



# Guftagoo



*Chalo, Sab Milkar is Guftagoo ko Dilkash  
Banaye*

## A NOTE FROM THE MANAGING TRUSTEE

Dear Friends and supporters,

We are excited to announce that "Guftagoo" is set to launch its third edition, covering the period from October to December 2024. The demand for our newsletter is ever-growing, with positive feedback pouring in from our team, friends at Samerth, and other stakeholders. This quarter has been a vibrant and invigorating time in Samerth's lifecycle.

Our results-based management program in Kutch has been ongoing, yielding significant insights as we witness its impact unfold. The team has demonstrated resilience, ready to embrace new challenges ahead.

This quarter, we welcomed Najma Keshvani as our new Programme Manager for education in the urban sector. Her enthusiasm and expertise have been invaluable, enhancing our efforts and providing robust support to our expanding team.

In Chhattisgarh, we marked the beginning of the second phase of a four-year initiative funded by Bharat Rural Livelihood Foundation, which has instilled confidence in our team to continue our impactful work with renewed vigor.

After a joyful Diwali break, we prepared for a visit from the Commanland team from the Netherlands. It was a pleasure to meet their new Managing Director, Gabrielle Taus, as we collaborated on understanding the landscape and strategizing for the next five years. Notably, the presence of the District Forest Officer, Kawardha during the landscape visit has opened new avenues for convergence.

In December, Krishna, our Senior Programme Adviser, and I attended the WIPRO partner meet at Azim Premji University in Bangalore. We had the privilege of meeting esteemed leaders in the education sector, including Anurag Behar, CEO of the Azim Premji Foundation, alongside other senior figures.

We also made strides in our livelihood project, Sangam, with support from the Ford Foundation.

Our work across Ahmedabad, Kutch, and Chhattisgarh is poised for significant advancements in the coming year.

The team's energy is palpable, and I am thrilled to present this newsletter showcasing the exceptional work achieved by the Urban Programme and beyond. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all supporters and well-wishers of Samerth—your contributions make "Guftoo" possible. Let us continue to spread love and positivity.

The newsletter represents a leisurely conversation that is becoming archaic, considering our shockingly low attention spans. So, let's enjoy some chai or coffee together in a relaxed setting, exploring ourselves and the work being done in Samerth's areas of impact. Let's connect with each other and cultivate friendships... Remember, love is never too much!

**Gazala Paul**

**Founder/Managing Trustee/ Executive Director**



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## Samerth's Innovative Education Program: Transforming Foundational Learning in Underserved Areas

Samerth's Urban Education Program focuses on enhancing the quality of education in underserved communities by empowering teachers, Anganwadi workers, and community members. The initiative aims to strengthen foundational literacy and numeracy skills (as outlined by NEP under NIPUN Bharat) through creative teaching methods.

By engaging preschool and primary-grade children (Grades 1–4) in creative pedagogy, the program fosters physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and creative development. It operates across urban areas such as Vejalpur, Juhapura, Fatewadi, Sarkhej, and Makarba, as well as rural blocks like Sanand, Bawla, and Dashkoi in Ahmedabad district.

In addition to education, the program drives women's empowerment and community engagement, promoting holistic development in Panchayat villages of rural Ahmedabad.



### Bridging the Digital Divide: Aliya's Journey of Digital Transformation

Samerth Urban Program's six Digital Libraries are transforming education in semi-urban, underserved areas, expanding from four libraries due to high community demand and positive outcomes. Serving students from Grades 4 to 12, these libraries support academic performance by enhancing conceptual understanding, assignments, and foundational skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Students engage with apps like Duolingo, Shala Mitra, Canva, and ChatGPT, while older students gain digital skills in MS Office and Gmail.

A shining example is Aliya, who began using the library in Grade 3 with no prior tablet experience. Now in Grade 7, she independently completes school projects, creates posters on Canva, and improves her English on Duolingo. Her journey showcases the empowering impact of these libraries.

With significant academic improvements and positive feedback from teachers and parents, Samerth's Digital Libraries are giving vulnerable communities the tools for a brighter future.



