

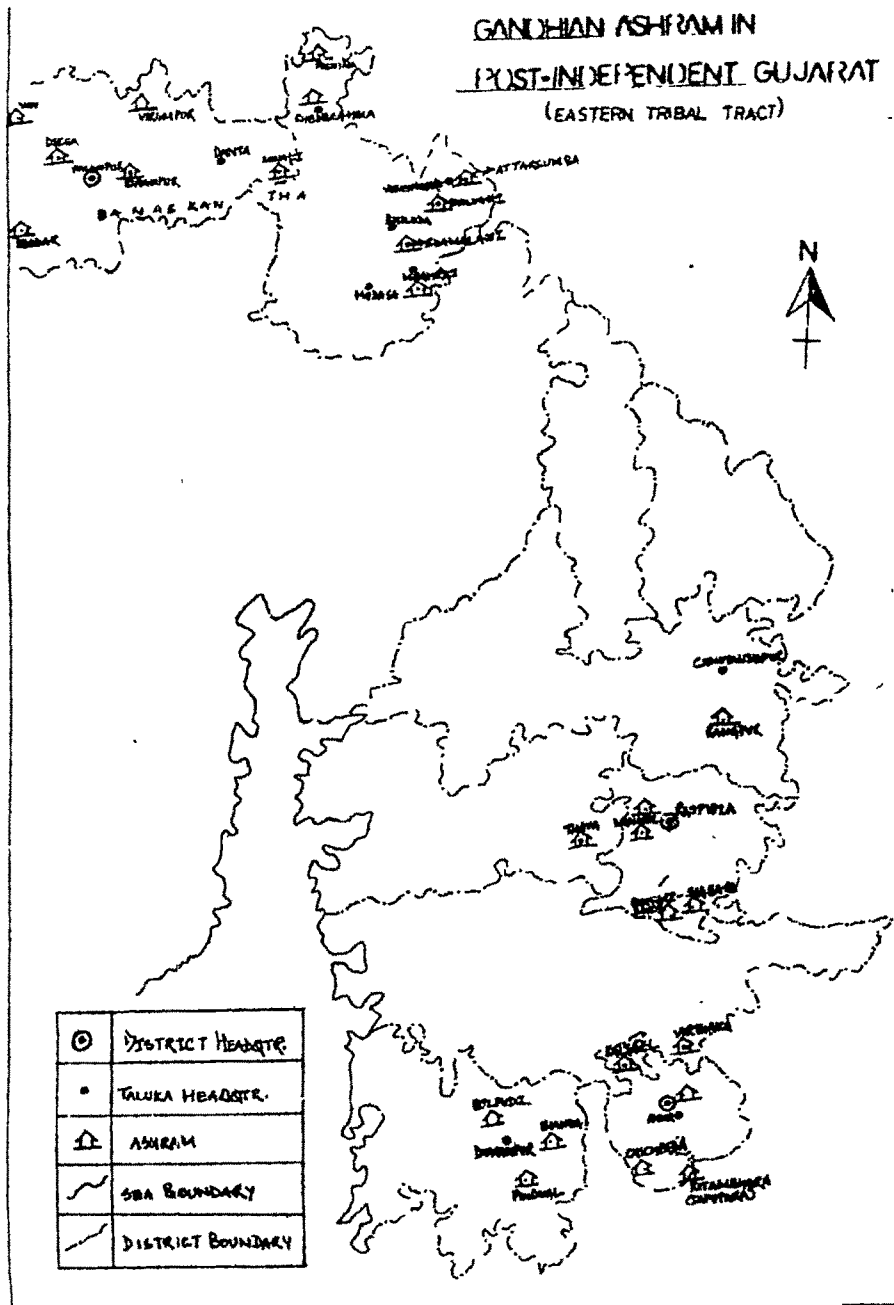
## Chapter VI

**GANDHIANS IN POST INDEPENDENCE  
GUJARAT**

Gandhians' work in Panchmahals saw its expansion and continuation in other parts of tribal Gujarat with many enthusiastic workers joining the peers. This chapter attempts to study the works by the followers of Gandhi for the tribal welfare in the post-Independence era. After Independence, Gandhi made a clarion call to all his followers. He asked them to stop participating in the active politics and go to the last unprivileged man of the Indian villages and serve for his basic requirements. In Gujarat this call of Gandhi did not go unattended and several young men and women readied themselves for the service of poorest of the poor tribals.



**The Gandhian Ashrams in the Eastern Tribal Tract of Gujarat**



Source: Self cretaed, Scale: 1 cm=25 kms.

This chapter analyses fourteen case studies, viz: (i) Lokniketan-Ratanpur, taluka Palanpur, (ii) Sarvodaya Ashram-Sanali, taluka, Danta

at Banaskantha, (iii) Shri Sewa Niketan Trust, Khedbrahma (iv) Adivasi Sewa Samiti, Shamalaji, Bhiloda; (v) Anand Niketan Ashram, Chhota Udepur; (vi) Champak Kaka Sukhadia, Rajpipla, (vii) Arch-Vahini and Prayas at Mangrol, Rajpipla, (viii) Gram Nirman Thava, Valiya, (ix) Sagbara Kelvani Mandal Trust, Sagbara, (x) The Dangs (xi) Dang Swaraj Ashram, (xii) Gram Sewa Sabha, Bilpudi, (xiii) Pindval Sarvodaya Trust, Pindval, (xiv) 'Vedchhi Pradesh Sewa Samiti' by veteran Gandhian activists Bhikhubhai Vyas and his wife Kokila Vyas at Vedchhi covering Dharampur and Vansda talukas of Valsad district.

### GANDHIANS IN BANASKANTHA

In the Banaskanatha district the main regions where Gandhians went for the social welfare activities among tribals were Danta, Palanpur, Amirgarh, Deesa, Deodar and Vav where Garasia Bhils are the dominant tribal communities.<sup>1</sup>

#### Savodaya Ashram-Sanali:

It was in 1932, during the time of Civil Disobedience movement that a young constable Akbar Chavda<sup>2</sup> was posted at Gujarat Vidyapith to keep an eye on the activities of nationalist struggle. During his vigilance duty he came in closer contact with Gandhi and his working strategy influenced him to leave his job and he become an ardent follower and volunteer at the Gujarat Vidyapith. At the same time, there was a young nurse from Rajasthan at Vidyapith Zorabai. After completion of her nursing training course from wardha she came to serve ashramites of Sabarmati. Gandhi played an active role in bringing them close to each other resulting in their wedding at Vidyapith in 1946.

<sup>1</sup> The broad description on ethnography and history of tribal people of this region is given in chapter I, Part-III of this thesis and Chapter-II, Part-I of this thesis.

<sup>2</sup> Akbar Chavda (1911-1998) was son of a feudal Lord of Prantij taluka, district Sabarkantha. After completion of his education he joined British police force in 1928 but after coming under influence of Mahatma he left his job. [Information given by V. D. Panchal, former Principal of Sanali Ashram School in an interview taken at his residence in Palanpur on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2003]

After blessing the couple, Gandhi advised them to choose a remote village to serve the unprivileged. For two years they got orientation at different ashrams, Sabarmati, Wardha, and Paunar. Later on they went in search of a suitable place to impart their services. While travelling and studying different regions they ultimately came to a remote and backward village of Sanali which was inhabited by Sokhla Grasia Bhils. It was located 23 kilometers from the headquarters of Danta State whose ruler was least bothered about the condition of its subjects and no school or hospital was raised till 1948.<sup>3</sup> When the couple came to Danta State, out of 182 villages there were only four which had primary schools.



The bust of Akbarbhai Chavda at Sarvodaya Ashram, Sanali-30/05/2003

The couple spent the initial days under a tree and had nothing to support them in the dense jungle. After few weeks of roofless nights they were supported by the local villagers in making a hut besides the confluence of rivers Kidi and Mankodi. Thus began the 'Sanali-Sarvodaya

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Kantaben Dave at Danta on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2003. She is the daughter-in-law of former Diwan of Danta State. Akbarbhai Chavda and Zohrabi had close relations with the family. Also see Chhotubhai Champaneri, 'Shalana Pachisma Varsha' (twenty-five years of the school) in *Rajat Jayanti Smriti Granth (Silver Jubilee Memorial Edition)*, 1992, p 15

Ashsram'. The couple tirelessly worked everyday. Zohrabi used to go to every house of the village and tried to convince the women to adopt basics of hygienic and infant care. She also convinced them to send their children to 'balwadi' at the ashram. Akbarbhai would convince the youngmen of Bhil Community to adopt healthy practices of life, to do away with liquor and inculcate value for education. Initially the work was difficult as these people were hard to be convinced but slowly mutual understanding and respect resulted in tribal people's trust in the couple. The first school (ashramshala) was opened in the year 1950. The popularity of Akbrakbhai grew and for the purpose he expanded his area of activities from Sanali and brought students from distant place of the region to study at the *ashsramshala*.<sup>4</sup>

In 1952 Akbarbhai Chavda contested the Lok Sabha elections from Danta constituency. The victory as Member of Parliament (hereafter MP) made him leave Sanali and go to Delhi. Though as MP he continued to serve the institution by bringing funds but due to absence of an able leadership there was decline in the reputation of Sanali ashram.<sup>5</sup> At this juncture two government servants Keshrisingh and Badansingh Chavda left their jobs and came to fill the gap but the situation continued to worsen. In 1957 Akbarbhai Chavda was reelected from Danta seat. The constant association of Akbar Chavda with political parties dissociated him from the activities of Danta with the result that till 1965 Sanali Sarvodya Ashram was not a registered trust and nor the ashram was a structured body.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Harisinh Chavda and Pushpaben Chavda told about life and times of Akbar Chavda and Zohrabi, in interview, at Loknicketan-Ratanpur, Dt. 30<sup>th</sup> May 2003

<sup>5</sup> Interview with senior persons at Sanali Ashram, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2003

<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately there is no detailed written document available on the life of Akbar Chavda and Zohrabi Chavda. The information collected on couple is based on the interviews taken of their contemporary workers like Harisinh Chavda, V. D. Panchal and Pushpaben Chavda and their colleagues at sanali ashram, on 30<sup>th</sup> May to 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2003. During this phase Akbrabhai and Zohrabi both were too much engrossed in the political activities to think of technicalities of registration. Moreover, their marital differences also led them to leave the ashram. As a result the responsibility of ashram fell to the people like Manubhai Bhatt, Chimanlal Trimbbkhai, Madhu Dwarkadas Joshi, Shantilal Shah, and Chhotubhai

In 1965 both Zohrabi and Akbar Chavda came back to Sanali with new spirit. The Balwadi and school which they started now had enough students who had already passed the board level examination. Thereafter Akbabhai focused more devoted on Sanali ashram while Zohrabi was elected from Danta seat as MP in 1962.<sup>7</sup> In 1967 Akbar Chavda brought Swiss Aid to Sanali and extended its support to Lok-Niketan, Ratanpur as well. Thereafter Lokniketan and Sanali Sarvodaya Trust continued to work at tandem with each other.<sup>8</sup>

The desire of Zohrabi to work for the cause of people independently made her to leave Sanali Trust. In 1962 she started her own ashram at village Kanihara in Deesa subdivision of Banaskantha district. This work was among Koli-Thakore, Manji-Rana Bhil and Rabari communities. Same year Akbar Chavda became District Congress Working Committee President for which reason most of his time was spent at Palanpur.<sup>9</sup> In course of time Sanali grew on its own with its new work force. Certainly the people who began it were no where to support it and rarely came to visit it. But the second generation of Sanali took the responsibility with caution and vision.

In 1973 a flood came in Danta which also swept away the loose structures of Sanali ashram. It was a huge loss to the Sarvodaya Trust and the trustees were forced to start everything once again. During these

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Champaneri. With the efforts of these people and consent of Akbarbhai Chavda in 1965 Sarvodaya Ashram Sanali was registered as a Trust.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with V. D. Panchal, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2003

<sup>8</sup> Editorial 'Sanali Silver Jubilee Issue', 1992

<sup>9</sup> Rumors often go that after Zohrabi became MP the marital dispute aroused between the couple but colleagues of the couple did not allow them to show their differences publicly. Infact in 1997 when Zohrabi took her last breadth, Akbar Chavda was their besides her. After a year Akbar Chavda also died at Sanali. Both were buried at Prantij, the ancestral town of Akbar Chavda, as told by V. D. Panchal-3<sup>rd</sup> June' 2003 at Palanpur

desperate times, 'Rajmal Sikharchand Charitable Trust' came for the rescue of Sanali.<sup>10</sup>

**Schools and institutions run by the Sarvodaya Trust Sanali<sup>11</sup>**

Educational Body	Founded	Capacity	Students	1981	1991
Rajmani Vidyalaya Sanali	1967	600	-	440	480
Rajmani Higher Secondary School, Sanali	1987	150	125	135	257
Ambaji mata, M. R. Mehta Boys Hostel	1952-53	200	3	200	275
Smt. M. R. Mehta Anandvan girls Hostel Sanali	1955-56	100	3	100	128
Arvind Ashram shala, Dalpura	1978	120	120	130	135
Higher Secondary Van vihar Vidyalaya Dalpura	1986	100	102	130	125
Vanihar Kumar Hostel Dalpura	1987	80	74	75	75
Devyani girls Hostel-Dalpura	1990	25	25	25	25
Sushilama girls Hostel-Dalpura	1990	28	28	28	28
B. L. Parikh Adarsh ashramshala, Dalpura	1990	150	125	125	130
Shri B. K. Bhansali Higher Secondry School-Dalpura	1990	150	100	100	100

Apart from education several other socio-economic welfare activities were also started by the Sarvvodya Ashram-Sanali. These were:

1. Milk Dairy was started at village Dalpura by the ashramities in 1972.
2. Social welfare centre to train tribal youths for technical skills.

<sup>10</sup> The trust was founded by Sushilaben Mehta wife of Ramniklal R. Mehta, a well known jeweller who was native of Palanpur and had a big business empire in Mumbai. The couple came to Sanali Sarvodaya Trust, with open hand and funds they donated for reconstruction of the ashram premises. Together with them came other business houses like, 'Deep Chand S Gardi charitable Trust,' diamond merchants, 'B. Vijay kumar and company' and 'B Arun kumar and company'. They all donated for education, and its mainly because of the funds generated by these bodies that educational activities of Sanali Sarvodaya Trust need not to depend too much on government bodies and flourished on its own.

<sup>11</sup> *Sarvodaya Ashram-Sanali Annual Reports 1998-1999 and 2000-2001*, Reports collected from Sanali ashram, May-2003, p 50

3. 'Shanti-Niwas', a guest house also used as typing and sewing classes for the women of the Bhil Garsia community.
4. Shri Shantilal Manchand Kothari Technical Training Centre.
5. Nayan Ramya Tapovan Niwas for residential quarters.<sup>12</sup>
6. Forest Labour Cooperative Society for the tribals of Danta State.<sup>13</sup>
7. The Press to publish reading material.<sup>14</sup>
8. The ashram also runs a Special Insurance Policy under which every, student, teacher and worker of ashram has insurance and when they leave the institution the benefits accrue to them.<sup>15</sup>

In 1993-1994 Sanali Sarvodaya Ashram got grants under special provision of Sarvodaya Yojana. Under this scheme the ashram was given funds to give training to tribals in improved agricultural activities, adult-education, khadi and small-scale industries, village health centres, and education for disabled.<sup>16</sup>

In short one can see that Sanali Ashram succeeded in ameliorating the educational, cultural, economic, and social conditions of the people of the backward area of the district. The institution started balwadis, night schools, and primary schools at several villages. It promoted improved methods of cultivation through its agriculture centres at Mordungra, Dalpura, and Sanali. It inspired farmers to use improved seeds, chemical fertilizers and modern techniques of farming. The ashram organized one Cooperative Society and one consume store. It may be said that the establishment of Sanali ashram has greatly changed the atmosphere in surrounding area.

<sup>12</sup> *Silver Jubilee Edition*, 1992, pp. 50-52

<sup>13</sup> Interview with shri V. D. Panchal, 02/06/2004, at Palanpur

<sup>14</sup> *Silver Jubilee*, op. cit., pp. 60-63

<sup>15</sup> *Sarvodaya Ashram Edition*, Sanali Annual Report, 1999-2000, p. 11

<sup>16</sup> As told by Mahendrabhai Prajapati convener of sarvodaya programme at Sanali on 30<sup>th</sup> May. 2003



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### **Lok-Niketan Ratanpur**

A single man's vision, his hard work, determination and constant support of people around him can create wonders is testified when one visits Lok Niketan. When I reached Ratanpur in the dark night I found Harising Chavda, the founder of the organization, surrounded by his followers and every one of them were reporting to him about the day's work. In another room his wife Pushpaben Chavda was receiving reports from other set of volunteers attached to Lok-Niketan. It was like a group in action where simplicity was the highest priority. It is the transparency coupled with dedication that has made the institution grow like an empire.<sup>17</sup>

Lok-Niketan was founded by Harisnh Chavda in 1958-1959 after he had experience as incharge of the hostel for young scholars at Palanpur running on Gandhian ideals of nai-talim.<sup>18</sup> This rural project was started in a small village called Madana and organisation was given the name 'Nutan Bharti' in 1959. Two years later it was entrusted to local leaders and prospective team moved to a place called Ratanpur where finally Lok-Niketan was established. The team began the work with a rural secondary school and boy's hostel under thatched roofs run with meager resouces.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Field Trip to 'Lok Niketan' Ratanpur, Palanpur, district Banaskantha, 1-3 June, 2003

<sup>18</sup> Lok Niketan- *Annual Report*, 1970

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p 4



Lok-Niketan Ratanpur, Palanpur

Ordinary huts with muddy walls and leafy roofs provided the residential quarters and shade of the groves the open air classes. Numerous wild creatures from ants, spiders, scorpions, and snakes to foxes and jackals gave the company to workers of Lok-Niketan. However, the enthusiasm and the will power of the workers and pupils were far too great to be deterred by any adverse situation. All difficulties were boldly faced with smiling endurance. "Nothing but the divine grace could have helped us to stand this trying time" said Harisinh Chavda.<sup>20</sup> The genuineness of their work drew the attention of the District Local Board and District Development Board. They appreciatively favoured the institution with necessary grants to help them build class rooms, water tank and a reservoir.<sup>21</sup>

The institution gradually started getting support and donations. The Civil Service International Organisation arranged a labour camp on the premises of Lok-Niketan in the year 1962-1963 wherein young boys

<sup>20</sup> *Lok-Niketan, 1961-Growth and Glory* 1994: Facts about Institutional Development

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Harisinh Chavda on 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2003 at Lok-Niektan, Ratanpur

and girls of India and abroad participated. It was at this stage that the delegates of Swiss Aid Abroad visited Lok-Niektan and being pleased with experiment work carried out by the students and the staff made contribution of Rs. 1.5 million for the development of various projects under Lok-Niketan.

In the years 1965-1966, Lok-Niketan expanded its activities in the villages of Deodar and Vav by founding Secondary schools which were subsequently handed over to the local organizations. A nursery school for the children of the comb sellers and other nomadic tribes was started in 1969 and a year later a girl's hostel and an ashram school appeared on the scene.<sup>22</sup>

### **Lok-Niketan Vinay Mandir-Virampur**

A Sarvodya Yojana was started at Virampur area in 1977. It was a scheme to assist the most unprivileged man to enable him to stand on his own. The purpose to start that scheme in Virampur was to achieve socio-economic and educational developments of the tribal people of that area. The finances were given by the state government. As a first step to achieve the objective of the Yojana, a Vinay Mandir School was started in Virampur with 20 students. Before that a few students desirous to get secondary education had to go fifteen kilometers away.<sup>23</sup> The project of Virampur could not have been carried out, had it not been granted a substantial help of Rs. 7 lakhs for the project by the Swiss Aid Abroad. It was the same year that the Gujarat Government Sarvodya Scheme was also started to help the economic, social, and educational development of this area through a number of activities.

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<sup>22</sup> *Lok-Niektan Growth and Glory*-1961, p 5

<sup>23</sup> Harisinh Chavda and Dalpathbhai, Parmar, *Social Transformation Through nai-Talim Success Story Series (23). Lok Niketan-Ratanpur*, Ahmedabad, Gujarat nai-Talim Sangh, 2002, p. 23

The various pioneering activities started by Lok-Niketan at Virampur opened new avenues for the overall progress of this area. Tar roads, electricity, telephone, water works a dispensary and such other facilities were made available. Lok-Niketan Gram Vidyapith was started in 1987. Gram Vidyapith is a university which provides education in rural context. The university is imparting services to a backward district of Gujarat state in education, health and hygiene. Lok Niketan has started secondary schools, hostels, ashram-schools and such other activities at Sembalpani, Malana, Samdhi, Danagia, Paldi, Kuvala, Bhabar, Lavana, Padan and Val villages.<sup>24</sup>

Lok-Niketan has its own approach and ideas for moulding the character of its children. This institution works more or less on the basis of a family form where the teacher and the taught are attached to each other through arts than through heads and hands. Being residential institution the services and the guidance of the workers are always available to children. The institution always strives to produce noble, sincere, and hard working citizens. They try to achieve this aim by developing students with moral values.

