

Bhasha Annual Report 2000-2001

Bhasha Research & Publication Trust is a voluntary organisation (NO E/4969/Vadodara, Date of Registrarion: April 1996) engaged in the area of tribal studies and development. Bhasha, in the title stands for 'voice' of the indigenous and marginalized communities. Since its establishment in 1996, the Bhasha Centre has been involved in the documentation and dissertation of tribal languages and literature, conservation and promotion of tribal arts, education, research and training, socio-economic empowerment and healthcare. The work of Bhasha Centre is concerned mostly in a completely tribal village named Tejgadh in chhotaudepur taluka, which seeks its place 90 kms, away from vadodara. This is entirely a tribal area that falls in the eastern belt of Gujarat, and western belt of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra . Between January and December 2000, Bhasha was actively engaged in organising various activities in the above mentioned areas. Brief details about these activities are stated below.

1. Tribal Academy at Tejgadh

A Post Graduate Diploma in Tribal Studies: Bhasha Centre has established a Tribal Academy at Tejgadh, a tribal village 90 kms east of Vadodara. The Academy started a two year Post Graduate Diploma in Tribal Studies from 15th August 2000. Sixteen tribal graduates from various fields are its registered students. Technical skills like computers are also being taught here. Apart from the formal class room teaching, a lot of field work is given to the students is an autonomous institution established by Bhasha Centre which seeks to combine the tribal life with knowledge. It is a unique place of learning and critical inquiry related to tribal communities of India, their history, culture, metaphysics, arts, languages, medicine, economy, development and traditions.

Construction of the Tribal Training Academy:

Bhasha Centre has a 10 acre land given by the Government where it is constructing its Academy. The Architectural plans are designed by the internationally known architect Mr. Karan Grover. The construction plans are approved by the district collector and the construction work has already begun. We already have constructed a check dam adjacent to the land of the Academy to provide as a water resource in and around the village of Tejgadh and also maintain the level of water table of the land.

Computer Training Centre:

With the help of Tribal Sub-Plan Chhotaudepur we started a Computer Training Programme for the school and college students from nearby villages. We began with the Basic course that included Ms-Dos, Word star, Windows and Ms-Office. 120 students completed the Basic Course in computer education and were given certificates after conducting an examination. We have now started the Advanced Course in Computers. The Academy also includes computer training

Archery Competition

On 5th February 2000 Bhasha organised the Archery Competition between the tribals and the Police Department (Rural) at Tejgadh. 120 tribals and 25 Police officers participated in this competition. The winners were awarded the Eklavya Trophy instituted by the Rural Police Department and Medals of excellence. Certificates were given all the participants. The dignitaries present on the occasion were Shri K. L. N Rao, DSP, Dahod, Shri Arun Sutaria (IAS), Dr. K. K. Chakravarthy (Former Director, IGRMS-Bhopal), and Shri K. P. Rao (M.D., Trifed).

1. Micro Credit Scheme:

As part of poverty alleviation programme, Bhasha has established a micro-credit network in the Chhotaudepur, Kawat, Pavi-Jetpur talukas of Vadodara district. Initially the debtor had to pay the local *shroff* or the money lender a very high rate of interest for borrowing money. The interest rates in this area are as high as 120%. But today, these debtors are being rescued from the vicious cycle of ancestral indebtedness through the micro credit scheme. 1200 families from the above mentioned areas are covered under this scheme. Initially with nominal but regular savings, 100 Self Help Groups were formed. These groups are holding their accounts in the State Bank of India, Tejgadh Branch. The accounts are operated by the members independently. Their savings have reached to 10.5 lacs within 16 months. The process of internal lending had already begun. This scheme now includes 124 villages. More of such groups are being formed. The students of the Tribal Academy travel from village to village to form such groups.

2. Micro Enterprise

With the help of the Census reports of 1991 available at the Tribal development office of government of India, Bhasha started a Poverty Alleviation Programme for the people living below the poverty line. Its first meeting was held in Tejgadh on 19th August 2000. Today 19 groups are formed which include artists and farmers. Each group has started saving regularly. They have also started with horticulture along with their regular cultivation of crops. The marketing of these products to the Vadodara yields an extra source of income for the people living below poverty line. More of such groups are in the process of being formed.

