

# Bhasha Annual Report for 2005-06

## Ten Years of Bhasha (1996-2006) by G N Devy, Founder Trustee

Why did Bhasha think of taking up any work at all with the adivasis? Was it a romantic fascination for the unknown and the inscrutable? Was it an ideologically charged move into the social sector? Was it a purely academic project of intellectual adventure? Or was it a turning away from the tired urban social-scape?

In 1996, the few individuals that formed Bhasha at that time went to Saputara looking for tribal stories. Then some adivasis came forward to share their songs and stories based in their profound memory. They then wanted to try their hand at the print medium. Now they write books, publish them through Bhasha, edit magazines, write plays, direct and perform them, organise adivasi literary meets. Their voice has now become a powerful movement. Our time together has been but a decade, but their waiting in the past had been long. They decided to speak. Bhasha facilitated this adivasi voice.

Though everyday of the last ten years has been a new learning experience, the days have not been all joy and excitement. When one works with the adivasis one just cannot escape the pain and misery surrounding their existence. There is, for instance, the incurable genetic mutation causing the sickle cell anaemia, the land alienation due to the stringent Forest Act, the forced migration to the construction labour market since employment opportunities as well as agricultural irrigation are not sufficiently available; and, of all, the plight of the nomads mistakenly branded as criminals, a moving story of a grave social injustice.

Had Bhasha not turned its attention to these issues we would have suffered from a sense of ethical inadequacy. A purely academic study of an adivasi language or a merely aesthetic appreciation of the adivasi art may have been attempted in the past; but in our time, if these interests do not go firmly together with the concern for the economic empowerment and the human rights protection, the project ought to be seen as a deeply flawed one. Bhasha naturally decided to weld together the aesthetic and the socio-economic concerns. That may be seen in the long term as Bhasha's positive contribution by the rest of the world. The adivasis themselves have come to realise the need for a comprehensive approach to their life and future, and have come to recognize Bhasha as their friend.

The trust that the adivasis have put in Bhasha is phenomenal. The Gram Vikas Kendras in eighteen locations are now working with nearly five hundred villages, bringing to them micro-credit self help groups, food grain banks, water harvesting cooperatives, non-formal schools, craft training and healthcare, and enabling them to fight for their rights. All this work is managed by the adivasi men and women trained at the Adivasi Academy of Tejgadh. They know that development does not mean becoming clones of the urban population. They have decided to become self-reliant. In their hearts, the days of subsidy and of a mere subsistent agricultural economy are over. The pride in their own ability to handle their developmental concerns that the adivasis working with the Gram Vikas Kendras have is the kind of new energy that will inspire them to create new ideas and imaginative expression. Real life concerns cross over into aesthetics in Bhasha, as in all significant aesthetic experiments.

Within months of commencing the work on the 50 volumes series of *Literature in Tribal Languages* (18 of which are published by now), many adivasi writers and scholars approached Bhasha with the idea of starting a magazine in their own language, aimed at the adivasi communities and to be read out rather than for individual reading. Bhasha accepted the idea. The magazine was called 'Dhol' (the drum), a term that has a totemic cultural significance for the adivasis. We started using the state scripts combined with a moderate use of diacritic marks to represent these languages. The response to the magazine was tremendous. More adivasis approached Bhasha, and asked for versions of *Dhol* in their own languages. In two years time *Dhol* started appearing in ten adivasi languages of western India. When the first issue of *Dhol* in the Chaudhary language was released, it sold 700 copies on the first day. This was a record of sorts for a little magazine. Inspired by the success of the oral magazine, our adivasi collaborators started bringing to Bhasha, manuscripts of their autobiographies, poems, essays and even anthropological studies of their communities which they wanted us to publish. Subsequently, in order to highlight the oral nature of adivasi culture, we launched a weekly radio magazine which was relayed throughout the adivasi areas of Gujarat and Maharashtra. All these initiatives together gave birth to a small but focused publishing and book distribution house, which now works under the name 'Bhasha Publication for Social Transformation', and which is the first community owned publishing programme for adivasis and nomadic communities of India. It is not so much a commercial venture as a cultural and literary platform for intellectual concerns and a forum for expression in people's own languages.

