

Nature never has more than what it needs

Anil Gupta

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Ahmedabad: It is obvious that if India has to become a knowledge society, it cannot do so without involvement of mass of the people, who hail from informal sector, who live in villages and slums as a part of the society.

Let me go to my next encounter with Karimbhai in Virampur village of North Gujarat. It will tell us more about the kind of relationship, which have nurtured Honey Bee Network and Sristi and in some sense has also guided me personally. So, we went to the village in 1994-95 along with Jayantibhai Patel, who was a producer in ISRO.

Karimbhai was a potter and a healer too. While making earthen potter for earning livelihood, he used to provide healthcare services to the villagers and the tribes living at Jessore in Balaram sanctuary area. It was a sloth bear Sanctuary and this village was located on the outskirts of the sanctuary. When we were on the way, Jayantibhai took a twig of a plant growing on the road side, the so-called weed, and asked Karimbhai to hold it for a photograph. However, Karimbhai got upset. On asking why he was upset, he said, did we really need this twig? I said, "Yes, for a photograph as Jantibhai thought that it would be a nice snap if you could pose with a branch in your hand." In reply, he said that in that case, you should have asked me to sit near the plant and hold it in my hand. It would have been the same pose or even a better one.

Like a fool, I made a remark saying, "There are so many of these plants on the roadside, how does it matter? It is only one small branch." On hearing this, he was disturbed and replied, "What did you say? So many of them? Nature never has anything more than what it needs." Till that day, whenever I was sitting in a lawn or standing near a scrub or a fencing of plants, I used to pluck a few leaves and crush them in my hands, just to keep my hands busy. After the said incident, it has now become impossible for me. Every time I touch a blade of grass or a leave of a scrub, I find Karimbhai standing before me asking "Do you really need it?" This prevents me from crushing the leaves in my hands. A learnt behaviour of almost 35 - 40 years vanished in a moment and I knew inside the heart that we are not supposed to take anything from the nature unless it is most necessary.