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RESEARCH NOTES

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**Impact of Gujarat's *Krishi Mahotsava* (Agrarian Festival)  
Campaigns: Results of a Perception Survey of 1445  
Farmers from 25 Districts**

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ABSTRACT

Since 2005, Government of Gujarat has been organising an annual, month-long, pre-monsoon *Krishi Mahotsava* (Agrarian Festival) campaign to expose farmers to new farming technologies and market opportunities, enhance their interaction with scientists and input suppliers, and improve their access to various government schemes. *Krishi Mahotsava* entails mobilisation of government machinery on a massive scale. But does it reach out to the farmer? This paper presents the results of a sample survey of 1445 farmers from across Gujarat to understand their perceptions about the *Krishi Mahotsava* campaign, its impact on them and their suggestions about how to enhance its usefulness to them.

**Keywords:** *Krishi Mahotsava*, Agrarian festival, Private input suppliers.

**JEL:** Q12, Q13, Q16.

I

INTRODUCTION

Since 2005, the Government of Gujarat has been organising, during May every year, a month long *Krishi Mahotsava* (Agrarian Festival) in a campaign mode. Each such annual campaign is preceded by months of elaborate planning. Eighteen government departments, agricultural universities, extension agencies, District Rural Development Agencies, Panchayats, farmer co-operatives, Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMCs), seed, fertiliser and pesticide companies, irrigation equipment manufacturers and political leaders of various hues work overtime in mass contact programmes with the state's 4.5 million farmers. *Krishi Mela* (Exhibitions) are held in district towns where input supply companies, banks, co-operatives, NGOs and government departments display their ware. *Krishi Shibirs* (Farmer Workshops) are held where scientists expose farmers to new technologies and farmers share their experiences with each other. *Krishi Rath* (Agrarian Chariot), a travelling exhibition mounted on a decorated tractor trolley equipped with video projector, posters and extension materials, and manned by agricultural university scientists and students

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visit each of Gujarat's 18000 villages on a pre-announced schedule. They provide information and guidance to farmers on topics such as soil health management, crop rotation, organic farming, use of fertilisers and pesticides, irrigation practices, crop and milk marketing strategies, agro-processing and value addition techniques as well as other new opportunities to improve their farming and incomes. The poor farmers in each village are also provided input kits on agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry, containing seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, and such like. Documentary films and VCDs on extension education prepared by the state agricultural universities are distributed to the farmers or the *gram panchayats*. Expert lectures and one-to-one counseling sessions are held. Soil health tests are undertaken and soil health cards are given to the farmers, detailing the soil composition of their respective farms and suggesting the best possible crops for that soil type. Intensive animal vaccination programmes and animal health camps are also held. Besides providing information and exposure, the month-long campaign also does a great deal to foster peer-group communication and discussion, and recognise farmer-innovators and publicise their achievements. All in all, the *Krishi Mahotsava* is a massive exercise, which mobilises various stakeholders in the agricultural development of the state in a concentrated and time-bound manner. Every year, a different aspect is chosen as the key focus of *Krishi Mahotsava* as shown below.

- 2005 - Agriculture
- 2006 - Horticulture
- 2007 - Animal husbandry
- 2008 - Subsidy schemes of state and central governments
- 2009 - Exhibition of technologies and marketing opportunities
- 2010 - Convergence of all agriculture related technology at village level.

All in all, while financial costs of the *Krishi Mahotsava* campaign are modest, the scale of the effort mounted - what with over one lakh functionaries involved - is formidable. While conventional agricultural extension machinery has become defunct everywhere in India, Gujarat's *Krishi Mahotsava* was designed to fill the gap, and enhance the farmers' awareness about new technologies as well as government schemes. Has *Krishi Mahotsava* served that purpose? IWMI-Tata Program, with the help of partners, surveyed 1445 farmers around Gujarat to assess the contribution of *Krishi Mahotsava*.

