

Technical Assistant Chabildas Jadhav

Kopurli village, Peth block, Nasik district, Maharashtra state

Chabildas Jadhav 36, first learned of beekeeping in 2009 when UTMT visited his village. Uncertain about his future and depressed with his meager income from agriculture and wage labour, he enrolled for the training held in his small village of Kopurli in Nasik.

Initially the only motivation to practice bee keeping was to support his family comprising of his wife and three children. But gradually he began to finding bee keeping fascinating. What started out as an income generating activity soon became a passion. He worked hard, quickly rising up the ranks from beekeeper to Master Trainer and now Technical Assistant in UTMT's Maharashtra team. Today, Chabildas not only delivers training to farmers in new project areas and checks beehives, but also mentors newly recruited Master Trainers. Chabildas acknowledges the constant support and encouragement received from UTMT as a key factor in his ascent. He is grateful to the organization for recognizing his potential and giving him opportunities to develop.





Chabildas Jadhav with one of his beehives

Of the 9 bee boxes Chabildas owns, he rents 5 to other farmers in Nasik for pollination purposes and keeps 4 in his own 5-acre farm. According to him, not only has he seen the yield of gourd increased by 30-40%, but there is tremendous improvement in its quality and a shorter duration between the flowering to fruiting stage. As a result, he is able to harvest greater quantities of better quality vegetables more frequently in each season. This in turn has increased his agricultural income to support his family, which earlier was difficult.

Sensing a larger opportunity, Chabildas piloted Pollination services in February 2013, when he gave 3 beehives to a pomegranate farmer in Peth for 6 months. Chabildas visited the pomegranate farm to maintain the beehives twice a month. Although he did not charge for experiment, the farmer, seeing the improvements in fruit yield and quality, paid him Rs. 10,000 in gratitude. Word spread quickly in the area, and 4 more orchard owners have approached Chabildas for renting beehives. He intends charging Rs.1000 per beehive per month for the coming season.

Chabildas has reached a stage where he has enough bees to sell. When the need for beehives in new project areas in Maharashtra arises, he sells his beehives to UTMT. Over the last 2 years, he sold 7 bee colonies for an average of Rs. 750 each.

His financial situation has thus improved considerably since his pre-beekeeping days. Chabildas' income sources used to be fragmented, before he joined UTMT. Until 2012, he worked part time 3 days a month with the NGO BAIF, on a monthly salary of Rs. 800/ month. His work comprised teaching women self help groups how to maintain records, understand accounting and loan taking. For 8 months annually, he also migrated to Nashik, working as a daily wage labourer in vineyards. After joining UTMT full time as a Master Trainer in 2012, Chabildas left BAIF and stopped migrating altogether.

Chabildas' wife Mirabai is involved in beekeeping in her own way. She is a member of the village women's Self Help Group – Shiv Shakti Mahila Bachat Gat - which was formed by UTMT

to create employment opportunities around beekeeping for women. The SHG was trained to tailor 2 beekeeping inputs - swarm bags and bee veils – and they have begun supplying the items regularly to other UTMT project villages. Chabildas and his wife constitute two important members of the beekeeping ecosystem in Kopurli village.

When Chabildas reflects back, he feels that life took an altogether different turn after UTMT entered the scene. He is more than able to support his family and can comfortably provide for the education of his three children. His eldest daughter who was earlier to discontinue schooling due to his inability to meet timely fee payments, is presently in junior college, while his second daughter is readying for her Std. 10 board examinations. His son studies in Std. 7. Interestingly, a side effect of beekeeping has been his acquiring a higher social status within the village. Neighbours often approach him for advice on a host of matters, and take small loans from him. Recently in 2014, he purchased a two wheeler, something he has aspired towards for many years. He feels it will save him tremendous time commuting between villages, eliminating his reliance on irregular public transport. He took a loan for for the purchase from UTMT, and is repaying it in installments. Chabildas' next hope is a concrete house, for which he has applied for a subsidized home loan through a Government scheme.

For Chabildas the association with UTMT has been beneficial on all fronts and he is immensely thankful for the change. He comments while sharing his thoughts, “In the beginning my involvement with UTMT was solely to fulfill my economic needs, but now there’s an emotional connect too”. He feels that his journey from someone who had to struggle hard to make ends meet, to the present where he has a newfound direction in life, has been an incredible experience.

