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My father pursued the concept of a new training based on Gandhian philosophy, his study, and later in his life he happened to work in such organizations. He studied in Lokbharati Sanosara which emphasised training based on national education / gramachmukh folk philosophy and there after he worked for its sister organizations and lastly retired as a professor in the teaching school of Lok Bharati. He did the work of sowing seeds of Gandhian philosophy and simplicity amongst us.

Our study from Kindergarten till Post graduation happened in the institute based on new training. After completing college and B.D in Lok Bharati, got a chance to work with Shri Mahendra Bhai Bhatt and Bharti Ben Bhatt who were thought leaders in Gandhian philosophy.

In a small town of Bharuch named as Mangrol, he served as a teaching coordinator in Sarvagin Grameen Vikas Mandal for two years. To develop the skill sets of young children in co-curricular activities and help them gain value based teaching, he started intermediary schools named Gunjtaghar and worked with young children and women who served as care takers in crèche for two years. Post that, he worked with an institute named Marg in Chotila town of Surendranagar district for two years. He formed unions for women belonging to Maldhari Community and helped them from the snooping of money lenders by teaching them various practices of savings and finances. Since then in 2000, he joined the Environmental Education Center, Talaja, shortly thereafter, he worked at the Environmental Education Center, Jasdán. Jasdán area is the

most backward taluka of Rajkot district. This semi-inferior region was filled with ignorance and poverty. Where to start work in socially, educative and economically backward taluka like this was worrying him. After introspecting for quite some time, he decided to start with the union of women to enlighten their gloomy life.

When we started our work there was a feeling of disappointment from all directions. There was lack of education in this area, how could one talk about women education? Low land space and that too non-fertile, malnourished animals, less rainfall, agricultural activities were carried out using poisonous chemicals, less water for drinking and irrigation and there was no other source of livelihood. Farmers as well as animal rearers were under tremendous debt pressure from money lenders, so I decided for organizing a union for women in such a situation, teaching them saving and using the organization's platform for providing quality life to the people. Though we started the work but creating a union was an extremely difficult task. Women were not ready to be a part of the union, there was no money for

saving, men used to stop women from attending the meeting, then how to initiate talking about asking them to participate in workshops and tours. But I kept the struggle going. I requested women multiple times to come and attend the meetings after which finally they did, to ensure that the poorest of the poor could save money, we started saving schemes in the denomination of 5 and 10 rupees a month, we explained the importance of strength and savings to women. As a result, women started coming to the bank, talking to the manager, started keeping accounts, more women participated and joined the union, started thinking about saving for their children's education, understood the importance of changing the ongoing traditional approach in agriculture, tours and workshops were conducted, the reflection of outer world's light fell on them, and the importance of growth was realized by not only women but also men of that place. The journey started with union reached 60. The savings started in the denomination of rupees 5 reached rupees 500 and a journey started with the count of 10 - 15 women reached thousands. After receiving the money

from money lender, the women standing at the edge of destruction came out of it through this union and became stable financially. They started helping others financially and the society which at once used to reach out to money lenders for taking money started taking loans from the union itself and led a life of self respect.

But our work was not just limited to creating the union. We wanted to provide a platform for growth and opportunities to these women and help them grow. Gradually as women had money in their hands they started thinking of a better and sustainable life. Women gradually wanted to explore more avenues to improvise the live stock, agriculture and business opportunity from forest products to lead a sustainable life. Work started on a concept named Gram Vidhi in which people started talking about eco enterprises, improvising productivity, getting money at lower interest rates, credit rates and markets were talked about, live agriculture and pure breeding were discussed, the natural processes to be kept intact were discussed and stable economy were discussed.

By selling the produced goods to cities, the economy of villages was to be made stable. This as well was discussed. At the first the women from union got together and started preparing a list of goods that could be sold to the cities. For this the skillset required in maintaining the accounts and platform needed for growth were discussed. Raised the dairyreservoir in 200, raised the Ghee Consolidation Unit, and initiated the new work. In the villages ghee was sold for rupees 140 per kg and it was sold at rupees 250 per kg and this is how they started new business in the cities. The process of ghee accumulation to selling ghee to the cities was handled by women. It was made sure that the ghee that was gathered was only from local cows. This had a positive impact. The price of Gir cows started rising, the price of ghee in the nearby villages and in the entire region increased. The women who joined the union were the beneficiaries but even the women and families who were not a part benefitted tremendously. The local breed were promoted, the cows that were once sold at 3000 now were not available even at 50000, and the roots

of this lay in the Panchal region. Post this, almost all the villagers started rearing high breed cows and buffalos not only for taking care of living expenses but also it was a major stream of business. Every village started creating milk production unions and collaborated with District cooperative unit and the women of these union started doing business of milk. The value for money increased by producing sani from sesame seeds, chikki from peanuts, and started business by selling butter milk, butter and local medicines. A journey started by selling one to two products reached hundred. Black soil, fire- ash, indian ber, scrub from sponge guard, seeds produced from agriculture, pulses, vegetables, hair oil, face pack, varieties of squash and crushed powders, cream, jaggery, rose water, Gulkand, chyawanprash, amla candy, sweets, milk mawa, and others were added to the list of products sold by these women and their business crossed boundaries of not only their locality, village or region but even the state. May it be Delhi's pragati medan or Chamba of Himachal Pradesh, women ruled their businesses all by themselves.

Whatever income they earned, they provided a good life to their families with this incomes. They are very much grateful to Srishti for the tremendous support that they received from it. There were many varieties in the village but the only concern was where to sell this in the city and who would provide space for it. In challenges like these Srishti organization stood beside these women. For a journey more than 12 years, to increase the confidence of these women, and providing them support in all possible forms, Srishti organization played a vital role. The women of Jasdan invented a new product named Findela Sarbat. The sarbat is made from the fruit of Hathadiya shrub and if these women would not have received Srishti's help the entire production would have died in its nascent stage. Today, this sarbat is sold across the country. Srishti helped in getting the stall at a reasonable price, provided accommodation, showed concern about whether the product was being sold or not, helped in promoting its sales, also explained the product to the consumers, also taught the farmers. This help is provided by Srishti from more than a decade and

a half which has helped my work a lot. If Srishti would not have helped then the women would not have been so enlightened and my work would have faced many challenges. Today the women of Jasdan have started doing live stock agriculture, caring for water, land and animals, respecting their culture heritage, appreciated the different varieties and transformed from labour to business, the region has got new identity, me and my work has got

acknowledgement, all because of the help provided by Srishti organization. Prof. Anil Gupta, Ramesh bhai Patel, Alka ben and the team of Sristi as well as CEE's director, Karthik Sarabhai, Atul Pandya, Ramesh Savaliya, Suman Rathod and CEE's entire team's support and guidance have proved to be of great help. I am also grateful to the people of Jasdan for their love and support.