## II

### OBJECTIVES, METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY

This study was undertaken as a preliminary assessment of the *Krishi Mahotsava*, to examine the extent of farmer awareness and participation in *Krishi Mahotsava*, and the adoption of new practices by the beneficiary farmers. It also sought to gauge the

success of the disbursement of soil health cards, the kisan credit cards, extension material and input kits for the poor. One village was selected from each of the 25 districts of Gujarat. A sample of 60 respondent farmers from each village was selected through the stratified purposive sampling method with a fixed number of households to be canvassed in each category as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. SAMPLING SCHEME FOR A SURVEY OF FARMER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT *KRISHI MAHOTSAVA*

Sl. No. (1)	Farmer category for the survey (2)	Fixed sample size per village (3)	Total sample size (4)
1.	Category 1 (>10 acres)	3	75
2.	Category 2 (5-10 acres)	7	175
3.	Category 3 (< 5 acres)	20	500
4.	Farmers of any land holding class who do not use irrigation at all on their fields	5	125
5.	Landless farm labourers/tenant farmers	5	125
6.	Schedule Caste (SC) households (any land holding size)	5	125
7.	Schedule tribe (ST) households (any land holding size)	5	125
8.	Muslim households (any land holding size)	5	125
9.	Women headed households (any land holding size)	5	125
10.	Total sample	60	1500

The primary survey was conducted in August 2010, a month-and-a-half after the 2010 *Krishi Mahotsava* had concluded. Information was collected from sample farmers through a structured questionnaire. It included questions about the economic status of the household (landholding, livestock and other livelihood assets), participation in the *Krishi Mahotsava*, awareness and retention of information from the *Krishi Mahotsava*, actual adoption of the learning, benefits derived from the various government schemes, suggestions on the improvement in design of future *Krishi Mahotsava*. The questionnaire specifically asked the respondents what they learnt and adopted from their experience with *Krishi Mahotsava 2010*. However, it is very likely that the respondent farmers 'over-attributed' to *Krishi Mahotsava* many messages they picked up from other sources. This remains a limitation of our analysis. In order to supplement and ratify the information obtained from the farmers, the Expert Opinion Method was used to solicit whereby opinions and suggestions of some 60 officials and scientists including District Agricultural Officers, District Nodal Scientists, officers from National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Gujarat Green Revolution Company (GGRC), APMCs as well as the *gram sevak* and *sarpanch* of the study villages. Secondary data was collected from government departments, lead banks, state agricultural universities and other sources.

### III

#### KEY FINDINGS

In the actual conduct of the survey, we had difficulty finding the required numbers especially of women-headed households, Muslim and in some cases *Adivasi*

(ST) households in the same village. The required quota was met by identifying households in neighbouring villages. The key point is that the sampling was neither random, nor proportional. It can be best called structured stratified sampling method. The purpose was to get sufficiently large sample for each category to make credible analysis of their perceptions about *Krishi Mahotsava*. Table 2 profiles the sample households and their asset base. Only a quarter of the land operated by the sample farmers was unirrigated; and only around 9 per cent of the sample farmers are engaged in rainfed farming on all their land. Wells and tube wells irrigated half of the total land operated by sample households, thus being the principal means of irrigation. Government canals were a distant second.

TABLE 2. PROFILE OF SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS AND THEIR RESOURCE BASE

Categories (1)	Number of sample house- holds (2)	Average holding size (acre) (3)	Percentage of land unirrigated (4)	Percentage of land irrigated by wells (5)	Percentage of land irrigated by canals (6)	Percentage of land irrigated by other sources (7)	Average milking bovines/ house- hold (8)	Average total bovines/ house- hold (9)
10 + acre	76	17.6	20.2	54.6	14.8	7.4	3.8	9.8
5-10 acre	178	6.8	21.4	59.0	9.8	5.9	3.1	8.3
< 5 acre	563	2.5	20.2	51.2	15.2	7.2	2.3	6.2
Unirrigated farmers	114	2.8	100	0	-	-	2.4	6.9
Landless	131	0	0	0			2.6	6.8
Scheduled caste (SC)	120	3.4	24.6	40.7	18.0	12.2	3.1	8.0
Scheduled tribe (ST)	74	2.6	25.3	34.5	28.1	6.5	2.5	6.7
Muslim	72	6.0	9.5	67.7	18.0	2.4	4.6	6.9
Women headed households	117	3.0	33.9	39.4	12.9	8.0	2.4	6.7
Total	1445	4.3	25.6	49.9	13.7	6.6	2.7	7.3