3. Prakriti: Health Care

A Seminar on Sickle cell Anemia was conducted on 9th September 2000. Dr. Kenneth Bridges from Boston U.S.A who has established a hospital for sickle cell patients was invited for the programme. Dr. Kate had especially come from Pune as an expert hematologist and other local doctors who have spent their lives in the study of sickle cell anemia were present for the seminar. This seminar was

followed by the blood testing camp in Malaja village of the Chhotaudepur taluka. The results of this camp were astonishing. It was found that from a random sample test conducted on 200 people, 50 were carriers of sickle cell anemia and 6 were diagnosed as having the sickle cell disease. Due to the high incidence of sickle cell anemia and other multiple health problems found amongst the people in the tribal regions of Baroda district 'Prakriti: Health Centre' unit was formed which is now in the process of being registered as a separate Trust. Second blood testing camp was held at Vijol taluka, Chhotaudepur, on 15th October 2000.

4. Publication

'Bhasha Publications for Social Change' is involved in the documentation & dissertation of tribal literature. Dhol, a magazine published in as many as eight tribal languages and two languages for the main stream readers. Dhol, founded in 1997, as a platform for voicing of the perception and concerns of the tribal thinkers and activities. The unique feature of this magazine is the exclusive use of the dialectics as they are actually spoken.

During this year the following issues of our biannual publication Dhol were released in the following tribal languages:

1. Ahirani	February 2000
2. Pawri	February 2000
3. Rathwi	February 2000
4. Panchmahali	April 2000
5. Kukna	April 2000
6. Marathi	May 2000
7. Bhantu	September 2000
8. Chaudhari	September 2000
Gor Banjara	October 2000

Other Publications:

Aadim Taal na Sangeet (poems) by Sudhir Deore in the Ahirani Language spoken by the tribals in Maharashtra was published in the year 2000.

Meetings for Dhol

An annual meeting for 'Dhol' was held at Tejgadh on 15th June 2000. This was a review meeting wherein all the editors of Dhol had come together to discuss:

- # The Polices to disseminate Dhol on a wider scale,
- # Increase the number of tribal languages in which it is published,
- # To view Dhol as a language movement policy

Bhasha Centre released one of its biannual publication Dhol in Chudhari language spoken by the tribals from Surat district. This release function was held at Bardoli, Surat district on 9th October 2000. Another such meeting was held on 4th November 2000 for planning the educational Dhol for the teachers of Gujarat. This work has been delegated to Bhasha by the GCERT.

5. The Artists Cooperative Society:

Bhasha is in process of forming a Cooperative Society for the tribal artists of the Vadodara district. The registration is proposed under the name Vadodara Jilla Adivasi Hastkala Utpadak Sahakari Mandali.

- a) Exhibition at the Faculty of Fine Arts, M. S. University of Baroda was held from 25th to 27th September 2000.
- b) All the small scale art industries together organize an exhibition 'Utsav'. This was held on the 7th and 8th of September 2000.
- c) Artists from this Cooperative were invited to take part in the exhibition organised by Trifed, Delhi. The platform was shared by Bhasha and Trifed. This was held from 12th to the 21st October 2000.
- d) Our artists also participated in the exhibition organised by the Dastakari Haat Samiti in Delhi from 16th to 25th of November 2000.

7. Crafts Training Programme

Two Craft programmes are being run at present especially for women with the help of *Gujarati*. 25 women are being trained under each programme at village Malaja (beadwork) and village Haridaspur (patchwork). The duration of these training programmes is six months. The trainees are trained in their own villages and paid a sum of Rs. 500/- per month for the raw material. The art material produced during the training will be marketed by *Gujarati* and the Bhasha Centre.

8. International Conference

Bhasha in collaboration with Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal organised an international Conference on 'Tribal Cultures and Societies' in Bhopal and Tejgadh from 4th to 8th October 2000. The seminar brought together scholars and activists from India and abroad. The seminar focused on:

* Social movements and legal and policy measures that need to be taken in the field of tribal development.

* To establish a network of international scholars who are actively involved in the movement of tribal development.

9. Bhasha Manthan

Bhasha held a seminar on linguistics named as *Bhasha Manthan* from 14th October to 16th October 2000. This was its first session. We aim to continue this for three consecutive years. Eminent linguist Professor Lachman Khubchandani from Pune and Dr. B.N. Saraswati from Indira Gandhi *National Centre for the Arts* were the special invitees for this dialogue. Students from the SNDT Mumbai also attended this seminar. Fifteen linguists from all over the country participated in this seminar.