Oral literature, unlike written literature, is not an exclusive art. It is inevitably intermixed with song, music, dance, ritual and craft. So, Bhasha was drawn to the craft of the adivasi communities, initially in western India, and subsequently to craft from all over India. This resulted in Bhasha's craft collection and craft training initiatives, further leading to the formation of an adivasi craft-cooperative under the name 'Tribals First'. The objects one identifies as craft are not produced in adivasi communities for aesthetic pleasure alone. They are invariably an integral part of their daily life. Often, such objects carry with them an imprint of the supernatural as conceived in the myth and the imagination of the adivasis. The shapes, colours and the forms of these objects reflect the transactions in the adivasi's collective unconscious. One often overlooks the fact that the metaphysical matrix of the adivasi thought process differs markedly from the philosophic assumptions of the dominant cultural traditions in India. Therefore, sometimes simple concepts and ideas, which look perfectly natural and secular, can provoke adivasis into reacting negatively, and even violently. Any intervention in an adivasi community is likely to have a better chance of making a lasting impact if it is preceded by a sympathetic understanding, if not a careful study, of the interior landscape of the adivasi mind. The rituals, arts and craft of the adivasis reflect the complexities of their cultural norms and thought patterns as nothing else does.

One learnt the hard way that there is a common source for the dominance of the red colour in adivasi arts, and their utter unwillingness to donate blood even when a kinsman is in dire need of blood, namely, the supernatural belief that the domain of witchcraft is red in colour. This incidental insight came handy when we found ourselves involved in a hematological disaster called the Sickle Cell Anemia. Reports from the Amarvati District of Maharashtra, inhabited by the Korku adivasis, about a large number of untimely deaths of children, and similar reports from Wynad in the south, had drawn our attention to the sickle cell phenomenon.

Medical sciences maintain that a certain genetic mutation required in order to fight malarial fevers has made the adivasis prone to the sickle cell disease. On learning about the Korku trauma, we decided to check the statistics of the sickle cell anemia in our own area. Blood testing of the adivasis is a challenging task. So we decided to draw up mathematical models, and at the same time composed an extensive family-tree through a survey that took us over two years to complete, to isolate certain localities, villages and families who could provide clues for coming up with the most reliable projections. We found that nearly 34 percent of Gujarat's adivasis have been carriers of the gene disorder, and about three and a half percent of the population is its direct victim. This means, about two hundred and ten thousand of Gujarat's seven million adivasis are likely to not attain the age of thirty. What is even more saddening is that the available healthcare system has not been sensitive to the epidemic scale of the gene disorder; and in most instances it remains inaccessible. This revelation was shocking to say the least. As a result, Bhasha decided to launch its healthcare programme under the title 'Prakriti'. Obviously, we did not wish to create a large hospital but rather a small and functional clinic and to train local persons as community health workers so that the patients in the crisis situation could be identified and provided with immediate relief locally, and be referred to city clinics for long term treatment.

Thus, beginning with aesthetics, we came up to anesthetics. Specific diseases may have universal scientific definitions, but the general notion of 'illness' as distinct from 'well-being' does not have a universal grammar. In a given community the illness and wellness are divided by an invisible line; and introduction of new medicine keeps pushing the line, enlarging the domain of anesthetics, that is, the management of pain, and encroaching upon the domain of aesthetics, which is, the management of pleasure. This, in turn increases the desire for instant curbing of pain, and at the same time, the longing for an instant gratification of the senses. The distribution of pain and pleasure on the cultural spectrum is in direct correspondence with the distribution between craft and product on the economic spectrum a given community. Often, shortages caused by the larger economic forces push a social sector from its subsistence-farming character into becoming impoverished labour providers. The acute food shortages faced by the adivasis in Kalahandi and Koraput in Orissa, and the mass migration of the adivasis to the mining districts, are not exceptional stories. Though their main occupation is agriculture, adivasis have been under-nourished throughout India, and sadly enough starvation death is no news for them.

Bhasha decided to set up food-grain banks for adivasi women to address the issue of food security. Initially, we had decided to follow the government model of food grain banks; but we realized that they had come to be seen by adivasi villagers as charity distribution events, and so we chose to set up the grain-banks without any government contribution and entirely through local participation. We feel convinced that no effort towards reducing the sickle cell incidence was likely to succeed if it was seen in isolation from the question of forced migration and food-insecurity. Food-security and healthcare form for us a single concern.