#### *Awareness About and Participation in Krishi Mahotsava*

Around 69 per cent of the sample farmers were aware of *Krishi Mahotsava* and 65 per cent thought it to be a 'good programme'. Awareness and participation were particularly high among large and Muslim farmers, and particularly low among SC and landless households. A quarter of the sample farmers attended the *Krishi Mela* and around one-fifth attended a *Krishi Shibir*; over half were aware that the *Krishi Rath* had visited their village and had visited the same. A majority of these respondents were large land owners and Muslim farmers. Our sample of Muslim farmers was remarkable in that 86 per cent of them were 'aware' of *Krishi Mahotsava*; and 81 per cent of these said 'they found *Krishi Mahotsava*' beneficial. Predictably, the landless were the least aware (49 per cent) though all of the 'aware' landless households also thought of it as a 'good programme'.

There was thus a strong scale-bias in the exposure to *Krishi Mahotsava*. Those with money to travel and time to spare were more likely to attend *Krishi Mela* and *Krishi Shibir*. Only 8 per cent of the sample farmers visited the model farmer's field. Many of the small farmers and landless had to forego this opportunity because they could neither afford travel cost and the time for it, nor forego their wages during that period. Moreover, they thought that they had no use for new information when they had no means to use it.

A *gram sabha* was to be organised by the *gram sevak* and the *sarpanch* in the village prior to the visit of the *Krishi Rath*. 41 per cent respondents said they knew the *gram sabha* was organised, and 32 per cent admitted to having attended such a *gram sabha*. Awareness and participation in the *gram sabha* was found to be the highest among large farmers and lowest among the landless and ST farmers.

There was much dissatisfaction and heart-burning with the manner of deciding beneficiary households as well as the delivery of the kits to them. Many households found the free agricultural inputs of no use as they were either landless or they got them after the sowing season. Our survey also showed evidence of considerable mis-targeting, with medium and large farmers walking away with agricultural kits.

Around a quarter of the sample farmers said that they received literature on extension education and admitted using it. Once again, the utilisation of the literature was better among large and Muslim farmers but low among ST, tenant and women farmers. As high as 43 per cent respondents asserted that they interacted with government officials from agriculture and other departments. This is remarkable because under normal circumstances, the farmers have few, if any, opportunities to get access to and interact with officials and scientists in village settings. Private seed, fertiliser and equipment companies were highly motivated in using the opportunity provided by *Krishi Mahotsava*; around 14 per cent respondents reported to have interacted with the staff of Gujarat Green Revolution Company (GGRC) that deals in micro-irrigation systems. Twenty seven per cent reported to have benefited from interaction with private input suppliers. Interaction with officials from the lead bank/NABARD (16 per cent) and officials of APMC (16 per cent) was relatively low. Overall, interaction with various extension agents was found to be the highest among large farmers and quite low among small, SC and ST farmers.

#### *Awareness Versus Adoption of Improved Practices*

A wide gap existed between awareness and adoption of new crops. The awareness levels were high among large and medium land owners and Muslim farmers and low among rainfed farmers, ST and women headed farm households. The gap between awareness and adoption rates varied greatly across categories of improved practices as well as of the farmers. Indeed the bulk of the adoption was concentrated in the former three categories; and the average for the sample as a whole was pulled down by the very low adoption rates of the SC, ST, landless, rainfed and

women-headed households. The large (10 acres+) and the Muslim farmers were at least 3 times more likely to adopt these practices compared to the landless, rainfed, tribal and women-headed households.

The highest gap between awareness and adoption exists with respect to improved irrigation practices, soil health management and water harvesting practices. In contrast, the lowest gap was found in the awareness and adoption of new crops and seed varieties which promised immediate private benefit. The innovation-diffusion literature argues that adoption of new ideas is determined by five characteristics of innovations: relative advantage these offer, compatibility with individual's life situation, simplicity, trialability and observability (Rogers 2003). Arguably, adoption of new crops and seed varieties score higher on all or some of these factors than irrigation and water harvesting innovations. Notably, however, even in soil health management and water harvesting, large farmers were found to be miles ahead of the rest in awareness as well as adoption of better practices. In improved marketing practices, both Muslim and large farmers were the most enthusiastic adopters of new ideas.