Lok-Niketan has been working for the improvement of public through all its sub-centres. The centres of Ratanpur, Virampur, and Sembalpani have made a great contribution in the development of farming, and animal husbandry asit also has in removing superstition, blind faith, evil social customs, and addiction to drinking, smoking, stealing and robbery. There is a slow rise in the tribal awareness and conciousness leading to their liberation from exploitation.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15

<sup>25</sup> Harisinh Chavda and Dalpatbhai Parmar, *op. cit.*, p. 94

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Some persons have criticised the Lok Niketan for caste politics at the institution.<sup>26</sup> Such allegations have been levelled against several Gandhian institutions, though this could be understood in the context of the institutionalisation of any service or movement.

### GANDHIANS IN SABARKANTHA

#### People in Sabarkantha:

The main tribal pockets in Sabarkantha district are Khedbrahma, Vijaynagar, Bhiloda, and Meghraj.<sup>27</sup> The followers of Gandhi and his ideals began to serve the people of this territory in the later half of 1940s after Independence. Previously in this part of tribal Gujarat, some of the local rulers and Christian missionaries had begun certain welfare activities.<sup>28</sup>

Prior to independence Sabarakantha was the part of Mahikanatha Agency of British regime.<sup>29</sup> During those times Idar State had only one important town apart from Idar that was Modasa. Modasa was famous for its nationalist struggle as most of the nationalist movements against Mahikantha Agency were rose from the place.

Vaishnavites are fairly in large number in Modasa. Most of the trade and commerce is under the hand of these people. They used to lend money to small traders in rural areas. These traders used to behave like moneylenders or sometimes as bankers. They gave donations and run institutions. The foremost among them was Mathuradas Gandhi. As such he was not a politician. But the atmosphere of freedom had

<sup>26</sup> During my fieldwork at Palanpur, I met Dungarbbhai Damor, a former MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly) when I asked about his comments on lok-Niketan, he believed that the organization is afflicted with the caste politics. Interview taken on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2003

<sup>27</sup> For Geographical and ethnographical details of the district see Chapter-I part-II and III

<sup>28</sup> For details see Chapter-II, Part I and III

<sup>29</sup> Refer Chapter-II, Part-I

impressed him to a great extent. He was attracted to Gandhi's ideas. He used to undertake social service activities in the neighboring tribal villages. He provided the poor with food-grain and clothes. He also gave financial assistance to their children who liked to go to school. He had relations with freedom fighters.<sup>30</sup>

The spirit of freedom struggle was felt by several young men of Sabarkantha. One such young man happened to be Narsinh Bhavsar of village Vadali near Idar. The adivasi Sewa Samiti-Shamalaji was founded by him for the tribal welfare in Sabarkantha.<sup>31</sup> Narsinh Bhavsar was son of Maganlal Bhavsar. Since his childhood he had seen stark poverty in his childhood and had worked hard in his life to achieve his ambitions. His father was a postman under British state who used to work for Rs. 3/ per month while his mother used to work as a maid. Even being eldest among three siblings Narsinh Bhavsar developed empathy to work for unprivileged people of society. This empathy turned to be the determined decision after he started working among tribals of Bhiloda taluka as a teacher.<sup>32</sup>

Narsinhbhai was not content only with the school work. After school hours he used to meet the village people. He heard about their woes and comforts. Due to his participation with people's problems, Narsinh became troublesome creature among government servants. Within a year he had to suffer two transfers from Virpur to Khedbrahma

<sup>30</sup> Navalbhai Shah, *Adivasi Sewa Samiti: Shamalaji*, Amdavad, Gujarat Nai Talim Sangh, 2001, p. 5

<sup>31</sup> Rajnikumar Pandya, *Parbhavna Pitrai* (Gujarati), Ahmedabad, R. R. and Co., 1991, pp. 7-10

<sup>32</sup> Narsinh experienced a difficult childhood, when he was only three years old his father died of serious illness. Thereafter, he paid full attention to his studies, which made Narsinh to attain first rank in seventh standard. He then decided to join as a teacher in the school of his native place Vadali. He was appointed as a teacher on the condition that for the first six months he would have to render service without pay. Thus, at the age of sixteen he started his career as a teacher. In those days a teacher's monthly salary was Rs. twenty five. During his services Narsinh not only got his salary but also the prestige of teacher. In three years he was promoted to the post of a head-master. Rajnikumar Pandya, *op. cit.*, Chapter-5. Also based on an interview with Dr. Suryaben Damor- Shamalaji, 25/05/2003 who is the only tribal doctor in the region.

to Virpur, in the year 1937. In those years he was greatly inspired by the nationalist struggle. After school hours he used to read news about nationalist movements and told about them to the people around. As a result he came to the notice of police department. On the ground of delivering inflammatory speeches and publishing provocative leaflets a warrant was issued for his arrest. He was sentenced to two months imprisonment after which Narsinh came in contact of 'Idar State Prajamandal' of which Mathuradas Gandhi was the head.

After Mathuradas Gandhi's advice he went to Bochasan to get training of *Gram Sevak* under Shivabhai Patel in Kheda district. He came in contact of peoples like Ravishankar Maharaj, Babalbhai Mehta, and many more Sarvodaya leaders at Bochasan. He learned spinning Khadi and got oriented towards village service in the company of these learned persons. Narshinhbhai used to say "Dada Ravishankar Maharaj gave me spinning wheel, Babalbhai gave me broomstick and Shivabhai gave me discipline and management skill".

After returning from Bochasan the first thing that Narsinh Bhavsar did was to study the adivasis of Sabarakantha and its population. During his field study he came into contact with Natubhai Raval of Tintoi village. He was a Gandhian worker imbued with national spirit. He had joined Mathuradas for congress work. Narsinh and Natubhai selected Shamalaji as a central place for their work.

When the two friends went to the temple of Shamalaji it was surrounded with filth and girth, so they decided to clean it first with broom. The worshippers who had come to offer their servings to the deity were wonderstruck to see these two worshippers do the sweeping. In the beginning the village people laughed at and even ridiculed them. But slowly people began to understand the worth of that work and the

workers learned valuable lessons. That experience turned out to be very useful here for Narsinh. They started to reside in a small room of a caravan sarai adjoining the temple. They wanted to become acquainted with the problem of the people. Services were beckoning them from the campus of the temple. There Narsinh began to recite prayers, told short stories, to the young tribal childrens and made them conscious about hygiene. These things pleased the children immensely wonderstruck the mother asked, 'who did this?' through the process of washing the clothes and bathing children the two friends entered the hearts of the parents and especially the mothers.

After that Narsinh became a regular teacher of these students and taught them with possible resources around. Soon they realized that the root cause for the adivasis difficult life lies in their illiteracy, superstition and bad habits. They used to discuss with Mathuradas whatever they saw and learnt. It occurred to Narsinh and Mathurdas that if they wanted to work systematically and constantly, an institutional framework is must. As a result an institution for upliftment of adivasis was established on 22/06/1947, which was inspired by Mathuradas, and the name given to this body was Adivasi Sewa Samiti (ASS). After ASS was established, Idar state supported its cause for adivasi welfare. The Samiti needed land where buildings for education could be erected as well as agricultural work could be carried on. Tintoi village donated land measuring twelve acres and 37 *gunthas* from Shamalpur, Bhavanpur village. Thereafter, land measuring 65 acres and 27 *gunthas* was purchased. Today the work of Adivasi Sewa Samiti has expanded in the extensive and measuring 75 acres and 17 *gunthas*. Thus, owing to the foresight of Mathuradas an organization came into being,<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Rajnikumar Pandya, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-55



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**The Paijania Problem:** In those days adivasis were in the grip of many superstitions and expensive customs. The tribal womenfolk proudly put on heavy anklets of brass on their feet known as *Paijanias*. All through their lives they wear this weight. Narsinh believed that these anklets were symbol of womens' slavery. Heavy weight was also a problem; the constant brushing by these anklets caused many skin diseases to the women. The husbands of these women also took pride in purchasing anklets and putting them on their wives feet. Nobody could understand the pain suffered by the woman. Narsinhbhai was determined to free the women folk from this trouble and slavery. One day he stood in the banks of river Meshvo and took a solemn vow: "I shall walk barefooted, until one woman gives upto her anklets".

He insisted the Garasia community to leave the practise of wearing 'Paijanias', he justified his movement by saying, "If the anklets symbolize status and prestige, how is it that Brahmins and *baniyas* do not insist that their womenfolk should wear anklets?" The argument struck to the people and started taking off their Prijanias.<sup>34</sup>

**Multifarious Services:** Narsinh's activities were not confined only to teaching. He shared the welfare and woes of tribals. He used to stand by them in their hours of sufferings. In 1948 the entire area was in the grip of dreadful drought. Adivasis main source of livelihood was forest produce. Now in the drought condition it was extremely difficult for them to do so. The government started some relief works and Narsinh gave his full support for the cause.

### Removal of Forced Labour

Narsinhbhai and Kanubhai Raval another associate toured from village to village to contact the people. They saw in rural areas that the

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<sup>34</sup> Navalbhai Shah, *op. cit.*, p. 5

petty chiefs (Thakors) wielded immense power. Out of fear for them, the people performed forced labour. But the experience taught him that solitary person from the community got ill he had to be treated by *Bhuva* or the local Kuvala the medicineman who many times blamed an innocent women for the disease, and demonized her as being 'Dakan' or a witch another practice was that the patient was said that if he/she wants to get cured then they have to perform annual sacrifice at temple of Mata. In opposition to this practice Narsinh initially conducted several meetings and in one instance, he slowly went to the sacrificial beam. He bowed on his knees and placed his head on the beam. He said, 'Dear brothers! Please let this dumb animal go alive. Instead sacrifice me. Man is superior to goat. So our super natural mother would like my sacrifice more'.<sup>35</sup>



Adivasi Sewa Samiti, Shamalaji, 17/05/2003

Looking to this incident all were stunned. The headman of the village came running. He made Narsinhbhai rise on his feet and said, "Narsinhbhai for the last many years mother goddess is given goats as sacrifices. If this would not be done she would be engeraged". Narsinh said "Mother Goddess would be angry with me. Why do you worry"? He further added; "if we will devotedly offer simply a cocoanut and

<sup>35</sup> Rajnikumar Pandya, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-55

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distribute the prasad of jaggery and coriander seeds. Our Mother Goddess will be pleased with us. God only wants our dedicated faith. He would never kill a living being.

This incident produced two-fold effect. The tradition to sacrifice a goat prevailing among adivasis came almost to an end. Moreover after independence primary health centre were started and medicine was available. Adivasis began to visit district place or big towns like Modasa to purchase medicine.

Superstitions vanished, forced labour also disappeared, *bhuvas* decreased (though not entirely), people turned towards medical treatment. This was due to the comprehensive Nai-Talim which awakened the people. Owing to the efforts of Narsinhbhai and Kanubhai, necessary financial help was received from Mathuradas Gandhi and friends and sympathetic citizens of Mumbai. Both the friends of Narshinhbhai and Kanubhai thereafter started increasing their network with tribals of Sabarkantha.

### **Sarvodaya Yojana:**

The responsibility to utilise the funds of Sarvodaya Yojana came as a blessing he had spent nearly two-three years to comprehend the problem of the rural areas and for that he had moved from hut to hut. Now with the introduction of Sarvodaya yojana, every year the organisation began to receive Rs. One lakh. The organisation was now in a position to spend more money for the work.<sup>36</sup> A boys' hostel was started in 1949 from the grant of Sarvodaya Yojana. Valued cultural traits and decent habits constituted the main teachings of this educational institution.

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<sup>36</sup> Presently the school is a full fledged building with teaching capacity of 200 girls. Till 1990's the girls used to spin khadi and the practice of Nai-Talim is part of this institution. My field trip to Shamalji and Interview with rector of institution Gitaben Naik Dt. 22/05/2003

### **Kasturba Kanya Ashramshala Shamalpur:**

The tribal girls' education started with only one girl under ASS Shamalaji. There is a Shamalpur village situated at a distance of 5 kms from Shamalaji. People gave a prominently located piece of land for the education of girls. A hostel for girls was started in 1956 and the name given to it was Kasturba Kanya Ashram Shamalpur. At Shamalpur along with the girls' hostel a primary school upto 7<sup>th</sup> standard was started. This hostel was overcrowded with girls recruited from the surrounding area<sup>37</sup>

Narsinhbhai had great zeal for the girls' school of shamnalpur. He sent the plans and estimates of the proposed building to Hari Om Ashram. They were approved, but the grants were not sufficient. With tremendous struggle the present full-fledged building came into existence in 1997 AD.<sup>38</sup>

Somehow for the sake of this institution support came from friends of business families Jayantibhai Bhikhalal Shah and Hiraben had affinity for the work in this region. Hiraben liked any work meant for the welfare of women folk. Previously she donated Rs. 15,000 for the water tank of the institution. Premubhai Thakor and his wife Anandiben Thakor undertook the full responsibility for the development of Mira

<sup>37</sup> Due to such delay in entire construction, Navalbhai Shah trustee of ASS once said, "The experience of my sixty-two years public life says that no work should be done by incurring debt. Only that much work should be done as could be financed from the funds at our disposal". A major role was played by Dolijibhai Damor in founding girls' education under ASS-Shamalaji. He is native of Bhiloda taluka and is among first learned tribals. His family is a leading one in the region with many of its kin members working as doctors, eliginess, and top level government officers. For details about his life see his autobiography, Dlijibhai Damor, *Adivasi Samaj ma Jagruti Mate mara Sangharshmaya Jivanni Katha*, 1977

<sup>38</sup> Apart from Educational institute, ASS own huge land farms in all three of its centres at Shamalaji, village Dholvani-taluka, Vijaynagar, and Megharaj. With growing developmental practices land sharks are vying to encroach them. Somehow these lands are essential to ASS as they inculcate practice of farm labour and improved agricultural techniques to young tribal boys and girls.

girls' hostel and Anandiben school of ASS-Shamalaji. Altogether Bhansali Trust also donated Rs. 1 lakh for the girls' school.<sup>39</sup>

Apart from these educational institutions other Vinoba ashram was founded, at Vadthali taluka Meghraj in 1962. In the same year Eklavya hostel was founded in Vajaynagar taluka to support kathodi tribal community, along with Shabari girls hostel was started near Dholvani in 1974, taluka Vijaynagar. For the upkeep of these institutions regular grants were received from independent donors as well as government bodies.<sup>40</sup>

### **Co-workers of Sarvodaya Ashram:-**

If Narsinh could create the miracle of good work among adivasis of Shamalaji it was mainly because of the dedicated support of people he had. Initially people like Kanubhai Raval Govindbhai Raval, and Vallabhbhai Joshi were attracted by the work of Adivasi Sewa Samiti. So they joined the institution and rendered their services during the initial hard period. Another good fortune of the institution was that many adivasi youths who were educated in these institutions raised their own independent institutions. Some of them are as under:-

**Surji Timoti Suvera** makes an important study because he is a Christian tribal influenced by the works of Lusadia CMS.<sup>41</sup> His parents were Christian converts but by the time he reached his adulthood he was influenced by Narsinbhai who used to come to Lusadia to inculcate Gandhian values among tribals, and took young boys and girls to nurture them under educational institution of

<sup>39</sup> Refer to chapter-II, part-III of this thesis

<sup>40</sup> I asked Surji Timoti present comparative opinions on the work of CMS and ASS. To which he said; "CMS and ASS both are meant for tribal welfare but certainly ASS has a broader vision of comprehensive tribal welfare in terms of social-cultural-economic and educational welfare whereas CMS was more into conversion. Interview with Surji Timoti Suvera, village Lusadia, Taluka-Bhiloda district Sabarakantha Dt. 24/05/2003

<sup>41</sup> Navalbhai Shah Pachaas Varsham Tap: Narsinh Bhavsar, 1993, pp. 14-16

Shamalaji. After completion of his studies from Mission school and idar states school of Tiutoi Surji Timoti joined ASS in 1949 and till 1987 served the institution.<sup>42</sup>

**Shastri Ramjibhai Nagjibhai Gameti** joined the Samiti as a teacher in the primary school of Raisingpur village. He was enamoured with the spinning wheel. He started spinning activities in his village. He learned and earned simultaneously. He shouldered many responsibilities of the institution. In 1974 Vijanagar became a centre of Sarvodaya Yojana. Ramjibhai extended his full support to this work in Vijaynagar taluka Narsinbhai selected him a lot. So he was selected as a trustee. On the death of Narsinbhai the institution selected him as the Sanchalk of the Samiti since November 1994.

**Vakhatbhai Doljibhai** of basic school, he graduated from Guajrat Vidyapith. Thereafter he started a secondary school from 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> standard in his own village, Dhodisara. He also worked as the Chairman of Sabarkantha District Education committee. He was member of legislative Assembly for five years.

**Vakhatbhai Doljibhai Ninama**, he studied in the institution. He first became a teacher and then a gram sevak. At present he runs a high school and a hostel in his native village kantharia situated at the border of Rajasthan.

Youth like Chunibhai Gameti and Ashokbhai Katara got experience from ASS and inspired by it, they are now running high

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with Shri Ramjibhai Pandor, Principal of Kathodi Ashramshala, Vijaynagar taluka, Dt. 26/05/2003

school and hostels for boys and girls at their respective villages in Bhiloda taluka.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, the workers of ASS of Shamalaji became the founders of many institutions. Narsinhbhai's own work expanded throughout Sabarkantha district through his young colleagues like Govindbhai and Vallabbhai. Today those who run the lively and reputed institutions of Sabarkantha district are none other than Narsinh's own colleagues. ASS of Shamalaji has expanded due to the workers drawn from many talukas viz. Himmatnagar, Prantij, Malpur, and Idar.

**Kathodi Ashramshala-Dholvani:** An interesting and milestone work of ASS was Kathodi Ashramshala Dholvani. This ashramshala is situated in Vijaynagar taluka. Originally this ashramshala was started for the development of the children of kathodi community who eke out their primitive livelihood by fishing and hunting monkeys or by simply eating grass-roots and leaves from the jungles of Vijaynagar. Gradually the population of kathodis went on decreasing. Hence, now along with kathodi children this ashram shala admits children belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes too. The major population of kathodi communities' is confined to villages: Vanaghol, Bandhana, and Badarakha villages. One may now perceive the luster, fearlessness and guts born out of self reliance in the kathodi community. This is due to the education imparted in the Ashramshala. Rajubhai Harjibhai Pandore, an adivasi ex-student of Smiti School is the principal of the school for the last twenty three years at a stretch. He speaks perfect kathodi dialect. The total students in the kathodi *ashramshala* in the beginning were 50 in 1978. At present the ashram's approved strength is 170.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> During my visit to Bhiloda I saw most of the barren hills and forests were extremely less evident, which were not able to support any organized forest based economic activity.

<sup>44</sup> Navalbhai Shah, *Pachas Varshnu Tap...* op. cit, p. 17

**Institutions working under ASS**

<b>Name of the Institution</b>	<b>Estd</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Students</b>
Sarvodaya, Vinay Mandir Shamalaji	1962	8 to 12	225
Smt. Vimalaben Lallubhai Naik P.B. Girls School, Raipur	1985	8 to 12	105
Smist. Shantaben Ravishankar Joshi Post. Basic School-Antarsuba	1980	8 to 12	105
Post-Basic Ashramshala Dholvani	1976	8 to 12	105.
Harishchandra Ashramshal Shamalpur	1977	1 to 7	120
Vinoba Ashramshala Vadthali	1962	1 to 7	150
Valmiki Ashramshal village Isari	1968	1 to 7	150
Kathodi Ashramshala Village Dholwani	1978	1 to 7	150
Sanskar Kendra Kumar Hostel-Vijayanagar	1949	1 to 7	150
Eklavya Kumar Hostel tal. Vijayanagar	1962	1 to 7	50
Navjivan Kumar Hostel Attarsumba	1982	1 to 7	30
Meera girls hostel Shamalaji	1968	1 to 7	150
Kamala Nehru Kanya hostel, Mota Kantharia, Bhiloda.	1962	1 to 7	45
Kasturba Kanya Hostel, Raipur	1956	1 to 7	50
Shabai Kanya Hostrel tal. Vijayanagar	1974	1 to 7	50
Panchal Balwadi tal. Meghraj	—	—	—
Od balwadi, tal. Megharaj	—	—	—
Kundo and Isari balwadi tal. Meghraj	—	—	—
Dholvani Chhapra Balwadi	—	—	—

Besides the above educational institutions ASS established several social welfare centres. These were located at the villages of Navagam, Rakhapur, Dhorwada, Rellawada, Dholvani, Kathvavdi, Ataytalav, Saroli, Vijayanagar, Antaresuba, and Modari.

