

MAR 17 RECD

Ramesh Yeshankar
Weekly Ritual Witness
5 February, 1984 Chikhale Ashram

This is a witness given here in Chikhale which we felt was so on target that it should be printed and sent out in the global packets. As you can tell from the content, it was during the preparation for the field visit of the delegates from the International Exposition of Rural Development. Colleagues from both Vaviharsh and Maliwada houses came before the event and participated in the preparation. Ramesh is an artist and painted/repainted the murals in Chikhale Village. They are beautiful.

"In the past week, when I was painting murals on the walls, one old woman came to me and said, 'these development people haven't any work. First they whitewash everything and now they paint pictures on the walls!!'. There were some other villagers watching who said to her 'old woman, what are you saying to them, if they were not here nothing would happen. They play a crucial role along with the village leaders in helping us improve our village.' But she was not listening. She spoke angrily, saying 'maybe they are paying you some money, but they are not helping me by building me a house', and then she left.

The second day she came by again on her way to fetch water. She stopped to see what I was doing. At that time I was painting the programmatic chart on the wall. When she saw it she said, 'painter, is this a picture of Chikhale women doing Ambar Charkha?' I said it was. She then noticed a picture of a classroom and asked, 'is this a picture of our pre-school?' I said it was. She then asked, 'are all these pictures you have painted happening in our village?' I said they were. She said, 'now I understand what you do'. Now that she was listening I said to her, Listen, I tell you, we are catalytic. We bring public - private - voluntary and local people together to improve and develop the village. We work for the community - not just for a few individuals. We are not officers who people can bring complaints to. We are model builders - we are doing research, training and demonstration in villages around the world. She said, 'Oh, I see. That is great. You have helped me to have the right view. Do your best'.

This was a great event for me. In reflection it has revealed one of the categories of profound humanness in a new way. From my experience, I would claim, LIFE IS DECLARATION. We are living in an increasingly interdependent world which offers many opportunities for actions from which everyone will benefit. What is required are the images that give people the eyes to see and the capacity to change.