

The trees of  
Piplantri bearing  
the fruits of self-sustenance

*Piplantri: Trees of Women Empowerment, bearing the fruits of self-sustenance*

*FLAME University*

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## Certificate

**This is to certify that the work incorporated in this report titled “*Piplantri: Trees of Women Empowerment, bearing the fruits of self-sustenance*” submitted by the undersigned Research Team was carried out under my mentorship. Such material as has been obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged.**

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## **Abstract**

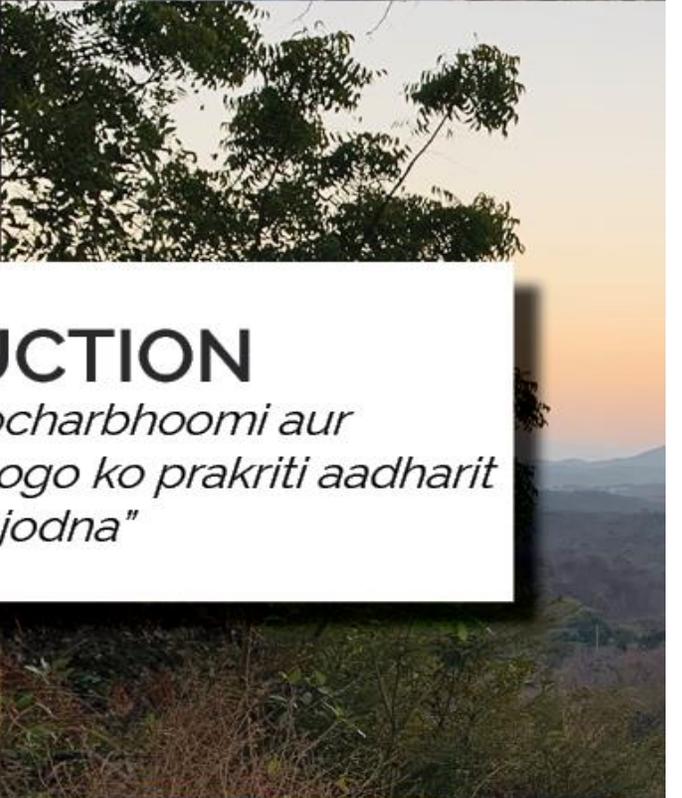
Piplantri, a village in the Rajsamand district of Rajasthan, harbors the roots of an ecofeminism tradition that has given rise to the need of self-sustenance through the means of local self-governance. This research aims at providing an insight to the milestone tradition of planting a hundred and eleven tree on the birth of a girl child to symbolize the end of female infanticides and feticides, which was initiated by the Piplantri Panchayat under the governance of Shri Shyam Sundar Paliwal.

The tradition has contributed to the growth and upliftment of the socio-economic status of women in the village. It has also given rise to female enrollment in schools, and has contributed to the increased rate of employment amongst females. Women of Piplantri have not stepped back from voicing their opinions and engaging in decision making by means of participating in the village politics. The men in Piplantri have also supported and lent a helping hand in the long yet fruitful process of women empowerment.

Additionally, through this research, the developments that have occurred under the Piplantri Model of governance have been showcased. Finally, this study is an ethnographic research that provides an overview of how through affective administration, villages can foster sustainable development.

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**INTRODUCTION**  
*"Beti, pani, pedh, gocharbhoomi aur  
vanya jeevo ko bachakar, logo ko prakriti aadharit  
rozgar se jodna"*



## **Historical and Geographical Overview**

In an environment where each morning newspaper is filled with incidents of girls being raped, tormented, molested, killed or treated like an object, one small village in the southern part of the Rajsamand district in Rajasthan is harmoniously practicing its homegrown tradition of eco-feminism and has achieved inspiring results. Since 2005, the village panchayat of Piplantri has been saving the girl child from infanticide while simultaneously expanding the green cover in and surrounding the village. The villagers of Piplantri plant 111 trees on the birth of every girl child and the collective efforts of the community ensure the nourishment and care of these trees as the girl grows up. The villagers have successfully planted more than a quarter-million trees since the beginning of this tradition. A wide variety of trees including neem, amla, mango, and sheesham have been planted on the village's grazing lands. The former sarpanch of Piplantri, Shri Shyam Sundar Paliwal planted the first-ever tree of this initiative in the memory of his daughter Kiran, who passed away due to dehydration. Paliwal says that most of the villagers were reluctant to accept a girl child which was the prime reason why he framed this practice. These families were identified by the village committee (comprising of the school principal, the Anganwadi and panchayat members) in order to spread awareness about the newly adopted practice. A fixed deposit of Rs. 31,000 is created in the name of the girl child with a maturity period of 20 years and includes Rs. 21,000 from the villagers and Rs. 10,000 from the father of the girl. In order to make the entire practice secure for the girl, the parents are made to sign an affidavit which states that the parents would ensure that the girl attends school regularly, they would take care of the trees planted in her name and would not marry her off before 18 years. Along with this, villagers also plant 11 trees on the death of a family member.

However, Piplantri did not stop at just the planting of trees and greening their environment. The residents have also planted a significant number of aloe vera plants to protect the trees from termites. Today, these aloe vera plants form a major source of income for most of the residents. The advantages of Aloe Vera were realized, following which it was processed and marketed in a variety of ways. Women were trained by experts which led to the production and sale of several aloe vera products like pickle, gel, juice, etc. The Piplantri panchayat now has its own website for the sale of these products and for inspiring the masses about the Piplantri village model. A complete ban on alcohol, cutting of trees and open grazing of animals was enforced in the village. It has been claimed by the villagers that no police case has been registered for the past 7-8 years.

Piplantri aims to be a self-reliant and self-sufficient village. The vision of Shri Shyam Sundar Paliwal has helped the village grow and inspire multiple local level governments in taking up the Piplantri model. In the words of Paliwal, Piplantri aims at saving the girl child, water, trees, grazing lands, and wildlife while engaging the villagers in environment centric employment.

## **1. Rationale**

The deep-rooted norms of patriarchy in India have been challenged by the initiation of this tradition by men in Piplantri. This unique aspect of the tradition where men took a stance for saving the girl child persuaded us to take up this project. Through this research, we attempt to understand whether this male-driven tradition aligns with the theories of eco-feminism or not. In addition to this, we would analyze this tradition through the lens of social, economic, environmental and political viewpoints.

## **2. Research Statement**

To study the impact of eco-feminism on the socio-economic condition of women in Piplantri.

## **3. Aims and Objectives**

- The main objectives of the research were to understand the idea behind the tradition along with its implementation over the years.
- In addition to this, the study examines the tradition's social and financial impact on women in Piplantri.
- Through this research, we also attempted to understand the involvement of women in the community decision making, politics of the village and their household decisions.
- Finally, this study approached different groups of people from school-going children and employed men and women to the elders of the village in order to record a diverse range of perspectives about the Piplantri way of living.

## **4. Research Methodology**

### **4.1 Sources of Data Collection**

As a part of conducting this research, the researchers were involved in collecting Secondary Data as well as Primary Data.

#### **4.1.1. Secondary Review of Data**

In order to gain a pre-field background about the topic, a number of secondary sources have been used to enhance the researcher's knowledge about the topic. For the purpose of the same, the researchers referred to a number of government reports, news articles, organizational documentaries (audio-visuals), dissertations and journals. While reviewing the literature it was observed that the content mainly revolved around certain broad aspects about the tradition. The process of secondary review of literature kept the researchers engaged and intrigued. Furthermore, this process helped the researchers to identify gaps and consequently plan the on-field schedule.

#### **4.1.2. Primary Data**

For the latter part of this project, the research team conducted ethnographic research by visiting the Piplantri Village. To be able to collect a significant amount of primary data, the research team was divided into five groups of three people, which included one member of the documentary team, one content writer and one interviewer. As a part of the primary research, the groups focused on a new village (belonging to the Piplantri Panchayat) every day. All the relevant data was collected through on-field observations and interviews using the snowball method of sampling.

#### **4.2 Sample**

**Population-** the Piplantri Panchayat has a total population of 4339 people spread across 9 villages that are as follows:

- i. Piplantri Kala
- ii. Kadecha ka Guda
- iii. Piplantri Khurd
- iv. Chhoti Morvad
- v. Badi Morvad
- vi. Dharmeta
- vii. Ghugleta
- viii. Umti
- ix. Arna

**Sampling Method-** the structure of the panchayat is such that it controls nine villages under it. This made collecting data from the entire demographic population extremely difficult and prone to errors.

In order to conduct a successful ethnographic research and gain valuable insights about this wide ranging topic some methods of non-probability sampling were used.

**a. Snowball Sampling:**

Snowball sampling is a method of non-probability sampling that allows the researchers to find a sample of respondents in situations where the sample is not readily available or in cases where the sample is too small.

With no prior knowledge about the village, the first step of conducting the research was to get in touch with the sarpanch. This was carried out by two members of the research team prior to the field visit. Once the research team arrived at the village they were introduced to Mr. Rahul Paliwal, who then became the main person of contact and guided the team on the field. With the help of Mr. Rahul Paliwal and by using snowball sampling we were able to identify and connect with some interviewees who further introduced us to more people because of which we were able to collect a significant amount of primary data from the field.

**b. Convenience Sampling:**

Under the convenience sampling method of non-probability sampling, the selection of samples depends on the ease of accessibility and availability of the sample to the researchers. This method is not just cost effective but less time consuming as well. As this research was conducted under time constraints, convenience sampling proved to be beneficial. Through the method of snowball sampling we were able to identify our respondents but in order to shortlist the respondents the team used convenience sampling and shortlisted five villages that were accessible to us that are as follows:

- i. Piplantri Kala
- ii. Kadecha ka Guda
- iii. Piplantri Khurd
- iv. Morvad
- v. Arna

**Sample:** The sample of this research included-

- i. Women
- ii. Men
- iii. Children
- iv. Teachers and the Headmaster of the Primary School
- v. Teachers of the Anganwadi

- vi. Members of the Self Help Groups
- vii. Shrimati Anita Devi Paliwal (Sarpanch since 2020)
- viii. Shri Shyam Sundar Paliwal (initiated the practice)

### **4.3 Tools for Data Collection**

#### **a. Interviews-**

The research team used a verbal interview method to collect primary data from the respondents. Furthermore, these interviews were recorded in the form of audios and videos with the consent of the respondents. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to ensure the flexibility and accommodative nature of the questions to facilitate the convenience and comfort of the interviewees. The questions in these interviews were additionally supported by frequent use of probing questions and statements which fulfilled the exploratory tangent of this research.

#### **b. Observation-**

For the purpose of filling the gaps that could not be answered by interviews, a method of non-participant observation was used. This method allows the researchers to get insights without participating in an event. Herein, all the observations are made from the periphery which helped the researchers to gain an overview of the village and the tradition.

