

Maganlal Ahir

A farmer's portrait



‘One must accept truths revealed by nature as soon as they are visible.’

- Maganlal Ahir.

There was a time when Maganlal, a farmer from Anjar block in Kachchh, used state-subsidized chemical fertilizers and pesticides. He saw his productivity increase in the initial years and then gradually drop, but farming was still turning in a profit. But increasingly he saw that the soil was retaining less moisture and the microbes in it were dying. He decided to turn organic.

Turning organic was painful, for the soil had got used to chemicals. But Maganlal had cows and buffaloes and he used their manure to feed the soil, rotated his crop through the year and even left some land fallow for months at a time.

He also grew trees (right) around his farms to recreate nature's chain of pests and pest-eaters. And then an amazing thing happened - the microbes returned and water stayed in the soil for longer. It would take between 6 and 8 years for his land to be healthy again, but Maganlal was nothing if not persistent. Today he says, he earns as much from his farming as he did when he used chemicals. But a greater satisfaction to him is to see the restoration of nature's cycles on his land.