There is also a similarly strong scale bias in awareness and availing of government subsidies under *Krishi Mahotsava*. Overall, some 30 per cent of the sample farmers were aware about government subsidy schemes; but only 11 per cent availed of subsidies. Large farmers, Muslim farmers and ST households in our sample had the highest awareness and derived the maximum benefit from government subsidy programmes. The proportion of sample households in these categories who benefited from subsidy programmes was larger than their proportion in the sample. Landless families, small and marginal farmers, rainfed farmers, SC and women headed households benefited the least. Small and marginal farmers, for example, were 35 per cent of the total sample but only 5 per cent of the sample households who availed of subsidies. Muslim and large farmer households in contrast were less than 5 per cent of the sample each; but were respectively 14 and 19 per cent of sample households who benefited from government subsidy schemes.

#### *Ownership of Wells as Key Determinant of Participation*

Ownership of well/tubewell was another defining aspect of participation in *Krishi Mahotsava*. The landless households (131) and rainfed farm households (112) showed the least participation in *Krishi Mahotsava*. This was quite understandable. However, even those 289 farm households who irrigated from canals and other local sources participated in *Krishi Mahotsava* activities significantly less than well owners (449 sample households) and those households who did not have their own wells (500 sample households) but were able to purchase well irrigation service from well/tube well owners nearby. In general, ownership of a well/ tube well had a strong impact on the participation of a household in *Krishi Mahotsava* and benefiting from it. Besides significantly larger proportion of well/tube well owners participated in

various *Krishi Mahotsava* activities compared to the rest of the sample households as a whole. Interestingly, the difference between the two groups on awareness about *Krishi Mahotsava* and 'it's being a good programme' was much smaller than in the actual rates of participation in various activities. Nearly twice the proportion of well owners in our sample participated in *Krishi Mahotsava* activities compared to non-well owners. This suggests either or both of the following two things. First, owners of wells/tubewells take their farming more seriously compared to farmers without 'on-farm water control' that wells/tubewells offer. Second, *Krishi Mahotsava* has had little or nothing to offer to rainfed farmers. Moreover, because the Irrigation Department - responsible for managing major and medium irrigation systems - is not included in *Krishi Mahotsava*, canal irrigators miss out on the opportunity to interact with a key service provider.

Consequent to such patterns of participation, the well owners learnt more from *Krishi Mahotsava* than the non-well owners. By far the majority of sample farmers owning wells and tube wells reported improved awareness about practices that offered direct benefit to them without drastic changes in their existing farming system - such as the use of new crops, new seed varieties, improved farming and pest management practices. In contrast, very small proportion of well owners as well as non-well owners learnt about organic farming, soil health management, water harvesting, improving milk production and milk quality.

Much has been made about schemes such as the soil health card and kisan credit card and how these are helping to change the way farming is done in Gujarat. Our sample survey showed that the penetration of soil health card and kisan credit card is limited. Just around 10 per cent of the 1445 farmers sampled had these cards. Most farmers who had these cards had not used it even once. The lukewarm response of the farmers to soil health cards was evident in our qualitative discussions with the farmers. However, the penetration of agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry kits was surprisingly high in our sample. Nearly a quarter of our sample households received at least one of the three kits at least once. This was higher than we expected since every village is supposed to have only 15 recipients of the kits of the three kinds.

A massive scale bias is evident in accessing these schemes. The large and medium farmers have more than their fair share of everything. Most large and medium farmers have soil health cards and kisan credit cards. Most also received the agriculture kits. The rainfed and the tribal farmers were the worst off in all the five schemes.

