



# STRIDES

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**Action Related to the Organisation of  
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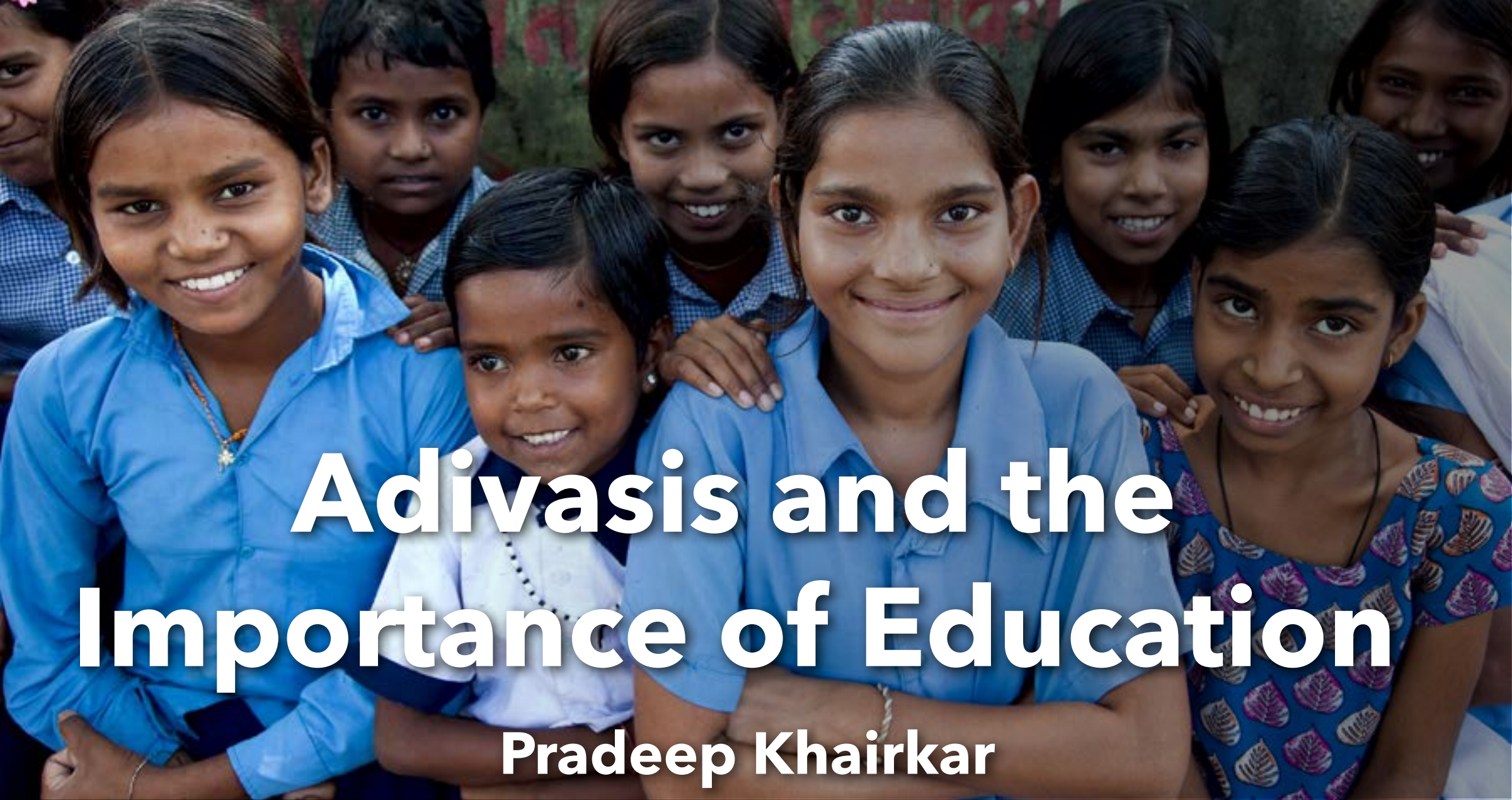
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# Adivasis and the Importance of Education

Pradeep Khairkar

**I**ndian social reformers and social leaders have time and again insisted on the importance of education in personal, social and national development. Mahatma Jyotiba Phule has underlined the necessity of education in six simple lines.