Soon after the Bhasha Trust was established, it decided to institute an annual lecture series named after the legendary Dr. Verrier Elwin, a long time friend of India's adivasis. For the 1998 Elwin Lecture, we chose the theme of Denotified and Nomadic Tribals. There are in India about 191 communities that were once wrongly notified as 'criminal tribes' owing to the colonial government's lack of understanding of nomadic ways of life. They were restricted by law to specific localities, prevented from making movements, put to unpaid labour and stigmatized beyond redemption. After their 'denotification' in 1952, these communities, now known as the DNTs, continued to suffer the stigma, social isolation and

an acute economic disadvantage. Utterly dispossessed, these landless, illiterate and hounded people have been unsuccessfully trying to shake off their identities. Their estimated population is about sixty million.

Moved by the Elwin Lecture delivered by the eminent activist Mahasveta Devi, we decided to establish the DNT-Rights Action Group. It was the first national campaign ever taken up for the cause of the DNT rights. In this campaign we moved the National Human Rights Commission and various ministries of the Central Government to abolish the Habitual Offenders Act, to provide a rights protection mechanism for the DNTs. Bhasha's energetic campaign for the DNT rights has received an overwhelming response from the denotified communities. We had opened up a long festering wound. As a leading campaigner Bhasha had to give a very serious thought to turning the anger and frustration among the demonized, brutalized and politically vandalized DNTs into a constructive energy. In order to contain the anger, we decided to use the most ancient method of getting people angry without making them destructive, which is 'theatre'. Our experience of handling the violence within the minds of these communities has left us firmly convinced that theatre is probably the most powerful cultural means of sensitizing communities about the mutual entanglement and dependence of economic, social and cultural rights of several competing and clashing social sectors. Bhasha has now its own theatre group under the name *Budhan Theatre*, named after Budhan, a DNT killed while in police custody. Apart from Budhan Theatre, we have so far successfully established four annual cultural festivals in as many locations of Gujarat, one of which is Dandi –the place made sacred by Gandhi's salt-satyagraha. Adivasi and nomadic performers go to these four locations on their own and people from several states participate in thousands. These *melas* are now there to stay.

Ever since the adivasis were brought under the provisions of the Colonial Forest Department, their access to forest produce has been continuously diminishing. They face loss of their agricultural land due to the conflict of notions about land records between them and the administration. At the same time, most adivasis have to depend merely on rain-fed cropping. These historical legacies have forced them into a chronic indebtedness. At the same time, rising costs of seeds, fertilizers, fodder and electricity, as well as the costs for educating children and getting the occasional healthcare, have multiplied the cash needs of the adivasis. Unlike the caste Indians who first earn and then spend, the adivasis, by and large, like to first spend and then earn just enough to meet those expenses. As such, their need for short term borrowing has increased over the years. However, the repayment of loans is very rarely defaulted, even when no written contracts are signed. In fact, these needs and habits should have been seen as a great opportunity by the formal banking sector, which is barely in existence in the remote and inaccessible adivasi villages. The credit delivery is not only pathetically poor but even almost non-existent, and it invariably takes a third party intervention to make the system work. For a majority of the adivasis, institutional banking requiring written records at every stage is a completely alien notion. On the other hand, the procedures of a private money lender are easily comprehended by the adivasis even when the interest rates are exorbitant .

When we noticed that the interest rates ranged between 60 to 120 per cent, we felt that we needed to intervene. That is why we took up the task of forming Micro-credit Self-Help-Groups. Our challenges were far too many : getting the adivasis to understand and recognize the formal bank institution as an economic person was a challenge of some magnitude; but even greater was the task of educating the bank employees on their own schemes, the micro-credit policies of NABARD and the economic concerns of an NGO such as Bhasha But

the most tricky question was the peculiar social character of the private money lender. For one thing, in the adivasi areas, these are extremely influential, and, they maintain extremely complicated and not easily terminable accounts with the adivasi clients, in a system that treats cash, land, grains and labour as inter-convertible currencies. Not surprisingly, therefore, the money-lenders teamed up against Bhasha's SHGs as soon as the adivasi farmers stopped going to them. I felt quite amazed when some of the SHG members started bringing in currency notes all new and serially numbered to pay off the bank loans they had received barely a month ago. On enquiring, we found that the money lenders had been distributing these notes liberally to whoever was prepared to step out of the SHG.