#### *Awareness Impact of Agricultural Universities*

Gujarat's four agricultural universities with campuses at Anand, Navsari, Junagadh and Dantiwada are the key players in *Krishi Mahotsava*. Each of these has several districts as its zone of influence as follows (Table 3):



TABLE 3. DISTRICTS IN THE ZONE OF INFLUENCE OF AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITIES

(1)	(2)
Anand	Panchamahhal, Vadodara, Ahmedabad, Anand, Kheda
Dantiwada	Gandhinagar, Mehsana, Patan, Banaskantha, Sabarkantha
Navsari	Valsad, Narmada, Bharuch, Surat, Navsari, Tapi, Dangs
Junagadh	Rajkot, Surendranagar, Amreli, Kachhh, Bhavnagar, Junagadh, Porbandar, Jamnagar

Since our survey covered villages from each of these districts, we are able to make an indirect assessment of *Krishi Mahotsava*'s impact on awareness building in the zone of influence of each agricultural university. The differences in awareness levels cannot be wholly attributed to the respective university; therefore causality cannot be implied since many other factors come into play. Yet, we had not expected such large differences in the awareness impact of *Krishi Mahotsava* in the zones of influence of the four universities. Navsari University's zone of influence includes tribal areas where awareness levels are expected to be low. Moreover, the presence of sugar co-operatives which provide total solutions to sugarcane farmers' problems also affects the farmers' need for and receptivity to extension. In contrast, the Anand University has in its zone of influence highly dynamic and affluent farming areas. In terms of the awareness levels of farmers along 9 key aspects of crop and dairy farming in the four university zones it was noted that the farmers sampled under the Anand Agricultural University gained the most from *Krishi Mahotsava* in terms of information and awareness along most of the 9 key aspects covered. Those under Navsari gained the least. Farmers everywhere were most keen to learn about new seed varieties and new crops; on these two, Dantiwada farmers were nearly as good as those under the Anand University. The farmers under Junagadh and Dantiwada, two water stressed regions, should have been more aware about improved irrigation practices; but it was in water-abundant Navsari zone that farmers were more aware about water management. Awareness about improving milk production and quality - central to Gujarat's agricultural growth - was uniformly low except in the Anand zone.

#### *Qualitative Feedback from Farmers and Officials*

Most farmers interviewed perceived the *Krishi Mahotsava* as a 'good thing', although they found it hard to specify its verifiable benefits and impact. Many would like guidance tailor-made to their specific context. Some farmers and many officials would like to reduce the periodicity of the *Krishi Mahotsava* to enhance its impact. Many scientists and officials felt that the *Krishi Mahotsava* bridged the gulf between the farmer and the scientist, benefitting both in various ways. However, some scientists and officials felt that the succession of annual *Krishi Mahotsavas* had led to over-exposure and fatigue among officials and farmers, resulting in waning farmer interest and dwindling participation. Some officials suggested more frequent *Krishi*

*Shibirs* in place of the present format of *Krishi Mahotsava*. Others, who felt that May - the hottest month of the year in which everyone is busy attending weddings - is not the best time for *Krishi Mahotsava* and suggested a redesigned *Krishi Mahotsava* in two parts: summer and winter.

#### IV

#### CONCLUSION

In sum, our survey of 1445 farmers around Gujarat tells us that: [a] 69 per cent of the farmers we interviewed were aware of *Krishi Mahotsava* and 65 per cent considered *Krishi Mahotsava* to be a 'good' initiative even though they are not able to specify its verifiable benefits; [b] over 40 per cent of the respondents said they came into direct personal contact with the government officials or scientists or input suppliers; [c] *Krishi Mahotsava* has done better in generating awareness about improved practices than in promoting their adoption; [d] large land owners and Muslim farmers have participated and benefited the most from *Krishi Mahotsava* while rainfed, landless, ST and SC farmers, and women headed farming households have neither participated nor benefited from the initiative; [e] owners of wells and tube wells are far more proactive in participating in *Krishi Mahotsava* compared to farmers who depend on canal irrigation and other sources of irrigation, as well as rainfed farmers. *Krishi Mahotsava* also has much more to offer to farmers with on-farm water control than to the rainfed farmers; [f] soil health cards and kisan credit cards have little penetration; and we found strong scale-bias in access to free input kits.

While awareness impact is high, adoption impact is low. Low adoption rates should not be surprising. Extension scholars like Everett Rogers (2003) have established through decades of research that new ideas are first taken up by 'innovators' and a small minority of 'early adopters'. It is then mostly through peer communication and opinion leaders that established new practices attract an 'early majority' to adopt. There is still a 'late majority' who follow the suit much later when their dominant 'propensity to resist' every new idea is overcome by a strengthening 'propensity to adopt', again through peer communication and opinion leaders. And even after an innovation becomes an established practice for long, there still remains a small minority of 'laggards' who refuse to change their old ways. In this light, the low rate of adoption of new ideas and practices from *Krishi Mahotsava* at 2-11 per cent is not hard to explain.