विद्येविना मती गेली  
मतिविना निती गेली  
नितिविना गती गेली  
गतिविना वित्त गेले  
वित्तविना शुद्र खचले  
एवढे सारे अनर्थ एका अविद्येने केले

So there is no need to reiterate how important education is. However, considering the state the education of the downtrodden has reached today, it is important to stress upon this topic.



Today we can say that the progressive and upper classes in the society have understood the importance of education. The work of a visionary like Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar also ensured that education reached the Dalit community. However, if we look at the downtrodden communities, we can observe that adivasi and nomadic communities still have a long way to go as far as education is concerned.

### **Why are Adivasis lagging behind in education?**

The horrifying statistics on the state of education in the Katkari tribe show that only 9 percent men in the community are literate, while the percentage amid Katkari women is barely 3 percent. Why is the situation in the community this miserable? On careful consideration, we would notice that the roots of this problem lie in the economic, social, geographic situation and a pessimistic mindset. That is why, the society and the government must strive to help these communities through optimistic approach and find appropriate solutions.

### **General understanding**

When teachers, government officials or people in general talk about education among adivasis, you can often hear them complaining, “We have tried a lot for their literacy, development, but they do not cooperate with us.” Some also go a step ahead and say, “After all they are Adivasis! No matter what you do for

them, they will stay the same... They will stay illiterate!”

The progressive people in the society often agree with them too. While many would believe this to be the truth, on introspection, we will realise that this is not the reality. It's us who fall short of understanding this reality, or probably, we ignore it as well. Therefore we need to analyse what the ground situation is and take steps accordingly.

### **Why are Adivasis not getting educated?**

Why are adivasi children falling behind in education? Generally speaking, the answer lies in poverty, lack of interest in school, apathy of parents towards education, migration and so on. If we look at these reasons through a holistic approach and ask ourselves who is responsible for these issues, we will realise that it's the hundreds of years of exploitation, injustice, atrocities and slavery imposed upon these communities. (For many, the situation still





hasn't changed much.)

Thus, education has continued to remain the last of their priorities. Their mindset does not let them believe that even they could win or have a free will. In such a situation, how are they to be blamed for their indifference towards education that has stemmed from this pessimism and poverty? It is our failure that we do not ask ourselves these questions.

They have faced exploitation for ages. Now when we ask them to 'get' education, their pessimism and the trauma of exploitation make it difficult for them to 'get' education. This might, in fact, also come across to them as a new form of exploitation. And there is nothing unnatural in it. We cannot take it for granted that the mindset formed over a period of hundreds of years would change within merely 10-15 years. For this to happen, it is necessary that we create an environment of assurance and trust for them.