The unease of the money lenders continued to increase as Bhasha's Micro-finance programme cut into the private credit market. There were moments when we felt that we should get into a dialogue in order to circumvent the conflict and to introduce an ethical element in their operations. But we had a naïve hope that the formal banking system may quickly step in and grab the opportunity. The money lenders continued to feel threatened and destroyed. Their fury expressed itself in March 2002, when the Hindu money lenders bribed, coaxed and threatened a pliable section of the adivasis into making violent attacks on the families and properties of the Muslim money lenders. Several hundred houses were burnt down, hundreds were injured, many lost their lives, and the livelihoods of thousands of adivasis and Muslims were adversely affected. At the height of the riots we felt that perhaps the money lenders may succeed in restoring once again their stranglehold on the adivasi economy. But, we found that more adivasis started forming SHGs after the riots. Since then, for our general SHG meetings, the number of adivasis wanting to participate has kept multiplying.

Bhasha has been providing training for the management of the groups, directing them to establishing viable occupations for getting increased income, and enabling them to form a federation of the SHGs. The new occupational avenues we have opened before the adivasis include honey cultivation, specialized gum-tree plantation, brick-making and masonry, craft training, and organic cropping. In the matter of the choosing a micro-enterprise activity, the minimum guiding principle we have followed is that a new income generating activity should not lead to the adivasi's migration to the urban centres, where neither the urban infrastructure has space for the adivasi poor, nor does the caste-bound society has the social respect for the adivasis. Therefore, we have been focusing more on the para-agricultural or value-added agricultural activities.

Over these years, we have noticed a great hunger for learning among the adivasis. Contrary to popular impression, the adivasis do want to send their children to schools. Their aspirations are belied because the primary education in the adivasi villages is burdened with its own numerous structural problems. We have noticed that given a set of dedicated teachers even in the tiniest adivasi hamlets, children shape up as potentially excellent university entrants. Therefore, at Bhasha we decided to take up a programme of helping adivasi children by establishing in about eighty villages, support schools to help those who have missed the bus altogether or those who lagged behind in their school studies. The results have been excellent. When one sees the children in these non-formal learning centres playing, singing, painting and reading, one's faith in the future of the adivasis is strengthened, or as Wordsworth said, "My heart leaps up when I behold a rainbow in the sky."

Bhasha Trust established the Adivasi Academy at Tejgadh in 1999. From 2000, we have been teaching the young men and women of the area, a subject that we have named 'Tribal Studies', by which we mean "The study and understanding of how the adivasis perceive the

world.” The attempt is to make our students reflect on their own situation, motivate them and to put them onto the great task of empowering the adivasi villages by helping them to be self-reliant. The Academy offers short term training in micro-finance, and diploma courses in Tribal Rights, Food-Security and Development, Publication and Rural Journalism, in Tribal Arts and Museum Studies, Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry, Community Healthcare and NGO Administration. As a rule, we do not hold examinations. The students are required to go out in the villages and set up SHGs, food-grain banks, water banks and promote the use of solar energy and organic farming. Based on their experience of field work, the students are required to write dissertations.

The Adivasi Academy is not a place for any cutting-edge theoretical knowledge. It is meant for forging out strategies for improving the lives and the economic condition of the adivasis, for building durable and sustainable assets for the community, for bringing respect to their cultural heritage and to provide a forum and a space for defending adivasi rights and voicing their concerns in an idiom of their own.

The Academy is today managed mostly by adivasis. It has its own library and a “Museum of Voice”. Often, Bhasha is asked if a Museum of Voice had to be made the centre-piece of the Academy, and, how much more important are cultural concerns than economic issues? Our answer is, for communities that are culturally marginalized and economically discriminated, an element of pride in their identity may come handy as a strategy to empower them. Besides, cultural diversity too is a nation’s wealth.