### Empowering Educators: Samerth's Teachers' Training on Creative Pedagogy

In the last quarter, Samerth organized a transformative training session for 58 teachers from five schools, focusing on the integration of Teaching Learning Materials (TLM) to enhance Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN).

Recognizing the demand from teachers and principals for innovative tools, Samerth provided TLM kits designed to foster interactive and engaging learning environments. However, the need for proper training on effectively using these materials emerged. Addressing this, Samerth's session included hands-on demonstrations, showcasing how TLM aligns with different developmental stages of students from kindergarten to Grade 5.

The training began with an icebreaker performance song, emphasizing the importance of creating joyful and motivating classroom environments. Teachers actively practiced using TLM, gaining confidence in applying creative pedagogical techniques to support student growth.

The session concluded with enthusiastic feedback, as educators expressed excitement about implementing the TLM kits in their classrooms, envisioning improved teaching practices and better learning outcomes. This initiative highlights Samerth's commitment to empowering educators with practical tools and innovative strategies to transform education.



## Empowering Women Through Self-Help Groups

Under the Samerth Urban Program, 26 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in rural areas are driving financial independence for 344 women. With monthly contributions of ₹100 or ₹50, these groups have collectively saved ₹7,37,250, reflecting their commitment to economic empowerment.

Through inter-lending, ₹80,000 has been disbursed to 11 members, supporting entrepreneurial ventures such as sari sales, home businesses, beauty parlours, and household needs. Some loans have also been directed toward children's education, ensuring academic continuity. This initiative not only fosters financial discipline and stability but also enables women to expand businesses, support families, and contribute to their communities' social and economic development. Samerth's SHGs are building a foundation for resilience and self-sufficiency, empowering women to lead change.

## Safa Pathan's Transformation: From Dropout to Re-Enrolment

## Samerth Talim Kendra: Ghazala's Journey of Confidence and Independence

Samerth Talim Kendra provides specialized services and therapies for children with disabilities through its main center, two community-based spoke centers, and a Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) program. Offering therapies like physiotherapy, speech therapy, art-based interventions, vocational training, and more, the initiative currently benefits 128 children across its facilities.

Ghazala, a 42-year-old woman with a 60% intellectual disability, has been attending Samerth Talim Kendra for seven years. With no steady income, her family encouraged her to join the center to develop skills and stay engaged. Over time, Ghazala has transformed into a confident, independent individual who travels alone to the center and actively participates in therapies like music, art, and animal-assisted therapy.

She has also excelled in vocational training, creating paper plates, bead jewelry, and operating a photocopier with precision. Her progress reflects the life-changing impact of Samerth Talim Kendra, fostering growth, happiness, and a sense of purpose for individuals with disabilities.



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## Celebration of International Day of Persons with Disabilities

On December 7, 2014, Samerth Ahmedabad Urban Program joined the celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities with a vibrant drawing competition at Tagore Hall, Paldi. Organized by the Society for the Welfare of the Mentally Retarded (SWMR), the event brought together 500 children with special needs, 20 teachers, and 50 parents from 30 organizations, fostering an atmosphere of creativity and inclusivity.

Samerth Talim Kendra proudly participated with 11 students showcasing their artistic talents through captivating drawings of Gandhi Ji, serene landscapes, and floral themes. The event was graced by Shri V. J. Rajput, IAS, Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, who highlighted the importance of such initiatives in empowering children with special needs. The program provided a platform to boost self-confidence, uncover hidden talents, and promote holistic development. Consolation prizes and E-certificates were distributed, celebrating the creativity and resilience of the participants. The event not only inspired attendees but also reinforced the spirit of community bonding and inclusiveness.

## Strengthening Ties: Improved Liaison with District Administration

The Samerth Urban Program has overcome challenges in engaging with government stakeholders at the District and Block levels. Over the past three months, coordination with department heads in Ahmedabad Rural and Urban areas has significantly improved. A pivotal moment came in November 2024, when a letter from Ahmedabad Jilla Panchayat streamlined grassroots implementation, opening new avenues for impactful work.

