

Banni Maldhari Gaurav Yatra:

A Walk for the Showcase of Maldhari Pastoralists Culture, Banni Grasslands and IYRP
9 -12 Jan 2021, Kutch , Gujarat, India



A Yatra in Banni Grassland area in Kutch, Gujarat state, India has been organized by Banni Pashu Ucherak Maldhari Sangathan (BPUMS- banni breeders association) in association with SAHJEEVAN and volunteers of RISG-SA (Regional Support Group for International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists for South Asia) on 9-12 Jan 2021. There were participation of more than 450 members of BPUMS include local pastoralists keeping buffaloes and cattle participated in the walk by raising slogans, singing pastoral songs for protection of Banni pasture lands, their livestock keeping culture and their local breeds viz. Banni buffaloes and Kankrej cattle.

Banni is Asia's the largest grassland spread over 2500 square kilometer in Kutch district of Gujarat which has been ravaged by *gando bawal* (*Posopis juliflora*) an exotic species. These pasture lands are classified under protected forests which is sole livelihood for about 7000 Maldhari communities in 54 villages who depend upon rearing of dairy animals for their survival. Now steps are being initiated by local groups for removal of exotic species for regeneration of local grass species. Recently Prime Minister of India visited the Banni area and this has earned good recognition of *maldhari* pastoralists culture who are demanding their legal entitlements for their landed property so that pasture land is protected for grazing their animals under Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers Forest Rights Act 2006 . Four days Yatra highlighted United Nation process on International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists for 2026, documentation and demonstration of traditional grass species, herbal medicine for animals facilitated by SEVA and RAMBLE and showcase their economic empowerment through selling of milk, milk products and live animals to farmers outside Kutch. Lunch and tea has been provided to participants by local villagers.

Yatra Day 1: 09-01-2021



'Gaurav Yatra' started from the western Banni, where Jat community is the dominant population. Route no. 1 where residents of Luna mota, Luna nana, Burkul, and Bhitrapanchayata gathered at Hajjpir and thereafter arrived at Bhagadiya village. Route no. 2 where maldharis from Sarada nana, Saradamota, Rabhuvandh, and Shervapanchayata gathered at Sherva cross road. They marched as rally to Bhagadiya village. At Bhagadiya village both the groups from route 1 and 2 gathered and celebrated the achievements with pastoral songs, discussion on their unique lifestyle /culture, grass species in banni lands and had lunch together.

Yatra Day 2: 10-01-2021



Communities like Hingorja, Node, Sumraetc from the Eastern Banni gathered from their respective villages. They came from Chacchi, Udai, Lakhabo, Misariyado, Sargu nana, Sargumota, Patreti, Dedhiya, Daddharmoti to Waghura. They conducted a rally from Waghura to Daddharnani. Herbal preparation for FMD disease of animals (*mathan thailam*) was demonstrated .

Yatra Day 3: 11-01-2021



The third day Yatra conducted at the Eastern most corner of Banni. Maldhari communities from villages viz. Noghaniyado, Godhadiyado, Raiyado, Kharod, Lakhara and Berdo joined for this occasion. They had concluded the Yatra by singing local sufi songs and had lunch together.

Yatra Day 4 : 12-01-2021



Fourth day Yatra covered Sadai, Arandawali, Gorewali, Panawari, Adhiyang, Dumoda panchayats and culminated in the valedictory programme at Hodka with *Bhagiyas* (local herbal healers), leaders of BPUMS(Banni Breeders Association) and representatives of local TV Media, Animal Husbandry department and private organizations. SEVA demonstrated few herbal preparations for animals(for FMD, Mastitis, herbal dewormer, herbal masala bolus/immunity booster) and documented their traditional knowledge with the help of scholars of RAMBLE involved in research activities of banni grassland.

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