10. Workshop with the CEPT students Ahmedabad

A Tribal Day at NID-Ahmedabad, was held in collaboration with Trifed at Ahmedabad. This included a slide show, discussions, screening of the film *Hazaar Chaurasi ki Maa* and an exhibition of tribal arts and craft.

The event titled Tribals: *An Inward Eye* was well attended by the students, scholars and tribals from Gujarat. The lectures were delivered by Shri K.P. Rao, Dr. Meena Radhakrishna, Dr. Ajay Dandekar, and Dr. K. K. Chakravarty.

11. Work with Denotified and Nomadic Tribes:

As a result of the continuous dialogue of the Denotified and Nomadic Rights Action Group with the National Human Rights Commission, Honorable Justice J.S. Verma, Chair person of NHRC, convened a meeting of Chief Secretaries of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Rajasthan and the representatives of DNT-RAG. The most significant decision taken was to repeal the Habitual Offender's Act. DNT RAG today is recognized by the NHRC – India. DNT-RAG has forwarded several atrocity cases to the NHRC and helped the victims to get compensations.

Secondly, in order to enliven and sustain the cultural practises of the denotified and the nomadic tribes of Gujarat the DNT-RAG holds a cultural Convention every year at Kaleshwari Naal in Panchmahals. This year it was held in collaboration with Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal. Artists, acrobats, performers, belonging to various communities from all over Gujarat participated in this event.

12. Check Dam

The year 2000 was a year of drought all over the nation. Thus Bhasha analysing the gravity of the situation constructed a check dam in Tejgadh village of Chhotaudepur taluka. This will definitely prove as water resource management for the villagers and also retain the original water bed level of the nearby land.

13. Plantation Project

Bhasha with the help of Trifed has taken up a plantation programme in rural areas. Bhasha has undertaken the plantation project in the premises of the Tribal Academy at Tejgadh and in the nearby villages. On the land of the Academy, various trees are planted in a systematic pattern. Each tree is given a name of either a languages and or a community. This aims at formation of a museum of languages and communities wherein the various languages spoken all over the world and the names of the communities will be recorded.

This will help to stop soil erosion and the produce of these trees will provides as an extra source of income to the villagers.

14. Annual General Meeting

In the month of May Bhasha had called for its Board of Trustees Meeting and similarly on 26 August 2000 for the Board of Advisors, wherein some of its important issues were tackled.

Visitors at Bhasha Centre during the year 2000

1. Smt. Mahasweta Devi
2. Shri Bhalchandra Nemade
3. Shri Ramakanth Rath
4. Shri B.N. Saraswati
5. Shri Satchidanandan
6. Prof. Khubchandani
7. Dr. Kenneth Bridges
8. Smt. Neeta Mathur
9. Mr. Rudolf Heredia
10. Dr. Ajay Dandekar
11. Dr. Henry Sehwarz
12. Ms. Anandita Mukhopadhyay
13. Prof. Shereen Ratnagar
14. Smt. Vidya Apte
15. Dr. Barbara Lotz
16. Smt. Dilnawaz Mahanti
17. Mr. Alan Sussman
18. Deepra Dandekar
19. Ms. Kelly
20. Ms. Amy Schuster
21. Ms. Shashwati Talukda, US
22. Mr. Dan Rycroft, US
23. Smt. Sonal Mansingh
24. Mr. A.K. Pathak
25. Mr. K.P. Rao
26. Mr. Arun Sutaria
27. Shri T.L. Chauhan
28. Shri Anil Mukim
29. Shri Sangita Mahendra
30. Shri Anosh Malekar
31. Mr. Alain Dussort
32. Ms. Claudia Luizza
33. Dr. Mallika Sarabhai
34. Ms. Lucie Williamson, BBC
35. Shri Tathagat Bhattacharya
36. Mr. Adarch Hathi
37. Shri N. V. Waghmare
38. Smt. Vilasini Ramchandran
39. Shri K.L.N Rao
40. Dr. K.K. Chakravarty
41. Smt. D. Thara
42. Dr. Meena Radhakrishna
43. Mr. D' Sou