### **5. Limitations**

- a. **Language:** As many of the respondents only conversed in their respective native languages, it was difficult for the research team to understand some of the interviews. Furthermore, the meaning of certain interviews might have gotten lost during the translations.
- b. **Time and budget constraints:** As the research team carried out this research under the DIP guidelines of FLAME University. The scope of the research may have been limited in terms of the time when research is being conducted and how the funds were allocated.
- c. **Lack of quantitative primary data:** As the research carried out was ethnographic in nature, most of the data collected was qualitative in nature. Therefore, the researchers were not able to conduct any form of statistical analysis.

- d. **Lack of credible secondary data:** Due to the lack of reliable secondary resources, the researcher could have misinterpreted the scope of the study, which in turn could have led to the formulation of research questions and aims that are either too broad or too narrow in nature.
- e. **Homogeneity of responses:** Since the research was conducted over a close-knit community, majority of the responses overlapped with each other.
- f. **Formulation of the research question and the aims:** The research questions and aims of the study were too narrow to have covered all the aspects of the Piplantri Model. By widening the approach towards this research, one would be able to cover various factors that are interdependent in nature.
- g. **Scope of Discussions:** The researchers may have lacked adequate experience in the field of conducting researches over such a large sample size. Therefore, the nature of discussion in the paper might have been compromised.



# SECONDARY REVIEW OF LITERATURE

*"The broken branch of a larger tree"*



Eco-Feminism, a term coined in 1974 by Francoise d'Eaubonne, a French writer, is made up of two words ecology and feminism. Eco-feminism aims to connect the oppression of women with ecological degradation and how women's contribution to nature can have a positive impact on both. In India, the brand of ecofeminism was pioneered by Vandana Shiva which supports that women have been a strong force of solving multiple societal problems and environmental protection is one of them. An article by Shweta Vashistha published on *EcoIdeaz* displays some intriguing trends portraying the stand taken by village women towards ecological conservation and further establishing a foundation for Ecofeminism in India.

The first trend that the article talks about is the digging of a well by the villagers of Langoti in the Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh. Langoti, like any other backward village, faces the evil of caste discrimination, separating the upper castes and Dalits. The untouchable part of Langoti lacked supply of water which made the lives of Dalits miserable and caused greater discomfort to women, who had to travel long distances in order to fetch water. Therefore, the courageous and determined Dalit women decided to demand the construction of a well in the Dalit area from the Langoti gram panchayat. Due to a lack of funds, the demand was rejected. This forced the women to pick up hammers and shovels in order to dig the well themselves. After 40 days of digging, the well was about 20 feet deep and water had started flowing into the well. (Ecoideaz, 2018)

The story of the Piplantri village in the Rajsamand district of Rajasthan is the second trend that the article focuses on. Shyam Sundar Paliwal, the former sarpanch of Piplantri started an eco-friendly tradition in the memory of his daughter, Kiran who passed away in 2006. As his response to this grave loss, Paliwal started an initiative of planting 111 trees on the birth of a girl child in the purview of growing female infanticide in Piplantri. The villagers have voluntarily participated and planted many saplings along with ensuring their maintenance. Aloe Vera is planted around the trees to prevent infestation by termites. Furthermore, the produce obtained from the planted trees including Aloe Vera has acted as a vital source of income for the village residents. (Ecoideaz, 2018)

“The purpose of planting trees is to ensure that every girl child is financially secure and for this, the villagers contribute 21,000 collectively and take 10,000 from the parents to put it in a fixed deposit which gets matured when the girl turns 20. Besides making the girl financially stable the villagers also make sure that the girl receives proper education and is not married off before they attain adulthood. Apart from conserving the environment and empowering women the village has another feather on its cap, it is

reported that in the last 7-8 years there has been no police case. The Piplantri village truly stands as an example of Ecofeminism that must be emulated.” (Ecoideaz, 2018)

Finally, the article talks about two other stories, one of an NGO named Navdanya and the other of a 12-year-old, Shruti Nerkar. Navdanya was started by Vandana Shiva to advocate biodiversity conservation by means of a large group of organic producers and seed keepers. Shruti Nerkar has developed an innovative shower that saves many liters of water. She claims that the shower takes up only 15 liters of water as opposed to the usually used 80 liters. Therefore, it saves 65 liters of water in every shower. (Ecoideaz, 2018)

The above piece of literature describes the phenomenon of eco-feminism with the use of multiple case studies. Through the means of this article, the study was further focused specifically on the case study of the Piplantri Village in Rajasthan in order to answer the multiple questions about the movement and the village model. (Ecoideaz, 2018)

The Guardian published an article in 2018 titled “It's for my daughter's memory': the Indian village where every girl's life is celebrated”. This article talks about the story of Piplantri and its popular tradition of planting trees. After his daughter, Kiran’s death, Shyam Sundar Paliwal, the sarpanch of the village pledged to put an end to the stigma around the birth of a girl child and decided that the birth of each baby girl in the village would be celebrated by the planting of trees. Since Paliwal was the village head, his word was highly influential. On a decided date, each monsoon, the new mothers of the village would lay a red cloth inside a large basket and decorate it. They would place their baby girls in the basket and carry them on their heads to the spot where the trees were to be planted. Around 101 trees have been planted in the village since 2006 for around 65-70 baby girls born in the village. (Dhillon, 2018)

The transformation of Piplantri began with sowing the seed of the first-ever tree for Kiran. Paliwal did not just stop on that day, instead, he kept planting trees throughout the year and persuaded the villagers to follow the same. The panchayat laid water pipes that were dotted all around in order to irrigate the saplings. In all 350,000 trees have been planted in Piplantri since the beginning of this tradition.

“With this, I’m doing two things: showing joy at the arrival of a daughter and honoring the land where my ancestors lived and died,” Paliwal informed Guardian.

The village entrance has a huge hoarding displaying the names of all the girls born throughout the past year. (Dhillon, 2018)

Along with the planting of trees, money is collected when the girl is born in an attempt to raise 31,000 rupees which can be saved in a Fixed Deposit. With the interest on the Fixed Deposit, the family has a safe sum of money that would act as the potential dowry of the girl.

Paliwal said, “It gives the family financial security. In return, they pledge to look after the trees, send her to school, and not marry her off before the legal age of 18,” (Dhillon, 2018)

The chief medical and health officer of the district, Dr. Pankaj Gaur stated that the practice in Piplantri by Paliwal has inspired a government policy of 2016 to provide staggered benefits throughout the life of a female. Under this policy,

“The family receives 2,500 rupees on her birth and the same amount on her first birthday. This is doubled to 5,000 rupees if she finishes class five and class eight. When girls finish class 12, they get 35,000 rupees, making an overall total of 50,000 rupees. These benefits stop a girl being seen as a liability,” (Dhillon, 2018)

The village model of Piplantri was not limited to the planting of trees. Paliwal’s wife was prescribed to drink Aloe Vera juice by an Ayurvedic doctor to cure her chronic back problems. This led to Paliwal extending his planting spree to Aloe Vera as well. Later, he realized that Aloe Vera also protected the trees from termites.

“‘Later, it dawned on me that aloe vera could be a source of livelihood for the women – the widows and unmarried women with no income and the women whose husbands had migrated to the cities for work,’ Paliwal told the Guardian. After training, the women now make and market aloe vera gel, juice and pickle. Some earn up to 6,000 rupees a month.” (Dhillon, 2018)

The article helps in giving a background to the practice in the Piplantri village, it also leaves certain questions unanswered such as how successful this tradition has been in empowering women. It also leaves out multiple details regarding the village demographics and the implementation of the practice remains an unanswered question.

A research paper by the Indian Geographical Journal, *Influence of Scale in Extraction of Wastelands - A Case Study of Piplantri Village, Rajsamand District, Rajasthan*, answers the question of where does Piplantri get land to plant so many trees. Wastelands refer to an area that has low-quality land which cannot be used for agricultural practices, in other words, it is also known as a barren or non-forested area which could be further divided into non-cultivable and cultivable land. However, if underutilized or

improperly managed, normal cultivable lands could turn into wastelands due to some anthropogenic activity. Identification of wastelands aids in planning land use or developmental activities that can be done in areas. Piplantri is the land being studied in this research, for the identification of wastelands. This village is famous for diverse reclamation activities that have taken place for the past few years. Piplantri is surrounded by multiple mining sites such as Umthi, Gholeta, Morwar, Aarna, and others. The mining dust from these sites has gravely impacted the environment and the quality of drinking water in the village. The residents of Piplantri pledged to plant 111 trees for the birth of every girl child. Aloe Vera and other medicinal varieties of plants and trees are grown which further act as the source of income for the women in the district of Rajsamand. Since the past six years around 250,000 Aloe Vera saplings have been planted in the village and the same is used for the extraction and sale of juices and gels. This practice has restored a large area of the mining dump sites and has replenished the environment in and around the village. (Sahithi, Saxena, & Shankar, 2017)

This research carried out wasteland mapping for the Piplantri block which has 35 villages in the Rajsamand district in Rajasthan. The researchers used IRS LISS III and LISS IV images at different scales using the semi-automatic method. It was observed that open and dense scrubs and marble mines formed the dominant wastelands in the area. Many sub-classes were identified like dumps covered with scrubs, types of marble dumps and industrial wastes. These were further delineated from scrublands and active mining. The study was done using a 10,000 scale and a 50,000 scale. It was observed that an increased spatial resolution helped in improving the interpretation capability, further increasing the accuracy of the map created. The use of wastelands surrounding Piplantri were used to plant trees for the tradition. This served both the purposes: restoration of barren land along with environment replenishment due to the planting of trees. In conclusion, if more such studies are conducted over various agro-ecological areas in the country, it could improve the magnitude of wasteland extraction which would further contribute to improved management of wastelands in India. (Sahithi, Saxena, & Shankar, 2017)

The next literature being reviewed is an essay by *The Yale Review of International Studies*, “Growing up Green in Rajasthan: Feminism and Grassroots Desertification Combat in Piplantri Village”. This paper studies the Piplantri initiative through the lenses of Environment and Development, Political Ecology, and Social Movement Theory. It aims at concluding whether the Piplantri initiative has led to the empowerment of women or not. However, the inferences from this study have proven to be inconclusive. The researcher claimed that environment and development were two of the most useful

lenses to study the Piplantri tradition due to the reliability of the available resources which further allowed a critical examination of the Piplantri initiative. However, due to the lack of information about the tradition and the questionable nature of the news articles, the study remained inconclusive. The study claims that multiple factors about the Piplantri initiative indicate that it would surely uplift the women's stature within the community which would then result in gender-based equality. Unfortunately, these apparent factors are not backed by any quantitative research. Moreover, the lack of women's involvement and participation in the decision-making and voicing their opinions has contradicted the Piplantri case. "The Piplantri case may be an ecological success; however, its impact may prove detrimental to its purported beneficiaries." (Growing Up Green in Rajasthan, 2016)

