

People's Participation in Dongripara

By | Oct 19, 2016

Dongripara is an Adivasi-majority village about 15 kilometres from Dhamtari in the Nagri Development Block in the State of Chattisgarh. Of the 80-85 houses in the village, 70 are Adivasi-households of which except the 4-5 *Kamaar* families, all the rest are Gond adivasis. Apart from the traditional mud-houses there are some permanent structures too. At the extreme end of the village is the primary school.



The greenery of the school is all its own, populated as it is not just by flowery plants but also trees like the Banyan and the Pipal. There is a beautiful vegetable garden too that includes a wide range of plants. These vegetables are used in the mid-day meals.

Bheekham Ram Markan, the Vice President of the School Co-operation Committee, says – “Our school is different from the other schools around here. They don't have what we have – an enclosure, a bore-well, garden and good education. And this is all due to the influence of our teachers.”

The Head Teacher Sahdev Ram Dhruv says that the rural community's participation too has a lot to contribute in this, and the credit for community-involvement should go to the teacher Hori Lal Nishad.

Hori Lal Nishad, the Assisting Teacher (Panchayat) has been working here since 2008. He says, “When I came here, apart from the main building of the school there was just a plain ground here. Just in front was a ditch to throw the cow-dung into. Before joining, I came here to have a feel of the place and found the people to be very good. It was during this time that there was a campaign being run by the DIET in Nagari by the name of ‘Our village, Our children and Our school’. Folk from the DIET too had conducted a meeting here.



“We continued to be in touch with and hold meetings with the people in the village and also encouraged them to visit some good schools. We took them on educational trips to Mainpur and Gahna Siyar. The villagers of both Dongripara and Barbandha were included in these sojourns. Not just this, when the villagers were not satisfied with one trip, another was planned in which women participated in good numbers.

“The village folk were quite impressed with these schools and looked enthusiastic for the development of their own school. There were huge stones lying near the school. The villagers got together to hew and cut them into pieces, and worked voluntarily to build this enclosure. The necessary funds too were similarly raised. For raising finances, a programme of *Cherchera* Dance was organized. A motor-pump too was installed involving an expenditure of around 23 thousand rupees. The villagers also bought and donated a printer and computer worth around 25 thousand rupees. It is used not just for the office but also by children.



“People from the village are even now contributing in their own way to the school – daily they bring a handful of rice and transfer it into a large earthen pot. Thus every month at least one kilo of rice and ten rupees come from one family, leading to a sum total of around 30-35 kgs of rice and 200-250 rupees every month. This amount helps in small ways – like a water-pipe to be bought for the garden. The co-operation and participation of the villagers is thus ongoing. They also help in the gardening and cultivation of vegetables, watering the plants in the after-school hours. A senior citizen, Suk Ram Markaam would come daily, morning and evening, to take care of the kitchen garden as well as the flowers and plants. For now, he can’t come because of a fracture in his foot but the staff responsible for cleaning-up is taking care.”

This school has also been in the news in its surrounding area because of the fact that in the last six years six students have been selected for the Navodaya School. All the more creditable is the fact that they are all adivasis and four of these six are girls, and one of these girls is a *Kamaar* adivasi. This is surely a very different, distinctive sort of achievement.

They are all preparing for the Navodaya school admission-test. The children who have already got admission there come to the village during the Diwali holidays and help the others in their preparation.

In one of Horilal ji's classes, children were working on measurements. In this primary school as of now there are 27 students – 13 boys and 14 girls.

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