Bringing Natural Happiness through Promotion of Natural Resins

Chait Singh happily showing his produce

Lali village of *Dundua Panchayat* is situated on the National Highway (NH) 75 and 5 km away from its block headquarter *Manika* in *Latehar* district of Jharkhand. Economy of the people in the area revolves around agriculture, forest and minerals. The problem of insurgency has crippled the life in the area and the menace has further aggravated the misery of the people. Absence or insufficiency of basic facilities like drinking water, healthcare facilities etc. further aggravates the problem for the people.

Burakher tola (hamlet) of *Lili* village is the residence of 30 years old *Chait Singh*, a marginal farmer and unskilled labour. He is the sole earning member of his five member family, himself and his wife, one daughter, one son and his 70 year old father. Presently his 6 and half year old daughter goes to school and his 4 year old son yet to be enrolled in the school.

One acre of agricultural land and 35 Kg of food grain per month from government schemes hardly fulfills food requirement of his family for 7-8 months in a year. The land in the area is ruffled, uneven and full of pebbles which make agriculture difficult and less remunerative. He also migrates to Ranchi and works there as labour in construction works for 30-45 days in a year but can hardly bring at the rate of Rs100/- per day.

Bihar Pradesh Yuva Parishad (BPYP) has been working in this area since 1990 and has a very good rapport with the local community. BPYP is the partner organization of Centre for World Solidarity (CWS) and implementing Vocational Education and Training Programme (VET) together in *Latehar,* one of the three project districts in Jharkhand.

Chait Singh came to know about the VET programme when he attended village meeting organised by BPYP, in this meeting villagers were oriented about the vocational courses available under the VET project, eligibility criteria for trainee selection and the facilities trainees would get after completion of the training like certificate, post training follow up and opportunity to be a part of the group of [1]Ecopreneurs' group. Interested candidates were requested to submit their application for final selection. *Chait Singh* submitted his application and got selected for Lac and lac seed processing training under VET project.

Lac and lac seed (brood lac) production has tremendous potential in the area because the abundance of host plant for lac cultivation, *Kusum* (*Schleichera oleosa)*, *Ber* (*Ziziphus mauritiana)* and *Palash (Butea monosperma)* and suitable agro climatic region. But maximum host plants are laying un-exploited. 10 to 15 years back lac was a This agricultural profession of lac cultivation is a subsidiary source of income for a large number of families in the area and they earned good amount of income through this activity. Lac cultivation was also famous among the farmers because it could be carried out simultaneously with their main agricultural activity. But gradually this activity started diminishing because of unscientific cultivation, vagaries of monsoon and fast disappearance of brood lac (lac seed) from the area.

[1] Ecopreneurs are the entrepreneurs who are utilizing their acquired skill for income enhancement through promotion of their livelihood in an environmentally sustainable manner.

A case story on Lac cultivation and promotion

Lac is a resinous substance deposited on the twigs of various host plants by the female lac insects; the product is used in the manufacturing of varnishes, sealing wax, jewelry etc. Lac has a great demand in and outside country. And presently India the highest producer of lac, contributes, around 55% of the total requirement of the world. The country exports around 80-90% of its production. Jharkhand is pioneer in lac production and contributed around 59% of total lac production of India.

Lac produce

Chait Singh was trained on various aspects of lac cultivation, right from pruning of host plant, life cycle of the lac insects, depositing brood lac on the twig, various trouble shooting during the gestation period, harvesting etc under Vocational Education and Training Programme (VET). Trainers and scientists of Indian Institute of Natural Resins and Gums (IINRG), the premiere institute of lac cultivation in India, also visited the area and also supported as resource person for knowledge building through training. Continuous support of IINRG for knowledge and capacity building is being enjoyed by the lac farmers of this area.

Brood lac of *Kusmi* variety was provided to Chait Sing and other VET trainees and other villagers of Lali village, He deposited the same on ber tree for production of brood lac and produced approx 40 Kg of brood lac and then sold it back to IINRG at the rate of Rs250-300 per Kg finally earning more than Rs11000/- (€175). BPYP also linked him and other VET trainees, lac farmers of the village with another project called Market Access and provided 1 Kg of brood lack of *Ranginee* variety which he deposited on *Palash* tree and harvested 5 kg of lac of *Ranginee* variety which he sold at the rate of Rs250/- per Kg. during the season, he also collected lac which casually fall from the trees and sold worth Rs3000/-. In this way during the season he earned an additional income of more than Rs14000/- (€223).

This year's income has boosted his confidence and he is planning to bring more trees under lac cultivation in coming crop cycle. Apart from fulfilling basic need of his family, he also started saving money to secure the future of his family. Additional income has begun to percolate down his family resulting in improved access to comparatively better facilities of life.

The spill out effect:

Total 40 trainees have been trained on lac cultivation till date under Vocational Education and Training Programme (VET) and this activity has encouraged nearing about 250 lac farmers to take up lac cultivation in the area successfully on approximately 1800 lac host plants. All trainees/farmers are expected to harvest 25-35 Kg of lac on an average this year. The revival of lac cultivation in the area has already begun. This initiative has also attracted the attention of IINRG, district administration and efforts of various linkages are on the scale up the activity. In coming years, the efforts are also on to institutionalize the activity by giving it a shape of cooperative to ensure real empowerment of the community through participation and promoting ownership.

Bumber crop production contributed in socio economic development of his family