Ela R. Bhatt, the founder of the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) argues that "The economic benefits of the project through the sale of aloe vera may indeed be providing women with extra income, which is a crucial step in the process of empowerment." (Growing Up Green in Rajasthan, 2016) While addressing the component of Fixed Deposits in the tradition, the study says,

"Additionally, the FD accounts established for the Piplantri girls—the eldest of whom are still nine years from legal marrying age—may, once the girls are old enough that their families can collect the money, strengthen their socioeconomic status and enhance their power in that sense. It will be interesting to see, in ten years' time, what the benefits have been to the financial and social climate of Piplantri as a result of this initiative; while it is possible that it is simply too soon for any real paradigmatic and ideological changes to have occurred and that it will take decades for them to become visible, there is also the danger that, due to the de facto paternalistic nature of the initiative, it may neither indicate nor cause ideological shifts." (Growing Up Green in Rajasthan, 2016)

Taking into consideration the lack of resources and limited credible journalism on the Piplantri tradition, it is non-viable to draw any forms of conclusions with regards to the future outcomes of the initiative or even the current atmosphere. The research also observed a lack of female voices which led to the inference that Piplantri has been a male-dominated endeavor regardless of its external feminist image. Hence, no assertive claims can be made either in support or at odds with the legitimacy of the tradition as an agent for development. In conclusion, the study considers the lens development and environment as the most appropriate ways of examining this initiative, simply because it raises more gaps than it answers. (Growing Up Green in Rajasthan, 2016)

The last piece of literature being reviewed is a report by the United Nations Development Program titled “Integrated Village Planning and Development”. This report on village planning was prepared as a part of the joint ministry of Panchayati Raj regarding capacity expansion for local governance. The manual uses case studies of multiple villages which are successful examples of village planning. The manual combines elements of planning from each village along with an overview of participatory village development and planning to ensure easy replication. One of the case studies taken up in the manual is that of Piplantri. Piplantri Gram Panchayat in the Rajsamand district of Rajasthan is a successful story of village development by means of enterprising and effective local self-governance. According to the manual,

“The Panchayat is a ‘group Panchayat’, consisting of 12 hamlets located in seven (earlier six) revenue villages, a distinctly different formation from the three other cases where development efforts generally took off after the village became a separate Panchayat. The Panchayat has a total estimated population currently of about 6500 (2001 Census records 5138), with 1100 households and additional immigrants working in the adjacent quarry. Less than 15% are BPL. The terrain is hilly and the largest business of marble quarrying (R.K. Marbles) in the state is located partly in the Panchayat area.” (“Integrated Village Planning and Development”, n.d.)

Piplantri village has primarily three main characteristics that are startlingly strong:

1. The high spirit and encouraging driving force of the erstwhile Sarpanch (a new Sarpanch was elected in the succeeding elections) to achieve goals.
2. Complete and proper utilization of the available government schemes and programs in order to formulate basic amenities and facilities in the village.
3. Finally, the well-grounded sourcing of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) resources obtained through multiple sources such as electrical fixture manufacturers or the adjacent quarrying company. “Principled stands on waste dumping, need to offset pollution and land usage and harmonious labor relationships with the quarrying company have been central features in this respect.” (“Integrated Village Planning and Development”, n.d.) For instance, in the case where quarry owners strictly demand Non-Rajasthani migrant labor in order to avoid problems with labor-handling, the adjacent quarry employees all of the labor that Piplantri has to offer without any complaints.

People's engagement in decision-making and in developmental activities are a very common occurrence and has majorly contributed to the success of the ex-Sarpanch's ideas and initiatives. Even though these factors are critical, they are not the driving factor in Piplantri. The major influence and motivation come from the ex-Sarpanch's aim to achieve a radical transformation. Regardless of his minimal education, no spearheading group, and comparatively less social inspiration, Piplantri is a clear case of "determined individual leadership". Nevertheless, this doesn't mean that the participation and support received from the village elders and other residents is not important, but the characteristic of a "charismatic leader" is what truly makes Piplantri different from other model villages. Furthermore, the Piplantri initiative displays a comparatively less time consuming, simpler and easily replicable process. ("Integrated Village Planning and Development", n.d.)

The literature available in books, reports, journals, and on the internet provided an overview of the tradition being practiced in Piplantri and how it correlates to the theories of Ecofeminism. The literature also points out some relevant questions that remain unanswered due to the lack of on-field and quantitative research done for the same. Piplantri has been used as a common case study for several larger studies such as the study on wasteland management and village planning and development mentioned above. Reviewing the literature contributed to the basic understanding of the initiative in Piplantri along with in-depth secondary research on the chosen topic.



**TRADITION**  
*"Sowing the seeds of  
Ecofeminism"*



The issue of skewed sex ratio has been persistent all across the nation and at its peak in Rajasthan, even after the enforcement of the Anti-Sex Determination Law, also known as the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act (PCPNDT Act) in 1994. On the contrary, under the panchayat of the village of Piplantri, the sarpanch Shri Shyam Sundar Paliwal led a movement of change to prevent female infanticide. The unfortunate and sudden demise of his daughter Kiran encouraged Paliwal to step up and channel his grief into bringing about a positive change under his panchayat. After the loss of his daughter, Paliwal realized that an extremely negative and backward ideology of girls being considered a liability was deeprooted in the minds of the villagers which led many of them to commit the heinous crimes of female infanticide and foeticide. Thus in the year 2006, Paliwal sowed the first tree of a revolutionary tradition.

As explained by Shrimati Anita Devi Paliwal who is the presiding sarpanch “under this tradition whenever a girl child is born in the village, 111 trees are planted and an FD of INR.31,000 is created. Additionally, the parents are made to sign an affidavit that clearly states that they would educate their daughters and would not marry them off before the legal age of 18.” (A. Paliwal, personal communication, February 14, 2020) with the emergence of this tradition, Paliwal sought to eradicate any form of injustice towards the young girls of the village.

Many questions that usually arise in the minds of people who read about this tradition revolve around the process of planting trees. The process of planting trees has been headed by Shri Shyam Sundar Paliwal with the help of the villagers and the government since the onset of this tradition. Moreover, even though Paliwal lost the panchayat in the consecutive term, he continued to have control over this tradition and took the responsibility of managing this process. In an interview, Shri Shyam Sundar Paliwal stated that “the government allots every panchayat with a significant area of land, which can be used up by the panchayat for the purpose of community development. Many a time, this land is occupied by encroachers who then solely enjoy the benefit of this land. In order to get land for the purpose of planting these trees, the encroached land was claimed back by the panchayat and the trees were planted.” (S. Paliwal, personal communication, February 12, 2020). A nursery was created where the trees were planted. This nursery also had cottages that are being used by the panchayat as offices, via which they are able to maintain and monitor this process of tree plantation. Recently, as the first nursery got well replenished, two more nurseries were constructed in various parts of the village.

Furthermore, this procedure also involved a selection of plants that need to be planted, making a decision on when they should be planted, where the seeds should be supplied from and finally who should

plant the trees. The selection of trees relies on when the trees are to be planted and based on the season, a number of fruit-bearing trees are chosen. The seeds of these trees are then ordered by the panchayat. Post the order is made, these seeds are supplied by the government at subsidized rates or free of cost depending on the government scheme that the order is made under. Subsequently, the land near the nursery is dug up based on the number of trees that are to be planted. Once the land is ready and the seeds are supplied the process of planting the trees begins. Since not all the trees can be planted on the very first day, three trees are planted by the mother, father and the girl child. As a part of this ceremony, the infant is wrapped in a red cloth and is put in a basket. This basket is carried by the mother on her head to the location where the trees are to be planted. Following this ceremony, the remaining 108 trees are then planted by the daily wage workers in the village over a period of time.



Image 1: A mother carrying her daughter in a basket for the ceremony

Once the trees are planted by the daily wage workers the trees are looked after by the panchayat. In addition to this, to protect the trees from any form of infestation, aloe vera plants have been planted around the trees. Besides, planting trees on the birth of a girl child, seeds of 11 plants are sown on the

demise of any person. On special occasions such as Raksha Bandhan, girls tie rakhis to the trees to symbolize how the trees protect them as their brothers would.



Image 2: Rakhi tied by a girl child on a tree on Raksha Bandhan

Moving on to the subject of the Fixed Deposits, Shrimati Anita Devi Paliwal, the presiding Sarpanch of piplantri disclosed in an interview that “The fixed deposit comprises funds that are taken from both the parents and the panchayat. A fixed deposit of 31,000 rupees is created, as a part of which 10,000 rupees are contributed by the parents and the remaining 21,000 rupees are contributed by the villagers as a part of “Jahnsayog”. This money can only be withdrawn from the FD once the girl turns 18 years old and can be used for her marriage or as a provision for her further education.” (A. Paliwal, personal communication, February 14, 2020). Additionally, the panchayat acts as the means of depositing the money as it assists the villagers to get the money deposited in an FD. Prior to the emergence of the government’s scheme known as the “Pradhan Mantri Sukanya Yojana”, this money was deposited through post offices in schemes that were chosen by the sarpanch every year based on the interest rates of the scheme. Once the Pradhan Mantri Sukanya Yojana (also known as the Sukanya Samridhi Yojana) was introduced, the fixed deposits were made under this scheme.

Pradhan Mantri Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana is a government-supported scheme in favor of the girl child. This scheme is a subsect of the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Yojana. Under this scheme, a fixed deposit can be created by the parents of a girl child who is under the age of 10. This fixed deposit has a tenure of 21 years but can be broken after the girl turns 18 years of age. Currently, any fixed deposit made under this scheme receives an interest rate of 8.4% that is compounded annually. (<https://www.paisabazaar.com/saving-schemes/sukanya-samriddhi-yojana/>).



Image 3: A woman signing an affidavit for her daughter

In addition to this, this aspect of the tradition also inspired the government to come up with a policy in the year 2016 under which various benefits were provided for females. Some of these benefits are as follows: (A. Paliwal, personal communication, February 14, 2020)

1. 2,500 rupees is granted to the family on the birth and the first birthday of the girl child by the government.
2. 5,000 rupees are given to the family once the girl passes grade 5 and grade 8. In addition to this, the government also pays a total amount of 35,000 rupees when the girl completes her 12th grade successfully.

These benefits have not just helped the girl child financially, but have also changed the perspective of many who considered girls to be liabilities. Furthermore, this scheme has also incentivized the education of girls due to which the enrollment of girls in primary and secondary schools has increased.

The implementation and control of this tradition is under Shri Shyam Sundar Paliwal even though he is not the sarpanch of the village anymore. It was observed on-field that Paliwal was immensely involved in this tradition. Every day he made it a point to visit all the nurseries to ensure that everything was on track. Furthermore, he visited all the families where the girl child was born in order to encourage them to take part in this tradition. Paliwal jointly with the government dealt with any problem that arose in the tradition such as selecting the types of plants that were to be planted, selecting the best scheme for depositing the money, getting the affidavits signed by the parents and making sure that they abided by it, etc.

There are two-fold community benefits of this tradition - upliftment of the status of girl child in the village and development and improvement of the overall village.