After beginning of Educational activities among tribals, Narsinh Bhavar started forest labour cooperative society, mainly to support economic self-reliance among Bhil Garasia communities but the activity



could not sustain for long due to restriction of Idar state and declining forest cover of Bhiloda subdivision.<sup>45</sup>

Khadi was also an important activity under the ASS. The yarn was collected from the Bhiloda taluka and Modasa and Himmatnagar were spinning centres, but with gradual creeping of industrialized goods and textiles demand for khadi declined.<sup>46</sup>

Another important aspect of ASS was its participation in Bhoodan movement. Ravishankar Maharaj visited territories under ASS and propagated concept of Gramdan and Bhoodan to them. A few land donations were also made which went for the community work in the territory.<sup>47</sup>

The change was evident among the tribal communities due to work of ASS in Sabarkantha district. According to Surji Timoti, the workers of ASS for their work had support of Congress Government. Thus, their work was extremely vast in comparison to missionary activities and also the modus-operandi was meant for comprehensive transformation of society. Moreso, Narsinh Bhavsar imbibed himself so much with the tribal people that they began to identify him as one among themselves. For the people of Sabrakantha Narsinh Bhavsar was the Mahatma.<sup>48</sup>

**Shri Sewa Niketan Trust Khedbrahma:** when Narsinbhai was working among tribals of Bhiloda taluka. At the same time a young man affiliated to 'Bhil Sewa Mandal Dahod', came to Khedbrahma to begin

<sup>45</sup> Maganbhai Patel, 'Adivasyan Vacchhe Pujnlya Maharaj', *Bhoomiputra*, Year-3, No. 13 Dt. 15/03/1956

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Surji Timoti, Village Lusadia taluka Bhiloda District Sabrakantha, Dt. 24/05/2003

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Shri Ishwarlal Motiram Pandya, Dt. 28<sup>th</sup> May 2003, at Khedbrahma

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*,

some concrete work with tribals of Khedbrahma and Vijaynagar. This man was Nandubhai Ambalal Patel.

Nandubhai was sent to work in this region by L. M. Shrikant. After coming to Khedbhahma Nandubhai met a local teacher Ishwarlal Motiram Pandya. I.M. Pandya was teaching at village Agya, Khedbrahma. Later both united to start a school for tribal students of Khedbrahma at village Limbadia, while working on this school Nandubhai realized that without a proper residential school, students cannot be enforced to study. To completely transform these tribal students the attempts to have an *ashramshala* at Khedbrahma began. Initially the ashramashala kind of arrangement was made at a *Ramlila* ground of Khedbrahma town. Initial arrangements were made for the students to stay overthere.<sup>49</sup>

It was important to make the students to stay away from there home for the sake of studies. As they tend to flee from school premises to join their home. When the *ashramshala* was begun at Khedbrahma several hindrances came the common town people were not ready to accept an *ashramshala* at their annual carnival ground. But Nandu Patel and Ishwar Pandya were adamant about their purpose. In such adverse conditions many people came for their support. One was Ibrahim a merchant who gave his godown for the services of school students. In 1950, Ishwarlal left his job, and became permanent member teacher of ashramshala. In the same year Nandu Patel send a petition to Moraji Desai, the chief minister of Bombay state, to seek the problem of ashram school at Khedbrahma. In 1951, Morarji Desai came to Khedbrahma and officially the ground was transferred to ashramshala, on a ninety-nine years lease. Then onwards Ishwarbhai became the teacher and Nandubhai the coordinator of this ashramshala.

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<sup>49</sup> F. No. 1, List of Ashramshalas under, 'Shri Sewa Niketan Trust', Khedbarahma, 2000

Meanwhile Bhil Sewa Mandal also extended its supportive hand to the organization and Hiraben Ninama and Lalchandbhai became regular convener and visiting invigilators to Shri Sewa Niketan Trust, Khedbrahma.<sup>50</sup> The institution now continued to grow and initiatives to start many more similar educational institutes by Nandubhai Patel began. With enduring efforts of Nandubhai, the activities of education expanded in 1965, Shri. Sewa Niketan Trust-Khedbrahma, registered organizations came into being and under it following *ashramshalas* were established at Sabrakantha and Banashkantha district.

***Ashramshalaas under Shri Sewa Niketan Trust***

NAME OF ASHRAMSHALA	LOCATION	TALUKA
Ambamahuda	Poshina	Khedbrahma(SK)
Kotazotasan	Poshina	Khedbrahma (SK)
Matchkoda	Near Sonali	Danta(BK) <sup>51</sup>
Uttar Buniyadi	Khedbrahma	Khedbrahma (SK)
Kheroj	Near Khedbrahma	Khedbrahma(SK)
Kotda	Khedbrahma	Khedbrahma(SK)
Khedva	Khedbrahma	Khedbrahma(SK)
Delwada	Khedbrahma	Khedbrahma(SK)
Demti	Khedbrahma	Khedbrahma(SK)
Attarsumba	Vijaynagar	Vijaynagar(SK)

But by 1970's ideological schism crept into the system.<sup>52</sup> Shriv Nandubhai Patel hailed from a prestigious family of Kheda district and after his graduation from Gujarat Vidyapith joined the Bhil sewa mandal for his dedicated services to the institution he never expected any remuneration. After he got married with Sumatiben Patel she also joined his services and together they adopted a tribal boy.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Shankarsinh Pandore, Principal 'Acharya Kumar Hostel Attarsumba', Taluka Vijaynagar, Dt. 27/05/2003

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Premanand Sharma, first generation worker of Shri Sewa Niketan Trust and teacher at Khedbrahma Ashramshala, Dt. 28<sup>th</sup> May 2003, Khedbrahma, and Premanand came from Agra to serve the tribals of Gujarat. He was working as a lecturer at Bharatpur University at present his wife and children accompany him for this work

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Malji Dabhi at Poshina, Taluka Khedbrahma, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2003

Gradually when Nandubhai became old, power started falling from his grip and new generation took it. Unfortunately the system went into corrupt hands. The institution which once was mentor of people like Dr. Bhagwadas Patel, Malji Dabhi and many more bright persons became vied with account deficits and corruptions.<sup>53</sup> It is pathetic to see that such an organization with presence of many a intellectuals and hard working persons does not has any written brochure about its activities and internalized politics has also restrained the working capacity of the organization. As a result apart from education no other activity was started. More so the most traumatic end came to Nandubhai Patel. During last days of his life he was completely thrown off from the trustee board of SSNT and being penniless he breadth his last at his ancestral house of Kheda.<sup>54</sup>

Maljidabhi is at present among the trustees of SSNT. He was elected MLA from Khedbrahma seat and then onwards he served the region. He is one among the well wishers of trust and hopes for a better future for the activities of trust. Under the trusteeship of certain new workers the trust is again improving.<sup>55</sup> Apart from him many person who studied at SSNT became independent entrepreneurs and have started their own organization for the tribal welfare. Which reveals that mission of social transformation has been accomplished through its path may have been different, with difficulties.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>54</sup> Among many famous persons who were products of SSNT are Dr. Bhagwan Das Patel well known anthropologist from Gujarat and M. N. Patel the founder of Rajpur Kelvani Mandal' an organization founded by M. N. Patel at taluka Vijanagar, district Sabarkantha in 1977

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Malji Dabhi at Poshina, Sabarkantha, 28/05/2003

<sup>56</sup> R. Prasanan, 'Justice of peace and progress'. The Week 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary special, Dec. 25 1994

## GANDHIANS IN BARODA DISTRICT

### *Anand Niketan Ashram; a Gandhian in Baroda*

So far the organizations based on Gandhian ideals which were studied were mainly based on social transformation of tribal societies through education. The organization to be studied in this part of the chapter will be of different nature. Anand Niketan Ashram, (hereafter ANA) has multidimensional character as it does not bind itself to the education alone. Its work included overall reform of the tribal society by generating work among children young women and elders. It has a holistic approach to development.

### **Harivallabh Parikh**

Well known among tribal as 'bhaiji', Harivallabh Parikh has a distinct past. He came to one of the remotest part of Gujarat known as Chhota Udepur in 1947. Along with his wife Prabhaben he was wandering in search of an appropriate work place. Once they reached village Rangpur, situated on the confluence of Heran and Rami rivers. The place had a mesmerising impact on the couple and they decided to settle there.

ANA accomplished people's court, forest conservation, reform movements, and several economic welfare projects for tribals.<sup>57</sup> The man who virtually built a small river valley civilization of self-sufficient villages on the upper reaches of Narmada valley had not even seen a plough in his childhood. He is son of Dewan of Partapgrah princely state of Rajasthan.

It was a chance encounter with Madan Mohan Malviya at the age of 12 that changed Harivallabhs' life. He accomplished Malviya, who was

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*,

visiting the Dewan to the nearby villages and was shocked to see the great man touching there untouchables. In reply to Harivallabh's question Madan Mohan Malviya gave him a small book on Mahatma Gandhi in which he wrote: "Dear Harivallabh I hope you will become a social worker when you grow up, this book comes with my blessings." The book impressed the young mind. Thinking of becoming a disciple of Gandhi he went to the Sabarmati ashram with two servants who were to wash his clothes. "I saw Bapuji in loin-cloth and I was ashamed. I sent back the servants". But he still used to leave his plates unwashed. Gandhi, cunningly sent Harivallabh's teacher in the ashram school to pick up the plates. The last bad practice of Parikh was to wake up late because of which he was unable to attend the morning prayers. The excuse to Gandhi he gave that he does morning yoga alone in his room, Bapu agreed. But he could not hide his lie for long and once confessed about it to Gandhi.<sup>58</sup>

Bapu wanted Harivallabh to work in Gujarat and sent him to learn Gujarati. He joined Gujarat Vidyapith. As the college closed during the Quit India movement Harivallabh went with a few friends to Karachi where they were involved in underground politics. The movement took him to Hyderabad and forgetting Gandhi's non-violence he blasted railway bridges and looted mail wagons. The escape from Hyderabad was miraculous. Harivallabh and two friends donned women clothes and got into a train.<sup>59</sup>

Bapu condemned the violence and appealed to the underground youth to own up their deeds. Harivallabh went to the Police in Ahmedabad and offered to surrender, but insisted on raising the national flag. The young British superintendent agreed to flag hoist and

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<sup>58</sup> R. Prasanan, *op. cit.*, p 5

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Harivallabh Parikh, 16/10/2001

surrender. Harivallabh was eventually freed when Gandhi insisted that all nationalists be released before he talked to the Cripps Mission.

During the underground wanderings, Harivallabh had met Mohanlal Parikh who ran a Khadi shop in Sawarkundala in Saurashtra. Mohanlal wanted his daughter Prabha to marry Harivallabh. Harivallabh agreed to brethrothal on two conditions they would marry only after independence, and Prabha would go after the brethrothal, to the Wardha ashram for the social service training. It was then he went to jail, when he came back he got to know that Prabha has not gone to Wardha. In such situation Harivallabh threatened not to marry then the parents of girls appealed to marry and on March 1946 at Wardha the couple was tied under nuptial knot. After which Prabha went to Korba Kasturba Ashram to learn social service.<sup>60</sup>

The couple got reunited after three years in 1949. When they went in search of *Antodaya*, the first halt of the couple was near village Mota-Vanta where they arrived on a bullock cart via Kosindra, a nearby town mainly dominated by merchant community and Patels. When Harivallabh and Prabha came to this village at that time they knew virtually nothing about the tribals, whom Mahatma Gandhi had told them to serve. They had heard of tribal 'savages' from the people of Kosindra village on the forest border where they had stayed for a fortnight in their friend Trikanbhai Patel's house. They had also heard that many of the tribals were being kept as slaves by money lenders and landlords.

Their first experience in Mota Vanta was unnerving. They were greeted with drawn bows. When the tribals came to know Harivallabh was unarmed, the crowd mellowed, but would not welcome him into

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<sup>60</sup> R. Prasanan, *op. cit.*, p6

the village. Later he learnt that the money lenders who had heard of his plans at Kosindra had warned the tribals that he has come to chase them out of their lands. "I told them that I had come to help them but the hunting community had no concept of help or service" said Harivallabh. "I told them that I had come from Gandhi and Nehru. They had never heard those names. I told them that the landlords and the *vanias* were cheating them and that Independent India had no place for such cheats. They did not understand what I meant by Independent India".

In the end the tribals retired to their huts leaving the strange visitors out in the cold. After unloading the grain that would save them for a week, the couple sent the cart back to Kosindra and huddled under a tree. For about a week they cooked and slept in the open, with Prabha often talking of the futility of the effort. Harivallabh told her to stop cursing the surrounding and catch hold of a few tribal children frolicking in the river and give them an oil bath. The plight of the couple finally moved a young heart that of the Bhagwan the Rathwa. He came to them and said; "It is not proper for a man and a woman to sleep under a tree". Bhagwan helped them build a small hut outside the village.

As Prabha bathed the tribal children washed their clothes and taught the women the women to keep their huts clean, Harivallabh moved around the village to learn about the Prabha's grindstone was an object of curiosity for the Rathwa who had not seen the grinding of grain. Farming to them meant scattering a few seeds in the open. They did not have the plough, the first tool of civilization.

The only non-tribals they had seen were the usurers who charged 300 percent interest. "Unable to repay the loans, the tribals were losing their land and becoming slave, labourers. There were originally no land



lords in this area as the land belonged to the tribals. But the usurers acquired their land and become landlords. The low of land was that of the arrowhead and the usurness world.”

Harivallabh's first task was to rescue the tribals from slavery. Every night he sat under a tree and told them about the country, the freedom struggle and tales from the mythologies. The tales highlighted such themes of bondage and emancipation, love and sacrifice and the value of social life. As truth developed, he told them to ask the usurers for accounts, they dared not, as a usurer had burnt one of them alive for showing such tendency.

One day Harivallabh sent them to Kosindra to buy writing slates. The landlords on the way told them that Harivallabh would check them. They returned angrily. They refused to tell them any story that night and went on a fast. That touched the savage winds they saw sacrifice. The next day they bought states, the written word was born in the Rathwa land. On these states Harivallabh also wrote each one's account with usurers to appear before the tribal panchayat and explain the accounts, and he persuaded the police, through his friends in the Congress, to file cases of cheating against the usurers. The action made many of the usurers turn hostile to Harivallabh Parikh, who now became well known as 'Bhaiji' among tribals of Rangpur and villages around. But Bhaiji continued his services to tribals and made many of these land slaves turn land lords again.<sup>61</sup>

Now onwards he got a vision to work with tribals, for which he decided to found an ashram. In 1949 he crossed the river Harnay and set-up a small house on a small hill at Rangpur, which used to be hunting camp of the Raja of Chhota Udepur. This house has now grown

<sup>61</sup> Suresh Ram, *Anand Niketan ke tees Saal: Swapan the Saakaar*, New Delhi, Society for Developing Gramdaan, 1971, p. 6

into Anand Niketan Ashram. Initially few small huts were built and bhaiji and his family with few worries started to live in it. At present this premises has grown into Anand Niketan Ashram (ANA) whose 300 full time workers and thousands of tribal volunteers had helped more than 20 lakh people in 3300 villages on to the path of enlightenment and progress.<sup>62</sup>

### **Beginning of Constructive Programme:**

From the beginning Harivallabh attempts was to give the tribals two tools of civilization, the plough and the law. The people's court: Before introducing the plough as a method of improved cultivation to the tribals. Harivallabh had to introduce better methods of legal justice. The struggle was no easy one. The lawless tribals' society was plagued by many ills. They kidnapped one another wives and most such kidnaps ended in a murder which would start a blood feud. They burnt women whom their witch doctor pronounced as vampires; they had no idea of medicine and left the ill to die. In terms of law the tribals had no law except a fierce clannish code of honour which only tormented the vendettas. Harivallabh told them about Gandhian non-violence but the talk went over their heads. Moreover, they had no faith in the law of the state which came to them in the form of thieving forest officials.

So, Harivallabh began to tour these villages settling small disputes. They young men who knew Bhaiji came to the ashram to learn reading, writing, and farming would inform him of any altercation in the neighborhood. "I would then rush in my bicycle to the village and take to both parties to settle the dispute before it turned into a blood feud". Harivallabh recalls slowly they began to like it. They knew it was better than going to the police and the law courts scores of miles away where they would have to catch up a lot of money". As trust was gained, the

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<sup>62</sup> Mark Shepherd, 'The peoples Court'. In *Gandhi Today*, p. 82

judge did not have to go around offering help, people approach him in the ashram, and the open court of Rangpur was born.

In the beginning harivallabh Parikh was suspicious about his step to participate in the peoples dispute, Gandhi had always warned his villager workers not to get involved in village disputes. But sometimes circumstances call for some bending of the rules.<sup>63</sup> Though Harivallabh remembered Gandhi's advice, disputes were mostly what he heard about from the few villagers who would speak to him. So he saw so way to avoid getting involved. Quarrels were common in the villages around there and could easily lead to murder, even over minor matters. It was from these buildings that the people's court grew.<sup>64</sup>

With such milestone success of people's court, it became the high court of judiciary system based in the villages. "Most cases are handled in the new village councils", Harivallabh said, "It's only the cases they find too hard to handle that were sent here" many of the spectators at court were village leaders who came to watch each session as a form of training. In last five decades, the people's court had handed over 30000 cases of all kinds. Most of these were marriage quarrels with property disputes next in number. But the court also handed criminal cases- assault, theft, even murder.

The people's court usually met once or twice a month. Between times, complainants were accepted by the secretary of the court, who issued summons to the people involved: Often it's the guilty person who makes the complaint, to keep it out of the government court' Harivallabh said, "Even reluctant villagers vainly responded to the courts summon. Since the community expected them to. but not always, if someone doe'nt turn up in two or three sessions', Harivallabh said,

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Shri Harivallbh Parikh, op. cit., 16/10/2001.

“We send 50 to 100 people to talk to them and persuade them, if that does not work, we send 500, or start fasting in front of their house’. Eventually the person comes.”

When a case comes before the court, each side would tell its story, while Harivallabh asked questions. Other witnesses would be called. Then Harivallabh would state how he understood the case, to check that he had gotten it straight. If the case was fairly simple, he would then give a judgment. A harder case would be referred to a jury selected from friends of each side. In those cases, Harivallabh would step in only if the jury could not reach a decision. This was the basic order of procedure but it was followed only loosely. The people court is very informal. The court judgements were almost always respected. When they were not, the villages enforced them in the same ways. But these judgements were seldom a great burden on the guilty. They were aimed mainly at giving fair compensation for wrongs and at making peace between the two sides; often they were only token. This was because the court's power to keep peace was based not on the threat of punishment but on the moral pressure of the community, directed by the court. For the adivasis, the court was a means to quick, efficient justice, without resort to expensive drawn out legal proceedings, proceedings that often fuelled bitterness and caused great hardships for one or both parties and because the people's court was so close at hand, it helped settle conflicts before they got out of control.<sup>65</sup> “When I arrived there were two or three murders in this area every week”, Harivallabh said, “Now that's down to three or four a year”. The rate of marital separations too had dropped.”<sup>66</sup> Finally the people's court was a means of social education. Harivallabh used the court to promote high standards of conduct, fair play, justice, and accountability to the community.

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<sup>65</sup> Interview with Harivallbha Parikh, 16/10/2001

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Harivallbha Parikh, 16/10/2001

As might be expected, the government courts were not always happy about Harivallabh efforts to take their place especially in criminal cases Harivallabh told of a run-in with the government regarding one of the more than 200 murder cases tried by the people's court. As a result legal experts came to visit there Lok Adalat or peoples court. Lok Adalat had been studied and observed by prominent scholars in field of, judiciary. Former chief Justice of India, P. N. Bhagwati, Justice D. A. Desai, Dr. Upendra Baxi former Vice Chancellor of South Gujarat University and prominent law expert Dr. D. N. Sanghvi have studied the functioning of the Rangpur Lok-Adalat and recommended that Harivallabh Parikhs unbiased and informal system of justice should be established across the country.<sup>67</sup>

Now, even the conventional courts are directing litigants to approach the Lok-Adalat for an earlier solution of their problems, and official lok-Adalats have been in some parts of the country. The Ashram also conducts lok-Adalats in other parts of the country through in sister organizations.<sup>68</sup> In respect to Lok-Adalat of Rangpur former Cheift Justice of India, P. N. Bhagwati wrote, 'I have known Shri Harivallabhparikh, commonly known as Bhai for the last several years. I admire him immensely for the highly constructive work which he is carrying on in the rural area. He was first person in the country to start the concept of Lok-Adalat long before the idea was booted by me on an all India basis. Lok-Adalats which shri Harivallabh Parikh is holding are real Lok-Adalats, because the people participate in the conciliatory and adjudicatory process. They embody and refelect peoples participation in the true sense of the term. If only the experiment of Lok-Adalats as conceived and carried on by him were to be replicated throughout India on a massive scale. We shall be able to bring about peace and tranquility in the rural area and remove to a considerable extent the bitterness and

<sup>67</sup> Nagendra Patel, *No Silence in this Court*, Rangpur, Anand Niketan Ashram, 1985

<sup>68</sup> Harshkant Vora, *Lok Adalat*, Rangpur, Ananad Niketan Pub. 1988, Back Page

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strife affecting rural life. It will also lighten the burden of litigation on the regular courts of the county. Shri Harivallabh Parikh has done magnificent work.<sup>69</sup>

Thus, using the combined arsenal of love and moral pressure, Bhai has won impressive victories over exploitation. The experience has shown the adivasis that people's power is an effective weapon consistent with their culture. Patience, perseverance and community solidarity-qualities inherent in their tradition have brought results which education or wealth could never field.

Like Gandhi Bhai finds that people's power stands on two pillars: law and Love. 'Law has the sanction of non-violence, Love is about change of hearts. Due to this peoples' court, the people's power has been generated'. Through the open court, Bhai has established his reputation as a wise and just arbiter, and a brave and dedicated champion of the tribal people. He has also earned something far more precious and powerful: the unqualified, total love and confidence of virtually everyone in this area.<sup>70</sup>

### **Bhoodan Movement and Rangpur:**

After solving many disputes and land problems of tribals the next important step in front of Harivallabh Parikh was persuading landlords to give away their surplus land. When Vinoba Bhave launched his Bhoodan and Gramdan movements, Harivallbh walked about 5000 Kms across Gujarat and collected 1800 acres, mostly in the tribal belt, for distribution among the landless. "Harivallabh started Bhoodan before me", Vinoba had commented on a visit to ANA, "While Bhoodan and Gramdan were largely families in the Ganglic Plain, they were grand

<sup>69</sup> Steve Dunwell, *Brother of the Tribesmen*, Ranagpur, Anand Niketan Asshram, 1980

<sup>70</sup> R. Pracannan, *op. cit.*, p. 29

success in the Narmada Valley thanks to the presence of Harivallabh and his volunteers.”<sup>71</sup>

By the time Vinoba Bhave became vocal about Bhoodan and Gramdaan, Harivallabh made sincere efforts for Gramdaan and in the Narmada valley of Gujarat. The first Gramdaan happened to be of village Ganjlawaant in Chhota udepur taluka of Baroda district in 1956. Before gramdaan Gajudavaanat was a small village where mainly Rathwa community lived. The rights of the village land were under four prominent landlords. After the grandaan the approximate three hundred acres of village land was equally divided among all the village persons. To promote the success of Ganjlawaant, Sarvodaya leaders Jugtram Dave, Ravishankar Maharaj, Babalbhai Mehta, Harishkant Vora, Vinoba Bhave and several others came.<sup>72</sup> After success of Ganjalanvaant many more villages in and around ANA and its ‘Fenai’ region came forward for the cause of *gramdaan* and *gramnirman*.

In year 1957 there were village Chhinkari Jaamgadh, and Piplia.<sup>73</sup> Further in 1957 there were *graamdan* in Sankheda and Naswadi region which were Rambai, Serangpur, Sildhana, Kaledia, Talati, Samanpura, Kanakua, Satbnedia, Kankavati, Kakuyvasna, and Khansara.<sup>74</sup> During his stay at ANA Ravishankar Maharaj collected the land in form of Bhoodan and then distributed it among landless peasants. The details of which are as follows:<sup>75</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Harivallbh Parikh, Gandavaant Ni Vate vate’ *Bhoomiputra*, 15/11/1956, Year-IV, No. 5pp.5-6

<sup>72</sup> Harivallabh Parikh ‘Bhoodan Samachar: From Nava Gramdaan’ *Bhoomiputra*, 26/04/1937, Year-IV, No. 18, p.16

<sup>73</sup> Harivallbha Parikh ‘Bhoodan Samachar’ *Bhoomiputra*, 19/06/1957, Year 4, No. 31, p. 12

<sup>74</sup> Harivallbha Parikh ‘Bhoodan Samachar’ *Bhoomiputra*, 15/03/1955, Vol.-13, Year-2 p. 8

<sup>75</sup> Shankar Patel, ‘Gujaratnu Santhi Mootu Gramdaan’ *Bhoomiputra*, 26/05/1958, Year-5, No. 26, p. 3

### Land Donated under Bhoodan Movement under ANA

Taluka	Land Collected (in acres)	Landless Houses	Total Land (Acres)
Sankheda	420-19	184	461-28
Naswadi	300-0	127	540-0
Jambugaam	339-20	100	915-23
Chhota Udepur	194-12	77	402-1

Due to efforts of Harivallabh Parikh and his team the largest Gramdaan was also made in 'Fenai' region. The name of the villager was 'Parvata' in Sankheda Taluka. With efforts of Harivallabh Parikh Baroda district became largest Gramdaan doner.<sup>76</sup> In these Gramdaan villages 'Bhaiji' initiated many a constructive activities. Thus, after bringing tranquility in tribal societies of 'Fenai' region and bringing back land to the tribals. The next important step was to improve the standard of living of these tribal communities. For which Bhaiji generated several economic programmers which ensured that the villages established local councils and helped the tribal farmers to wet and plough the dry land. Since its establishment. Anand Niketan has put a premium on scientific farming, horticulture and dairying.

It is this generally acknowledged brotherliness that has spurred the development of what started as an individual's adventure to a social revolution of far reaching significance. 'Bhai' has become a symbol a motive force for all the adivasis to come together and act together and struggle and win together. The fight that started way back in 1949 till continues. From the enthusiasm and vision of bhai it is stage to bet that the fight will continue for long very long till almost the entire state of Gujarat is changed <sup>77</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Shashikant Mishra, 'Strategies of Rural Development: Adivasis on Advance', *People Action*, Feb 1974, Vol.-8, No. 2, p. 19

<sup>77</sup> Edith Martin (ed.), *A Centre for Generating peoples Power for peaceful Progress*, Rangpur, ANA, pp. 12-15



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Throughout his works among these tribals the priority was given to improve the way of living of the villagers and two goals were set: (i) Raise the food production (ii) control the population growth (iii) practising improved agriculture to raise the food production. The adivasis used to simply throw the seeds in the fields and wait for the results, new techniques had to be taught: the ways to plant the seed to get new hybrid varieties, to spread fertilizers and insecticides. For all this, the ashram set a practical example in its own fields, the good results being enough to motivate the villagers to do the same.<sup>78</sup>

But the weather conditions were still masters of the game. However, hard they worked; the adivasis could still see all their efforts and hopes if monsoon failed to come or if rains were too heavy. The introduction of irrigation systems and water pumps gave justice to the work done. Slowly irrigation projects are being completed in different areas, either with the help of foreign agencies community aid abroad and freedom from hunger campaign from Australia; Oxfam from England, EZE for the World from Germany, IMADE from France or Indian charitabale Trust. Nearly 500 projects are now functioning in the area, providing water for 65,000 acres of land. Irrigation is not only an insurance to get food all years around, but very soon it helps to raise the living standards of the Adivasis. Old debts are paid back, houses are reconstructed with bricks and good roofs, additional clothes and latched utensils are brought in, and new cartels are purchased.<sup>79</sup>

### **Youths Involvement in Village Development:**

Every year more than 1500 students and teachers from all over Gujarat or outside come in the Qummer to give a helpful and to the

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17

<sup>79</sup> Medha Patkar, Dalpat Vankar and few others are examples of products who worked at ANA in their initial years

villagers. They live with them, learn from them, and become aware of the problems of rural India. It even gave to come as a strong motivation to become social workers.<sup>80</sup>

### **Improving Health Conditions of Tribals: Family Planning**

To confirm this economic betterment the growth of the families has to be controlled. Much convincing on this point has been done throughout there Lok-Adalat serious or in other meetings, and every year ashram is organizing sterilization camps where most parents with already two or three children voluntarily turn up . Constant efforts of information for family planning are also made in the villages.

### **Women Health Workers:**

To help improving the health conditions, a project has been started since 1987 with women health workers covering 100 villages. A team of young girls receives a medical training in the ashram on basic diagnosis and treatments. In pairs, they are visiting the villages, talking specially with women, showing them more nutritious dishes to cook, teaching some rules of hygiene, calling the nearby doctor when they spot a person whose sickness would be rapid by contagious. Ultimately, they also organise women's activities and train one women leader in every village.<sup>81</sup>

### **Co-Operative:**

Another step was also to find an alternative to the money-lending system. For a long time, whenever an Adivasi was in need of money, he would go to the money-lender who currently requested to be repaid with 200 to 3000, of interest. Before the crop was in his field, the villagers knew it was already out of his hands. Due to the pressure of the open

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<sup>80</sup> Interview with Shri Harivallbh Parikh, 16/10/2004, at ANA-Rangpur

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Chankiben, village-Rangpur, 15/10/2001. She was main coordinator of women cooperative, under ANA. Also see, Edith Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 22

court, money-lender had to stop their practices of the false receipts taking advantage of the adivasis, they made them sign for amounts with no relation to the oral agreement, and they were forced to lower their interest rate down to 25 percent. But an alternative was needed and organized as soon as 1950, by creating a net of co-operatives. They are giving loans with rate of 12 percent interest. Moreover, since *Gram Sabha* is not yet a legal entity in the state of Gujarat, the ownership of the land in Gramdaan villages is held by the Gram-swarajya co-operative societies. Each farmer gives 2.5 percent of his yearly income to the Gram swarajya Fund, and it is managed for the benefit of the entire community, to pay off old debts, to recover land from the Sahukars to undertake some irrigation projects, or to offer credit for productive years.

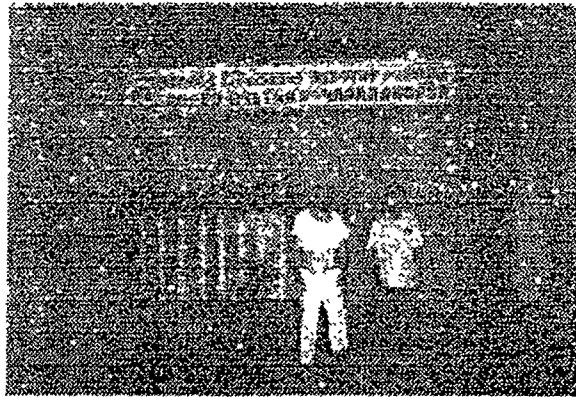
The Cooperative stores are offering seeds, fertilisers and first necessities at low prices and then intermediaries to sell the crops. There are now 75 co-operative in the whole area. They also serve us links between the villagers and the national Banks which are giving full trust to the villagers since under the guidance of the ashram all their loans receive very good recovery.<sup>82</sup> On the Gujarat level, the Ashram has also undertaken the great task of helping all the marginal farmers, landless labourers and village artisans to unite in one, defence organisation; "The Gujarat khedut, khed Majoor Parishad" There are two and a half million of land holders in Gujarat; among them two million are marginal farmers having less than five acres, one million eight hundred thousand villagers are landless, and one million are village artisans.

Through this organization, they will receive help to get timely loans, seeds, fertilizers, minimum wages and contacts with appropriate funding agencies. It is providing them training to get a new leadership.

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<sup>82</sup> Edith Martin (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 22-27

Its aim is to become the organisation of the poor, for the poor, which is needed for the development of the villages. The Gujarat Khedut Majoor Parishad, non-politically oriented attracted the attention of many social workers in other states of India, and the experience rapidly being multiplied all over the country.<sup>83</sup>



Harivallabh Parikh along with an ashramite at Anand Niketan Ashram, Rangpur

The one important satyagriha taken by ANA to protect the tribal land rights was, 'Akteshwar *Satyagriha*', conducted in 1975, village Akteshwar a *Grammdaan* village in the Rajpipla taluka of the former Bharuch. The case came into light when one of the royal members of Rajpipla princely state took over the land of village Akateshwar, leaving twenty to families landless. Against this exploitation, adivasis of the region became anguished. They sent petition to the state government and formed peoples' opinion. The peasants' satyagriha occurred 580 peasants went for voluntary jail and four times the satyagriha happened. The women of akteshwar had shown great courage in their work and satyagriha. In praise of these women Induala Yagnik wrote; "Several *satyagriha* occurred in this region, but women participation in such a large number and with such dedication is admirable. Harivallabh has made the Akateshwar cantt of *Satyagriha*". Later the question of Akteshwar was taken to the Governor of Gujarat. With proper

<sup>83</sup> Harivallbha Parikh 'Akteshwar Zaninna Sava' *Bhoomiputra* 16/09/1971, p. 7

discussion and mutual understanding the solution was reached. The farmers of the akteshwar got their land back and the case pending at court was taken back.<sup>84</sup> This proved the success of Satyagriha of Akteshwar.

In another episode, a similar *satyagriha* struggle occurred in a village called, 'Golagamdi'. This is an originally adivasi village about 47 miles from the ashram. But as it is common now, the adivasis had been deprived of their land long ago. The *patidars* came to be the patidars by grabbing the land of the adivasis. But this occurred long ago, that the adivasis have forgotten about this. But the fight began for 75 acres of government waste lands. They also went ahead to reclaim the lands. As the work was in progress, they had constructed 47 huts too there rains intervened, and in its wok came the floods.

The adivasis had to flee, and went back to their old huts in the village. This was the moment the Patidars were waiting for the lands. Demolished 23 huts and floated a bogus oranisation called 'Lok Bharti' with the ostensible goal of providing education to adivasi children. The land the patidars claimed was for the purpose of the 'Lok Bharti'. The series of action of on the part of land grabbling land owners provoked the adivasis to offer satyagriha. But before launching a movement they came all the way to the ashram to consult *Bhai* and other. Their sincerity and determination can be ganged from the fact that they walked all the distance full 47 miles. Tired and dirty, but determined and defiant. They sought the advice of the ashram. The peoples' court was summoned, and after discussion, it was decided to rush a group of *ashram* people to the village to investigate the adivasi charges.

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<sup>84</sup> Shashikant Mishra, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21

The team found every word of the adivasi true and it was then only matter of hours before they all decided to launch satyagriha. The adivasi workers of Golgamdi had started to turn, and everyone immediately realized the significance of this. As the *Satyagriha* started the mind of the adivasis was already agitated and the atmosphere was tense when the police had opened fire on another set of adivasis. In another place in which a woman was grievously hurt, the Golagamdi incident came as another wave of their resentment

Two of the both of the adivasis, representing the area, threatened to quite on the firing issue. The Rangpur ashram too was getting ready to send more volunteers to the aid of the embattled adivasis of Golagamdi. It was at this juncture, that the Chief Minister of the state, Chimanabhai Patel, who represents Sankheda, the adjoining area of the agitation, wrote to Bhai asking him not to participate in the matters. He also promised to look into the question.

Rangpur ashram is noted for offering Satyagriha. Infact, the history of how *Satyagriha* could be used effectively even against the most stubborn enemies. The Golagamdi agitation followed the typical pattern set by the *ashram*.<sup>85</sup> This is the technique of *satyagriha* that 'Bhai' Harivallabh Parikh has forced over the years. That this type of struggle has proved to be so eminently successful is a tribute to the unique work done by Bhai.

### **Environmental Protection and Afforestation: A Lifelong Endenvour of Shri. Harivallabh Parikh:**

The relationship of tirbals with the forest need not be highlighted. More than 95 percent of the tribal population relies on forest and forest

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<sup>85</sup> David C. Thomas, *Harivallbh Parikh: A Stanch Advocate of Afforestation and Environmental Protection*. Trichur, 1992, pp. 3-6

products for survival. When Harivallabh Parikh came in the Fenai region, the entire area was thickly forested. However, the changes that took place after the second world-war transformed the entire scenario of the district. The deforestation was so drastic that the tribals, who traditionally depended upon the forest to survive, turned to agriculture. On the one hand, nature has played its role in deforestation by soil erosion and the land has become barren and open. On the other hand, the proponents of deforestation, usually business interests and corrupt government officials were a fierce lobby to resist to. The inevitable result was that once deforestation of a particular area had begun, it did not stop. The popular resistance made by tribals under the leadership of Harivallabh was ignored by all. When Harivallabh visited this area in year 1949, it was part of the then princely state of Chhota Udepur. Before merger with the Indian Union, the king had given contract to several contractors to fell trees. When Harivallabh Parikh realized the seriousness of the on-going deforestation, he pleaded to Sardar Vallabhai Patel the then Union Home Minister to stop it. But he got no response. So he personally visited the Prime Minister Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, and a meeting was organized between him, Patel and the personal secretary of Jawaharlala Nehru, Mr. George hathai. He was told that under the merger agreement whatever promises given to the former king had to be fulfilled. However, he made an earnest plea to see that justice be done to tribals. He suggested to the authorities that the state should pay to contractor at market rate so that forest could be saved. He was assured that necessary steps be taken but no positive action was taken at government level. Until the sixties the government policy was to continue giving contracts to cooperative bodies to fell trees despite opposition from Harivallabh Parikh and the tribals. He fully realized that the aforestation programme could be successfully implemented only with the active participation of the tribals. Without gaining their trust and confidence, no effort in aforestation would be

successful. Contary to the truth, the tribals were being accused of causing deforestation.<sup>86</sup>

Realising the seriousness of the situation which prevailed at the time, Harivallabh started a mass contact programme among tribals. He was able to make them aware of the importance of keeping a healthy environment to sustain their own lives. He was able to make them ready to protect whatever forest remained. That was, when Isamilbhai, a contractor was fighting against the forest department in court over his right to fell down 7000 Mahua trees in the Nalej village which he had brought from a relative of the king. A series of legal battles took place. At the end, the contractor won the battle in the court. When he arrived to the spot to cut down trees, the tribals led by Harivallabh also reached the site. Harivallabh had a talk with the contractor who was not at already to give up. The contractor was armed with a decree from the Supreme Court and no one could stop him from cutting down those 7000 trees. Harivallabh continued his reconciliatory efforts with the contractor and after much persuasion the contractor agreed to delay cutting down the trees until some alterative arrangement was made. Harivallabh held a series of talks with concerned officials and then chief minister of Gujarat managed to make state authorities realize the need to save this large number of trees. He made the government ready to give the contractor trees from areas to be submerged by series of dams being constructed then. On the rivers of Sukhi and Rami. As a result of this, Harivallabh was able to save all 7000 trees.

In the 1970s', the government of Gujarat asked the tribals to leave their homelands, the forests without providing them with a proper and decent compensation. The new, so called enlightened environmentalist wanted to evict the aboriginals from the forest. "They must realize that

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.



unless the tribals are made confident and are involved in the project, no afforestation programme will ever be successful” his point of view has been repeatedly exposed by Harivallabh in front of the Gujarat state Government authorities who nevertheless have turned a deaf ear to his pleas. So the people’s power fought back, and under the leadership of bhai, over 1200 tribals fought in high court and won justice.<sup>87</sup>

The High court appointed a committee to recommend that no deforestation take place and that the aboriginals remain on the land that has always been theirs. The authorities were dubious about the success of such enterprise but Bhaji’ proved that the aboriginals could be trusted.

Due to the mass contract movement conducted by ANA under the leadership of Harivallabh, tribals from 18 villages came forward and took pledge that none of them would cut any tree in their villages, nor would they allow anyone from outside to do so. Harivallabh through his mass contact programme was able to make forest preservation a ‘movement of the people’. Later 84 more villages formed village cooperatives and made contract with the state government under the leadership of Harivallabh in all these 84 villages, a movement jungle lagan Jungle bachao, became a mass movement of the people, and now it has become extremely popular in several hundred of villages.<sup>88</sup>

Seeing the success of his joint project, Harivallabh decided to step into the afforestation programme on a largest scale. Everything from finance to water facility was a difficult task for him to cope with. However, dedicated and determined by his vision, he started contacting funding agencies and launched a project of afforestation programme to be implemented by ANA alone involving its peoples. It was in the year,

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9.

1980; he planted thousands of trees in the compound of ashram itself. This had a tremendous effect on tribals, who frequently visited the ashram in connection with their work. During their visits, Harivallabh used to make them aware of importance of a healthy environment and how it can improve their lives. In the planting season of 1981, there was an overwhelming demand from the tribal farmers of seeds and saplings. ANA was also flooded with the requests from tribal farmers for assistance and how to plant a tree and maintain them. Using the interest shown by tribals in afforestation, Harivallabh was able to plant 16 lakh trees through a thousand tribal farmers during the next season in the year 1981.

Despite several practical difficulties, ANA was made to raise and plant 65 lakh trees, the same year. The chart below will give details of the afforestation activities of ANA.<sup>89</sup>

A realistic assessment of the success of this programme goes as follows:- 'One crore trees a year by one agency had been planted'. It convinces that professionally qualified personnel would be able to make an even better and more proper impact on this scheme. In the year 1984, ANA availed itself of the service of the professionally well qualified personal and together with the ashram own well trained workers, they decided to plant one crore trees in a period of three years. The idea was not only to plant the specified number of trees in specified period but to make the afforestation programme self-reliant and self-sufficient for tribals themselves to protect the environment and balance the ecology on their own even after the programme was over.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Harivallbha Parikh 'Our Involvement In Dams Baroda ANA. 1994. p.1

<sup>90</sup> Edith martin and Baldevbhai Patel, *An Experiment in community living and Learning* p. 5. Also see, David C. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 10

Another important aspect of ANA's work is their involvement with construction of Dams and water harvesting in their hinterland. Harivallabh always believed in preservation, conservation, and optimum utilization water. Since its inception ANA has been working on this line. In the beginning the water of river heran and Rani was linked with the ashram by establishing the life irrigation-programme. ANA started lift irrigation projects in several areas. They entered in the programme of water shed management by installing more than 250 lift irrigation projects. In later times need to conserve rainwater also arrived, they started constructing overflow weirs and at the same time, they started farm forestry, which helped in strong rain water and simultaneously it helped to balance and coordinate the economic for a sustainable development of the people.<sup>91</sup>

**Our School is Different:** ANA has a residential school for the tribal children of this area, which is known as *JeevanShala* or life education school (hereafter LES), it imparts formal and non formal education to the children of this area, so that they can go back home and work for their own villages after completing their education.<sup>92</sup>

Jivan shala ss this school is named is part of the ANA. The institution was founded with the arrival of Harivallabh and wife Pushpa in 1949. It works on a non-political, non, sectarian basis to improve the life of the adivasis. The institution has only one building so far, used during the day as class rooms and in the night as the hostel for the children. Most of the children are adopted by outsiders including a few foreigners, who take care of the expenses involved in their education. The school prepares the youngsters to shoulder the responsibility of carrying on the revolution. They are taught modern methods of agriculture, technical education to run and repair the many irrigation

<sup>91</sup> Shashikant Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 24

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Harivallabh Parikh, 16/10/2001

The success of the ANA's work can be seen the way he has won the ground and patiently won over the adivasis. From living under a tree, he progressed to earning the right to have a hut of his own. From then he went on to work to secure for the adivasis the right not only to live in *pucca* houses but also be the masters of the land.

<sup>93</sup> Field visit to ANA-Rangpur in October-2001

94 Interview with Shri Harivallbha Parikh 16/10/2001

Industrial unit '*Udyogwadi*' here women are taught sewing and other handicraft activities and simultaneously men are trained in small scale technical skills and driving. The ANA has an Industrial Training Institute in its premises.<sup>94(a)</sup>

With presence of all these activities the growth of material development and exposure to broader world is evident among tribals of Chhot Udepur. A region amidst forests and hills have reached the stage where deprivation does not exist but aspirations do. In no way Harivallabh feels proud to say that his organization is so self-reliant that it does not depend on any Government grant and it's only the government which often comes voluntarily to support them.<sup>94(b)</sup>

### GANIDHANS IN NARMADA AND BHARUCH

As mentioned in earlier part of this chapter the reform activities of followers of Gandhi crept deep in several parts of eastern tribal tract of Gujarat.

In the following part of the chapter, case studies and one individual institution has been taken for study, which are as follows:

- (i) Champakkaka<sup>95</sup> Sukhadia at Rajpipla.<sup>96</sup>
- (ii) Bharuch Zilla Adivasi Sevak Sangh at Rajpipla.
- (iii) Sagbara Kelvani Mandal Trust, Sagbara.
- (iv) Gram-Nirman, Thava.
- (v) Sarvangin Gram Vikas Mandal; 'Prayas' and 'Arch-Vahini' at Mangrol, district Narmada

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<sup>94(a)</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>94(b)</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>95</sup> This portion on Champakkaka will be in form of narration in first person, as I spent my personal moment with kaka and it was tremendously shocking for me because he died just after three months after I met him

<sup>96</sup> My first visit to 'Apna-Ghar', at Rajpipla, 9<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2003.

**Champakkaka Surkhadia:** - On the entire thesis so far I have taken into consideration persons and their organization. But in this description of a person institution himself will be given.<sup>97</sup>



Champak Kaka Sukhadia

Champakkaka was son of Vaishnav parents, born on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1917 in a *Vaishnav Kapol vania* family of Rajpipla. Champakkaka was the youngest among six siblings. Since childhood he was a vagabond but was always eager to serve the unprivileged. A dropout from school, at a very young age he left home and in search of peace he went till Bombay. But fast and qualitative life of the city did not suit him, so he came back to Rajpipla and joined the nationalist struggle. He associated himself with people like Induala yagnik and *swami* Sahjanand and in this process he himself with them raised kisan sabhas and raised and protested against the atrocities paved by the Rajpipla king on tribal subjects. Even after Independence he remained vocal in Maha Gujarat movement and raised youths for the cause of separate Gujarat State. A dynamic personality with strong humanitarian values he made maker every person possible. In Rajpipla, infact in entire Narmada taluka people knew him as a messiah of poor. Who will extend his hand to

<sup>97</sup> 'Kaka' is a respectable word for Uncle in Gujarati language.

every unprivileged person possible? He did all this not for fame but because he was sensitive about their feelings and his eyes got wet for them. After the peoples movements became politicized kaka.<sup>98</sup> Left his participation to them and about 1958 onwards concentrated on his spice business. During those years a married woman was in search of some work to support her familial needs. She joined his store and became sales-cum-production in charge whereas kaka continued his service by serving starved people, treating lepers and doing funeral ceremonies who were left with no progeny. Every year he organized '*shraddh*' for people who died either on streets or in deplorable conditions due to lack of financial support. He took initiatives to perform last funeral and post-crematorium rights to them.

This work of '*Shraddh*' began with dramatic incident. When kaka left social movements due to their over politicization. He was loitering on the streets of Rajpipla and one day saw an old man dying on the roadside. This made kaka tremble with empathy and he himself made a pyre and gathered people to perform last rights of this unknown changer in his life. Since then every year he performed '*shraddh*' fortnight for such unknown died persons. In this ceremony thousands of people were fed and also funds were raised to support the cause for unprivileged in society.

Apart from this he also raised the '*Rotla Yojana*', under which he gave subsidized food (sumptuous lunch and dinner) in Rs. 2/- to the people in hospitals specially those who came from remote tribal areas.

He also distributed basic needs of food clothes, and health associated assistance to tribal. This ways the works of Champakkaka were varied in nature. Due to such variety of his works he was known in

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<sup>98</sup> Vadodara Newslite, *The Indian Express*, 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2004

different circles of people differently. For lepers he was a genuine healer, for tribals working in Rajppipla town he was more like a rationing officer providing food without cost. For tribals staying in far off villages he was like a Santa Claus coming after every weekend or fortnight to distribute them clothes, fruits and sweet rice and cereals. For government officials he was mediator bringing grievances of tribals to their notice and for orphans he was father of large heart who knew how to take care of them like a mother. He raised about nine orphans and to them he was the most tender father who never scolded them whatever they wanted to-do in life.

His craziness to serve the people made him close his profit making spice shop by late 1970's his entire life for the cause of welfare to unprivileged in society. A true Gandhian and a staunch valued person, he believed in non-possession in extreme. He had a very small house to live and though offered several times by his followers to own basic amenities like phone and little more spacious house he refused them all. He was content in his 'Apna-Ghar' with his close allies, his orphans and his multitude family members constituting trials Lepers and everyone who met him became his relative. When I asked kaka, why he did not married? Then he replied very kindly and with innocence, "Khotuy nathi boltu hun brahmachari anthi?" (I must not speak lie, I am not a celebrate saint.) Kaka did fell in love. When he was young, unfortunately he could not succeed. In later stage of life he lost interest in it. Though many women approached him when he was in late thirties. But by that time he was fairly engrossed in his social service and was content with whatever close allies he had in his life.

Kaka was jolly but equally aggressive, extremely punctual and true to his words. He did not liked people who played games to him and tried to cheat him. Yet he was duped by many for which he had no



regrets in his life. Mainly because if he met too many crooks in his life, he met 10,000 well wishes too.<sup>99</sup> Kaka's warm hospitality and cordial nature made me meet him almost every day, so long as I was there in Rajpippla. The day I met kaka, in the evening I went along with him to village Sakva, at Tilakwada taluka of Narmada district. At village Sakva live Dharendra Soni and his wife Sunita Patel with two sons Bhargav and Vaishnav. Both are scientists in Electronics and Physics. Now they have their own two acres of land on which they practice organic farming. After meeting them I came back to Rajpippla. Kaka had space for everyone in his life and everyone had tremendous respect for him too. On 16<sup>th</sup> March 2004 at 4:00 am. Morning he died due to acute asthmatic attack.<sup>100</sup>

### **Bharuch Zilla Adivasi Sevak Sangh**

The Sangh is the oldest working organization in the territory, for the welfare of Tribals. It started working in the later half of 1930's. Its work began with the founding of the forest labour cooperative societies at the former Rajpippla Princely state. Earlier it was working hand to hand with Bhil Sewa Mandal later in 1957 it became an independent organization under workmanship of Ratnasingh and Harisingh Mahila. At present the organization governs multipurpose and versatile projects like ashramashalas, ashram hostels kindergartens (balwadis) forest cooperatives, sewing centres, hospitals etc.<sup>101</sup>

If a person has a dream determination and workmanship to create them, then lack of resources cannot deter the person from fulfilling it. Such was the determination of Ratansingh Mahida when Mahida took charge of Bharuch Zilla Adivasi Sevak Sangh. Mahida was a dynamic

<sup>99</sup> Mahendra Trivedi, 'Gujarat Rajya Zilla Sarva Sangraha: Bharuch District, Gandhinagar, Gujarat Govt., 1991, pp. 531-533

<sup>100</sup> Vajubhai Vyas, *Advashyon Na Vandevta* Rajpippla, 1970, pp. 10-15

<sup>101</sup> Harshad Rana, 'Muthi Unchero Mahamanav' in *Silver Jubilee Edition*, of BJASS, 1991-1992, pp. 11-13

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personality who stood for various kind of growth among the unprivileged tribal communities of the Rajpipla state. Ratansingh Mahida was son of Ganpatsingh Mahida, a small scale Rajput farmer of village Kosadi, taluka Mandvi district Surat. Born on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1915 AD. The child was energetic enough since his childhood. After completion of his primary education he came to Rajpipla for higher studies. At Rajpipla and its vaue socialcircles Ratansingh got dynamism in his personality. There he coalesced with several new social activities and became vibrant social workers. But he could not complete his higher studies. Infact not his post SSC studies due to lack of financial sources. After leaving his studies he took a personal oath that one day he will become so very capable that he will support all those who want to study but could not due to their poverty. With this left his studies and joined service of princely state and became private secretary of younger brother of king of Rajpipla state. He served him for a few months. But the chained life and luruy of place did not suited to Mahida and he left the job Inspire of it his healthy relations with the royal a family contiused. He did not left Rajpipla and now started taking initiatives in educational welfare activities.<sup>102</sup>

Realising the importance of education he started a boy's hostel for Rajpur boys at Rajpipla. He himself became rector of that institution. Under his supervision this institution because reputed in entire Rajpipla. Due to his firm dedication for educational activities in 1947 he was chosen as the educational in-charge by the Rajpipla princely state. Under the position he started several primary, secondary, and higher secondary institutions in them Rajpipla state.

In 1944 he left his states service and joined nationalists struggle. In 1947 when Rajpipla state was merged with the Bombay state at that

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<sup>102</sup> Vajubhai Vyas, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-48

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time Ratansingh was for most person who sided the cause of Bombay state and democracy in Rajpipla. Fortunately the king of those times in Rajpipla state was also lineout and transfer of power went quite smooth.<sup>103</sup>

By the time Ratansingh became acquainted with cultural background of Rajpipla state and realized that the condition of Rajpipla cannot be improved until the Bhils the original inhabitants of the region will remain deprived. He came in touch with Thakkar bapa, the founder of Bhil sewa mandal. He also made contacts with then President of India Dr. Rajendra Prasad, and then he was also the Director of Bhariya Adimijati Sevak Sangh. With inspiration from these two personalities, he founded 'Bharuch Zilla Adivasi Sevak Sangh' (hereafter ~~BZASS~~) as registered organization.

The service to these adivasis was not a maiden work and many friends, colleagues, and persons from tribal communities themselves came to initiate work for such issues. The educational activities began when a person named Ram Prabha of village Jhaira in Rajppipla came to Ratansingh mahida and donated a greater part of his land holding for Ramashraya Ashram. Then onwards several educational institutions became part of Jhariya village and it became core of many educational activities, and also of social welfare activities.<sup>104</sup> The services of BZASS now became famous enough a villager named Tetia Bhagat from Ghantoli village of dediapada taluka came to meet Mr. Mahida and urged him to start one such ashramshala at his village. Mahida agreed and ashramshal began with full fledged farm and dairy attached to it.

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<sup>103</sup> Vajubhai Shah, *op. cit.*, p. 40

<sup>104</sup> Interview with King of Sagbara at Sagbara, 21/12/2003

Ratansinh Mahida was not satisfied by merely opening the *ashramshala*. More so, the outflux of ashramshala students need an outlet for higher studies so he decided to open a higher secondary school at Rajpipla with name of king of Rajpipla, Maharaja Rajendrasinghji Vidyalaya.

Later in 1962 he started 'Shri Mahraja Rajendrasinhji Arts College'. A huge premise now was there to serve the student of Rajpipla, who previously left studies after primary due to lack of facilities and funds. Mahidas' services did not end here. After promoting educational activities he went for promotion of medical facilities to the unprivileged people of the Rajpipla state. As he realized that many of the tribal people still practice superstition and cannot afford and reach righteous medical services. More so, the condition of elderly people also took his attention and he decided to start two such organization which could help sick and elderly people of Rajpipla.

For the cause he started one hospital and one old age home at Rajpipla. The institution is still working with genuine care for the people.<sup>105</sup> He also started forest labour cooperative societies, with branches at Rajpipla, Nilakwadas and Dediapada.<sup>106</sup> With such dedicated services BZASS is still working for the masses of Rajpipla and remains a genuine organization working for human welfare. The following table shows the details about different bodies functioning under BZASS.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>105</sup> List of Ashramshalas in Narmada district as collected on 30/12/2003, collected from Narmada collectorate (see p. 360)

<sup>106</sup> The details about this organization can be topic of further research. Manubhai Bhatt now lives as a recluse in a village Karaj of Taluka Ankleshwar District Bharuch. Information gathered through Interview with. Mansing Mangrol at Valia, 20/12/2003

<sup>107</sup> Interview with Sukhrambhai Madanlimji Patel, son of madanbhai Limjibhai Patel, at village Narwadi, 23/12/2003.

## Ashramshalas under BZASS

KIND OF ORGANIZATIONS	STUDENTS	BOYS	GIRLS	CAPACITY
Ashramshala Jhariya	120	92	28	120
Ashramshala Motapipariya	121	64	57	120
Ashramshala Moskut	120	70	50	120
Ashramshala Tabda	120	66	54	120
AshramshalaKundia mbda	120	99	21	120
Ashramshala Maalsmot	120	86	34	120
Ashramshala Ghantoli	120	60	60	120
Ashramshala Pat	120	53	67	120
Ashramshala Mosda	120	99	21	120
UBA-Ghantoli	120	60	60	120
Ashramshala Motilala	120	60	60	120
Ashramshala Vankhunta	120	72	48	120

**Sagbara Kelvani Mandal Trust (SKMT)**

The second important organisation which chronologically come after BZASS was Manubhai Bhatt's 'adivasis Sudhar Kendra' at Dekai. Unfortunately the organisation met certain infamous complexities. So Manubhai Bhatt new lives life of a recluse at a village in Bharuch district.<sup>108</sup>

The same time when Manubhai Bhatt was working in the northern part of the Rajpipla state down south at Vasava state of

<sup>108</sup> Interview with Sukhrambhai Madanbhai Patel son of Madanbhai Limji Patel at village Narwadi, 23/12/2003.

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Sagbara an organization named Sagbara Kelvani Mandal Trust was founded by people like Madanbhai Limijibhai Patel, Jethabhai Chandariabhai Vasava, and king of Sagbara.

Madanbhai limijibhai Patel was from Nizar taluka of Baroda state, born in 1908 AD. He had his education from Nizar. In later part of his life he got influenced by the activities of Congress Working Committee (CWC). To join CWC he came down to settle at Nandurbar (Maharashtra). During his stay in Nandurbar he opened new trusts of education and cooperative societies. In 1951, he left Nandurbar and came to settle down at Sagbara. In 1936 he had bought 10 acres of land at village Narwadi, taluka Sagbara.<sup>109</sup> After coming to Sagbara, Madanbhai once again initiated welfare activities. In 1952 he became member of local board and started Framers Cooperative Society.<sup>110</sup>

During those days there was no sign of educational activity under Sagbara State. The local kings of Vasava clan were most reluctant about the educational activity. More so due to administrative pressures and issue of state merger continued them to remain engrossed in their own issues. Emisaging this whole situation madanbhai decided to start an educational Trust at sagbara. In the beginning he started with teacher around ten tribal boys beneath a tree shade at Sagbara. Later he formed a trust with land donated by Nanaba lonvala wife of then king of sagbara, Shri karan Singh Vasava. Further financial donations were made by nadishah Anklewara a Parsi businessman. Nadirshah had crisp business profits at state of Sagbara. With these donations began the 'Sagbara kelvani Mandal Trust' at Sagbara, in 1963<sup>111</sup>

<sup>109</sup> Interview with Yusufbhai Vasava, Trustee of SKMT, at Sagbara, 22/12/2003. A case of deceit and malpractice in the trust are going on Yusufbhai has filed this case against a few board members of this trust. Where they are blamed of corruption fake appointments and ignoring the decision of other board members.

<sup>110</sup> Interview with Mausing Mangrola at Valiya, 4/20/2003

<sup>111</sup> Interview with Yusufbhai Vasava, at Sagbara, 22/12/2003



The school was named after son-in-law of nadirshah anklesaria, which is Jaljibhai K. Highschool. The SKMT trust continued to work for expansion of educational work in Sagbara, its two branches were opened at Sagbara and one at village BhavariSavar. At Bhavari Savar the ashramshalais upto 7<sup>th</sup> standard, here mansing mangrola served in his initial years of work. He promoted educational and khadi work at Bhavari savar for almost four years. Mansisnggh was invited by madan bhai patel from Dekai to assist them in SKMT.<sup>112</sup> Somehow SKMT has not shown enough progress. More so it went into several conspiracies and corruption which restrained the working potential of the Trust. As a result the amount of work which SKMT must have done was not done. After 1977 Madan Liji Patel left SKMT trust. A a tribal leader jethabhai chandariya Vasava became its Trust head. Ssince then the administrationis under him and several cases of educational malpractices are undergoing under it.<sup>113</sup>

(iv) GRAM NIRMAN THAVA: -

The next important organization of the region is Gram –nirman, at village thava of Valiya Taluka, district-Bharuch. The organization is founded by Mr. Mansing mangrola. An elderly Gadhian, he came in the region in 1958 and worked for the casue fo tribal welfare the attributed his services at the 'Adivasi sudhar Kendra'-Dekai, then at Sagbara Kelvani Mandal Trust at Sagbara. After working experience at these two organizations he started his own organsiation at Thava.<sup>114</sup>

The Service to human welfare was part of Mansing mangrola. Mr. Maangrolas ancestors were Rathods who belonged to a village Kharaj at Jaipur district of Rajasthan. From there they came to Mangrol taluka of Surat district. As a result there last name became 'managrola'. Before

<sup>112</sup> Interview with Mansing Mangrola, at Valiya 20/12/2003

<sup>113</sup> Rajkumar Pandya, 'Nankadi Tekerī parthī Ganga bagate', in Prakash ni Pagdandiya. Thava, 2000, pp. 20-23

<sup>114</sup> Interview with Mansing Mangrola, at Valiya 20/12/2003

Mansing was born his family moved to Luna village of Vatiya taluka, at Luna his family was one among the Prosperous landlords. To work at their home and fields many tribal persons came, since childhood Mansing saw penury of such humble people and this made him serve them in all possible efforts. As he grew he came in contact of many more idealists were guided by socialist ideology. The main persons, who moulded his life at his young age, were his neighbour Parvati Shankar Joshi, Parvati Shankar was an elderly freedom fighter.<sup>115</sup>

Mansing was born in 1935 in traditional atmosphere. As a custom at a very tender age he got wedded to Kamuben. But neither his ancestral luxury nor his young wife could restrain him from serving tribals. Soon after Mansing entered adulthood, he left his family and went to Sevagram. There under guidance of Mahatma Gandhi and other noted leaders he learned how to serve people. After his stay in Sevagram he came to Rajpipla state and joined Dekai ashram of Manubhai Bhatt and served tribal people there almost for two three years here he was working with leprosy patients. His devotion made him popular enough among people in Rajpipla State.<sup>116</sup>

In 1960-1961 the organization which was begun for education of tribals in Sagbar state was started by Madanbhai Linjibhai Patel with name 'Sagbara Kelavani Mandal Trust', was in the dire need of dedicated workers. With word of mouth Madan Patel came to know about Mansing Mangrola. Madan Patel invited Mangrola to work with them at Sagbara state. He was given charge of a village, 'Bhavari Savar', where he had to establish an *ashramshala*.

Mansing took the challenge of working at ashramshala Bahvani Savar a model boarding and Sarvodaya Center in 1965. Where tribal

<sup>115</sup> Rajkumar Pandya, op cit., p. 22

<sup>116</sup> Mansing Mangrola, *Ek Vikas yatra*, Thava, 1991, p. 19



younglings were taught and trained under *nai-talim*. Also he expanded Khadi activity in the region. His two years efforts were exemplary. But his services in Bhavani savar took tremendous toll to him. He lost his elder son due to lack of proper medical treatment at Bhavari Savar. The loss of his first son could still not dissuade him from Bhavari Savar. But when his second son also succumbed to the hardships of the territory, then Mansing decided to have his independent organization to work on. Before leaving 'Bhavani Savar' he decided to learn appropriate skills from independent working. He went to Gujarat Vidyapith Ahmedabad in 1962 to do Graduate studies in Khadi. In 1964 he came back from Vidyapith and once again expanded khadi activity in and around Bhavari Savar.<sup>117</sup>

His efforts under SKMT made leaders like Ravi Shankar Maharaj and Babalbhai Mehta visit the 'Bhavari Savar' ashram during *Bhoodan* movement. In 1965, Gujarat Congress Party made him responsible to raise branch of 'Bhartiya Yuvak Sangh', through which he aroused youth of Bharuch district and made them work for social cause. The work made him to realize the importance of beginning many more institutions which could serve unprivileged people in upbringing their socioeconomic status.<sup>118</sup> The determination to continue his noble work made him search his own platform, where he could implement the experience he had gained so far. For his noble cause his friend Kesarsingh Sayaniya always stood besides him.

His search for land to begin an organization continued for almost a year. After such painstaking effort, the result was 'Thava'. Mansing chose the region as it lay in close proximity to his work field of 'Bhavari Savar'. Thava is located in the nearby area of Dediapada taluka of Narmada district and Jhagadia and Valia talukas of Bharuch district. The nearby rivers to Thava village are river Mohan and river Karjan.

<sup>117</sup> Rajkumar Pandya *op. cit.*, p. 26

<sup>118</sup> Mansing Mangrola, *Eklavya Sadhna: Uttar Baniyadi Vidyalyaya, op. cit.*, pp. 24-25

When Mansing Mangrola reached village, Thava there was a small ancient Lord Shiva temple where used to live Vitthalbhai Rai, who himself was also keen in serving people. After meeting Mangrola, Vitthal Rai acquired to the formers vision and donated major portion of his land for the purpose. The same day Vitthahbhai gathered more than three hundred people and a mass meeting was organized in which Mangrola put forth his vision for beginning a welfare organisation for the people gathered. The meeting held in night was like a spark in the thick darkness of ignorance which later on grew like a holy fire.<sup>119</sup>

After the public gathered approved the proposal then the next step was legitimate beginning of the Trust. With help of his friend Prafulla Trivedi who used to work at Vedchhi he founded 'Gram Nirman Kelvani Mandal', (hereafter GNKN) Trust at Thava. On 12<sup>th</sup> June' 1966, with noble hands of Mr. Jugatramdave the foundation of the Eklavya Sadhna School was laid. Mansing Manrola chosen the name 'eklavya Sadhna school', because Eklavya is the legendary Bhil student whom sacrificed his life to get better archery skill. He was student of par excellence, so do Mansing wanted his students to be like Eklavya.<sup>120</sup>

Giving educational facilities to such pauperized and deprived students was not an easy task. Those who were living on daily basis certainly were not in a position to support even the subsidized education so imparting services to these. People were based on zero percent profit and for the cause Mansing used to move from Thava to Mumbai and even went to countries abroad to raise funds and aid these people and their noble cause. His efforts did not go futile and Thava-GNKM continued to

<sup>119</sup> 'Sanstha ane Sanskaar', *Ek vikas yatra* op. cit., pp. 54-62

<sup>120</sup> 'Aamara Manoratho', *Ek vikas Yatra*, op. cit., pp. 62-77, During my stay at Thava, I went to nearby villages of Mandana Thava and Beda Company and for me the change was evident, as I saw many of the well constructed houses with almost one person of their family educated at Thava

grow like a banyan tree with its roots in Bharuch and Narmada district as well.

GNKM began with 'Eklavya Sadhna Vidyalaya' after which were founded several more organizations. Mansing Mangrol did not limit his activities till primary education. He expanded it for further studies. Higher Secondary Schools, colleges for B.Ed. and bachelor in rural studies programme were also opened at Thava campus.

Education was not the ultimate goal of Mansing Manarola and other services were also providing to the tribals such as:

- (i) Environmental Protection and Afforestation.
- (ii) Women forms
- (iii) Adult Education and Programmes for promotion of Education.
- (iv) Legal Aid Campus
- (v) Agriculturists Camps to teach modern techniques of agriculture to Tribals.
- (vi) Organising Gandhi fairs and children fairs.<sup>121</sup>

After education it often occurs that students do not get appropriate jobs and remain without work. For that purpose mangrol arealized the importance of extra training of young aspirants in other important skills like forestry, Khadi and village industry, soap making, Papad and spice grinding, lime industry, honey industry, improving dairy industry, carpentry, iron sailtry, masonry liks and brick making bamboo craft electricity work and cycle repair etc.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>121</sup> List of educational Institutes under Gram-Nirman thavqa, in '*Prakash ni Pagandiya*', *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7

<sup>122</sup> Interview Mansing Mangrola, at Valiya, 20/12/2003.

The lists of the educational institutions under Gram-Nirman thava are as follows:<sup>123</sup>

(A) BALWADIS

- (i) Shri. Prakash Balwadi – Thava
- (ii) Shri. Jyoti Balwadi- Kakadni
- (iii) Shri.Kastuba Balwadi- Chhanighoonth
- (iv) Shri.Saurabh Balwadi- Mandana
- (v) Shri.Rang balwadi- Mal
- (vi) Shri. Dipika balwadi-Samot.

(B) PRIMARY EDUCATION

- (i) Shri.Kushna Ashrmshala- Thava
- (ii) Brauch Primary School- Thava

(C) SECONDARY EDUCATION

- (i) Shri.Eklavya Sadhua Uttar buniyadi vidyalaya- Thava
- (ii) Shri.Girivar Uttar Buniyadi Vidyalay- Malsamot

(D) HIGHER SECONDARY EDUCATION

- (i) Eklavaya Chattar madhyamik Vibhaag- thava

(E) GRADUATE COURSES

- (i) Gram Sewa mahvidyalay- thava
- (ii) Nutan Gram Vidyapith-- thava

The GNKT has one campus at Malsamot taluka Sagbara too. It began in 1984 for serving the backward community of Mathravadia Bhils. When Mansing Mangrola started his organsiation in 1985, here were only 7 boys. The beginning of Gram Nirman Thava was result of treneedous faith, strength, and endmance. In his service to unprivileged peoples he lsot two of his sons. His service to the tribals of the region are

<sup>123</sup> List of educational Institutes under Gram-Nirman thavqa, in '*Prakash ni Pagandiya*', *op. cit.*, pp. 6

exemplary his institution serves more than 5000 students. Mangrola appreciates working capacity and honesty of tribals. But he is afraid of the fact that changed scenario and education has disguised many of the tribals to appreciate their culture. Many of them have left their villages and try to adjust themselves in the urban life. He is equally afraid about the fact that the changed cultural values have eroded the 'smile living high thinking' with which they lived for generations in the region.<sup>124</sup>

(V) SARVANGIN GRAM VIKAS MANDAL- MANGROL:-

The presence of organizations like BZASS, SKMT, and GNKT at former Bharuch district still left scope for volunteers to work in tribal land. For the purpose in later half of 1970 a band of educated youths from different parts of India came to settle down in a village called Mangrol in Rajpipla Taluka.

During Bhoodan movement many young graduates joined Vinoba Bhave and realized the importance of working among villagers. In one such episode a group of young graduates came to village mangrol. The names of these friends were Jagdish Lakhia, Bhartiben Vyas, and mahendrabhai Bhatt.

The beginning of work by these young and educated youth was an experience they all went in the village Mangrol with a mission to work for people's welfare. One important aspect of these young groups was that all of them were technical graduates. Their intention was to implement new technical skills among the people scientifically backward. In the beginning when they all came to Mangrol in 1968 they had varied ideas to implement.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>124</sup> Interview Mansing Mangrola, at Valiya, 20/12/2003

<sup>125</sup> Interview with Dr. Anil Patel, 13/12/2003 at Mangrol.

Mahendra Bhatt professionally an electrical engineer designed an Industrial unit with human technology as an upper hand over it. For the purpose special architectural unit was created at village Rampur a Kilometer north to village mangrol. It was twelve room dome structure named as 'Udyog-Wadi' is this institution Mahendrabhai began a unique experiment. In 'Udyog-wadi' he enrolled young tribal students and taught them all the technological skills, which were suitable for their rural environment. The students were taught about sustainable and renewable technology product use, new technology for agriculture and animal husbandry.

The reformist ideas were spread through songs skits and fairs by these workers among tribal population of village and area around Rajpipia. With such dedicated efforts the Trust was given name 'Prayas', the meaning of the word is initiative. So Prayas is an attempt for social welfare and economic uplift for the unprivileged. It works constantly to make tribal people conscious about the resources which they had around. Further to make them capable ought to use them in best possible ways.<sup>126</sup>

When Prayas was actively engaged in the human welfare activities at village mangrol and village Rampura, A few years after in 1975 three young friends Ashok Bhargav, Ashwin patel, and Nimitta came from Rajasthan and North-east respectively. They all came and started working with 'Prayas'. Ashok Bhargav was a historian by profession and Ashwin a doctor. The trio friends were more interested in the community health than the purpose of the 'Prayas' of technical improvement.

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<sup>126</sup> Interview with Mahendrabhai Bhatt at village Mangrol, 14/12/2003

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Thus, in 1977 to broaden the horizon of community health programme, Dr. Ashwin contacted his friend Dr. Anil Patel, who was in those years hunting for a suitable job at Surat medical college, along with his wife Daksha Shah. The couple was well learned from Baroda Medical College and London University on community health issues. It took hard to Dr. Ashwin to convince the couple but later he could bring them at Mangrol. In 1978 Dr. Anil Patel and Dr. Daksha Shah came to Mangrol. Together these five friends formed the 'ARCH' i.e. action research in Community health in 1978.<sup>127</sup>

The name 'ARCH Vahini' was given to the Trust by Dr. Anil Patel. He was inspired to give such a name with his reminiscences from his days at London. In London he used to see a serial called '*Accent of man*', the serial was made by the famous mathematical Jacob Bronovsly. According to Bronovsky science and humanities are two cultures which cannot meet. Where science is tedious without any emotions, humanities are all about aesthetics. Man has made accent on two fronts aesthetics and science". In the serial these two aspects of human accent but were shown growing together. The symbol of this culmination he found in Greek architectures 'arches'. So he gave name of Arch to the organisation. Where the word 'ARCH' Symbolised action research For Community Health in 1978. Arch-Vahini turned out to be a centre for tremendous services to the people. Tribal from Chhot Udepur to Vyara Songadh at Surat came down to get such effective medical services at Mangrol.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>127</sup> During my personal visit to Mangrol 13<sup>th</sup> May to 17<sup>th</sup> May 2003) I saw patients coming from far off areas to get treatment at Arch-Vahini. The team has proven Arch-Vahini to be Servants of highest order

<sup>128</sup> An important aspect of 'Arch' is its construction. The entire structure of the institution is built in style of 'Arches'



Dr. Anil Patel at Clinic of Arch-Vahini, Mangrol, 19/12/2004

In 1980 Prayas and Arch-Vahini got together to found a joint trust, 'Sarvangin Gram Vikas Trust'.<sup>129</sup> The working group of two trusts now joined and dedicated themselves for the cause of tribal welfare. They initiated several training camps, youth camps, raised projects to keep tribals updated about latest means of technology and better production. Simultaneously they promoted Gandhian ideology of Khadi and village industry promotion sustainable growth and conservation of local heritage and culture and education through naitalin.<sup>130</sup>

After analyzing to the work of 'Prayas' and 'Arch-Vahini'. One comes to the conclusion that these two organisations mark the attitude of service. These young men and women were guided by the Gandhian ideology of Sarvodya and '*antodaya*', but their tools were different. This band of workers was more tech savvy and more educated than its predecessors. They had entirely different outlook for services to mankind than their contemporaries working in the eastern tribal tract of Gujarat. Their orientation and its implication were guided by the new wave of socialism as well as technological capitalism.

<sup>129</sup> 'Sarvangin Gram Vikas Mandal' – Annual Report- 1999-2000

<sup>130</sup> Interview with Mahendrabhai Bhatt at village Mangrol, 14/12/2003



When I inquired about the success of their work among the people of their region. They said the never ideas could not penetrate among the tribal masses as much as they wanted them to be. Somehow, there were no negative impacts in terms of investment. Certainly there were problems as people generally don not came forward for much progressive deeds. Pessionistically Mahendrabhai told that after serving for nearly forty years in this region they could achieve only five percent success out of their input still ninety five percent scope is their for better meat of people.<sup>131</sup> Whereas Dr. Patel seemed quite optimistic, according to him, the change in Mangrol and area around is evident. People have become more materialistic and they are open mindedly accepting technological and cultural change.<sup>132</sup>

After studying all the four organizations and the individual institution Champakkaka Sukhadia, the image of social welfare of adivasis of Narmada and Bharuch district became fairly progressive. Wherever the reformers devoted their time, energy, and investments change was evident in the tribal societies in terms of education and awareness. Rajpipla which was formerly a small town new has almost all the facilities like a modern metropolis. Deprivation is not a widespread phenomenon for them new. The consciousness for education is increasing and so also for other materialistic gains. Still scope for development in deep interiors of Narmada district is expected.

### GANDHIANS IN THE DANGS

The Dang is the territory of tribes. It is the smallest and only district in the Gujarat with highest concentration of tribal population in it.<sup>133</sup> When reformers influenced by Gandhian ideology came in this territory it was completely desolate and dominated by thick jungles,

<sup>131</sup> Interview with Dr. Anil Patel, at Mangrol, 13/12/2003

<sup>132</sup> For detaials see chapter I, part-II

<sup>133</sup> Chhotubhai Naik, 'Maari Aatmakatha', Original hand written copy, retirened from Dang Swaraj Ashram Ahwa Dangs. The copy was written in 1980. I collected it in Dec. 2002

marauding animals and tribes of Bhil Kokani and Warli communities. No trace of education and awareness about outer culture was evident. The Dangs were content with their own tribal cultures.

The people who were alien among tribal communities of the Dangs were British officials working as administrators and forest department officers. These persons were notorious among tribal communities as attritions exploiters.<sup>134</sup> British regime gave to the Dangs free access to liquor drinking by opening several liquor depots in different parts of the Dangs. The tribals were subdued by promoting liquor in take. This facilitated of the British regime to freely exploit the people and their rich resources of timber.<sup>135</sup>

Disappointed with the new imperial rule many of the tribal people got disheartened. To get rid of this exploitation they went in search of redemption. During these times of distress, the only possible voice they could hear was of Mahatma Gandhi. With inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi many people were working among tribals and dalits in India. One among them was jugatrain Dave who was actively working among the tribals of Vedchhi near Surat.

**Ramjibhai Patel:** Ramjibhai Patel could be addressed as the first philanatrophist of the Dangs. He was local medicine man. This search for herbal medicines had made him to move out from the Dangs. This resulted in expansion of his world view, because of which he got to know people like Jugatram Dave and Mahatma Gandhi. This wide vision he shared with his companions and together they all decided to got to Vedchhi.<sup>136</sup> In month of December of 1940 Ramjibhai along with his few associates went Vedchhi. In those days reaching Vedchhi from Dangs

<sup>134</sup> Interview with Ghelubhai, at Dang Swaraj Ashram, Ahwa, 7<sup>th</sup> Jan. 2003

<sup>135</sup> Chhotibhai Naik, op. cit., p. 2, Interview with Dhanubhai Nail, at Dang swaraj Ashram ahwa, 22/2/2004

<sup>136</sup> Interview with Ghelubhai Naik, at Ahwa, 07/01/2003

was not an easy journey. They had to cover the entire distance by walking. When Ramjibhai reached Vedchhi he came to know that Jugatram Dave had gone to Bardoli to meet Gandhi. Without missing the chance Ramjibhai straight away left for Bardoli and asked people over there to arrange his meeting with Mahatma Gandhi. The meeting was made possible, when he went to meet Mahatma at that hour Gandhi was busy talking with Sardar Patel. Mesmerized with presence of two such leaders, Ramjibhai laid down himself to least clad person and pleaded saying, "There is a lot of poverty, ignorance, and exploitation of we people of Dangs by the imperialist powers so please come and safeguard us. The way you have helped people in other part of India". Gandhiji was assailed by his thoughts the indicated Jugatram Dave and Sardar Patel to take care of the issues of the Dangs.<sup>137</sup>

Somehow in 1942 quit India movement began and Vedchhi and Bardoli ashrams got engrossed in freedom struggle and the entire concern for the Dangs got subsided for almost a decade. Ramjibhai after coming back from Bardoli did not sit idle. He continued his social service activities at the Dangs. After independence when Sardar Patel was working on the amalgamation of the Princely State in Indian Union. At that time the issue of Dangs and its Bhil Rajas came. The immediate concern for Bhil people also arose. Once again Jugatram Dave with order from Sardar Patel decided to go to the Dangs. With him were Rajendrabhai Gulabdas, Nambhai Larchalivala and Babalbhai Mehta. In March 1947, they all went to Dang through its Southern borders via Saputara. The journey was extremely difficult as they had to cross difficult terrain of hills and moors. Ultimately they reached Alwa and conducted a small meeting over there. Late on after coming back,

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<sup>137</sup> Jugatram Dave, *Maari Jivan katha*.

Jugatram Dave sent Babalbhai Mehta to prepare and on extensive report on Dangs and its condition.<sup>138</sup>

In the end of 1947 Babalbhai Mehta submitted his report about the Dangs. The report was further subdivided to Balasaheb Kher and Morarji Desai for their further consideration. As a result unanimously all these leaders decided to send a dynamic man to serve the people of Dangs on behalf of Gujarat Sarvodaya Mandal.<sup>139</sup>

**Chhotubhai Naik and Dang Swaraj Ashram:** Chhotubhai Naik was from village Amalsad of Navsari taluka of Baroda State. Son of a farmer and second among five brothers, the young Brahmin boy was extrovert and eminently dynamic. Since his childhood he was notorious because of his dynamism and vagabond nature, in spite of being an intelligent student he never studied hard and devoted more of his time in man management.

After his S. S. C he left his studies and became teacher at village Fansa' in Viramgam taluka of Thana district. There he joined under his leader brother Dhirubhai Naik, Dhirubhai being eldest took the responsibilities of the family at very young age, and became teacher at Fansa School.<sup>140</sup> At Fansa Chhotubhai stayed for a good long time, till he was called by Jugatram Dave at Vedchhi.

When Chhotubhai reached Valod he was told by Jugatram Dave to go and serve people of the Dangs. To work in a strange and forested area like Dangs was a challenge, which Chhotubhai took braveheartedly. Following the commands of Jugatram Dave, he straight

<sup>138</sup> Chhotubhai Naik, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>139</sup> Interview with Lalife of Dhirubhai Savitaben at 'Dang swaraj Ashram' Ahwa, 1/1/2003. Dhirubhai is still alive is 87 years old. Five years back he had serious paralytic attack because of which he is unable to communicate.

<sup>140</sup> Chhotubhai Naik, op. cit., pp.6-7

away went to his village Amabad. From Amabad he convinced his younger brother Ghlubhai Naik to join him. Together they both went to the Dangs.<sup>141</sup> When the brother duo administrative headquarters the Dangs, the loom was surrounded by thick jungles and except two or three building the entire region had forests and a few scattered huts of tribals.<sup>142</sup>

When Chhotubhai was tudyng at Alwa, seeking for a location aperson Mukundbhai pawar came to him and took him to his home. The person was acquainted with Jugatram Dave and knew about the services Chhotubhai was about to ordain at Dangs. Soon Chhotubhai ecame part of this family, Soon he got to know that the collector of Dangs, Ratanlal Desai arrange a house for Chootubhai Naik near the American Brethem mission church. Then the brothers moved to that house and from there they initiated activities of reform and education to tribals.

From this house began the reform activities of Chhotubhai Naik. Students were gathering to teach and prayers were sung every morning and evening.<sup>143</sup> Later on the position of activities was shifted from church compound to near Government rest house and the place was given name of "Dang Swaraj Ashram'. When people asked Chhootubhai that why the name 'Swaraj'.<sup>144</sup> Has been given to the ashram? Specially when Dang is already apart of independent India. Then he used to reply that, the fruits of Swaraj are still awaited in the Dangs. So Swaraj was an appropriate name for the ashrams activities. After 'Dang swaraj Ashram' came into being people like Mukundbhai and his brother Ramjibhai became It regular visitors and brought grievances of tribals to them. Dang Swarak Ashram, hereafter 'DSA' became a place of solace,

<sup>141</sup> Chhotibhai Naik, *op. cit.*, pp.51-52.

<sup>142</sup> Swaraj is a word in Hindi language which means Independence.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with Rameshbhai Naik at DSA-Ahwa, 15/2/2002, Rameshbhai is kin member of Naik family and a free lancer Journalist.

<sup>144</sup> Chhotubhai Naik, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-58

service, and justice seekers. Chhotubhai and his younger brother Ghelubhai took special care of all the problems of these tribals and wherever required negotiated with the district and state government.

During formative years of DSA a young district collector K. T. Sattarwala came to the Dangs. This young officer proved of extreme help to the brother duo whatever barriers were their in the formation and redressed of DSA were solved by him.<sup>145</sup>

### **The Progeny of Dang Swaraj Ashram:**

After DSA achieved proper base at Ahwa, the next step of Chhotubhai was expansion of the activities. For the purpose in 1966, he stood for local board elections which he won with great margins. During his tenure ship as local Board President he took many reformist steps like structural plan of Ahwa town. Development of Saputara as a tourist centre. The educational expansion of DSA was done through developing boys and girls' ashramshalas at Ahwa, kalibel, and Virthava villages of Dangs and Surat. From these ashramsahalas not only educational but social welfare activities for the tribals were also undertaken.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> The field visit to village Bhadarpada, 6<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> Jan. 2003, and personal interviews of Janubhai, Urmilaben and Kishorebhai Patel at the Dangs

<sup>146</sup> Interview with Gandabhai Patel DSA-Ahwa, 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2003 and Gunvant Parikh, chief-Kalibel Ashram, Kalibel, The Dangs , 21/3/2003



The entrance of the Dang Swaraj Ashram, Ahwa, The Dangs



Memorial house of Chhotubhai Naik,  
Dang Swaraj Ashram, Ahwa

**The Ashramshalaas under Dang Swaraj Ashram, The Dangs**

SNo.	Institution	Year	Students
1	Boy Hostel, Alwa	1950-51	135
2	Ashramshala, Kalibel	1954	160
3	Ashramshala, Virthava	1966-967	160
4	Vallabh Vidyalaya , Alwa	1975-76	155
5	Shbari girls, Hostel Kalibel	1986-87	42
6	Girls Hostel, Ahwa	1997	35

The educational activities of DSA have favourably proved beneficial to the young tribal girls and boys of the Dangs. Many of them who studied in this organisation started their own schools and initiated successfully the educational and social reform activities. The one most exemplary example to it is the Janubhai Chodrho (Kokni) and his entire family. They all got educated at Dang Swaraj Ashram. Ahwa and initially served also in it. After retirement in different educational schools, Janubhai and his wife Urmilaben began a school at their native village Bhadarpada in south-west of the Dangs. The school serves almost ten villages in the area around. Apart from that their son Kishor Patel is also active and tirelessly works to improve the condition of this school with new ideas.<sup>147</sup>

From Ahwa, Kalibel, and Virthava, initially Khadi activities as well as Forest labour cooperatives used to work. But unfortunately Khadi activity could not succeed from Virthava and kalibel ashramshalas due to lack of proper training and interest from the side of tribals. Though initially a khadi centre for spinning and setting was raised at Waghai. Waghai centre collected khadi from Ahwa and kalibel ashrams but not it survives only from the little weaving done from Ahwa.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Interview with Manchubhai Patel at village kalibel, The Dangs 23/3/2003, Manchubhai now 80 years in age was the active member of kalibel FLCS. Even today in 2004 the kalibel Forest Labour cooperative society is working with most its orientation for the afforestation activities

<sup>148</sup> Interview with Gandabhai at Ahwa 16/3/2003, and Sukhurbhai Tadvi village Sati, The Dangs, 23/3/2003, But Ramji thakore has been blamed by the local tribesmen as being corrupt and not sharing profit for the over all tribal welfare



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Members of Dand Swaraj Ashram, Ahwa  
(Lto R) Dhirubhai Naik, Dhanubhai Naik and Rameshbhai Naik

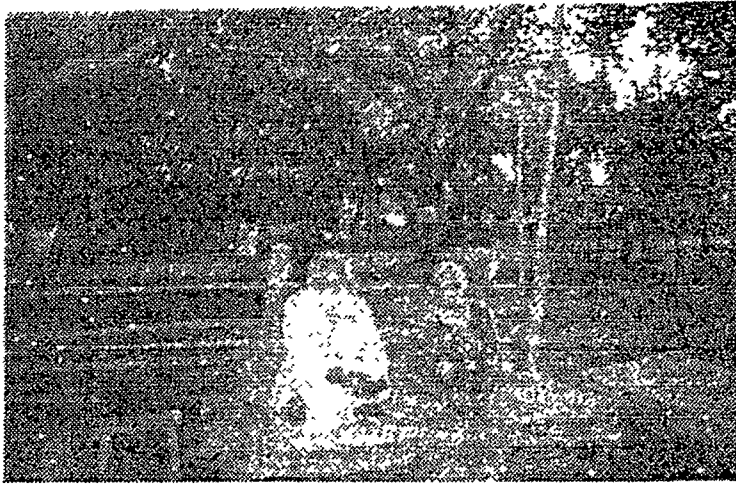
The Kalibel ashramshala which was opened in 1952-1953 was famous for its Forest labour coopertiave society. Gunvant Parikh a supporter of Chhotubhai naik came from Navsari to assist Chhotubhai and dedicated his services for the tribal welfare with his selfless efforts he raise a very efficient FLCS at kalibel, which supported almost forty villages in and around kalibel. The setback to this cooperative came in 1986 when coupe cutting got banished in the Dangs.<sup>150</sup>

Similary such FLCS activity was raided from Ahwa and pioneers of this society came from Ahwa ashramshala. Ramji Thakor the students of DSA. He became active in politics after competition of his education in 1960. He was elected as the member of district Panchayat and the same

<sup>149</sup> Interview with Gandabhai at Ahwa 16/3/2003, and Sukhurbhai Tadvi, village Sati, The Dangs 23/3/2003. But Ramji thakore has been blamed by the local tribesmen as being corrupt and not sharing profit for the over all tribal welfare

<sup>150</sup> Interview with Shri Ganubhai chodhri (Kokni tribal) at village Bhadarpada, 7<sup>th</sup> Jan. 2003, Gamanubhai is the first B.Sc. from the Dangs this educational expenses of Ahmedabad University and hostel were meted by the donations raised by the Chhotubhai Naik under the Dang Swaraj Ashram. Later Mr. Gamanubhai turned out to be the active member of DYWS and DDES. See constitution of DYWS and DDES, as retrieved from Gamanubhai, village Bhadarpada. The Dangs

year he became head of FLCS, the society reached heights during his reign and many coupes he gained from contractors to give them to FLCS.<sup>151</sup>



Gandabhai Naik the organizer of Dang Swaraj Ashram and his wife Kusumben, Ahwa, 22/02/2002

The activities of FLCS were later taken over by the young Dangi men, who were educated at Dang Swaraj Ashram and later received higher education at institutions of Ahmedabad and Baroda. These young men came back to Dangs, with broader world view and started implementing their new ideas in the Dangs. With their joint efforts they founded 'Dang Youths Welfare Soccity'. (Hereafter DYWS) and "Dangs District Educational Society (hereafter DDES), in 1970 and 1980 respectively. The first educated generation of the Dangs became leaders in which they received full support from Dang Swaraj Ashram. In these ways the foundational work for the tribals' welfare and development in the Dang was done by the Dang Swaraj Ashram.<sup>152</sup>

<sup>151</sup> These all are my personal informations and obersvation which I got while mystay at DSA for my field trip. Almost three months I spent at the Dangs

<sup>152</sup> Interview with Induben Naik at Dang Swaraj Ashram Ahwa, 1/1/2003, Presently Induben and Ghlubhai Naik are working on organizations called 'Pryosha Pratsh than' and 'Sumangalam Trust' for the educational upliftment of the tribals of the Dangs and neighbouring areas

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**The Internalised Politics of the Dang Swaraj Ashram: -**

As written in the earlier sections of about Dang Swaraj Ashram, that the DSA was founded by the Chhotubhai Naik. Once Chhotubhai Naik came to the Ahwa, with him came his entire family. His eldest brother Dhirubhai who was teaching at village school of Fansa also came after Dang Swaraj Ashram, Ahwa came into existence. Ddhriubhai along with his wife Savitaben joined DSA and became teacher over here. Initially he taught at Virthava Ashram, and then he joined DSA, Ahwa. Later his son Dhanubhai Naik and other daughters also got educated and individual identity clashes began. It was said that Chhotubhai was an autocrat and under his authority the entire unit used to work. None of the person dared to express their view and neither were they approved to imply their vision for the betterment and progress of the DSA. Unless and until the first step of revolt was initiated by the Induben Naik wife of Ghelubhai Naik.

Ghelubhai Naik is the younger brother of Chhotubhai. At the young age of twenty he came along with his elder brother to serve the tribals of Dangs. But his inclination towards education made him to go for higher studies and he joined Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Bombay. After completion of his education in social work, he married Induben Desai; daughter of Magulal Desai the Gandhina residing at Sabramati Ashram, Ahmedabad continued their services to DSA and other affiliated institutions.

The family orientation of DSA is well known. The Ahwa ashram is dominated by the kith and kin of the Chhotubhai Naik. But the one positive aspect of the family is that the entire family sacrificed their services for the welfare of tribals and not for their own welfare. It is important here to notice that the family do not own a single luxurious

house at Ahwa (though now many a tribals own such good houses in Ahwa town.) They all still prefer to live in the ashram.<sup>153</sup>

As any other organization DSA-Ahwa also has its own internal political problems and an identity conscious woman, Induben, when she came to Ahwa she was made to work at DSA- Ahwa for two years as teacher. But she was paid for her services to the institution. So she refused to work further and applied for government job which she got. After which she organized herself against autocratic rule of Chhotubhai and constantly went on speaking against her dictatorial style of working at DSA.

What she was against was the stagnating policies of DSA, Ahwa. It was mainly because of look back attitude of DSA and its organizers that the pace for educational standards and their constant progress was never sustained, and though off. Where as Induben was the education officer of Gujarat Education Department. This made her to critically analyze the loopholes of the DSA. Unfortunately as long as Chhotubhai lived, none of the women of the family got chance enough to enter the DSA's educational board. As a result DSA could never utilize the potential of women like Induben, which remained a loss for the institution forever.<sup>154</sup>

### **Bringing the Dangs in Gujarat:**

The activities raised by Dang Swaraj *ashram* were continued to bring socio-economic and educational reforms in the Dangs, in 1960 when Gujarat State was bifurcated from Bombay state at that time a major issue was raised. Should Dangs be placed either in Gujarat or in the Maharashtra? The dialects spoken in the Dangs were very close to Marathi than to Guajrati. More so in every villager of Dang there were

<sup>153</sup> Interview with Gunvant Parikh, at kalibel Ashram The Dangs, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2003.

<sup>154</sup> Interview with Girish Desai at village Chichpada, The Dangs, 25<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2002

more number of Marathi schools than Gujarati. At that time it became fairly difficult for Chhotubhai Naik and the entire DSA team to make sure that people of Dangs must not go to Maharashtra but remain part of Gujarat State. For the purpose, DSA raised a movement under which in almost all the villages of Dangs Gujarati primary schools were opened and teachers were appointed. From these schools the idea of 'the Dangs in Gujarat' was raised. It was immensely difficult for Chhotubhai Naik to convince people of Dangs to join the Gujarat State. He and his associates went for painstaking marches in the roadless Dangs. At last the efforts did not prove futile and people of Dangs voted to be part of the Gujarat.<sup>155</sup> Since then government of Gujarat gave immense importance to DSA, in whatever decision it took about the Dangs.

In 1982, Chhotubhai Naik met on unfortunate accident and died. After that lots of splintering occurred within DSA. The ideological difference and attempt to do different beyond the autocracy of Chhotubhai Naik emerged. As a result in 1977 Ghelubhai Naik and few of his associates founded Suumangalan Trust. The Trust began from village ashramshala at Chichpada village. The in charge of the institution was Girishabhai Desai. Who still holds the position is brother of Induben (Desai) Naik. From the Chichpada *ashramshala*, the Sarvodya programme was implemented among the region. Under the scheme the young men were taught skills of handicraft carpentry, Khadi spinning and many others. Several young men got benefited by it. The scheme remained for a year. Later on government support was taken off.<sup>156</sup>

Sumangalam Trust still continues to work but its activities are more concentrated on education. Later on Ghelubhai took an oath

<sup>155</sup> Interview with Ghelubhai Naik, op. cit., my personal interaction with many a tribals of the Dangs. Unfortunately the efforts of Ghelubhai have gone fruitless as the number of liquor drinking persons in the society has increased rather than decreasing

<sup>156</sup> Interview with Induben Naik, Ahwa 1/1/2003

against liquor intake practices among carries long marches within the Dangs and tries to convince each and every villager against liquor intake.<sup>157</sup>

In the formation of Sumanagalam Trust and its later activities, a great role was played by the Indubrn. Through her experiences in the government education department, she could fairly work well in the improvement of educational standards. Simultaneously several changes in the educational pattern were also adopted by the Sumangalam Trust.<sup>158</sup> In the twenty-first century the activities raised by Induben and Ghelubhai Naik are exceedingly magnificent with the support of other funding agencies. Somehow Dang Swaraj Ashram is facing tough completion with other upcoming educational institutes in the Dangs. As many more sophisticated and subsidized educational institutes came into existence in the Dangs after the decade of eights in the twentieth century.<sup>159</sup> Mention of few such educational institutions is follows:-

(i) Ritambhara by Purnima Pakvasa: - 'Ritambhara' is a serene institution of education which is located in the hills of Saputara. Its pleasant presence is far from city chaos. Surrounded by hills and trees the premises of this institution give to a person serenity and eternal peace of mind. Purnima Pakvasa wanted to serve the most unprivileged women and girls of the society, 'Ritambhara is genuinely serving the purpose of social a transformation through education in the tribal societies of the Dangs.<sup>160</sup>' Ritambhara' is a dream fulfilled of one single woman Purnima Pakvasa. Herself a noted figure in the freedom struggle of Gujarat and active member in socio-political activities she hailed from a well known Jain family of Saurodaya in which most of the family

<sup>157</sup> My personal visit to several such educational institutes, during my field work in December 2002 and March 2003

<sup>158</sup> My personal visit to 'Ritambhara', Saputara- The Dangs, 30/12/2002 to 1/1/2003

<sup>159</sup> Bio-data of Poornima Pakvasa, retrieved from Ritambhara Vishwa Vidyapith', office, Saputara, The Dangs, 31/2/2002

<sup>160</sup> Interview with Purnima Pakvasa, at Saputara, 30/12/2003

members were engaged in the freedom movement. Young Poornima grew in the nationalist Surrounding. She also came in close contact with Gandhi and under his direction took up the life mission of empowering women by making them courageous, honest, fearless, and economically self supporting and uplift the women who were socially backward and to gain them their rightful place in society by imparting physical, military, and spiritual training.<sup>161</sup>

The vision to serve the unprivileged women languished in the subconscious of Poornima Pakvasa. So after her marriage when she completed all her family responsibilities, she decided to serve the most backward women and girls. For the purpose she chose the Dang, and the tribal women in the region. Initially, when she came many people opposed her idea to start a school in such a remote part. Yet she was focused and ultimately in the one end of Saputara she made a hut for herself and started staying over there.<sup>162</sup>

The hut was the foundation building for the girls' education. Initially when she asked parents of tribal girls to send their girls to ashram at Saputara, she was bluntly refused. It took her lots of hard work, patience to convince the parents. To convince the parents of girls she personally used to visit each and every house in the far off villages.

Gradually when reputation of Ritambhara grew, then parents themselves started coming to the institution to get their daughter admitted in though Ritambhara.<sup>163</sup> At present under the auspices of 'Ritambhara Vishwa vidyapith' literacy training to 10,000 women has been provided. 5000 children were trained under Balwadis. With platform for providing complete village development programme which

<sup>161</sup> 'Ritambhara Vishwa Vidyapith', *Silver Jubilee Edition-1974-1999*, pp. 3-4

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8

<sup>163</sup> Poornima Pakvasa, 'A Twinking Star in the Dark Nook', an unpublished article, Ritambhara-Saputara, pp. 9-10 undated

is established in the 17 villages in the Dangs district. 3000 people were administered to oath to refrain from drinks.

Simultaneously 'Ritambhara' actively participated in the village development activities. To increase the income of villagers, cottage industries and home made products to supplement income in the 17 villages also begun. It was provided free medicine to 20,000 adivasis, along-with training young girls about missing skills and home industries.

Poornima herself prepared a five point programme for development of tribal villages in the backward district of Dangs. Main emphasis was laid on educational development, economical upliftment, providing medical facilities, removing superstition and explaining advantages of prohibitions. Community centres for implantation of the five point programme were established in eleven villages and work of establishment of community centres in seven more villages. So far 5000 people have taken advantage of the programme.<sup>164</sup>

The aim of Ritambhar is to achieve 100% literacy instead of 5% and on government papers it is showed as hundred percent. So far Ritambhar has proven its ability to achieve its largest in almost every village of the Dangs. There is at-least one woman in every village of the Dangs who has studied at Ritambhar and promoting the cause of education and social welfare.<sup>165</sup>

### **Christian Missionaries in the Dangs: -**

Prior to coming of any reformist activities in the Dangs, The Christian missionaries had their churches located over there. Initially all

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<sup>164</sup> Interview with Father Navarroh, at Shaugahan District, The Dangs 29/12/2002.

<sup>165</sup> D. H. Koppers, 'Economic Development and Cultural Change Among Dangs' *Adivasis Gujarat*, Vol. 1, No. 1 1978, p. 47



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these churches were engaged in religious activities. In later half of twentieth century Roman Catholic Church came to the Dangs. The Priest who was main person behind the found Roman Catholic Church in the Dangs was Father Navarroh. Father Navarroh previously used to work in the Ukai; from there he took many a students from the Dangs to educate them at Ukai School.



Father Navarroh at Village Shamgahan, The Dangs, 27/12/2002

In 1977 he came to the Dangs and founded a Dairy Cooperative in association with Vasudhara Dairy of Valsad district. For the purpose many tribals were made members of it. In the long-term this cooperative could not sustain for long. The trials were not adaptive to rear milch cattle's, so the cattle have died soon. With the demise of cattle also died the cooperative societies.<sup>166</sup>

With the failure of such reform activities through milk cooperatives, Father Navarroh decided to initiate education first than to bring social reform activities, as for him education was the base for any reform in the society. Since then Roman Catholic Missionaries in the Dangs have opened more than ten well furnished schools in different parts of the Dangs which are located in the Waghi, Primpri, Ahwa, Shamgahan and Saputara. These institutions got favorable support from

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid. pp. 52-53

the district administration of the Dangs. At present these mission schools are giving tough completion to the ashram schools.<sup>167</sup>

### **Cultural Change among Dangis**

The Dangs is a gift of nature to Gujarat which cannot be denied. Not only because it is the richest in forest wealth but also because the Dangs is an example of living prehistory of Gujarat. It contains a rich and unadulterated tribal population which is still practicing its prehistoric customs, traditions, and way of life. Beautiful nature has sustained the Dangs through the ages. The Dangs therefore is a peculiar sensitive tribal district and its development problems require special solutions.<sup>168</sup>

Economic development alone to the neglected of social and cultural dynamics will tend to create an imbalance in the development programmes in the tribal context in particular. After all social and cultural changes are not a mechanical addition and subtraction but the integration of the new among the old. Every advance therefore depends on the pre-existing pattern and must fit into it and in doing so an intrusive element will probably undergo changes itself. In the case of the Dangs it is evident that the mere imparting of the economic development plans is not suitable. Separate and parallded programmers of social and cultural development would have to be thought of and implemented for all round development of the Dangs.<sup>169</sup>

### **Impact of Education among Dangis**

The growth of education and job opportunities are substantial in the post independent era in the Dangs. These are also the major areas of

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<sup>167</sup> The Data was provided by the district School board The Dangs

<sup>168</sup> Interview with Gamanbhai Chodhri, Village Bhadarpada on 7/1/2003

<sup>169</sup> I met a few young men and women of Dangs in this regard. One eof them is lalubhai Vasava who has founded, 'Dang Sewa Mandal', at Ahwa. Similarly there are other such youths who are working for the similar cause

the tribals' criticism of government policies. The communities now approve then importance of education but they are also demanding generation of employment. Introduction of formal education in the Dangs took place in the first decade of twentieth century. First attempt in this direction was made by the Christian missionaries. The British Political Agent also started a school in Ahwa. It was mainly meant for the Bhil rajas and nayaks. The Rajkumar School as it was known had only eleven students in 1947-1948. It was considered as "a white Elephant", by the government Officers.