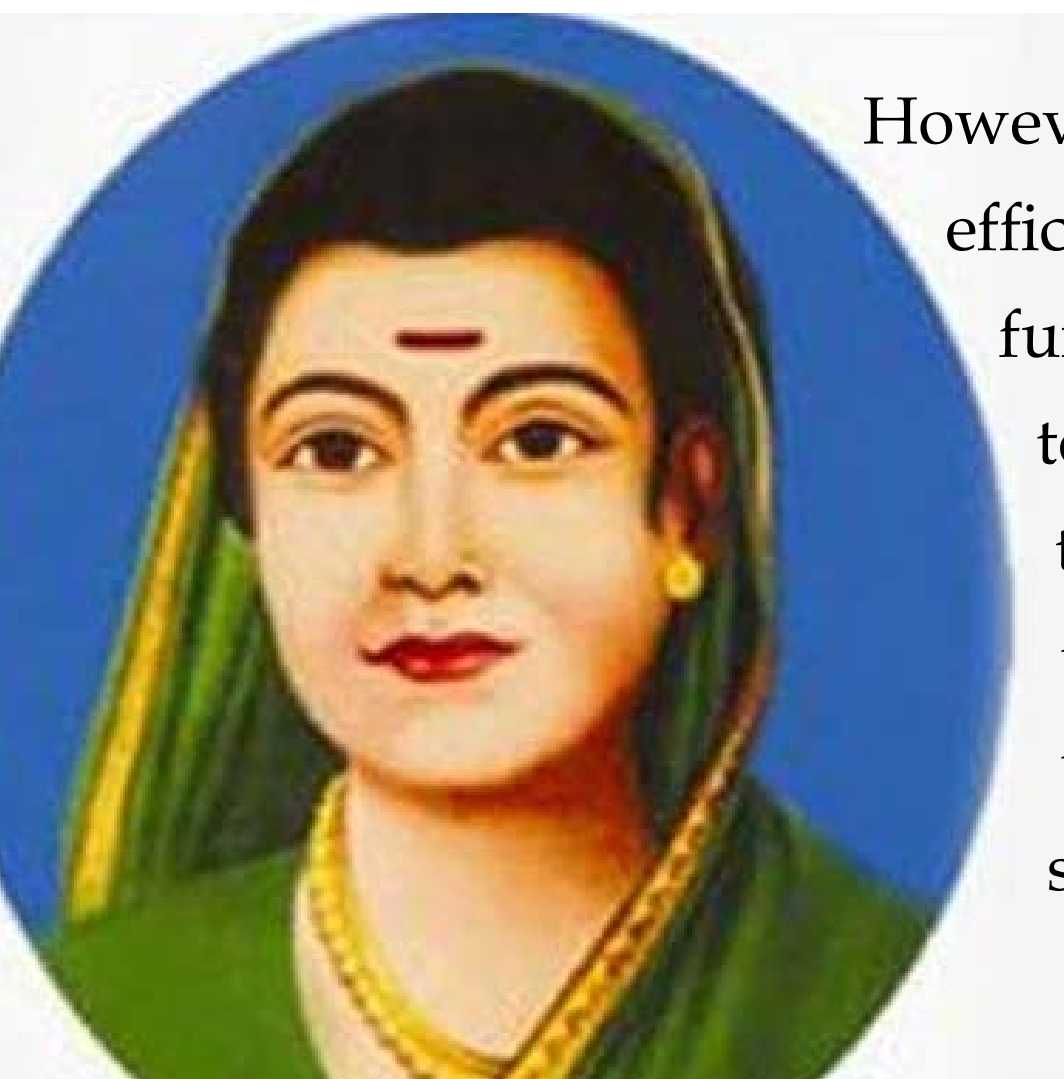
Even today, adivasis and other such communities struggle to find work in villages after harvest. Thus they are left with no other option but to migrate in search of work, along with their children. They call it 'moving for a living'. The poverty that they are enduring as a result of the traditional exploitation has confined them in a vicious circle of migrating for survival and neglect of education.

Which parent would not want for their children to get education? Who would want their children live a life of struggle and labour

like they did? Which parent would not want their children to prosper? There are no answers to these questions. And that is why, it is very necessary that while looking at the educational woes of adivasi children, the society and the government agency must analyse their socio-economic and geographic background, their mindset and their material situation. Once they start reaping the benefits of education, the task will become much easier. Until then, we must not lose hope.

### **Shortcomings of schemes and their implementation**

The Right to Education proved to be a major step in the educational development of downtrodden communities. However, such schemes and laws are not implemented with the required sensitivity and passion. The reason for this is also hidden in our social inequalities. The government has entrusted authorised school management committees and local governance bodies with the implementation of these schemes.



However, we are all well aware of the efficiency with which these institutions function. These institutions do not seem to be taking any efficient measures to empower these committees. They think their duty is over once they take one or two routine training sessions every year. The organisations

working for the education of the marginalised communities are often obstructed by keeping them running in a loop of seeking permissions. The government agencies would not do anything new, neither would they let someone else experiment.

Until the government officials/employees and people's representatives do not let go of their arrogance and greed, the laws/schemes for the marginalised will remain merely on paper.

The funds that are allotted for the same will keep getting swallowed, but the adivasis will stay as they are. There is a need to fundamentally change the way the society and government agency looks at the educational issues of the downtrodden.

### **The obstacles in education**

The reasons mentioned in the article earlier about why adivasis are not getting educated are also the obstacles that they face. But apart from these, the lack of social, political and administrative will to get adivasi children to the school is also a major obstacle.

Other major hindrances also include the negative approach of the primary teachers and government officials towards the education of the marginalised, apathy towards the community, the shortcomings and flaws in the implementation of various schemes, etc.



## Solutions

It is essential that we get rid of these obstacles in order to ensure that education truly reaches the marginalised communities. It is important to explain the importance of education and its benefits to this community and to create an atmosphere of trust and necessary facilities for the same.

At the administrative level, there is a need to shift the perspective of the government officials-employees so that they perform their duties with passion and honesty that emanate from a sense of social responsibility. Making learning a fun activity will help prevent children from dropping out of Zilla Parishad Schools. Teachers must be given as little non-academic work as possible. The government must seek assistance of the organisations that can help implement different schemes efficiently. Gram Panchayats must take up the responsibility to ensure that no child in their village stays out of school. Education should be a permanent subject of the Gram Sabha agenda.

