



DECCAN DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

101, Kishan Residency, Street No.5
Begumpet, Hyderabad – 500 016, A.P., INDIA
Tel:+91-40-27764577,27764744, Telefax:+91-40-27764722
Email: hyd1_ddshyd@sancharnet.in / hyd2_ddspvrl@sancharnet.in
ddshyderabad@gmail.com
Project: Pastapur, Zaheerabad – 502 220, Medak Dist.,A.P.INDIA
Tel: +91-2451-282271/282785, Telefax:+91-8451-281725
Email:ddspastapur@gmail.com
Website: www.ddsindia.com

PRESS RELEASE

March 8, 2011

On the 100th anniversary of the International Womens Day we are extremely delighted to introduce the distinguished media community to Masanagari Mayuri a ten year old village kid in whom the Deccan Development Society lives one of its cherished dreams.

This media meet is not to introduce a child prodigy, a unique accomplisher ... nothing of this sort. The excitement of DDS in Mayuri is that she proves what a deprived village girl from a dalit family can be capable of if provided the right environment and right encouragement. In Mayuri the DDS sees the possibility of a post modern Gen Y child who would transcend the current symbols of modernity viz., Pepsis and Cokes, McDonalds and L'Oreals and use the most modern media of Television to uphold the values of her community. She also is instructive of how a small child from a “backward”, back-of-the-beyond village can pick up one of the most advanced arguments of development viz., Food Sovereignty and construct through her own images and a child argument. She also exemplifies the possibility of children in villages being able to learn some of the most cherished ecological principles from their own community elders.

Masanagari Mayuri, will be ten year old this March. She is the daughter of Punyamma and Narsimlu a landless dalit couple. She lives in Pastapur Village in Medak District of Andhra Pradesh. Mayuri studies Class 5 in the Government Primary School in her own village.

Even as a child of four, Mayuri started handling a digital still camera and started taking pictures of all things and people around her. This was possible because of the environment she lived in. Her aunt Chinna Narsamma, a non literate dalit farmer herself, was a pioneer filmmaker among her communities. Mayuri's uncle Yesu a Class X failed young man had learnt video editing and become an accomplished editor. Mayuri spent a lot of her early childhood playing in the editing room of he Community Media Trust started by her aunt and her friends. Therefore she had photography in her genes.

Her photographs started getting better and better. She did a number of photo essays for fun. On the cooking done by the group of her little friends, a meeting she attended with her aunt, a visit to Kerala.....so on. As the promise she brought with her grew, we decided to let her handle a small video camera. She would spend an hour a week or so with this camera on Sundays and School holidays. Gradually she learnt how to make one to two minute video clips.

In the winter of 2009 when she visited her grandmother's farm in Village Dhanwar, she had her camera with her. As she started talking to her grandmother Ratnavva, her camera

rolled on. The kind of things Ratnavva said made Mayuri to think of a film. Since she herself was a product of a farming family and spent a large part of her free time in the campus of the Deccan Development Society which was concentrating on issues such as ecological agriculture, biodiversity, food sovereignty etc., Mayuri was vaguely aware of what it meant to produce one's own food, the advantages of diverse crops in a farm etc. Thus she wove a little story around the crops that Ratnavva grows, how she uses them in her day to day life, the food that she cooks, the animals she rears etc. Thus was born the little film ***Dhanwarlo O Avva***.

As the blurb on the CD says:

Dhanwarlo O'Avva is the profile of an 80 year old woman who in spite of her advanced age, is still robustly engaged in ecological agriculture and maintains vibrant biodiversity on her farm. She has not only avoided chemicals on her farm but has last applied even farmyard manure as far back as eight years ago. Through her cropping systems, she has maintained rich fertility of her soil and produces a wonderful yield of diverse foods.

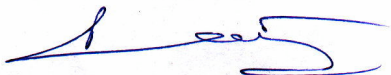
It is this protagonist that Mayuri follows in her little film, talking to her, getting to know of her farm and home and making her own observation about her protagonist and what she represents for her. This child's observation of an ecological farmer and her farming is summed up in her closing remark: ***Ratnavva does not buy any food from outside while the rest of us have to buy it from outside. If everyone was like Ratnavva how nice it would have been!***

This is as far as a child can go in defining food sovereignty in her own terms.

Dhanwarlo O'Avva has received a lot of attention around the country. It was premiered in the Mobile Biodiversity Festival, 2010, Inaugural film in the VIBGYOR Film Festival of Thrissur, Kerala in 2010 and has been written about a lot in the media. Not just because it was made by an 8-year old rural dalit girl from a fam labouring poor family but also because it portends the possibilities of how a new education can be made possible for children by learning some profound principles of farming from their own unschooled elders.

In her second film made in 2010, Mayuri further exemplified these possibilities by filming, photographing and creating a visual research on her grandparents' farm in Pastapur Village. She would visit it every week from the time of planting till harvest, meticulously measure and record all the plant growth data, make a photo album and a graph book. Most importantly as and when she discovered something new, something she did not know she would go either to her grandmother or grandfather to clarify her doubts. Thus she had found her own farm teachers in her own elders. A principle that many sensitive educators are today trying to discover. The new film ***My Farm – My Classroom*** thus takes Mayuri closer to agriculture as a great teacher and community as a repository of invaluable knowledge.

This is a dream of the Deccan Development Society which Mayuri lives.



[p v satheesh]

Director

Deccan Development Society