The golden rule in good extension work is to identify innovators and give them recognition and publicity. This is one part that *Krishi Mahotsava* did well. It mobilised agricultural administration and universities in tracking down innovative farmers in every taluka, gave away awards to them in well attended public meetings, published their achievements in souvenirs and brochures, and encouraged other farmers to visit their fields and understand their innovations. It is unfortunate, though

not hard to understand, that very few of these innovative farmers are from scheduled castes or tribes or from the small and marginal farmer or rainfed categories.

In an era when government agricultural extension has become defunct, agriculture teaching and research have got further removed from the farmer, and government support to agriculture has reduced mostly to subsidies and giveaways, Gujarat's *Krishi Mahotsava* has treaded a new path. Gujarat was never known for its agrarian dynamism. Yet, since 2000, Gujarat has grown its agricultural economy at an uncommonly high growth rate of over 9 per cent/year. Many factors explain this remarkable growth story (Shah *et al.*, 2009). If *Krishi Mahotsava* has played even some minor role in it, the experiment must be considered worthwhile for emulation by other states.

This is especially because *Krishi Mahotsava* costs so little in real terms. Budgetary allocation for it has seldom exceeded Rs. 100 crore per year. The resource it intensively uses - the staff and students of Agricultural Universities, government departments, APMCs, co-operatives - could not possibly have better alternate use than reaching out to farmers in large numbers. Indeed, one might argue that never were agricultural scientists in Gujarat closer to the farming community than they are today, thanks to *Krishi Mahotsava*. Running around in villages in scorching heat of May in Gujarat, setting aside all routine work, is naturally not pleasurable. Yet, most scientists and officials we interviewed conveyed the sense of pride, fulfillment and self-actualisation they experienced by participating in *Krishi Mahotsava*. Replacing the existing format by more frequent *Krishi Shibirs* or undertaking *Krishi Mahotsava* in two equal parts during summer and winter were among the suggestions from scientists and officials.

*Krishi Mahotsava* also marks a shift from 'propitiative' to 'proactive' governance of the agricultural economy. By giving away doles and subsidies, a propitiative strategy keeps a restive peasantry quiet but deepens their fatalism and dependency. A proactive strategy actively supports innovation, change and progress. Given the current predicament of India's small-holder dominated agricultural economy, there is need for both but there is also need to strike a balance between the two. In many states, the emphasis is wholly or mostly on propitiative approaches driven by vote-bank politics. Gujarat's agricultural strategy has tilted increasingly towards proactive governance. *Krishi Mahotsava* is a good example of this shift.

The challenge for *Krishi Mahotsava* then is of deepening the osmotic processes through which diffusion of innovative ideas and farming practices becomes faster to reach the benefits of progress to the poor. One strident criticism of the *Krishi Mahotsava* from farmers was that its extension messages were too generic and not location/farmer-specific. This may require a change in *Krishi Mahotsava's* 'Hanuman strategy'<sup>1</sup> of inundating the farming community with progressive ideas and technologies and leaving it to each farmer to find what is useful to him. A more differentiated approach based on the needs, risk and resource profile of different sub-groups of the farming community may arguably produce superior outcomes. *Krishi*

*Mahotsava* is also too focused on the well owner segment of Gujarat's farming communities; it offers little to dry land farmers and farmers dependent on canal irrigation. Including the Irrigation Department in *Krishi Mahotsava* would improve the interface between irrigation agencies and farmers. The campaign should also focus some attention on the opportunities for improving rainfed farming. There is need for resolute effort to contain and reduce the scale-bias in the allocation of benefits through a special thrust to reach out to the landless tenants, women headed farm households and rainfed farmers.

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#### NOTE

1. In the Hindu epic *Ramayana*, when Lakshman was on death bed fatally injured in the epic war, Hanuman, the monkey God was tasked to procure a life saving herb from the Himalayas. When he failed to identify the required herb, Hanuman returned with an entire hillock for the doctor to find what he needed.

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