

# Creative individuals and perceptive institutions



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**A** farmer who breeds new varieties of chillies in which pods don't droop down but face upwards, develops mangoes grafts that taste and yield well despite little irrigation, uses biogas to run cattle milking machine and designs motorised weeders, sprayers etc., should be a familiar name in the country. But he is not.

And that underlines that huge task still lying ahead of Honey Bee Network despite more than two decades of not much effective lobbying and pleadings on behalf of unsung heroes of our society. I met Ramesh, a maverick farmer innovator from Tarulwada, 25 km away from Vizag, Andhra Pradesh.

Deeply in debt but still runs a free homeopathic dispensary

every weekend for animals and humans. What

is remarkable is that many of the patients who recovered have been volunteering at his clinic. Founder of Navyug Engineering Company (NEC), sent many years ago his son to fetch seeds of a chilli variety developed in 1987.

When told that he was an engineer and ran a company, Ramesh refused to give seeds. These were meant only for farmers. When NEC founder sent him again mentioning about his farm, Ramesh relented. But then his destiny was to change.

The family of the industrialist offered him land near Vizag and support for experimentation with no question asked. By 1990, Ramesh moved from Guntur to Vizag. I wish every corporate leader would provide such support to at least five to ten innovators in their chosen areas of work. We would not need to worry about the indifferent government agencies then.

While breeding varieties for wilt and curl resistance in Chilli, he grows specific plants which are preferred hosts for these diseases. If the newly bred varieties remain resistant despite disease load created by growing such hosts, then selection of desirable plants leads to a resistant variety.

The chillies don't droop down and the ratio of leaves to pods has been reduced. With dark colour and low pungency, these varieties are in great demand. He has also developed yellow coloured chillies. Similarly, he has developed about ten varieties of mangoes. He

has 30 cu meters fixed dome biogas plant which he also uses to run generator and cattle milking machine.

He has designed several innovative farm machineries. And as if that is not enough, he has also established a lab at his farm to grow microbial agents for controlling diseases and pests by isolating such cultures from diseased insects selected from his farm. All this with just eighth class education. His curiosity, willingness to experiment and explore, and persistence with his ideas invariably make him a role model.



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His wife Laxmi makes delicious pickles with the chilli and mango varieties bred by him. Her only lament was that she did not care if he did not eat his food on time, but why should he not let volunteers at his clinic at least eat food on time. His children extend helping hand when they are not studying. His dream is to share the fruits of his labour with farmers all over the country so that they are also encouraged to innovate to solve their problems in a sustainable manner. I hope that readers will come forward to help such farmer innovators and help them set up a distributed network of decentralized laboratories for developing green solutions for common good.

## MINDS ON THE MARGIN