Understanding that after all adivasis are also an integral part of the nation and to give them education or do everything necessary to make it available is a moral responsibility of each citizen as their development is integral to national development. When everyone starts working together with this understanding, only then will the marginalised obtain access to education.





# **Releshani: A workshop on relationships for Adolescents**



**A**dolescence is a tender yet complicated period of growth. Teenagers go through major physical and emotional life transformations and are often oblivious to how they can react to these changes. It is necessary to provide them with complete knowledge about their growth and the growth of their peers to help them grow into empathetic and capable adults. AROEHAN held a three-day workshop on 'relationships' in Kosbad, Dahanu facilitated by AABHA - Arogya Bhan Collective Association. Relationships with self, friends, peers and adults were explored in this interactive three-day camp.

The workshop kickstarted with grounding techniques by trainers. Facilitator Dr. Mohan Des sang the song 'My Yard is the Rhythm of the Tree' which described the importance of the tree of life. After





some warm-up exercises, the participants were opened to varieties of activities to understand complex topics like prejudice about genders, toxic behaviour, different emotions, needs and desires, the human body, evolving relationships, sexual health and the role of mobile phone and media in this day and age.

The participants performed skits based on the experience of children growing up, discrimination between boys and girls in sports, the importance of voting and societal myths around menstruation. Adolescents crave junk food and are often vulnerable to toxic substances like nicotine, drugs and alcohol. The trainers talked about the effects of such substances on the body and how to avoid them. The





dialogue was then opened to social norms and discrimination based on gender. From clothes to their perceived roles, several gender biases were addressed.

The body anatomy and process of reproduction through male and female bodies were explained using visual aids by facilitator Shruti Bhide. This was followed by an open discussion about the nature of relationships, different sexual orientations, genders other than male and female, the difference between sexual and romantic relationships, consent and care, contraception, incorrect representation of sex in media. Myths and truths about all topics were thoroughly discussed.

Adolescence is a vital time in any individual's life. The learnings here lay the foundation for becoming an adult. Not all the information learned in this workshop can be relatable for each individual. However, it is necessary to understand human nature to live a full life and embrace each other as a human before our differences. As Dr. Mohan Des said, the conversation can sometimes get uncomfortable but he has never







# Farmer's Day Celebration

**A**griculture is the primary occupation in India. National Farmers Day, also known as Kisaan Diwas is celebrated on December 23 in honour of India's fifth Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh who was born on the same day in 1902. On this day, several states across the country celebrate farmers and acknowledge them as the country's backbone.

**Did You Know:** *Around 80% of farm work is undertaken by women in India. However, they own only 13% of the land as it is often inherited by male members of families. (source: OXFAM India)*





Panchayats respectively. The event was attended by 65 farmers from the area.

CEO Amit Narkar and Project Manager Nitesh Mukane were also present and they shed light on Kisan Diwas with their words. Sunil Pardhi explained various government agriculture schemes, subsidies, processes and criteria required to avail certain benefits.

The Taluka Agriculture Officer also spoke of shade net houses, agriculture tools and machinery and gave information about starting small farming businesses. Project Officer Ganesh Sarode facilitated training for Jasmine plantation and cultivation.



After the session, the farmers were taken on a tour of the incubation centre. They were shown demonstrations of vermicomposting units, drip irrigation, horticulture plantations and farm pond.

They were also shown a demonstration of beekeeping and were educated about its financial and ecological benefits as well as nutritional value.





# Photo Of The Month







# Asha Kiran Awards Rays Of Hope



**AROEHAN** organised a programme to celebrate 10 years of project 'ASHA' a wonderful partnership between SIEMENS and AROEHAN. To mark the completion of the decade long partnership, AROEHAN officiated an award ceremony for honouring the community workers and groups in tribal Mokhada. The award ceremony was held on December 16, 2022 at Shramik Adivasi Bachatgat, a new AROEHAN Resource Centre in Pawarpada Mokhada. The awards were distributed among community members like teachers, ASHA, AWC workers, Rojgar Sevak, Medical Officers and community groups like PESA Gram Kosh Samiti, Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition committee (VHSNC), Pada Samiti, Self Help Groups (SHG) and Mata Samiti.