Firstly, as this tradition symbolized the end of female infanticide and foeticide, it prompted an ideological change in the mindsets of the villagers. Where the girl child was once considered to be a liability because of the underlying evil of dowry, this tradition removed that burden from the family by the help of the creation of the Fixed Deposit. Although Piplantri has not been able to uproot the evils of dowry completely, it has been noticed that over the years families have increasingly claimed that once their daughter turns 18 either she would get to choose how the FD money gets utilized or they would use that money to educate her further.

Consequently, with the advent of this tradition, the community benefits that are enjoyed by the entire village are as follows-

1. As the seeds that are sown are of fruit-bearing trees, once the trees grow, the produce of the trees is sold in the market.
2. The panchayat has created a brand under the name of "PIPLANTRI" through which it sells Aloe Vera products.
3. The revenue that the panchayat is able to generate from the sale of these products is not used for any personal use, rather it is used for developmental activities such as the construction of roads, sanitation facilities, educational institutes, etc.
4. Prior to this tradition, Piplantri faced a problem of water shortage. With the implementation of this tradition, the water table was restored.
5. This tradition also increased the number of employment opportunities in the villages under the MGNREGA program of the government.
6. Not only did this tradition replenish the water table but it also restored the flora and fauna.

7. Once what was known to be a deserted, barren land by the neighboring villages, was now recognized as a “Green Village” that sheltered its people with a healthier environment.

Lastly, this tradition acted as the first step towards making the villages that came under the Piplantri panchayat self-sufficient and self-reliant. Moreover, it was also observed that many of the migrated people returned to their family homes once the village started becoming self-sufficient.

At a macro level even though this tradition was started to uplift the stature of the girl child in the villages, it gave way to a number of ideological changes. Many households claimed that they considered both the sons and daughters to be equal. In addition to this, a number of households also pointed out that with the emergence of this tradition the village became a safer place for girls and that now they could roam around in the village at any time fearlessly. Kala Paliwa, a resident of the Piplantri village and the head of the Self Help Group shared her experience of the tradition as,

“In my personal life also, there have been many changes. For instance, if I wanted to go to my mother’s house, I had to take a bus that used to charge Rs. 50/-, and may be a little extra to buy the kids food if they were travelling with me, for which also I had to ask for money. Today, if I want to go anywhere, like my mother’s house or buy food for the children, I can afford it on my own, I am not financially dependent on anybody. I just have to inform my husband that I am leaving and going to my mother’s house. This is the biggest change that has come in my personal life.” (K. Paliwal, personal communication, February 10, 2020)

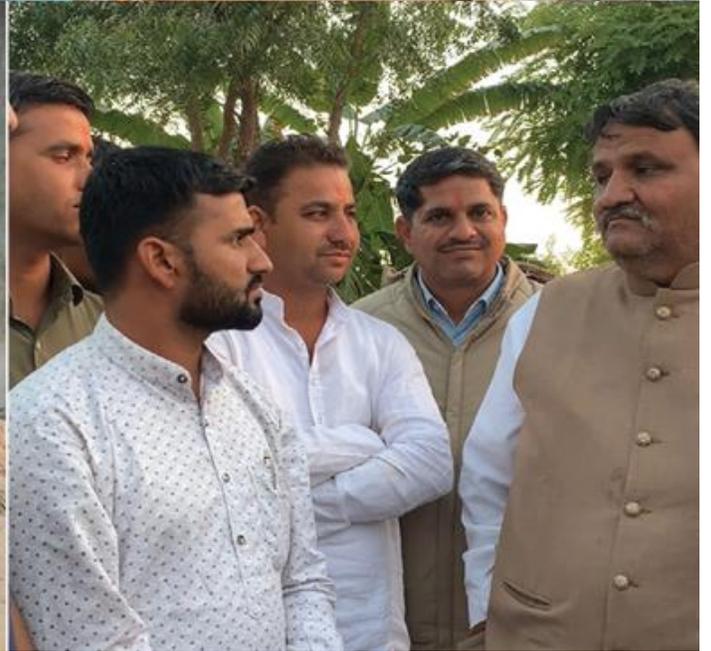
This tradition not only brought about a change in the ideologies but also gave way to the formation of what is widely known as the “Piplantri Model”. This model focuses on making Piplantri a self-sufficient village and focuses on protecting the environment, the rights of women and every member of the village as well as generating employment and a well-educated skilled labor force. Moreover, this model also aims at developing proper facilities for the villagers as is expressed by the head of the Training Centre of Piplantri, Shri Niranjana Suman that “the panchayat is working towards making Piplantri a cleaner and a developed village by providing numerous facilities and schemes for the people of Piplantri.” (N. Suman, personal communication, February 10, 2020)

Finally, this tradition has not only resulted in changes within the villages that come under the panchayat but has also been recognized by the government as the “Kiran Nidhi Yojana” that has motivated and inspired many other panchayats to adopt a similar model for their own villages. This tradition has brought fame and recognition to the village of Piplantri and has proven to be a milestone in the context of

Indian Ecofeminism. As Dr. Manjushree Palit (assoc. prof. at Jindal Institute of behavioral sciences) asserts her views on the Indian context of ecofeminism "... there is a need on the part of young men to be actively involved in their schools and communities in advocating women's equality rights." (Patassino, 2016), this tradition stands to be an example of such a positive change.



**GOVERNMENT**  
*"Sarkar apke dwar"*



The transformation in Piplantri began when Shri Shyam Sundar Paliwal was elected as the Sarpanch in the 2005 elections. Paliwal's political ambitions and goals were not well appreciated during the early years, but with the support of the village elders including his father and friends, a previous headmaster of the middle-school, Paliwal won the elections. He was enthusiastic and self-motivated to bring about substantial changes in Piplantri and was further inspired by the coverage of Sarpanches being awarded the "Nirmal Gaon Award" on the television by the President. This made him determined to transform his village from the present state and bring it back to its "Nirmal" (pure) form. Community involvement and transparency in the decision-making by the panchayat have been the crucial instruments in the process of village transformation. On presuming office, Shri Paliwal made sure that the Panchayat meetings were held regularly and he further changed the way these meetings were conducted. He felt the need to engage the community elders and the interested citizens of the village at the time of village planning. Hence, the sarpanch and all the ward members decided to conduct meetings in an open space. Through this, it was ensured that the village politics was an inclusive and transparent process along with active participation of the villagers. Achieving milestones like successes in school upgradation and winning the Total Sanitation Awards had resulted in an increased number of participants along with voluntary contributions in terms of labor, land, ideas, external connections and time. The villagers of Piplantri were able to develop complete faith in the Panchayat and trusted its ability of resolving social disputes and settling conflicts.

"This is Piplantri and in Piplantri we are trying to get nature based employment by saving trees, plants, water and grazing land. The work has started in our village but we plan to take this out and spread it worldwide and work is being done for the same. This has started in one village and will spread to lakhs of villages and that day all the problems will truly end. Today people are moving out of villages and moving to big cities which is in turn overpopulating these cities. The population in cities is increasing day by day and till the day people in villages are not provided with a source of income they will continue to move to cities. The biggest thing is that the kind of respect a person receives in a village can never be received in a city and by communicating this message we can stop the villagers, prove them with education and nature based employment here in this village.

The development in a village is of a very different kind. It concerns the development for water, nature, other life forms, and innovation. It is a very difficult task for any MPA or

MLA to make small roads connecting one village to another since particular plots of land belong to certain people who are not willing to give their ancestral property for reasons such as emotional attachment, and so on. On one hand, the government provides compensation for the building of highways, but no such compensation is provided by the government for the construction of small roads in a village. In a village, plots of lands have to be given up with mutual consent. Villagers who do not agree to give their land up are further emotionally blackmailed and guilt tripped by "mature villagers" who are dedicated towards the betterment of the village by helping with the implementation of new schemes, and are not hungry for commission." said Shri Paliwal (S. Paliwal, personal communication, February 12, 2020).



Image 4: Shri Shyam Sundar Paliwal during an interview

Individual households in Piplantri, today, have piped water supply, properly made and comparatively wider roads, expanded road networks, street lighting and power supply. There are two schools in the village having up to class 10<sup>th</sup> (secondary) and class 12<sup>th</sup> (senior secondary) levels along with 11 schools having up to 8<sup>th</sup> class (middle level). Schools have a well-equipped infrastructure along with competent teachers, adequate supplies and furniture, basic necessities such as sanitation

(washrooms/basins) and drinking water, play space and sports equipment and cooking gas connections (for mid-day meals). The dropout rate is almost equal to zero with girls obtaining education till at least 12<sup>th</sup> standard (high-school). The panchayat has ensured smooth functioning of nine Anganwadi kendras. The village has a significant number of commonly needed sanitary facilities, household-level soak pits with kitchen gardens to ensure a hygienic environment and 60 dustbins installed with regular waste collection.

Shyam Sundar Paliwal spoke about his ideologies as the sarpanch and said,

“Sarpanch, This was started because we believed in the saying that “*Ram rooth jaye par raaj na roothe*” , the meaning of “Ram roothna” is that if even if almighty leaves the side of a child or a woman, the shadow of the government/administration should always be there on them. The policies/schemes created by governments to educate and further these children and support women should actually reach them. With the above saying in mind we started working for our people and constructed a panchayat office which was unnamed yet people started giving it names like ‘Hi-tech’ gram panchayat, ‘Adarsh’ gram panchayat and sometime later it was also went by names such as ‘Rajiv Gandhi seva kendra’, ‘Atal seva kendra’ (atal means firm). A lot of other gram panchayats and states got inspired by this model and tried applying the same into their own panchayats. The arrangements we made for the villagers also came to be known as “Sarkar aapke dwaar” under which the state and panchayat officials started visiting the panchayat office during night. This also led to the beginning of ‘Raatri Choupal'.....” (S. Paliwal, personal communication, February 12, 2020).



Image 5: Panchayat office or 'Bharat Nirman Rajiv Gandhi Seva Kendra' established in Piplantri

Raatri Choupal' is an initiative to bring together the community people and discuss their issues and spread awareness among them on certain issues. These choupals/camps are organized usually at late evening hours especially when everyone is back from their work, hence the name 'Raatri Choupal'. Efforts are also made to invite the government officials from various departments to 'Raatri Choupal' to bridge the gap between them and the villagers. The community people can share their problems and interact with the government officials, records of such grievances are officially recorded and are resolved on priority basis.

“.....The problem with this was that if the collector is attending the raatri choupal then the sarpanch will manage his people and organize everything properly in prior. In order to compensate for this bias we came up with idea of 'Raatri vishraam' under which the government officials can stay the night at their quarters and in the morning village's cleaning facilities, the problem of open defecation, installation of fans in schools, clean toilets in schools and aanganwadis ( Anganwadi is a type of rural child care center in India) and the panchayat bhavan will become alright and this imagination that we had in our minds has slowly started becoming the reality.” (S. Paliwal, personal communication, February 12, 2020).

