

Using organic waste for paddy germination

Author - S. Harpal Singh, Published on - 17.7.2018

Adivasi farmer Athram Bhujang Rao directing the mande vatval process at his field in Kothaguda in Adilabad district. | Photo Credit: S HARPAL SINGH

Adivasis have a time-saving method for raising paddy nursery

Generally accustomed to spending their time in a leisurely fashion, the aboriginal people living in natural surroundings of erstwhile united Adilabad district are not known for scheduling events 'tightly' in terms of time. In some aspects however, the creative ethnic people seem to 'break' this rule that too without 'straying' away from nature, as is their wont.

The Raj Gonds of Kothaguda (G) in Utnoor mandal, a small village located by the side of the Utnoor-Jannaram road, follow an 'organic' practice in paddy farming which saves them precious time which can even be applicable to all paddy farmers in the area. Instead of the traditional way of raising nursery by planting paddy seeds in a compact piece of wet land, the Adivasis in this habitation get the seeds to germinate within the leaves of teak and the medicinal vavili (*Vitex trifolia*) tree, a method evidently most suited under dry conditions.

Raised platform

"We call the process 'mande vatval' meaning setting up of a raised platform," disclosed farmer Athram Bhujang Rao. "We do so by first laying equal sized stones on the ground as pedestal upon which thin sized wooden poles are placed to ensure flow of air from below," he continued.

"A bamboo mat is placed on the wooden poles on which a layer of teak leaves is arranged with perforations to let water drain out. The seeds of regular variety of paddy are placed on the teak leaves which are then covered with a layer made up of leaves of vavili, called nirgudi in Gondi, and a top layer of teak leaves," the farmer explained.

About 30 kg of paddy seed is placed on this platform measuring 4 ft X 4 ft. Heavy objects like flat stones are placed on leaves on top to make the arrangement rather compact.

"The seeds are watered every morning and evening for three days in order to control the heat generated by the nirgudi leaves. The seeds begin sprouting on the second day itself and are ready for being raised in a conventional nursery," Ada Gangaram, who set up the 'nursery' added.

Time saving

"This is a wonderful way of going about the initial process of paddy cultivation as it saves about 8 to 10 days for the farmer for taking up transplantation activity. It does help the farmers during the beginning of monsoon season when there is little water available for raising nurseries," opined retired Agriculture Officer in Adilabad C. Narsingu who conceded that it was for the first time that he got to know of the innovative method.

"As per the normal standards, about 30 kg of paddy seeds are planted in every acre. The yield is also normal at about 25 quintals per acre," Mr. Bhujang Rao pointed out.

It maybe mentioned here that the Adivasis living along the Godavari river have paddy cultivation as part of their farming practices. Those living in the interiors had cultivated traditional varieties like red rice since centuries but the practice has almost vanished now.

First published by

The Hindu