

“Vriksha Rakshabandhan” Shri Mahadeo Mahto



Innovation Brief : Sri Mahadeo Mahto, 63, has innovated a unique way of organizing a Vriksha Raksha Bandhan Fair (Tying sacred threads to trees for their protection) to protect trees and conserve forests. The group formed by him, Vanya Prani Suraksh Samiti is now running this campaign in 10 different venues. As estimated, he has succeeded to protect 500 acre of land area till now.

Innovation Details: Sri Mahadeo Mahto, is a retired teacher. He worked with the government middle school at Dharpur village of Hazaribag district.

Every year, Sri Mahto organizes a Vriksha Raksha Bandhan Fair. People who tie threads then undertake an oath to protect trees. This fair is repeated every year and people's participation is maintained. Sri Mahto got this idea after an incident when a group of wild elephants came in to Berho forest. Many people including Sri Mahto visited to watch them closely when

Name :

Mahadeo Mahto

Address:

Village Berho, Bishnugarh,
Hazaribag, Jharkhand

Contact No: 09973813959



suddenly the elephant attacked them. He got away safely from the forest but he learnt a lesson which took shape of an idea i.e to conserve and protect forest. He thought that animals attack humans as there is an intervention in their natural habitat. Hence, to protect their natural habitat. ie forest and popularize the concept he thought of tying sacred threads to trees for their protection.

Sri Mahto was worried more about local

community involvement rather than government people and outside technology.

Sri Mahto with his colleague's cooperation established Vanya Prani Surksha Samiti after 1988 and continuous process involving padyatra, vichar gosthi (meeting), cycle rally, school level meeting were initiated. Many villages and volunteers have joined this group in this campaign. During 1994 this group organized the ceremony of forest protection and decided to undertake an area which requires protection. Villagers could easily maintain the sanctity of their oaths and commitment. A demarcation line was fixed at Dudhmatiya near Tatijharia where deforestation was increasing at an alarming rate. The first Vriksha Raksha Bandhan was arranged on 7th October, 1995.

The program for Vriksha Raksha Bandhan under Vanya Prani Suraksh Samiti is a full day programme. Local people and various school going children participate in this programme along with their teachers.

Stalls and exhibitions of different environment related issues are arranged by various departments of government and nongovernmental agencies. In the last five years there has been also been some involvement of Department of Forest and Environment.

The Raksha bandhan of trees is carried out by following certain guidelines like:

A. Awareness-The area selected for the Raksha bandhan will show a willingness to protect forest resources through forest protection related meeting, door to door meeting, padyatras, wall writings, dance and songs followed by street play and drama. Work is also conducted to protect surrounding forest around the Raksha bandhan forest.

B. Formation of committee-After public awareness campaign it is necessary that the committee works and struggles for the campaign. Every head man of the concerned village will be effective member of this committee. Women's participation and local forest department involvement is ensured in the committee. This committee works regularly for forest protection and conservation. A meeting of the committee is conducted once a month to discuss successes and shortcomings.

C. Selection of Forest-A forest that is close to the village is selected as the forest is highly damaged to meet the daily requirements of the villagers. If there is no forest nearby, then the participants select a forest at some distance. The selection for raksha bandhan area will be decided as per availability of coverage because these trees after offering prayer and tying red string on it will

never be cut. They will be protected and further, and as per belief, any damage to these trees will harm the women, children and old persons. In this way growth of wild life and its relationship with near by forest will be improved.

D. Survey of selected forest-After selection of maximum number of local people, lists of vegetations and wildlife creatures will be prepared. An evaluation of different kinds of species and their status will be done accordingly. This will be helpful to replicate the impacts of community efforts after 5-10 years in that area.

For the Rakshabandhan-A date is selected as per convenience of all the participants. Keeping in view aspects such as climate, agricultural engagement etc, a date is fixed for the whole life. Every year on the same date Raksha Bandhan will be observed as an annual festival.

Tying string and offering prayer materials-Red colored cotton cloths are used as tying string of 4-5 cm length or as per necessity. During the program offering prayer to trees is main activity as per Hindu and Muslim religion. During the prayer, people thank trees for providing oxygen and cool temperature. Later at the end of prayer they take an oath to save the trees. Apart from this any family may also make special arrangement for occasions such as marriages and birth in their family.

Preparations for the Vriksha Raksha bandhan start a week prior to the decided day. Everyday activities like wall writing, street play, meetings etc are organized by the committee. Children are especially trained for these activities.

Sri Mahto was part of the 27th Shodhyatra. Inspired by the Shodhyatra, he and his group arranged a 120 km walk in 2015 for forest protection from Vanlotwa forest of Ormanji block to Umedanga of Budmu of Ranchi district. Through resource support by forest department almost 1 lakh people participated or were involved in some or the other way in the Vriksh Rakshabandhan Campaign by SriMahto.

The Vanya Prani Suraksh Samiti is now running this campaign in 10 different venues. As an estimate more than 500 acre of land area was protected as follows-Sri Mahto belonged to a poor family but completed his matriculation and joined for teachers training course. After graduation, he completed his LLB degree from Rajendra Law College, Hazaribag.

After deciding on the idea of Vriksha Rakshabandhan, he studied a lot of holy and religious books so that he can succeed in this idea. He was always in touch with local community and family people for consultation/advices and organizing the program.

During initial days of campaign he spent lot of money from his salary. Later contribution from villagers helped him in the campaign. Now, department of forest & environment, local banks, companies and NGOs are supporting him in cash and kind.

The group is now running this campaign in 10 different areas. As an estimate more than 500 acre of land area was protected. (Appendix 1 -Table of these details).

Complied by: Social Upliftment Trust, Ranchi, Jharkhand

Sr. No.	Name of Places	Area of land being protected
1.	Simarkundi, Koderma	70 acre
2.	Kandaber, Barkagaon	30 acre
3.	Dudhmatiya, Bishnugarh	30 acre
4.	Bhelwara	79 acre
5.	Kharna	100 acre
6.	Baudha	15 acre
7.	Berho	15 acre
8.	Murki	12 acre
9.	Holang	15 acre
10.	Surajkund, Barkatha	7 acre