Multiple efforts by the Piplantri Gram Panchayat have rewarded it with the Award for total sanitation and is now known as a Nirmal Gram Panchayat. Furthermore, Piplantri is now a recognized village under the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Adarsh Gram Yojna of the Rajasthan government. The panchayat has also worked towards the well-functioning and upgradation of health facilities, with one Ayurvedic Aushadhalaya and three Primary Health Centers. Through various government schemes and provisions, Piplantri panchayat has set up resource centers like the Kisan Seva Kendra, a Community Hall, two ration shops, the Mahatma Gandhi library, a Patwar Bhavan and a herbal garden irrigated with solar-powered water sprinklers.

When asked about usage of government funds and provisions, Paliwal said,

“The village in which I was born, my father was born, several of my generations have grown up, is nothing less of a pilgrimage place. Ram’s birth place, Mathura, Ayodhya are all places of pilgrimage but the biggest one for me is my village. The government is providing the gram panchayats with so much money to implement all the work and the people who claim that there is no money are simply lying. The government does not stop money for anything but you have to prove that you are deserving of that money. Once the head of the agency .i.e. the panchayat proves itself from that day onwards they won’t fall short of money.” (S. Paliwal, personal communication, February 12, 2020).

Paliwal faced a lot of opposition from rival political groups in the village who persuaded Paliwal’s supporters to withdraw their support. He was mocked for planting trees and taking care of them. Nevertheless, the sarpanch ignored all the criticism and went ahead with his aims and aspirations for Piplantri. He called a meeting to decide on the water scarcity problem. He was well aware that the participation rate would be very low, still he set up the meeting in the village square, sat with his friends and supporters, arranged for water and noticed the involvement increasing gradually. The number of people attending the Gram Sabhas and similar village meetings rose in the subsequent meetings held by the Sarpanch.

He further elaborated on the working of panchayat through participating villagers and quoted,

“Even if 2, 5 or 10 people come with me and say "this is what we've decided, now work on this. The work has to be done by me, but the decision has to be made by the village.

Now I have started some work today, I will have to work hard on this for the next 10-15 days in order to successfully kick start it. Government proposals and schemes under NAREGA have to be implemented, yesterday I went to the airport and met the SBM's (Swachh Bharat Mission) secretary and handed over a proposal to him regarding common toilets to be made in Piplantri, the "aanganwaadi" does not have such toilets, and spoke to him about the state of the schools in the village. I want to come up with a waste-management project.” (S. Paliwal, personal communication, February 12, 2020).

Piplantri has transformed from an underdeveloped village to a fully functional village with all wells flushing with water, multiple hand pumps, revival of agriculture, and the common wastelands that were left unused due to the quarry wastes being dumped are replanted and replenished. Around 1.5 lakh trees have been planted since the start of the tradition. Watch and ward and effective watering systems have been set up to ensure the survival of plantation and protection from free grazing. Panchayat meetings have also evolved, all the meetings are publicly notified and open to all with multiple seats in the meeting room, highlighting that everyone is welcome.

“Not only are statutory Gram Sabhas held but a number of other “aam sabhas” or open gatherings in various hamlets are held regularly. It has a new air-conditioned building, the Panchayat Bhavan. Village elders are consulted in every major decision and involved in some capacity or the other in all initiatives and programs. The trend of emigration has also reversed. Not only has the growing quarry alongside attracted immigrants from other states who stay in the village, but earlier emigrants, such as those who had found long-term employment elsewhere, are now returning to their abandoned homes and participating actively in community deliberations.” (S. Paliwal, personal communication, February 12, 2020).

The systematic planning by the Panchayat under the guidance of the Sarpanch has proven to be beneficial for the village. The sarpanch allocated resources from Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and contribution from the marble quarrying company for upgrading the local school up to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Money has also been sourced from the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) for the repair and expansion of internal roads and inter-linkages of roads. Similarly, the plantation and watershed development programs have been funded from sources such as the Adarsh Gaon Yojana, the marble company along with voluntary

labor and irrigation activities performed by the villagers, streetlights sourced from the villager's contributions. The building of sanitary latrines falls under the Total Sanitation Campaign accompanied by piped water supply under the Swajaldhara program. ("Integrated Village Planning and Development", n.d.)

Mindful-thinking, motivation and most importantly, "participative leadership" are some of the key factors to early successes which further develops faith in participatory and local planning efforts for the development of a village. "The legitimacy of the Sarpanch, the full involvement of the community in decision-making and rule bound functioning of Committees appears to have precluded any major hurdles after the difficulties faced in achieving total sanitation. Apparently, there have been no major difficulties, though time and efforts are substantial in some instances such as funds for the irrigation project etc." ("Integrated Village Planning and Development", n.d.)

Paliwal has proven to be a participative leader with strong emphasis on self-governance. He further elaborated on his approach towards the villagers,

"I have made it very clear to the villagers that I will only use the money that is collected by the villagers for the development of the village, and I will not spend money from my own house for any purposes. Neither will I ever tell anyone that I have contributed anything from my own wallet for the development of the village, and nor will I ever take any money that is used for development purposes back home. Whatever amount of money that is left over will always be used for the betterment of the village and its villagers and not for any personal expenditure. People who have such values succeed in life, even during difficult times."

He also told the students about an incident highlighting the importance of self-reliance and swaraj,

"Recently, I had gone to Jhalawar to meet the Chief Minister and discuss certain matters with him. During the meeting, I asked for a glass of drinking water. The person who I asked went on to asking someone else to do the favour, who went on to asking a third person, till the ripple effect led back to me. In the end, I was so frustrated that I got up and did the job myself. After this incident, I had to join my hands, and tell them that I do not think I would be willing to work with people who have such an attitude since they are unable to work

and are just simply wasting my time and effort. Everyone is of the mentality that the laborers are the only ones who are meant to work. Additionally, if you are littering, why would a sweeper clean up your mess? It is up to you to take up responsibility for your own actions.” (S. Paliwal, personal communication, February 12, 2020).

Bhawar Singh, a villager from Piplantri, has been working with Shyam Sunder Paliwal since 2005, contributing to the Piplantri model in a significant way. He spoke about how the situation in the village changed when Mr. Paliwal was not elected as the Sarpanch from 2010-2020.

“For 10 years, from 2010- 2020, Mr. Paliwal was not serving as sarpanch and someone else was. However, he did not lose his spirit and stopped work. The sarpanch was doing whatever his duties were and Mr. Paliwal was doing the work that he felt the village needed him to do. He continued working on his mission for planting trees, saving daughters and building watersheds. It is true that a person who works for the good faces many challenges, but those challenges did not bother him. He took compliments with happiness and saw criticism only as a reflection of an individual's attitude in general. He did not stop his work, and we followed him through the years. He also made sure that whatever work he did was not sabotaged by someone else.”

Finally, in 2020, the Piplantri elections were won by Mrs. Anita Paliwal, the wife of Mr. Shyam Sunder Paliwal. Mrs. Paliwal reflected on her agendas as the new sarpanch and they are aligned with those of Shi Shyam Sunder Paliwal.

“This is the second time that a woman has taken the seat of the sarpanch. I am grateful that the villagers gave me this opportunity and I would like to make the most of it in order to respect the aspirations and wishes of the villagers. I would like to revive my husband’s good work that he started 15 years ago. According to me, women should be a part of the panchayat. On the lines of the government’s “beti bachao, Beti padhao” ideology, I want women who see the world through their “pardas” to step up and participate in the decision making of the panchayat. This would help the women to widen their perspective and increase their self-confidence (empowerment). I want women to play an active role in the panchayat.

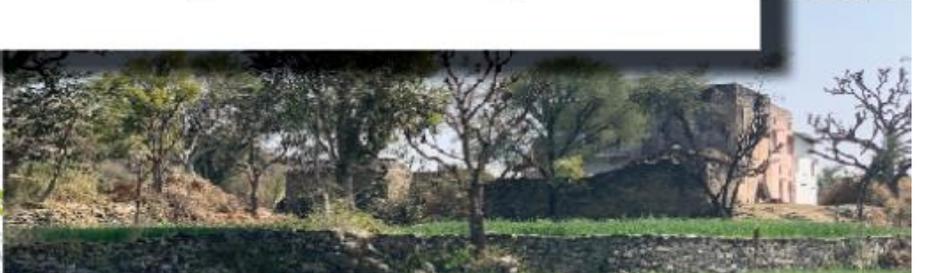
I am to complete the pending work of the last 10 years including proper supply of water and electricity, construction of roads and infrastructural development. Furthermore, I aim to take back the encroached land from the “atikraman”. I would request and encourage the panchayats of other districts to bring together their youth and women and facilitate collective community development the way we have tried to do it through this tradition.”  
(S. Paliwal, personal communication, February 12, 2020)



Image 6: Mrs. Anita Dev (current sarpanch) during an interview



**ENVIRONMENT**  
*"Encouraging miners to plant trees on the wastelands, making the lands greener"*



## Before the Tradition

Since India is considered to be one of the largest producers of raw-stone globally, with the increase in the demand for these stones, hundreds and thousands of mines have been excavated on territories that surrounded untouched rural regions of the country. Rajasthan is home to the Aravalli range that is famous for its richness and abundance in raw-stones and other minerals such as sandstone, marble, and granite and thus faces the after-effects of extreme and excessive excavation of mines. The Rajsamand district is known for having some of the most abundant mines in Rajasthan which is why a large portion of the land is corroded by both legal and illegal mining activities. Preceding the tradition, the lack of proper government administration in Piplantri and the excessive demand for raw-stone in the industry led to the destruction of massive green cover by human activities such as marble mining and deforestation.



Image 7: R. K. Marble Mines in Rajsamand district

R.K. marble mine (one of the largest extractors of marble in India), has been operating in the Rajsamand district for several decades. The increase in the demand for marble and depletion of the mines has forced the company to expand and move closer and closer to regions near the village. The villagers have observed that the green cover has vanished and the wildlife has retreated to dense forests far away

from the village. In addition to this, the dumping of slurry (stone particles mixed with water, usually formed during the polishing of marble) in the nearby wastelands/used up mines has exhausted the water table to a great extent. The hills that were once covered by different varieties of indigenous trees now became hills of piles and piles of debris. With every passing year, the opening in the hills widened whereas the flora and fauna narrowed down. Bhawar Singh voiced his concerns regarding the exploitation that comes hand in hand with the expanding mining activities as,

“It is due to the mines that the village has lost its wildlife. Mining also creates a lot of debris, for which there is a dump yard, which was one of the reasons for loss of wildlife. Mr. Paliwal has started a mission where he encourages these miners to plant trees on these wastelands and dump yards to compensate for the losses that the village has suffered. As a result, making the lands greener”. (B. Singh, personal communication, February 13, 2020)

In addition to this, Kala Paliwal also expressed that,

“In my opinion, due to the mines there have been major losses in the village. Rainfall reduced considerably and people contributed by giving their personal land. Even I gave my personal land and all the trees that were planted were felled brutally. Like this, the people of the mines bought over 100 pieces of land and felled off the trees. All this led to was a personal loss. All the dust that is also taken in by the villagers and people working in the mines is very unhealthy and can cause health concerns. But now since Mr. Paliwal has taken over. He put his foot down in front of the people of the mine and said that, on the waste land trees have to be planted, helping increase greenery. In all these dumping areas, there are trees that have been planted, if you ask, they will show you. Like the RK dumping ground & CM dumping ground.” (K. Paliwal, personal communication, February 10, 2020)



Image 8: A yard where marble stones are cut into slabs

Another contributor to the degradation of the environment was the villagers. The villagers had been continuously wiping out the green cover of Piplantri in order to make coal or use the firewood. This led to a situation where despite rainfalls there was not much of an increase in the water table as there were no longer any roots that could stop the water from flowing down the hill with the polluted soil particles.