When Bhasha was launched in 1996, it was a small group of like minded individuals. Now we are over a hundred and fifty. Our hope is that the Adivasi Academy becomes the source of many more new journeys. The road ahead of us is not easy to tread. The eighty-three million adivasis and sixty million DNTs is not a small number. Their problems do not have easy and ready solutions. What we have undertaken is but an experiment in shaping an alternative model of development and a society which respects the rights of all citizens. It is too early to judge if it will produce what it seeks to create. Yet, we believe with Shelley that one must “Hope, till Hope creates the thing it contemplates.”

The following activities were carried out by the Bhasha Research and Publication Centre between 2005-06:

### **Adivasi Academy**

#### **Courses**

The Adivasi Academy at Tejgadh continued to run the following courses that had commenced the previous academic year :

Post Graduate Diploma in Publication, Media and Rural Journalism

Post Graduate Diploma in Adivasi Culture and Museum Studies

Post Graduate Diploma in Rights, Social Security and Development

Certificate Course in Accounting and General Management for Rural and Community Based Organisations

The following new courses were commenced during the year :

Post Graduate Diploma in Food Security and Women Empowerment

Post Graduate Diploma in Sustainable Agriculture and Forest Management

Senior Certificate Programme in Community Health Care

Distance Education Programme with IGNOU

A new Certificate Course in Pottery was commenced at the IGNOU Centre at Tejgadh for traditional and potential potters.

New batches were admitted to the various Certificate and Diploma Programmes

### **Fellows / Trainees / Internships**

The following trainees and fellows visited Bhasha/Academy :

Mr Nishant Choksi, US, Anthropology and Fulbright Fellow was with Bhasha for research on Avenues of Action : Indigenous Participation in Indian Democracy

Ms Aliche, Italy, Anthropology came to study tribal culture and its representation in museums

Ms Natasha Petit from Canada studied the non formal education system set up by Bhasha

Ms Charlotte Serranrens made a study of Healthcare Delivery in tribal areas of Vadodara District

Ms Devki and Ms Payal, students from National Law School, Gandhinagar made a study of the migration patterns among tribals of Vadodara District at the Academy during April and May April 05

Prof Gregory d' Alles and a group of nine students from Maryland College, USA, visited the Adivasi Academy in January 2006 for an exposure field trip to tribal areas.

### **Seminars, Conferences and Lectures**

The following seminars and conferences were held during 2005-06

The first *National Convention on Nomads and Adivasis* in April 05 at Delhi in collaboration with the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts. 1600 tribal and nomadic performing artists, craftpersons, activists and scholars participated in the event.

*Vimukti Divas* was celebrated at Chharanagar, Ahmedabad on the occasion of Denotification Day on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2005.

*Workshop on Cultural Encyclopedia* on Bhils was held in October 05 at Saputara

*The Saputara Cultural Convention* was held in October 05 at Dangs

The *National Conference on Contemporary Adivasi Literature and Adivasi Languages* (with representation from 90 languages) was held in November 05 at Tejgadh

An *Exhibition of Traditional Writing Practices* (with IGNSA) was organized at the Tejgadh Museum in November 05

An *International Conference on Asian Translations with reference to Buddhist and Sufi literature* in was held in November 05 at Tejgadh

The eighth Verrier Elwin Memorial Lecture was delivered by Prof Ram Dayal Munda on . On the same day, Bhasha commenced the Academy Foundation Lecture that was delivered on the occasion by Dr K K Chakravarty on

*A Bhili Epic Recital from Sabarkantha* was organized by Dr Bhagwandas Patel in Baroda on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2005

*Writing the Marginalised*, a Workshop on the Rights of Denotified Communities was held in January 06 at Delhi

*Vikas Haat* was organized at Panchmahals on 29th January 05 at Panchmahals and at Tejgadh on 8<sup>th</sup> March 06.

A Workshop of writers, artists and editors for preparation of Pictorial Glossaries in Tribal Languages was held in collaboration with CIIL at Baroda from 21<sup>st</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> February 2006

A Seminar on Adivasi Movements was held for college teachers from adivasi areas at Tejgadh on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2006

Kaleshwari Mela was organized on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2006 on the occasion of Mahashivratri that was attended by 7000 artists and members of the denotified communities.