This progress has been spearheaded by Miss Najma Keshvani, a seasoned professional with over 20 years of experience in the non-profit sector. With expertise in government liaison, education management, and strategic planning, Najma has strengthened Samerth's collaborations. Her qualifications, including a Professional Teacher Educator Program from IIS London and a Master's in Social Work and Literature, have further bolstered the program's efforts.

Her leadership has been instrumental in transforming challenges into opportunities, ensuring the Urban Program's objectives align with government frameworks and community needs.



## Empowering Women Through Skills: Varsha's Journey

Nineteen-year-old Varsha Solanki from Sari village transformed her life through Samerth Community Center's beauty parlour course. In six months, she mastered threading, mehndi design, facials, waxing, and bridal makeup.

On December 14th, Varsha earned ₹3,500 for her first professional bridal makeup and mehndi order at a group wedding, marking her financial independence and making her family proud.

Varsha's journey highlights how skill development programs empower young women to achieve self-reliance and unlock their potential.





## Miyawaki Forest Plantation Drive at Government Middle School, Sheetalpani

We have successfully completed the Miyawaki Forest Plantation Drive at Government Middle School, Sheetalpani Village, organized by Samerth Charitable Trust with the enthusiastic participation of Child Clubs. The Miyawaki method, known for its rapid forest growth, enhanced biodiversity, and improved ecosystem resilience, was applied to create a thriving, biodiverse forest.

Key achievements include the planting of over 400 saplings from 16 native species and the active involvement of children and the community in environmental conservation. Expert guidance from Dr. Emmanuel D'Silva played a crucial role in ensuring the program's success. The event also provided a valuable learning opportunity for students, connecting academic concepts with real-world environmental practices, such as soil treatment, carbon sequestration, and the importance of native plant species.

This initiative has inspired students to take ownership of nature conservation, while also providing vital habitats for local wildlife.

## Empowering Anganwadi Workers for Early Childhood Education Excellence

In this quarter Samerth has successfully completed a 3-day Early Childhood Education (ECE) training under the Learning and Migration Program (LAMP), supported by the American India Foundation in partnership with the Department of Women & Child Development and ICDS. Held at all the ICDS office in Chilphi,

The training empowered 68 Anganwadi Workers from five districts, including 37 from the Bodla Chilphi sector. The sessions focused on enhancing early childhood development skills, covering key topics such as developmental traits of children aged 3-6, fun learning games, storytelling techniques with puppets and picture cards, and crafting storybooks and TLMs. By equipping Anganwadi Workers with the tools to become master trainers, the program aims to bring lasting positive changes to early childhood education in the community.



## Capacity Building of Primary School Teachers in Chhattisgarh

Three transformative 3-day training program for primary school teachers under the Learning and Migration Program (LAMP), supported by the American India Foundation has been completed. This training, organized in collaboration with SCERT Chhattisgarh and the District & Block Education Departments of Kabirdham, Mahasamund, Sarangarh, Sakti, and Balodabazaar, focused on enhancing the skills of teachers to create an engaging and effective learning environment.

The program centered on the Art of Facilitation, Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN), and pedagogy for Grades 3 to 5. Teachers from three districts participated in hands-on activities to develop handmade Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs) designed to bridge learning gaps and promote grade-appropriate progress. A 45-day FLN plan was also created to support children with learning gaps, ensuring continuous academic growth.

The enthusiasm and active participation from the teachers were truly inspiring. Their positive feedback and commitment to applying these innovative practices in their classrooms reflect their dedication to improving education for every child.

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## Strengthening Collaboration for Landscape Restoration in Kabirdham

Recently, Samerth hosted an important visit from the Commonland Foundation team, led by Managing Director Ms. Gabrielle Taus, along with Mr. Shashi Kumar, Divisional Forest Officer of Kabirdham, and our coalition partner PRADAN. This visit marked a key milestone in shaping Samerth's vision for the Kabirdham landscape over the next five years. Our strategy focuses on harnessing opportunities through the High Impact Mega Watershed Project and integrating landscape restoration practices from the CHiRP program to promote water resilience.

