर्वज थे।"

इतना सुनते ही उनमें से लगभग आठ साल की एक बच्ची बोल पड़ी, "हाँ, मुझे याद है। वह ऐसे उड़ता था।" कहते हुए उसने अपने दोनों हाथ फैला दिए, जैसे कोई बड़ा पक्षी पंख फैलाकर उड़ रहा हो। मैं सोच में पड़ गया। वाकई अब ऐसा समय आ गया है कि गिद्धों को देखे हुए वर्षों बीत चुके हैं। हमारी नई पीढ़ियाँ बिना गिद्धों को आकाश में देखे ही बड़ी हो रही हैं।

पिछले 20 से 25 वर्षों में भारत में गिद्धों की संख्या में भारी गिरावट आई है। इसका मुख्य कारण है डाइक्लोफेनाक नामक दर्द निवारक दवा, जिसका उपयोग 1980 से 2000 तक बड़े पैमाने पर दुधारू पशुओं के इलाज में किया गया। यह दवा भले ही पशुओं को दर्द से राहत देती थी, लेकिन इसका एक बड़ा हिस्सा उनके शरीर में जमा रह जाता था। जब ये पशु मरते, तो गिद्ध बड़ी संख्या में उनके शवों को खाते थे। परंतु मृत पशुओं के मांस के साथ डाइक्लोफेनाक गिद्धों के शरीर में पहुँचकर विशेष रूप से उनकी किडनी को नुकसान पहुँचाता था, जिससे उनकी मृत्यु होने लगी। एक समय था जब भारत में लगभग पाँच करोड़ गिद्ध खुले आसमान में विचरण करते थे। लेकिन अब ये लगभग विलुप्ति की कगार पर पहुँच चुके हैं।

वैज्ञानिकों, पर्यावरणविदों और सरकार के प्रतिनिधियों के बीच व्यापक विचार-विमर्श के बाद वर्ष 2006 में "एक्शन प्लान फॉर वल्चर प्रोटेक्शन" अस्तित्व में आया और इसके तहत गिद्धों के लिए घातक मानी जाने वाली डाइक्लोफेनाक दवा पर प्रतिबंध लगाया गया। इस कदम के बाद गिद्धों की संख्या में कुछ वृद्धि अवश्य दर्ज की गई पर सीमित क्षेत्रों में ही। कभी भारत में नौ प्रजातियों के गिद्ध पाए जाते थे, लेकिन अब यह संख्या घटकर सात रह गई है।

अमेरिकन इकोनॉमिक एसोसिएशन के जर्नल में प्रकाशित रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, भारत में गिद्धों की अनुपस्थिति के कारण पिछले पाँच वर्षों में लगभग एक लाख लोगों की असमय मृत्यु हुई है। यह आँकड़ा दर्शाता है कि गिद्धों की भूमिका केवल "साफ़-सफ़ाई" तक सीमित नहीं, बल्कि वे एक प्रभावी जैविक सुरक्षा तंत्र (biological safety mechanism) के रूप में कार्य करते हैं। गिद्धों की घटती संख्या का एक और अप्रत्यक्ष प्रभाव यह हुआ है कि भारत में आवारा देसी कुत्तों की संख्या में उल्लेखनीय वृद्धि देखी गई है। कितना अच्छा होगा अगर गिद्ध फिर से पहले की तरह हमारे आकाश में मंडराते दिखें। तब शायद अगली पीढ़ी के बच्चे 'चिड़िया उड़... गिद्ध उड़' खेलते समय ठिठक कर यह न पूछें कि "गिद्ध क्या होता है?" बल्कि वे उत्साह से अपनी उंगलियाँ आकाश की ओर उठाएँ, यह जानते हुए कि गिद्ध सच में होते हैं — और वे ऊपर उड़ रहे हैं।