Furthermore, the threat to nature was not only from the economic activities undertaken by the villagers but also from their day to day activities. This concern was voiced by Shri Shyam Sundar Paliwal as,

"I visited the house in which there was a death, and saw the amount of garbage lying outside it. There were a couple of boys sitting outside the house, so I went and interacted with them. I explained certain facts to them. I asked them if they drink alcohol, to which they replied saying yes. I then asked one boy if the person who died was his brother, to which he replied saying yes. I said, if your brother died today, even you can die tomorrow. The boy was then surprised and felt extremely bad as to how I was speaking to him in that manner. I explained to him that he comes from a respectable household, he has a good mobile phone, he possesses a good television set, and yet he doesn't understand that you cannot drive a vehicle while you are intoxicated since it causes accidents. And if you know this, then why do you yet consume alcohol before taking out your vehicle? Moreover,

I told him that students from Pune and Mumbai had come to visit your house and it was disgraceful and an embarrassing moment since there are heaps of garbage and polythene lying outside your house which nobody has bothered to clean up. Who will clean this mess up? Do you expect me or other fellow villagers to come outside your house and clean it up? The group of boys replied saying "no we will clean it up ourselves." I told them to start that very instant, and so eventually the garbage was cleared out which finally made the house look presentable.

Nationwide, the problem is that everyone wants to fight pollution, make the environment a cleaner and greener place to live in, but nobody actually gets down to doing the work. People try to make selfish excuses and try to escape the situation of contributing to the progress of such movements. Everyone fails to understand that it is their responsibility to keep the place that they live in clean. They are breathing borrowed oxygen and eating fruits, so they can make the effort of planting at least one tree. Some people support movements and traditions, but when it comes down to getting work done, they take a step back. " (S. Paliwal, personal communication, February 12, 2020)

#### After the tradition

In order to raise the stature of the girl child in the village and restore the environment, Shri Shyam Sundar Paliwal started the tradition of planting a hundred and eleven trees and creating an FD in the name of the girl child as a symbol to prevent female infanticide and foeticide. This tradition further encouraged Shri Shyam Sundar Paliwal to come up with the Piplantri Model that not only focused on women and the environment but also aimed at making the village self-reliant and self-sustainable.

As a part of the Piplantri Model, Paliwal sought to halt and improve the adverse damage caused by the mines. For the purpose of the same Paliwal made provisions through which the villagers could collectively work towards making the village environment friendly as well as self-sustainable. He continued to carry out this work, by educating the farmer about the benefits of terrace farming in preventing the water from running off. While most of the mines operated without taking the responsibility of the environmental degradation caused by their economic activity, the mine owners and the Piplantri Panchayat came to an uneasy yet a mutual agreement. In order to ensure proper compensation from the mining companies the agreement stated that these companies would have to assist in the planting of trees as well as donate funds for the same. The direct beneficiaries of this agreement were not only the people

and the environment, but even the mine owners used this as their contribution to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Other than this the government revoked the dumping grant of the mining companies. The land that was earlier used for the dumping of slurry was then given to the Panchayat as the “common land” which is now being used for the plantation of trees on various events such as the birth of a girl child and the death of any family member. Shri Bhawar Singh in an interview also asserted that,

"We are currently sitting in a land covering 900 bhiga (over 350 acres) which is covered by boundaries. All of this land is under plantation work. The old nursery has a land cover of 120 bhiga (50 acres) which is completely covered by plants and trees. All in all, we have planted over 5 lakh plants in the village. Our aim is to cover all of this land that we have, including where the miners are mining and creating craters and debris, with plants. We have been working on this till now, and we will be working on it for the future as well." (B. Singh, personal communication, February 13, 2020)

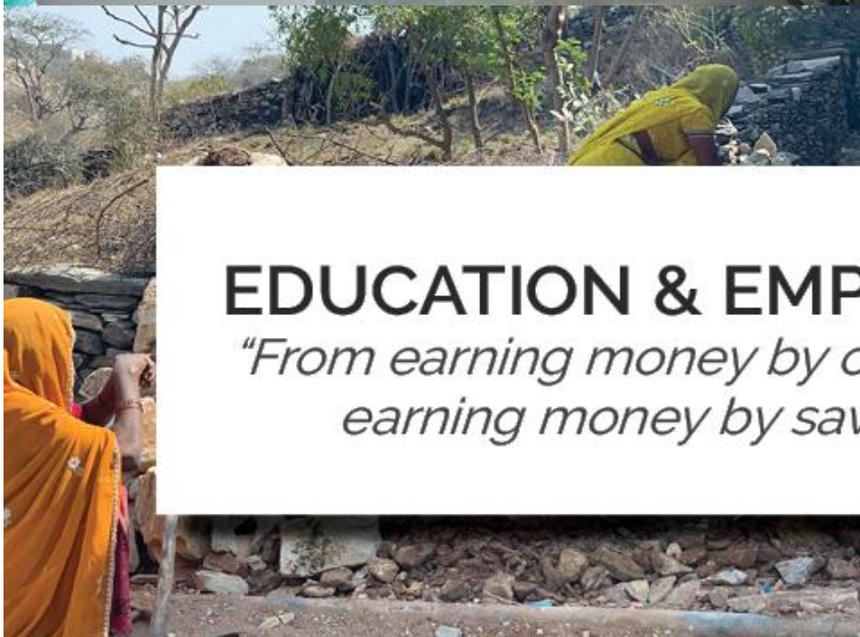


Image 9: Bhawar Singh plants a sapling

Furthermore, he also developed a new irrigation system and would help provide water to the wells, households, hand pumps and other sanitation facilities of the village. With the support of voluntary contribution rooftop rainwater harvest systems were installed in the schools, check dams were constructed

over stream beds and the retention and treatment of the land cover was facilitated. The people of Piplantri have joint forces with the Gram Panchayat and built over 12 water tanks that provide water to the households. In addition to this, the panchayat has invested in a Playpump (also known as roundabout-cum-water pump) that is installed in the primary school which pumps water to the overhead water tanks as and when the students spin the roundabout. Under the Piplantri model the panchayat has provided 13 piped potable water supply facilities under the Swajaldhara Program of the government. In addition to this two water pumps have been installed in the villages that pump water using solar energy.

Finally, none of the efforts taken for the Piplantri Model and the tradition went to waste. Today, Piplantri is given the name of “adharsh” (responsible) village due to its eco-friendly practices.



**EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT**  
*"From earning money by cutting trees to earning money by saving trees"*

माणकलाल	— 22	101	13795
चतुरसिंह	— 23	75	16786
चैनसिंह	— 25	128	18249
—	— 25-A	127	18110



One of the first initiatives that was taken up by the Sarpanch in the village was the issue of girls' schooling which was discontinued or difficult because of the distant location of the nearest high school in the town. Therefore, the Sarpanch implemented the upgradation of the existing school till the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. This was achieved using the resources provided through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Additional funds acquired from the local quarry were used to construct remarkable premises with proper furniture and facilities equivalent to any English medium school in the city. Elaborate meetings with the community contributed to this process of academic development. Around Rs. 20 lakhs were invested in the building of the school and the teachers' accommodation. The schools also offer the complete range of courses including computer classes. Cleanliness supplies are provided in all the educational premises such as acid bottles and brushes for cleaning, soap and soap dishes, napkins, mugs and tumblers. Children's hygiene is also ensured through the provision of the following supplies: comb, nail cutters, oil, mirror, etc.

Bhawar Singh compares the situation of schooling before and after the necessary steps were taken by Mr. Paliwal,

“...I'll tell you about education and schooling in this village. There was no school in the village during my childhood days. There was only a private school in the village which had grades only up to 5th and we have studied only till that. There was a big school in Rajsamand but we did not have any roads or a mode of transport to go there. The generation after us had studied till 8th, 10th or 12th grade but there again, only boys attended school. Only about 5 out of a 100 would ever attend college after school. Since Shyamji became the sarpanch in the year 2005, he made sure that all the girls in the village will attend school. This mission had a very major challenge that he had to overcome. The schools were about 1 to 2 kms away from the village and girls could not travel that far alone. So, Mr. Paliwal had built a school in every village in his panchayat that provided education till 8th grade. So, girls can study till 8th grade in their village and then they can attend a school built in main Piplantri village to study till 12th grade. After 12th grade, they can attend a college in Rajsamand. In the year 2000, only 15 girls attended school out of around 300 schooling children. Today, there are more girls than boys studying in schools in the village. On top of that, all the private schools in the village have shut down and government schools have been functioning well.”



Image 10: Participation of students in showcasing drawn portraits of Indian leaders

The schools also provide students with cooked meals to ensure proper nutrition while learning. Akshaypatra Foundation is a foundation which provides midday meals to the primary school. Earlier the midday meals were prepared in the school itself, but recently the government has collaborated with this NGO that supplies midday meals to the schools. The Akshaypatra foundation is paid by the government based on the number of students who are a part of the midday meal program. The panchayat additionally helps in the organizing events for the school.

The primary school in Piplantri has a merry-go-round pump installed which helps in storing underground water. “During the break the children play on the merry go round. As the children play on the merry go round it pumps water into a storage tank with the help of a fan that is attached to the base of the merry go round. The water that is pumped up is used as drinking water in the school”, explained a primary school teacher.

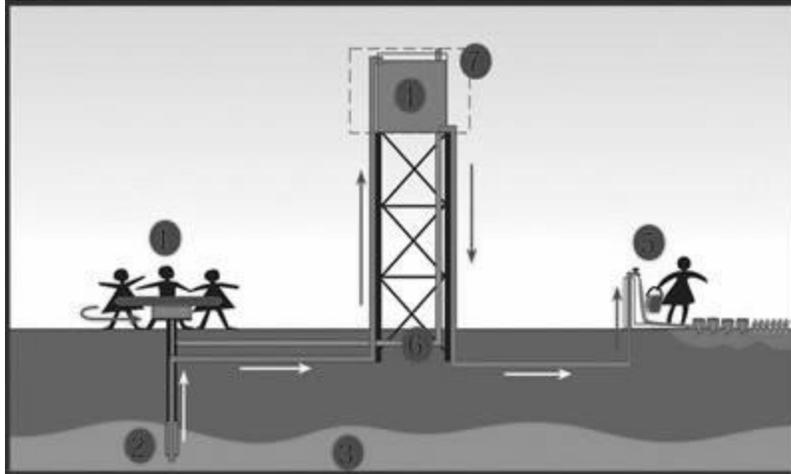


Image 11: Depiction of water pumping by use of merry-go-round.