This visit also fostered stronger collaboration with the Kabirdham Forest Department, with Mr. Kumar proposing monthly coordination meetings between Samerth's team, the Forest Department, and local offices. These sessions will drive joint action and enhance interventions for landscape restoration and water management.

A productive discussion with local community members and a visit to Dholbhajja village allowed us to witness Samerth's ongoing watershed work firsthand. The Commonland team introduced the 4 Returns Guidebook, a key resource for sustainable restoration efforts. These collaborations are instrumental in realizing Samerth's larger vision of ecological resilience and community empowerment.



### लाख की खेती : एक समृद्ध जीवन की और



कबीरधाम जिले के बोड़ला विकासखंड से 13 किलोमीटर दूरी पर और राष्ट्रीय मार्ग 30 पर स्थित एक छोटा सा गाँव पालक है। यह एक पहाड़ी क्षेत्र है जिसमें बैगा आदिवासी समूह के 51 परिवार निवास करते हैं। गाँव में मुख्य आजीविका स्रोत मजदूरी, वनोपज और शहद संग्रहण है। इसी गाँव में बल्लू सिंह बैगा अपने परिवार के साथ रहते हैं।

बल्लू सिंह बैगा 10 वर्ष पूर्व वन विभाग के सहयोग से अपने कुसुम के पेड़ में लाख के खेती शुरू किये थे। परन्तु आवश्यक तकनीकी सहयोग के अभाव और लाख की चोरी के कारण उन्होंने ये काम छोड़ दिया था। फिर समर्थ संस्था के द्वारा जनवरी 2024 में उन्हें लाख बीज और आवश्यक तकनीकी सहयोग प्रदान किया गया। परिणामस्वरूप उनके एक पेड़ से 31 किलो लाख का उत्पादन हुआ। बल्लू बैगा ने 500 रूपए प्रति किलो के हिसाब से स्थानीय हाट बाजार में बेचा इससे उन्हें 15500 रूपए का मुनाफा हुआ।

बल्लू बैगा से प्रेरित होकर गाँव के 12 और किसानो ने लाख की खेती करने का निर्णय लिया। इस साल पालक गाँव में 55 और पेड़ों में लाख की खेती शुरू हो रहा है। यह लाख की खेती समुदाय को एक समृद्ध जीवन की और बढ़ने, एवं जंगल के बचाव हेतु इकट्ठा होने के लिए प्रेरित कर रहा है।

### वन चौपाल: जंगल संरक्षण की नई पहल

वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन विभाग के सौजन्य से 12 दिसंबर 2024 को ग्राम बोक्करखार में स्थित वन पेट्रोलिंग कैंप में "वन चौपाल" का आयोजन किया गया, जिसमें वन विभाग के कर्मचारी, समुदाय के लोग और समर्थ संस्था के प्रतिनिधियों ने भाग लिया। इस आयोजन का उद्देश्य जंगल की सुरक्षा और संवर्धन के लिए समुदाय और वन विभाग के बीच समन्वय को बढ़ावा देना था।

चौपाल में वन विभाग द्वारा किए जा रहे निर्माण कार्य और पौधारोपण पर चर्चा की गई। इसके साथ ही, संयुक्त वन प्रबंधन समिति द्वारा आजीविका गतिविधियों में सहयोग के मुद्दे पर विचार हुआ। वन्य प्राणियों द्वारा जनमानस और कृषि को होने वाले नुकसान पर चर्चा करते हुए मुआवजे की प्रक्रिया पर भी बात की गई। इसके अतिरिक्त, आगामी योजनाओं के क्रियान्वयन के लिए मजदूरों के पंजीकरण पर भी चर्चा की गई।

इस आयोजन ने वन विभाग, समुदाय और समर्थ संस्था के बीच बेहतर समन्वय की शुरुआत की है, जिससे जंगल, वन्यजीव और समुदाय के बीच सामंजस्यपूर्ण संबंधों की दिशा में महत्वपूर्ण कदम उठाए गए हैं।



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