

## **A Wild Free Walk with Women in Search of Ancient Ways of Living in a Changing World**

### **(My next phase of life-heart-soul-work)**

**First of all I express my deep gratitude to dear friend and mentor John Seed and the Rainforest Information Centre for the support I received which made my life and work easier during the last two to three years.**

**I would like to continue the enriching witnessing of the agricultural and ecological restoration going on in Wayanad and Attappady under the leadership of Adivasi (indigenous people) women.** More than me supporting and appreciating them, it is me who is getting enriched and healed by their spiritual faith in living the way they love to. Moreover I am blessed with a long term hope in nature's resilience, human capacity to change for the better and children's joy in farming and in the wilds.

**I would like to learn, document and reinforce the rich traditional knowledge of the rich diversity of the wild edible plants and herbs used by the Adivasis in these two areas.** Some of the plants are still not identified scientifically (this is my observation as I have sent pictures to field Botanists who are not able to identify them) and need to be conserved. Conservation of plant diversity can be assured only if people identify, use and depend on them regularly. Even they agree that it is in the human mind that plants go extinct and later in the land.

**An illustrated booklet on the edible wild plants** with local names, mainstream name (if there is such a name) and if available the Botanical name along with the ways of indigenous cooking and recipes is a long term dream.

**A glossary of the diversity of the indigenous cultivars** (cultivated varieties), land races, endemic species/varieties of crops like rice in Wayanad and millets in Attappady is also being prepared.

**Nurseries of indigenous trees to be planted along the riverside and the eroded hillside** are already there under the Forest Conservation Committees as part of the Participatory Forest Management program of the Forest Department. Some of the women I know are Presidents and members of this committee, but not all of them are very enthusiastic about planting trees. There is a misunderstanding (rightly so) that if wild trees come up, the land will be taken away by the government. Clarity is needed in this issue through honest dialoguing with the government departments under the initiative of the Adivasi women. A right combination of able and committed women and sensitive and empathetic official can and has done wonders in ecological restoration. But this is still a long term dream.

**Encouraging educated Adivasi youth to take up traditional farming** for food security as a viable and healthy livelihood, and also to save themselves from despondency and alcoholism is also an ongoing education/empowerment process.

RIC will send Santhi \$4000 to support her beautiful work going forward.

Santhi also wrote: "It is definitely a beautiful involvement in a wonderful movement of restoration, re-seeding, rejuvenation, reconnecting and re-storying as they say now. So enriching and joyful, making my life meaningful and soulfully spiritual. All thanks to you.

They have requested me to help in documenting the Oral History and traditional knowledge, songs, stories, legends, rituals and cultural memories of the elders - women and men - of the Kurumba Adivasi community in Attappady. Perhaps the last generation who remember their songs and stories will be no more in a few years. As you know this is called 'Orality' by Social Scientists! I am curious to know whether there is ecological wisdom also embedded in their stories.

Today I got a whatsapp message from one of the farmers with pictures of little millet harvest in a hamlet where I was in August last. I am attaching the pictures.

The elderly woman who had embraced me so warmly can be seen smart and beautiful with the harvested Little Millet, which they call 'chaama'. You would love the tasty light tiny grain without gluten or too much carbohydrate, but full of fiber and micro nutrients.

Thank you once again dear soul-brother. " and sent us these photos of the chaama harvest:

