

Irfan Karim was one of the first grassroots musicians and poets to spontaneously arise in our development forums and workshops to sing a song he had written himself about the reawakening of his people. After that, whenever Irfan sang, the room would light up; his voice so pure and beautiful, his words like clear bells touching every heart with their shimmering energy.

Once we were having a very serious discussion in one of our forums. Thinking a song would uplift the spirits, we asked Irfan if he would sing. "In how much time?" he asked rather seriously. "Ten minutes?" we said. "Can you make it twenty minutes?" he asked. Not quite understanding, we readily agreed.

In about twenty minutes we found Irfan in a corner scribbling on a piece of paper. When he saw us coming he said, "OK, OK, almost ready". He had written a song from scratch in twenty minutes.

You can see him in the picture below elegantly moving his hand as he reads from his notes while he is singing his new song.



Irfan died, along with nine other community leaders in a terrible highway accident in late September 2012.

In October, there was a hole in our forums and gatherings where Irfan would have been. Instead, we found ourselves glancing again and again at the grief-etched face of Irfan's sister, also an active participant in the HiMaT project.

Without Irfan, even the music night held in his honour on the last night of

our gathering was subdued. It just didn't have the spark and energy of other times.

Then, on the last afternoon, another young man (whom we had never seen before this session) arose and announced that he had written a song and he wanted to share it. His name is Asgher Ali Rumi.

His voice was rough, but filled with a pressing energy that burned. He sang in Urdu, but here is an English translation of what he sang. Note that "Himat" is an Urdu word that means courage, empowerment, and making a great effort against difficult odds, (which is why we chose it as the name of our project).

HIMAT HIMAT

*Himat, himat
can change our homeland.
Himat, himat
can change our garden.¹*

*Don't give me bread; I'm not hungry.
Don't give me a stick; I'm not blind.
Don't tease me; I'm not a child.*

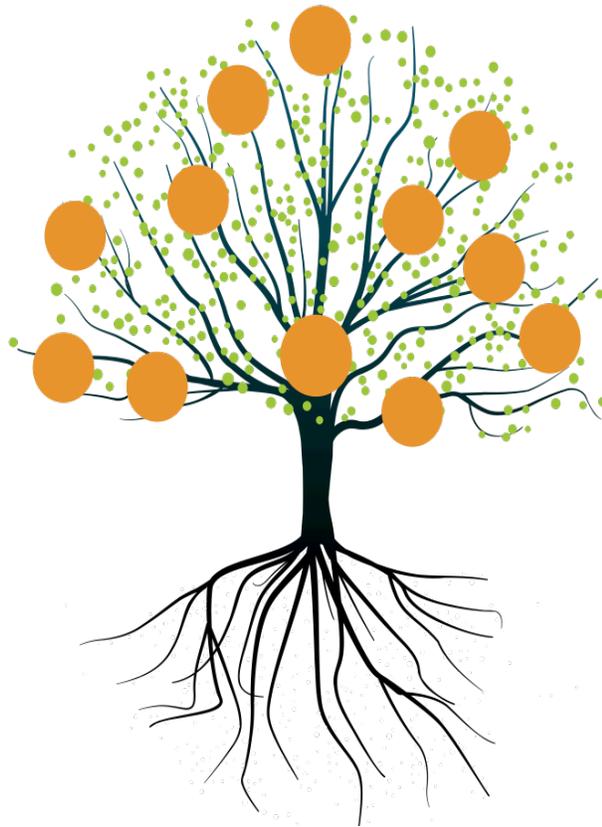
*If we stand up as teachers,
if we stand up as leaders,
if we stand up as farmers,*

*then Himat, Himat
can change our homeland.
Himat, himat
can change our garden.*

*If we have all these things,
Then why are we idle and passive?
And why are the fruits of our tree²
so small and weak?*

*Let us take good care of this tree,
and then we will taste
how the fruits are sweet and good.*

*Himat, Himat
can change our homeland.
Himat, himat
can change our garden.*



Afterwards many quietly commented that the spirit that had so animated Irfan continued to live on within the people he loved and served all his life.

¹ Garden here is a metaphor referring to all the produce of life's efforts.

² The tree of development