The occasion was graced by the presence of our chief guests MLA Sunil Bhusara, Siemens officials Mr. Anees Mohammad and Ms. Sharon Gonsalves and AROEHAN trustees Ms. Anjali Kanitkar and Mr. Naresh Jena. AROEHAN team and community members from







different parts of the Taluka were also present.

Pradnya Kulkarni, who was part of the nomination procedure expressed how tough it was to select a few people from this extraordinary group of social workers. With more than 100 applications, all the nominations were honour-worthy, but having a record sets an example for others and helps them grow stronger. Upon receiving the awards, each winner shared her/his/their heartfelt words with the people and expressed gratitude for the honour.

The guests visited the grading and packaging unit in the resource centre. A display unit has been constructed here with bamboo and organic materials, where the products created by Self Help Groups will be put up for sale. Later, the unit was inaugurated by chief guests. A





variety of products such as rice, rice flour, nagli flour, chickoo chips, moringa powder, honey, papad, mango and pickles were displayed for buying.

### **Individual Level Awards**

Mr. Jairam Lakshman Nadge, Gram Rojgar Sevak, Saturli village

Mr. Arun Vasant Bhosale, Teacher, Ashram School, Adoshi

Ms. Chandrakala Jadhav, AWC worker, Shirasgaon

Ms. Chhaya Choudhary, ANM, PHC Vashala

Mr. Prabhakar Janu Bhusare, MPW, PHC Morhanda

Ms. Yogita Santosh Shinde, ASHA, Shirasgaon

Dr. Kishore Desle, Medical Officer, PHC Morhanda





### Group Level Awards

Jaswandi SHG, Sonarwadi (to Ms. Sangeeta Kuwara)

PESA Gram Kosh Samiti, Karoli (to Mr. Narayan Mahadu Maule)

VHNSC, Bhowadi (to Mr. Mahadu Khirari)

Pada Samiti, Banachiwadi (to Mr. Namdev Patare)

Mata Samiti, Shirasgaon (to Ms. Susheela Balu Nisal)

of tribal ware to local and urban markets for better visibility. It will act as a one-stop space for linking beneficiaries and stakeholders which in turn will enhance livelihood opportunities and sustenance.





# Adult Literacy Programme

**I**n any given conversation, if we talk about basic education, we immediately picture children in classrooms learning foundational blocks of knowledge. Adults who are not literate are often overlooked for a multitude of reasons. If one did not gain the foundation of learning at an early age, it is perceived that there is no scope for her to learn ever.

Adult learners and the need for improved adult literacy, deserve attention and effort. These people deserve the opportunity to not only survive but also flourish. When a person is educated, the positive effects of it flow through their lives and ripple into the society. They become more enlightened citizens and curious about their capacities, responsibilities and duties.

**? DID YOU KNOW?**\_\_\_\_\_

*While a total of 74.04% of the Indian population is literate, 82.14% of them are male citizens, whereas the female literacy rate is about 65.46%.*

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They become more efficient breadwinners for their families and take better decisions for their household and finances. Improved literacy also results in more informed decisions about nutrition and healthcare.

AROEHAN initiated an Adult Literacy Programme in November 2022, with a generous donation from the Rotary Club of Mumbai Charities Trust No.3. The intention of programme is to promote and strengthen education for adults, primarily women. It will help learners reach functional literacy in 50 to 55 hours. This programme follows the functional literacy modules developed by Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and the Rotary Club of Bombay (RCB), the implementing agency for this initiative in Palghar District.







Prerikas were identified from 46 hamlets of Mokhada and Jawhar talukas for this programme by AROEHAN. These volunteers were provided with training sessions by Master Trainers in October at the BAIF Training Centre at Jawhar. The Adult Literacy Programme kickstarted in November 2022. The school is conducted during nighttime so as to not disturb the daily routine of adults. A multimedia software package and e-learning system are introduced to help adults learn basic reading, writing and arithmetic. Over 1,150 adult women in Mokhada and Jawhar



area would attain functional literacy with 70 sessions of the programme. Learners will be presented with TCS certificates after the successful completion of all modules.

**Project Outcome:** We hope to have 1,150 adult women in the Mokhada/Jawhar area reach functional literacy with 70 sessions from the start of the programme. Learners will be presented TCS certificates after successful completion of the functional literacy and other modules as per the standard laid down by TCC.







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