Source: <https://blogs.ei.columbia.edu/2010/07/01/the-playpump-what-went-wrong/> (Stellar., 2010)

An interview of the headmaster of the primary school portrayed the following condition of primary and secondary education in Piplantri.

“The people of the village are well aware of the importance of education, health, cleanliness and all children- girls and boys attend school on time. I am very happy to inform you all that when it comes to education, the girls are much ahead of the boys. In this school, which is from grades 1 to 8, out of 10 students, 5 girls received a laptop. The students who score more than 75% receive a laptop from the government. This motivates the students and the people of the village to receive education....

.... All the children after completing the 8<sup>th</sup> grade in this school, do not drop out. They continue studying in the other school which is up to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. They have a 0% drop out rate. After completing their 12<sup>th</sup> standard they even go to the college (outside the village) to pursue their dreams (eg. B.Ed). I believe that they will go to great heights and even after leaving this school, we all motivate them to continue studying and doing something big in their life and whatever the problem maybe- monetarily or societal they always have our support.

Those who are uneducated, we try teaching them the importance of education and imparting some amount of knowledge. The village is still taking measures to provide a

structure of those who have not been educated, and still want to receive some amount of education.

Initially, I had to go and force people to enroll their children in the school, but now times have changed. In spite of the enrollment age being 5 years at the school, parents start coming to take admission as soon as their child turns 4....”

After completing education in the schools at Piplantri, students either start working or pursue further studies outside Piplantri.

Prior to the formation and implementation of the Piplantri Model, the main source of income was from the mines. A majority of the male population under the Piplantri Panchayat were employed in activities such as the digging of mines, extraction of resources, etc. Moreover, many men also provided their services for the maintenance and management of these mines as well as provided security for these sites. Although the mines provided adequate job opportunities to the men, there existed a scarcity in the employment opportunities for the women. While a majority of women in Piplantri were involved in household work, some women took the initiative of getting involved in pickle making, papad making, designing embroideries and sarees, teaching, taking care of the cattle, etc. in order to help their families financially. However, it was also observed that a significant number of people migrated to nearby cities in search of better job opportunities and left their aged parents behind in the village. This not only had a personal impact on their respective families but also hampered the pace of sustained-development in the village.

Due to this a major focal point of Shri Shyam Sundar Paliwal’s Piplantri Model is that of employment. This model aims at creating new employment opportunities within the boundaries of the villages. The access to these job opportunities would further encourage the migrated residents to return to their ancestral homes and work towards the overall development of the villages collectively.

The tradition of planting a hundred and eleven trees on the birth of a girl child as a symbol of preventing female infanticide and foeticide has not only proven to be beneficial to the women and the environment of Piplantri but has also led to the emergence of new job opportunities. One major employment option that surfaced post the implementation of this tradition was that of Aloe Vera production. While the main purpose of planting Aloe Vera plants around the trees was to prevent any form of infestation, the panchayat identified its economic benefits of selling the organic Aloe Vera products.

As a result, the panchayat founded a brand under the name of “Piplantri” through which products such as Aloe Vera pickle, Aloe Vera Gel, etc. were sold. The active participation of women in the training, manufacturing, and management of Aloe Vera production is a distinctive key feature of the brand. With the support of the panchayat, the women have formed a Self-Help Group that manages the production of Aloe Vera products, as well as provides training workshops for women to develop their skills. Once the brand “Piplantri” was successfully founded, a website was created for the purpose of selling its products. This further gave rise to new job opportunities in the field of e-commerce and managing the sale of the “Piplantri” products. The head of the Self Help Group Kala Paliwal shared her

"I thought Shyam Sundar Paliwal ji is right because what's the point of sitting inside at home and we should also go out, and instead of making cow dung cakes and working on the farms if we go out then we can also earn a little and then there we will also be aware and we can also go out. So, I joined hands with Shyam Sundar Paliwal ji and then my family was against it but I slowly convinced them and told them that they will earn Rs.5000. Then one by one other women kept joining like this. So, in the start we had a small nursery where we started working and planting the trees. We planted the saplings on all four sides of the roads as well as near the temples. The area was filled with rocks and termites that used to ruin the trees but then someone told us that if we plant 3-4 aloe vera plants around the trees then the termites wouldn't destroy the trees as they would not bite the aloe vera because it is bitter. Following this we arranged 2.5-3 lakhs small aloe vera plants and planted them near the trees. This allowed us to grow a variety of trees such as kesar, khajur(dates), nariyal (coconuts), tobacco and such other trees whose products could be sold at high rates in the market." (K. Paliwal, personal communication, February 10, 2020)

In addition to this, it is not just Aloe Vera that gave livelihood to the people of Piplantri, quite a few people started selling the produce of the fruit-bearing trees that were planted as a part of this tradition. This is a result of Shri Shyam Sundar Paliwal's policy that allowed the residents to "...collect fruits from the forest and barter them in exchange of anaaj, so as to bring back the era of nature-based employment." (S. Paliwal, personal communication, February 12, 2020) In addition to this many villagers also started manufacturing products such as pickles using the organic fruits of the trees of Amla, Mango, etc. Moreover, as this tradition replenished the once degraded land such that it could now be adequately used for cattle grazing, many households started fostering domestic animals such as cows, buffaloes, hens, etc.

and used their product for personal consumption. Some households also sold or bartered the excess of these products to the other villagers in order to increase their income.



Image 12: Aloe Vera products made by the women in Piplantri

Furthermore, even though the reacquisition of the government land from the encroachers, gave rise to the unemployment of people who were illegally working on that land, for a short period of time, with the help of this tradition and various schemes of the government a large number of people were given the chance to earn a good living, one such scheme is that of MGNREGA. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 is one such scheme that has backed the employment opportunities that emerged with the tradition.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (MGNREGA), is a social security initiative taken by the central government under the labour laws section of the constitution. This social security scheme aims at providing livelihood and employment to the labourers in the rural areas of the country. This scheme guarantees a minimum 100 days of employment to all the registered rural workers in a financial year. In addition to this, this act not only provides employment to skilled or semi-skilled workers but also recognizes many unskilled jobs. Moreover, if the government fails to do so and

in case employment is not provided to the registered person within 15 days, the government gives a concession to the beneficiary in the form of an unemployment allowance. Although this initiative was started by the central government, the implementation of this scheme has been decentralized and the management of the scheme is taken care of by the Gram Panchayats at the grass-root level. (Government of West Bengal, 2005)

Many unskilled job avenues were generated under the Piplantri Model that increased the demand for local unskilled laborers. In addition to this, the Gram Panchayat of Piplantri has successfully recognized many unskilled jobs under the schemes of MGNREGA. Some of the unskilled jobs that are recognized by the Gram Panchayat of Piplantri under MGNREGA are as follows:

1. Excavation of land for the plantation of trees.
2. Planting the remaining 108 trees after the parents plant the first 3 trees for each and every girl child.
3. Agricultural activities
4. Construction activities
5. Maintenance of the nurseries and graze lands
6. Hiring unskilled daily wage laborers for cleaning of roads and the sewage, building “katcha” houses.

In addition to this, the Piplantri Model also focussed on establishing proper institutions of primary and secondary education, this in return created a new demand for well-educated teachers, class assistants, headmasters, etc. in the villages. Subsequently, the Panchayat founded a Training Centre that facilitated workshops that would help develop the skills of the villagers. This includes the training of the Aloe Vera plant worker, laborers who are involved in the planting of trees, workers involved in pickle making, etc. The Training Centre is managed by the head engineer of the village Shri Niranjan Suman. In an interview Bhawar Singh, resident of the Piplantri village, when asked whether the tradition or the Piplantri Model led to any change in the employment, said,

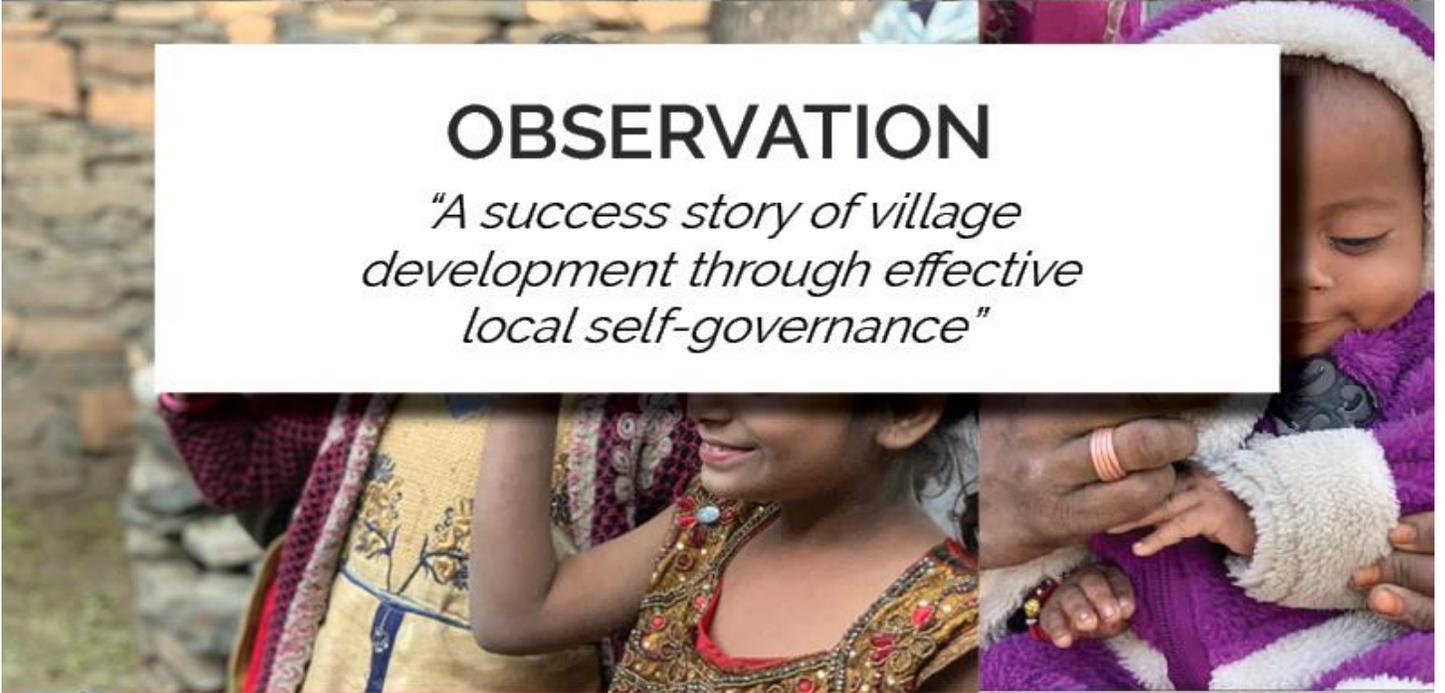
"This village was dead in a way. There were no amenities, no roads and no one liked to get their daughter married in this village. The villagers started leaving the village and migrated to cities in Maharashtra, Gujarat, MP, or UP for labour and employment. The only work that was available in the village was farming. So, when there was no water available, these farmers had deserted their land and left the village. Ever since the wells have started refilling, these people have started coming back to the village and settling

down. So, a dead village has now been revived. This village has now set an example for other villages in the country. My village, Piplantri village, has around 80 families living in it. There was a time once, when we used to buy 1 quintal of milk from another village to make tea for ourselves, and today, my village sells over 10 quintals of milk. I have seen the days when we used to be the buyers, and today we are the sellers. We have started keeping livestock in our village again and we are now living happily without any problems. The youth work in mines. The widowed, disabled, and weak either work for, or get work through MGNREGA. They get paid Rs. 180 per day, which is sufficient for their daily expenses. With the water problem solved, the farmers are continuing to farm without any problems. All the labour problems have been solved in the village. Back in the days when there were water and labour problems, people used to go to other villages for work. Today, these people have come back to the village. So, yes, there are a lot of changes in this village." (B. Singh, personal communication, February 13, 2020)

