

Shri Sunit Dhanaji Bonde

Recipient of Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Application of Science and Technology for Rural Development-1987

Shri Sunit Bonde was born in 1942 in a family devoted to social uplift. His father, Shri Dhanaji Bonde, is a freedom fighter, educationist and social worker and has also worked for the uplift of the tribals through Sarvodaya schemes. After graduating in Agricultural Science, Sunitbhai worked at the Agricultural Institute at Kosbad for over 5 years and gained experience in research, training and extension. He then joined the Satpuda Vikas Mandal at Pal in Jalgaon district and has been doing tribal development work with great devotion for the past 17 years.

He conducts a wide variety of activities, which include:

1. Ashram Schools and Post Basic Ashram Schools for the tribal children ; 2. Agricultural training for the tribal youth and adult farmers both male and female; 3. Community nurseries of Horticulture and social forestry; 4. Seed production farms of food crops, fibre, oil seed crops, etc.5. Research-cum-demonstration farms; 6. Dairy development programmes through cattle improvement and milk collection; 7. Health services through medical centres . 8. Promoting village industries 9. Krishi Vigyan Kendra for transferring new technique to farming community, farm women, rural youths; 10. Development of infrastructure facility in tribal villages; 11. Organising fishermen's co-operative society.

Development of tribals through application of science and technology : Shri Bonde has been working for the tribals known as Tadvi Bhils and Pawara. Their main occupation is agriculture and animal rearing. However, due to ignorance and poverty, they followed primitive methods of cultivation, used local seed but no fertilizers with the result that their yields were very low. They grew only one crop, jowar/bajra, during the year and were without work for about 8 months of the year. Shri Bonde introduced hybrid seeds and carried out practical training in cultivation of hybrid crops at the Institute's demonstration farm. He started service centres to supply the inputs required for cultivation of hybrid jowar and made credit available through co-operatives. This has resulted in two-fold increase in jowar crop.

The most significant contribution of Shri Bonde is the introduction of multicropping pattern among the tribals. For this, he took up the programme of sinking small irrigation wells fitted with electric pumps. He also carried out training in multicropping for the tribals which are now growing several crops like jowar, wheat, vegetables, cotton and sunflower. This has given the tribals year-round self-employment, increases their purchasing power and improved their diet, clothing, housing, health and education.

Bonde is giving training in new technology and skills through in Krishi Vigyan Kendra. Since these are the first generation of multicroppers, he takes great pains to make it a success. He has organized credit for securing inputs like seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. He also organized marketing of the produce through co-operatives.

Dairy development through cattle improvement and milk collection : The Satpuda hills are full of a fodder bush, viz. Anjan: leaves of this bush are a rich source of proteins. Shri Bonde considered it to be rich natural source for developing dairy industry. He, therefore, took up cattle improvement through artificial insemination by setting centres for crossing local cows with exotic breeds.

Another significant contribution of Shri Bonde to the tribals is the establishment of milk co-operatives. He motivates the tribals to upgrade their cows which improved the milk yield significantly. This milk is now being collected and sent to the dairy at Jalgaon.

Introduction of new crops in the region : Shri Bonde took up the programme of seed production of hybrid cotton and also demonstrated the cultivation of hybrid cotton like H4. This created great impact on the tribals who have now taken to hybrid cotton cultivation.

Oilseeds : The tribals were growing low-yielding oil seeds like sesame. But Sunilbhai introduced cultivation of sunflower, groundnut and safflower. He established Oileed Growers' Co-operative Society for supply of oil and agricultural inputs and for better prices to oilseed crops for the producer.

Fruit crops : Tribals were seldom growing any fruit crops, hence lacked in protective foods like vitamins and minerals. Therefore, Shri Bonde introduced bananas and papayas on a large scale, providing cash income to the tribals besides improving their diet. He also introduced perennial fruit crops like mangoes, guava, chikoo and coconuts, starting a fruit nursery for the purpose. He developed agronomic practices for chikoo and coconut cultivation and after years of experimentation he demonstrated that they can be successfully grown in the Satpuda hills. The hills have large number of mango trees, but they did not fetch good price in the market. Therefore, Bonde devised low cost technology approach, namely side-grafting and stone-grafting. He trained tribal youths in these grafting methods. He supplied budstumps of improved mango varieties to them. The trained youths have applied these grafting methods transforming the local mangoes into improved varieties.

Village Industries : Bonde has been training tribals in various village industries like brick-making, lime making, spinning and weaving, oil pressing etc.

Building leadership among the tribals : Shri Bonde has been conducting Ashram Schools for building leadership among the tribals. They are residential Schools and tribal children are first generation learners. Besides their class-room studies, the children are given work experience in projects like vegetable growing, gardening, nursery, poultry keeping calf rearing, etc.

Health and medical centre : Here the tribals receive treatment for their ailments and diseases. The centre also undertakes vaccination programme and runs naturopathy section.

In addition to all these activities, Sunilbhai is associated with an educational society, a leprosy service centre and a co-operative sugar factory.

He received the Indian Merchants' Chamber Award for contribution to Rural Development and the Satpuda Vikas Mandal was given an award by Peoples' Action for Development (Maharashtra) for outstanding work of Rural Development.