#### **Overseas Collaborations were developed with :**

- Georgetown University (Prof Henry Schwarz) on Culture & Rights of Nomadic Communities
- Maryland College (Prof. Greg D'Alles) on Oral Literature , mainly Oral Epics
- Monash University (Dr. Paul Komesaroff) on Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation
- University of Limerick (Dr. Brian Coates) on Craft and Arts in Cultural Transition
- University of Winnipeg (Dr. Renate Eigenbrod) on Tribal Identity and Indigenous Literatures

#### **Museum of Voice**

Vacha or the Museum of Voice at Tejgadh has undertaken to set up a Consortium of Tribal Arts in collaboration with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. This shall involve digitization of the existing collection of all Museums of the State Tribal Research and Training Institutes and creating a virtual museum interlinking all the museums.

#### **Library**

The Library has acquired original manuscripts of tribal writers in its archives. It has added 200 academic journals in its collection. The Library has now a collection of 18,000 books, journals, magazines and newspapers.

#### **Buildings and Campus Development**



The construction of the Museum of Voice, Library and Artists' Workshop was completed and these spaces became functional. The campus now has a model organic farm and water harvesting systems including two check dams. The Academy is developing an Alternate Energy Centre that would have pedal power generators, organic farms, solar lights and cookers, traditional water harvesting systems.

### **National Recognition for the Adivasi Academy**

The Bhasha Trustees and Advisory Board Members had a discussion with the Honorable Prime Minister for initiating the process of formal recognition of the Adivasi Academy as a National Institute. The discussions have been successful and the process for recognition has been initiated by the Government of India.

### **Development Work**

The Development Services Centres established for implementation of development activities in tribal areas, have formed a Trust registered as Adivasi Chaitanya Trust. The Trust shall endeavor:

- To combine academic research with grassroots level social activism to bring about constructive change in adivasi society
- To build a development framework that influences the understanding of one's context and its history
- To build a synergy between traditions and people's knowledge and their imagination of the future
- To be self sufficient in cultural, economic, political terms

Bhasha had established seven DSCs between 2002-05 at Panvad, Chhotaudepur, Zoz, Moti-Amrol, Khatiawant in Vadodara district; Kantar in Panchmahals and Selamba in Narmada district. Eight new Development Services Centres were established during the year in Panchmahals, Madhya Pradesh and Vadodara districts at the following locations :

- Padamdungri in Surat district
- Khanpur, Naroda, Dodia and Bhiloda in Panchmahals
- Rangpur Sadli in Vadodara district
- Dugdha in Naswadi taluka in Vadodara District
- Umrli in Madhya Pradesh district

The status of the various activities of the Development Services Centres is as follows :

1. Bhandol (Micro Finance) : A total of 1050 SHGs have been formed in 533 villages with 12,304 members. The groups have a saving of Rs 6 millions. After a systematic gradation of the micro finance SHGs, 3 Micro finance Federation has been formed for the more enterprising and regular groups in Vadodara, Panchmahal districts and Vedchi.

2. Vidya (Non formal education centres) : 40 non formal education centres were run for migratory tribal children in villages of Pavijetpur, Chhotaudepur and Kanwant districts; and 24 such centres were run in Panchmahals districts for children of denotified and nomadic

communities. During the year, 422 children (245 girls and 177 boys) from these centres were admitted to formal schools. It was decided to begin a preparatory school at Tejgadh for migratory drop-out children between the ages of 8 and 14 years. These children would be initiated into formal education and admitted to formal schools after a training of one year.

3. Moseeti (Food Grain Banks) : In all 92 Food Grain Banks are operating in 88 villages. The banks have a membership of 7000 women who are actively involved in agriculture.

4. Prakriti (Healthcare) : The Tejgadh Healthcare Centre now has a full time resident doctor and a visiting physiotherapist. During the year, the centre received 11,432 patients having complaints related to malnutrition, infections, musculo skeletal, skin diseases, goiter, sickle cell, occupational hazards, ophthalmic and cancer. The centre has added a laboratory. The centre has initiated work in reproductive and child healthcare. While continuing to focus on rural healthcare, the centre shall now create a Healthcare Research Unit. Linkages are being established with Monash University, Australia for developing such a unit at the Tejgadh Academy.