In recent years, the Training Centre has also started conducting workshops that explain the Piplantri Model to the Panchayats of other villages in order to encourage them to choose the path of self-sustained development for their respective villages.



**OBSERVATION**  
*"A success story of village development through effective local self-governance"*



No	Aspect		Piplantri
1	Initiation by		Individual
2	Leadership	Motive force	Sarpanch
		Characteristics	8th class, achievement-oriented
		Mechanisms of legitimation	Section of village elders, transparency
3	Community Involvement Mechanism		Aam sabhas, Open Panchayat
4	First initiative		Aam sabhas, Open Panchayat
5	First development effort		Upgrade school, building, TSC
6	Resource Mobilization	Timing	After problem identification and initial planning
		First source	Govt. program
		Responsibility	Sarpanch, Sec, BDO
		Sources	Govt. Programs, local & other companies,
7	Re-visioning Panchayat structure/ operation	Community contribution	Voluntary labour, suggestions
			"Open Panchayat"
8	Timeframe		5+ years
9	Integrated Planning		
	When started		After 3-4 years
	Who does		NGO with Panchayat support
	Need identification, Proposals development		Sarpanch & ward members, Aam Sabhas
	Community involvement		Sarpanch with others generate ideas, Aam Sabha discussion
	Finalization		Panchayat

Image 13: The features of the village development on each of the relevant parameters.

Source: [https://www.in.undp.org/content/india/en/home/library/democratic\\_governance/integrated-village-planning-and-development-lessons-from-hiware-bazar-gangadevapalli-ramachandrapuram-and-piplantri-gram-panchayats.html](https://www.in.undp.org/content/india/en/home/library/democratic_governance/integrated-village-planning-and-development-lessons-from-hiware-bazar-gangadevapalli-ramachandrapuram-and-piplantri-gram-panchayats.html) ("Integrated Village Planning and Development", n.d.)

The Piplantri model of village development is a multi-dimensional model which addresses multiple different problems such as female infanticide, mining activities, land encroachment, lack of water supply, depletion of forest area and grazing lands and migration due to lack of employment. Under the guidance of the village Sarpanch, Shri Shyam Sunder Paliwal, the village has been able to successfully resolve most of the problems faced by the villagers in Piplantri. Throughout the course of this study, a diverse range of observations were made with regards to these developments in Piplantri.

Firstly, it was observed that the literature available online or in journals regarding the Piplantri case offers a very small proportion of what the village is actually about. While researching for secondary data about the village, it was found that all of the data summarized the practice of planting 111 trees in the village and ignored the multi-dimensional nature of the model. The literature available online, fails to deliver justice to the hard-work and constant thought that has been put in by Shri Shyam Sunder Paliwal while designing this model for his village. The literature covers only one factor that has contributed to the village development, which is, the practice for saving the girl child. It has been equated with being an eco-feminist movement. However, it was observed that this practice of planting trees in Piplantri has set up the basis for a larger model of village development.

The Piplantri practice of planting trees has not only uplifted the status of women in the community, but has also contributed to the altogether upliftment of the village status. The planting of trees as a part of this practice has contributed to the replenishment of a vast area of wasteland that was earlier used as a dumping site for mine waste. The formation of a fixed deposit under the practice acts as a sense of security for the girl child being born which could be used for her higher education or for dowry during marriage. The planting of trees at a mass level has also led to the generation of both skilled and unskilled employment. Aloe Vera plantations have also acted as a major source of employment for men and women alike. The sale of aloe vera products has brought back employment in the village. With the growing awareness about saving the girl child, the Sarpanch tied the motto of “beti Bachao, beti padhao”, therefore, connecting girl child to education. This ensured that the schools in the village were upgraded to promote primary and secondary school education. In the initial phase of this practice, not many people were enthusiastic to join the sarpanch in his efforts, but looking at the positive impacts of the practice, supporters of the sarpanch increased.

Through the on-field research it was inferred that the growth of Piplantri and the success of the village development model was majorly possible because of the efficient administration of the local government. The Sarpanch was seen as the driving and motivating force engaging the entire panchayat in

working for growth of the village. Paliwal believed in transparency towards the citizens and citizen-engaging decision-making. He felt it was necessary to engage the people themselves in order to understand the problems and provide for an effective solution. He was also one of the very few Sarpanches to have judiciously used all of the government schemes and programs such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Swachh Bharat Mission, etc. One could also notice that the villagers were very fond of the Sarpanch and it was this influence that increased the participation of villagers in all the practices conducted in Piplantri. The funds received from government schemes as well as the mine companies, was allocated evenly to education, irrigation, maintenance of trees, etc. Even after Paliwal's tenure as the sarpanch ended, the villagers continued to show support and gratitude to the work he had done. The influence of the sarpanch was such that in the 2020 panchayat elections, his wife Mrs. Anita Paliwal won, primarily due to the popularity of her husband. It was a popular opinion amongst the villagers that the Shyam Sunder is the most citizen-devoted leader. In an interview with Bhawar Singh, he mentioned,

“Mr. Paliwal has been the sarpanch of this village from 2005 to 2010. He has made full use of the government schemes that were available to him for the welfare of the village. With reservations for SC, ST, OBC, BC coming in, the village had taken a round turn to becoming backwards again. The villagers believed that the village would prosper again only if he became the sarpanch again. So, the sarpanch was re-elected, but as a backbone to his wife Mrs. Anita Devi with unity among the villagers. With him as the sarpanch again, the villagers are looking forward to a brighter future.” (B. Singh, personal communication, February 13, 2020)

The Piplantri model along with the practice of planting trees has successfully contributed to the environmental replenishment of the village. The degradation faced due to constant mining activities and lack of tree plantations had damaged the village's natural self. Sarpanch's strategy of convincing the mine workers to plant a sufficient number of trees in return for their mining activities has truly balanced out the degradation that was taking place in Piplantri. The green cover of the village has returned after around a quarter million trees were planted. The water table has also replenished, which now supplies water to all the households in Piplantri. Nurseries full of trees planted in the name of girls are well-maintained and looked after. The Aloe Vera plants protect the trees from termite infestation, further yielding produce like mango, amla, sheesham, neem, etc. Even though the mine activities could not be completely stopped due

to the high employment dependency, Mr. Paliwal was successfully able to negate the destruction caused due to mining by the planting of multiple trees.

A rise in the average school attendance rate and employment rate has also been observed in the village. After the upgradation of the primary and secondary schools, the enrollment rate in the village increased up to an extent where today, every child in the village attends the primary school. According to the headmaster of the primary school, “Along with this, all children go to a government school and when it comes to education, “balak, balikau mai koi bhed nahi kiya jata.” Girls are progressing and doing well in every field.” (Headmaster, personal communication, February 13, 2020) The quality of education in the government school is no less than that of a private school with equal participation of both girls and boys. The girls in the village are also becoming independent and empowered through the means of education.

The migration rate in the village had increased due to the lack of job availability. However, after the successful planning and implementation of the village plan, multiple jobs in the nurseries, schools, aloe vera plantations, training centers and aanganwadis have opened up for the villagers. This has brought back some of the villagers who went away looking for jobs. Paliwal aims at bringing back the era of nature-based employment where one sustains relying on nature and in return gives something back for its conservation.

This exploratory research helped in observing the roadmap to self-sufficiency being followed by Mr. Paliwal in Piplantri. Local self-governance has indeed proven to be a powerful tool in the development and upliftment of the village and village residents. It also highlights that the government has provided villages with enough help through schemes and subsidies and a rational use of the same could bear fruitful consequences for a community. Finally, eco-feminism was just one small yet powerful aspect of this multi-faceted approach towards development and environment conservation.



**CONCLUSION**  
*"Piplantri is not just a thought out strategy, it is infact the result of pure and dedicated hardwork"*



This study was initiated with the research statement “To study the impact of eco-feminism on the socio-economic condition of women in Piplantri.” Even though the socio-economic condition of women has drastically improved because of the tradition, the very male-driven nature of this movement, restricts the participation of women in the decision making, management and administration of the tradition. Thus, the tradition cannot be entirely claimed to be an ecofeminist movement.

However, through the observations made during the field visit, it can be concluded that Piplantri not only facilitates a tradition that positively impacts the stature of women and the condition of the environment in the village, but also has implications on various other aspects such as education, employment and development. Inspired by the idea of “Swaraj”, Paliwal led Piplantri on the path to self-reliability. He presented an instance stating that one should not rely on sweepers and cleaning staff for picking up your garbage. One should be aware enough to clean and maintain their own surroundings. Under the Piplantri model, Paliwal has attempted to provide all the necessary facilities in Piplantri, in order to make the villagers independent.

In addition to this, Shri Shyam Sundar Paliwal’s Piplantri Model has indeed made the village famous for its “adharsh” (responsible) nature. In the making of this model Paliwal was inspired by Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, a freedom fighter, who painted the image of an ideal village as one which has greenery and proper sanitation facilities. Paliwal has been successful in his attempts to take Piplantri back to its original self with plenty of trees, safety of women, sufficient water for villagers, education for all and participation of citizens in decision-making.

This model further strengthens the foundation of self-sustained developmental practices that can be adopted by other Panchayats who are focusing towards uplifting the status of the village via community initiatives. In order to make the world a better place it is important for the members of the government to actively take decisions and initiatives similar to those of the Piplantri Model. Once similar models are adopted at different levels of the government, the positive consequences of this practice would be amplified.

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