5. Chotro (Migratory Labourers Forum) . A survey in 10 villages was conducted covering 2053 migratory tribal families. The forum has 525 members. As part of legal awareness, Bhasha has prepared a book in the local Rathwi language on the penal code. The book was disseminated in 64 village panchayats. Lallubhai Rathwa, the co-ordinator of the project, has been working on 35 legal cases of which 12 have already been resolved. 208 silicosis patients have been identified as affected and 105 have been reported to have died. Requests for aid to the State Health Government have been put up on their behalf.

#### **New Initiatives :**

1. Organic Agriculture and Gobar Banks : The DSCs have linked 190 marginal women farmers in Vadodara and Panchmahals districts to organic farming. Training programmes were held for initiating the women farmers in organic cultivation, land preparation, meteorology and crop selection, irrigation, intercultural crop operations, harvesting, storage and marketing. 60 gobar banks were formed for vermicompost formation and value additive agricultural activities.

2. Masonary Training : Masonary Training was provided to 40 migratory labourers for skill upgradation and to enhance market value.

3. Samuh Lagna : In order to reduce the costs of weddings among tribal households, the Development Services Centres have floated the concept of holding community weddings in tribal villages. This would also strengthen community structures. The first such community wedding for nine couples was held at Sihada village. The DSCs plan to establish marriage banks/funds within villages or SHGs for one time material investment.

All The above activities reach out to 50,640 households in 780 tribal villages.

**Bhasha Publications released during the year include : (TO CHECK WITH NEERAJ)**

- *Saora Folktales and Songs* (Saora – English) edited by Mahendra Kumar Mishra
- *Khasi Folksongs and Tales* (Hindi – English) documented and translated into English by Desmond L Kharmawphlang and into Hindi by A R Tripathi
- *Kinnaur Sabhyata aur Sahitya* (Kinnauri – Hindi) documented and translated by T C Negi
- *Gornat* (Gor Banjara – Marathi) documented and translated by Atmaram Rathod
- *Pictorial Glossaries in \*\*\*\* languages*
- *Bol*

**Films prepared**

**Policy Interventions**

Bhasha has taken a lead for holding national consultations for formulation of the Draft Tribal Policy and Dr G N Devy was invited by the Parliamentary Advisory Committee for consultations.

Bhasha has been instrumental in the setting up of National Commission for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-nomadic Tribes by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in February 2006. The Commission shall specify the economic interventions required for raising the living standards of De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes by asset creation and self-employment opportunities; and recommend measures to utilize the existing channeling agencies set up for the economic development of SC/STs and OBCs by extending an economic development package to these groups. The Government of India has set up the Technical Advisory Group that has representatives from the DNT Right Action Group for advising the DNT Commission.

**Highlights**

Smt Mahasveta Devi ;- awards

Dr G N Devy ; awards, ICSSR Member

Smt Manisha Varia was awarded the Smt Anita Sen Memorial Award for her exemplary work in empowering tribal women through micro credit

Pithora artist Shri Mansing Rathwa was invited to London for an exhibition on Indian Tribal Craft in May 2005

Bhasha Centre carried out relief work in Vaodara city and Naswadi taluka following the floods in July 2005.

The Oxford University Press has undertaken publication of series on Tribal Literature

The vision and work of Adivasi Academy was covered by NDTV in September 2005

**Funding Support for various activities was received from the following organizations**

Action Aid India

American India Foundation

Association of India's Development

Central Institute of Indian Languages

Commissionerate for Rural Development

Ford Foundation

Functional Vocational Training Forum

Global Human Rights Fund

Hivos

Indo Global Social Service Society

Oxfam India Trust

Terre des Hommes and Pharmacists sans Frontiers

United Way of Baroda

**General Donations were received from the following individuals and organizations :**

**Visitors**

Mrs and Prof Sahasrabuddhe, Director, DA-IICT, Gandhinagar

Dr Sudha Gopalkrishnan, Director, National Manuscript Mission

Shri Dilip Chitre, eminent writer

Prof Ram Dayal Munda, former VC, Ranchi University

Dr Jaya Mehta, economis

Shri Laxmi Chand, Member, DNT Commission