From 1949, Gujarati and Maharashtra social workers launched the movement for spreading education. In the local dialects they convinced Dangs for giving education to their children. They told them that their children would live better life and would become big officer by taking education. Within three years by 1951-1952, 70 schools Gujarati and Marathi put together started working in the area. Dangi students got free education, boarding, lodging and clothing. By 1969 300 primary schools 282 Gujarati and 18 Marathi with 11,907 students and 401 teachers came into existence. Two secondary schools with 318 students also work in the districts. Besides this there are seven ashram schools, two hostels run by Sarvodaya workers, and five hostels managed by the District school Board. As a result of these attempts, rate of literacy has increase considerably. BY 1969-1970, according to a well-informed respondent there were 508 youths with different levels of education.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> The Data was provided by the district School board The Dangs

TABLE-I  
LEVEL OF EDUCATION AMONG DANGI YOUTHS

Standard	No. of students
Graduate	04
Intermediate	14
S. S. C.	40
Secondary	150
Vernacular Final	300
<b>Total</b>	<b>508</b>

### **Frustration of the Educated Youth:-**

These educated boys are the maincritic of their education. While studying in colleges or attending offices outside the district, they pass through tribe strain in adjusting to non-adivasis. Their beliefs regarding other communities develop during this period. If there are one or two distressing experiences, they develop hatred against non-tribesmen. Slowly, prejudices get piled up. Without inquiring into the facts, they fit their experiences in a single frame of mind-injustice to adivasis, suppression of adivasis by the non-adivasis etc.

In order to obtain their demands and redress their grievances, youths of Dangs have organized an institution, the Dang Yuvak Sewa Samiti. One of its aims is, "to get justice for Dangs in their day today problems", only a Dangi belonging to Kunbi, Bhil, Warli, Dangi, Gamit, and Marvchi, to become its member. The membership is also restricted to the Dangi who has passed vernacular final examination.<sup>171</sup>

Since independence of India the Dangi society is moving from 'simple' to relatively 'complex' society. Political power is no longer a monopoly of Bhils. Besides agriculture the Dangs are engaged in public and private offices. The younger folks go to Ahmedabad for education and employment; where they interact with non-adivasis. The Dangis

<sup>171</sup> *Annual Report, Dang Yuvak Sewa Samiti, 1980*

have to observe rules and regulations of the forest, to repay loans, to apply for logs and timber and so on. All these “new roles” and complexities generate stress and strain. But more than that failure of the government administrations in adjusting its apparatus with local conditions is a major source of grievances of the Dangis. They hardly feel convenient, with the present administration.

Moreover, the various changes that have come about in Dangas have raised aspirations of the Dangis. They want more than they get the complain that they do not get what they want because the non- Dangis come in their way. Such feelings widen the gap between the Dangis and the outsiders, and the “wetness” of the group is strengthened. This has resulted in further political groupism in the Dangas. These days young educated and political conscious Dangis are moving towards indigenous people’s rights. Though some of them are politically motivated and are simply working as puppets in the hands of political giants. Other who is more rational is working for the cause of their knowledge, culture, and traditions. They have associations with an organization working for indigenous people’s rights. They are restoring their eroding cultural systems and working for their further expansion promoting identity consciousness.<sup>172</sup>

### **GANDHIANS IN VALSAD**

Valsad is the southern most district of the Gujarat state. It was created in 1960 after its bifurcation from the Surat district. The district is well known for its eastern hilly terrain which is dominated by the various tribal communities. The Valsad district is bounded on the north by the Surat district. Thana district of Maharashtra in south, Dangas

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<sup>172</sup> Interview taken at Graduate College at The Dangas and met few other such educated young men at Ahwa and Taklipada village. March-December’2002

district in the east and Arabian Sea in the west.<sup>173</sup> Among the eleven talukas of Valsad district, Dharampur taluka has the highest concentration of tribal population. The concentration of tribal population in all these talukas is as follows:

TABLE-I  
Population in Tribal Blocks of Valsad, 1971 Census

<b>Taluka</b>	<b>% of tribal population</b>
Pardi	58.5
Umdergaon	54.7
Chikhli	68.0
Bansda	90.0
Dharampur	92.5

Dharampur is one among the large talukas (area-wise) in the entire state. It is spread over an area of 1650 square kms. It has long range of mountains belonging to the Sahyadri ranges. In Dharampur taluka this range consists of broken hills and is flanked by thickly wooded table land. This table land is the place of inhabitation of two most important tribal communities: Kokna and Warlis.<sup>174</sup>

#### **Gram Sewa Sabha: 'Bilpudi' Dharampur:**

The tribals of Dharampur and Vansda were always approachable to the Valod group.<sup>175</sup> Many a movement for their welfare was raised by the leaders of Valod region. Jugatram Dave of Vedchhi-Valod groomed many young men and women from tribal and nontribal communities to work in these territories. For the support of these welfare activities young men of Dharampur state came forward. They all were youth active in the nationalist struggle and were studying graduate college of

<sup>173</sup> S. C. Jain, *Block level planning: Valsad Taluka* (A project sponsored by Government of Gujarat) Vol.I; General papers. Surat, Mahatma Gandhi Department of Rural Studies 1979, p.14

<sup>174</sup> R. B. Lal, 'Dharampur Taluka Hilly Tract: A Brief Ethnographic Note' Seminar on Development of Dharampur Taluka 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1981. Tribal research and Training Centre, Ahmedabad.

<sup>175</sup> See Chapter- IV, part-II

Dharampur. Among them the one leading young man was Nanubhai Desai son of Dewan of Dharampur state Madanlal Kishorbhai Desai. Since his college times nanubhai was active in the nationalist struggle and always kept himself updated about what was happening in the political seenaioir. More so with the arrival of Jugatram Dave in Vedchhi are Namubhai Desai kept himself in regular touch with him. When Jugatram suggested expansion of educational activities for the tribals of Dharampur, then Nanubhai took the volunatership and begain activities with a boys school based on Nai-Talim at village Bilpudi. From here the 'expansion of educational activities took place and more than thirteen villages were brought into its influence. The organization was given the name of 'Gram Sewa Sabha-Bilpudi', by Nabubhai Desai in 1953 Many of Nanubhai's college friends became its associates, among them the most important was Mukund Rao Likhite. Together both the friends made several tours in the far spread hills of Dharampur state and brought young boys and girls to study at their ashramshalas. The Gram Sewa Sabha became air apostle organization in the region which served so far deprived tribals from education and do their socio-economic changes.<sup>176</sup>

Nanubhai Desai did not limit his activities only to education; he constantly kept himself engaged with never ideas. He realized the education can not bring the change overnight in a society and its results are attainable in year to come. In such circumstances the present problems of poverty, indebtedness and emaciation among the tribal cannot be absolved. As a result the thought to begina forest labour cooperative society (ICS). For the purpose the required guidance he received from the Vedchhi. As Valod group had FLCS's in Uyara and Songadh divisions. FLCS was a good thought as tribals were well

<sup>176</sup> Interview with Laxmiben Patel, Bilpudi, Dharampur, 27<sup>th</sup> march 2003, Interview with Mukund R. Likhite Dharampur 22<sup>th</sup> march 2003, 'Both these persons are life member of the Gram sewa Subha- Bilpudi. They were associated with nanubhai Desai since the inception of the organisation'

acquainted with forests and its resources. In 1957 began Daharampur forest labour cooperative society. Around 108 villages of Dharampur division became its members. Many a tribal men ensured benefits out of it. The Dharampur FLCS became an ideal society which was well maintained and organized. It also ensured many a financial responsibilities of Gram Sewa Sabha. The profits of Dharampur Forest Labour Cooperative Societies' Schools hostels, Balwadis, College Dairy Cooperative, and Cooperative Credit Societies were raised in the Dharampur division.<sup>177</sup> The success of Gram Sewa Sabha continued providing base and courage to other volunteers to enter the territory. It was true that Nanubhai Desai and his team members were doing immensely appreciable job but still there was scope enough for many more workers to enter this territory and work for the welfare of tribals of this region. Nanubhai Desai in his last years dedicated his services in uniting tribals of Dharampur to work in forest labour Cooperative Societies.<sup>178</sup> Whereas the educational work of Gram Sewa Sabha from Navsari and dedicated all her youthful energy for the cause for the institution.<sup>179</sup> At present Gram Sewa Sabha is managing six ashramshala, six hostels for boys and girls of tribal communities, three balwadis (Kinder garden) and one university on forest management which is a unique institution of its own kind. One most exemplary aspect of the organization is its Vansewa Mahavidyalaya an institute which is meant to educate the tribal students about their forest heritage.<sup>180</sup> Following is the list of educational institution working under Gram Sewa Sabha.

<sup>177</sup> Interview with Rumsibhai Chodhri, Dharampur, 27<sup>th</sup> March 2003, also taken reference from *annual Reports of Dharampur Forest Labour Cooperative societies, 1968 and 1972*

<sup>178</sup> Nanubhai Desai died in 1984 while conducting a meeting on matters relating to Forest Cooperatives at village Taamchhedi, Dharampur

<sup>179</sup> Till today M. R. Likhite laxmiben patel and other members of the organization work for more than eighteen hours day. It is due to such dedicated workmanship that such organizations are working without much ado and pomp

<sup>180</sup> 'The Gram Sewa Sabha has under its auspices 'Vanseva Mahavidyalaya', the institution teacher's students about forestry and management of forest. It is a university level organisation'. Personal Field Trip to Bilpudi 26-28<sup>th</sup> march 2003. 'March of the information collected about this organization is oral, as no written statement about this institution is available'



TABLE -I  
Educational Institutes under Gram Sewa Sabha

Name of Village	Ashramshala	Hostels	Balwadis
Bilpudi	1	1	0
Nana patta	1	1	0
Kaprada	1	1	0
Karanjia	1	1	0
Malanpada	1	1	0
Dhararampur	1	1	0
Gundia	0	1	1
Lakhanpur	0	0	1

#### SAROVDAYA PARIVAR TRUST-PINDVAL

Gandhian ideology of sarvodaya always affected young men and women. Many of them got influenced so much with the idea that they left their urban life and jointed the service to mankind, whereas some remained in the so-called mainstream by helping their friend through moral and financial support. One such important organization in the Dharampur region which has blend of these two groups of urban and rural based workers is Sarvodaya parivar Trust. Pindval. The trust is working in the region since 1960. Initially it was a young doctor Dr. Navneet Fouzdar who came to this territory for the health issues of tribals.<sup>181</sup> Initially to have understanding of the people to serve in village, he went along with Dr. Joshi in one of a village in Mehsana district of Gujarat. After returning from Mehsana he came in contact with Vinoba Bhave and joined the Bhoodan Movement and people associated with it. In 1953, he left Mumbai and joined 'Bhoomiputra' group of 'Vadodara District Sarvodaya union'. Hence he made friends with

<sup>181</sup> Interview with Dr. Navneet founder at Kandivili (East) Mumbai, 21/10/2004. Dr. Navneet is from Mumbai born on 17th November 1933 in a humble family. His parents came to Mumbai from village Bilkha of district Junagadh, Gujarat. At Mumbai all younglings of Fouzdar family started studying in different schools. Young Navneet was most intelligent among all. In 1951 he got admission in G. S. Medical College Parel. At Parel medical college he became a subscriber of Journal 'Bhoomiputra' and regularly read literature by Gandhi and Vinoba. His neighbour at Kalbadeve was Dr. Joshi, a philanthropist doctor, due to close alliance with him the ascetic mind of Navneet became more curious towards service of mankind. In 1958 he finished his study of medicine and with guidance of Dr. Joshi decided to settle down in one of the villages of Gujarat where he could serve the most underprivileged people of the society.

people like Kanti Shah, Chandrakanta Shah, Harilas Shah and many more workers of Gandhian ideology.



The founders of Sarvodaya Parivar Trust, Kanti Shah Piroja Zokhi, 26/03/2003



Harvilas Shah



Dr.Navneet Fouzdar, Pindval

In 1955 the entire group of the volunteers of Bhoomiputra went for an 'Antodaya' march. There were about five hundred people who were moving in the different parts of South Gujarat. A group of one such volunteer was moving among the different villages of Dharampur. The hills of dharampur had certain villages of Bhil, Warli and Kokni tribes. These tribes were living in the most deplorable condition, their poverty made young doctor to serve them. Hence, Dr. Navneet decided to leave his home of Mumbai as his elder brothers were in a position to take care of his parents. In 1958 Dr. Navneet Fouzdar with his medical talents came to Dharampur and after moving for certain months decided to settle down in village Pindval of Dharampur.<sup>182</sup> Initial stages made Dr. Fouzdar to found a small out in which he used to stay. From his hut he used to conduct all the medical treatments of the tribals, he also used to visit all the different houses of the villagers and gave them required treatment at their home later when people came to know about the talents and goodwill of Dr. Fouzdar people themselves started coming to him and a small clinic came into existence at Pindval.<sup>183</sup> For almost ten years (1959-1969) Dr. Fouzdar served people of pindval all alone. In 1967 there was a famine in the Dharampur. The famine took toll of several tribal people. There was an extreme shortage of food and water among tribal natives of Dharampur. At this juncture Dr. Naveet went for help to his friends of Bhoomiputra and together they all initiated famine relief work.<sup>184</sup>

<sup>182</sup> When Dr. Fouzdar reached village Pindval of Dharampur at that time the village did not had any road to travel no means of communication except a postman who used to come in the village after every fortnight. The entire population of tribals who were undereducated and had no idea about outer world. In such adverse conditions Dr. Navneet decided to begin his career of social service'. Interview with Dr. Navneet Fouzdar, Kandivili (West) Mumbai Dated 21/10/2004

<sup>183</sup> This clinic is till a major part of Pindval ashram and thousands of tribals get treatment every year from here

<sup>184</sup> 'Person like Kanatiaben Shah, Harvilasben Shah and Kanti Shah were supportive this organization from places like Atul. Prior to joining these services of tribal welfare these people were busy in expanding the network of *Bhoomiputra* in the Valad and Mumbai region'. Interview of Kantishah 24/3/2003

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When Dr. Fouzdar told his friends about the deplorable condition of tribals, then work for famine relief began. Initially a subsidized ration shop was opened at Pindvala village. Here the famine stricken tribals were given subsidized grains, initially free of cost.<sup>185</sup> When friends of Dr. Fouzdar, Kautashah were moving in various parts of Dharampur they realized that apart from famine relief a lot of other relief work is also required to be done in the region for the development of tribals. As a result they all decided to shift to Pindval with a strategy of welfare.<sup>186</sup> Since ages people in and around Pindval were living in their own seclusion. They were unaware and unaffected by the waves of technological advancements. But with changing times tribal areas were affected too. The changes were more exploitative in nature than those of progressive. Many of these tribals were suffering from illiteracy and due to famine many underwent debt trap of moneylenders. With the timely arrival of Sarvodaya workers in this region the first positive thing which happened to them was that they got access to facility for which they need not to pay undue payments. More so the area which was always far from the urban impact, received welfare facilities from Sarvodaya Parivar Trust. The main services provided by Pindval Trust were in terms of food, clothing (promotion of khadi) housing water supply, water facilities education, tree plantation, employment, cultural preservation, and mass education.

For the generation and expansion of employment among the tribal men and women of Dharampur, Chandrakanta and Harvilas Shah began the Khadi programme. About five thousand spinning wheels and

<sup>185</sup> 'The subsidized grains shop is still working at Pindval and thousands of tribals come here to take their share of grains. Since 1969 this ration-shop is working and serving thousands of needy people everyday'. Personal visit to Dharampur-Pindval between 24<sup>th</sup> March 2003 to 28<sup>th</sup> March 2003

<sup>186</sup> 'Initially Kantaben Shah and Harvilaben Shah joined Dr. Fourzdar. Both these women from Mumbai and their bent towards social service made them to join Bhoomputra and Bhoodan movement of Vinoba Bhave and later they both joined Sarvodaya Sangh'. For details about biographies of these two legendary women see, Kanti Shah, *Ekatvani Aradhan: Bhaginidvya Harishcandra Ni Jivan Katha* Vadodara, Yagna Pub. 1999

spindles were distributed among the villagers of the region. Mainly womenfolk were made responsible for the preparation of spindles which were later collected by the 'Pindval yarn House' well known as '*Kabi-Kutir*'. At '*Kabir-kutir*' all the men folk come to weave the spindles into yarn. As a result many a families in the Dharampur region have got the employment. Till today in twenty-first century many of families are engaged in the Khadi activity.<sup>187</sup>

With the works done by Pindval Sarvodaya Trust, The region has come under the pursuant of many other social reformers. As a result several new works have been generated other than khadi. The most important of it is the expansion of educational work. When Dr. Fouzdar began his medical welfare work with the tribals of Pindval, he also began small teaching session for the young children of the village. From here the concept of education began. Initially due to lack of workforce the educational programme remained in rudimentary form. But after 1985 few volunteers came along with which expansion of education began. An ashramshala for boys and girls came into existence and girls' came into existence and around four to five teachers took responsibility of teaching the students.<sup>188</sup> The work of Pindval Sarvodaya Trust has not only given a vision to work among the tribal, bringing social reform in their societies. It also gave a new dimension to the health practices of the tribals. With the efforts of Dr. Fouzdar the Trust has two dispensaries in the region and Government has also founded a Referral hospital over here. The trust has created a fair ground work for the

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<sup>187</sup> As told by Harvilas Shah, on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2003. At Pindval-Sarvodaya Trust Dharampur, Harvilas Shah is working at Pindval since 1978. Her Co-partner in this humane task Chandrakantaben died in year 2000 after prolonged illness. The duo were responsible for tremendous amount of welfare work they initiated for the tribals of Dharampur.

<sup>188</sup> With presence of 'Sarvodaya Parivar Trust-pindval' many a young aspiring social welfare workers are also joining the tribal welfare work. One among them is Sujata Shah. Hailing from Vedchhi Sujata always wanted to work among the tribals of Khadi twenty kilometers East Pindval'. Meeting with Sujata Shah at Khadki-Sarvodaya Parivar Trust, 26/3/2004



future social activities to come up and take the Challenge of social welfare of tribals in the region.<sup>189</sup>

### **Vedchhi Pradesh Sewa Samiti**

The tribals of Dharampur always enchanted worker of Valod Group.<sup>190</sup> Initially Jinabhai was repentedly visiting Dharampur villages, to establish and develop carpet weaving centres. In 1985-86 two prominent members of Valod group Bhikhubhai Vyas and Kokila Vyas took a new direction regarding welfare of tribals of Dahrmapur. At that stage a lot of projects were thought to alleviate object poverty of Dharampur.<sup>191</sup> 1986 Jhinabhai Darji insisted in starting ashramshal for children of carpet weavers in Dharampur. This way began the first such ashramshala by 'Vedchhi Pradesjh Sewa Samiti, at village khanda 1989. The supporting trustees to this ashramshal were Gujarat Khet Vikas parishad (GKVP) when khanda ashramshal was started the founding members did not had much idea about what to do about the regional development. But as time passed them saw problem around them and along with solutions were designed.<sup>192</sup> Wwhen Khanda ashramshala came into existence. Gradually, the people associated with it started suggesting programme for the welfare of the Dharampur and its people, with their priorities.<sup>193</sup> With the passage of time, the projects got shape

<sup>189</sup> Interview with Kanti Shah, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2003, at Pindval Dharampur

<sup>190</sup> For Details on Valod Group see Chapter IV, Part-II

<sup>191</sup> To get the proper guidance for the subject Bhikhubhai and Kokila vyas personally visited Pindval Sarvodaya Parivar Trust. Intervies of Bhikhu Vyas, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2003 at khanda Ashramshal-Dharampur

<sup>192</sup> About the solutions reached Bhikhu Vyas wrote, 'Regarding Dharampur we did not have even of glimpse of which activities we will execute, from where to make a start, which piroties to follow, how much resourcewe will require and from we ould obtain them'. Kokila Vyas and bhikhu vyas Buniyadi Prayajana Dharampur Gujarat, Nai Talim Sangh 2002, p. 2

<sup>193</sup> Dharampur is a land full of countradictions area-wise very large but progress-wise very backward. During rainy season all its rivers get flooded, but well start during up from later winter itself leading to severe drinking water problem. Dharampur is a forest area, full of natural beauty. But the forest is fast vanishing people are very industrions. On finding water anywhere they utilize them to its optimum. The geographical situation is such that quite a few villages are simply unapproachabale. Transport is insufficient, scarce and unreliable. In remote villages one can reach only by walking and climbing hills. Why the Gooernment servants care to visit such places?' As told by Bhikhu Vyas, 15<sup>th</sup> march'2003 at Gandhi Faliya Vedchhi, Taluka Valod District-Surat

and later on progressed very fast on the following four pillars:- (i) Education (ii) Health, (iii) Water Management, (iv) Land Development

The entry of 'Vedchhi Pradesh Sewa Samiti' in Dharampur area in 1988 began with one school at Khanda. After that fifty night classes for adult education were began, with fifty child care centres, and twenty won formal education WFE) classes for youths between 81989-1992). The residential Primary schools were started in 1993 with 1-2 graders. New the organization has 730 students with 7 graders in 6 schools. Formerly the organization was directly running the hostels and the schools. Since year 2000 they have, joined hands with the government Day Schools of the concerned villages. These hostel based schools has resulted in the strengthening of the day schools and extension of standards from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> stage by stage. It is a milestone in those villages, having the full fledged primary schools, for the first time. Another unique experiment in education has been done through hamlet schools. In which classes were conducted in the Verandas of big houses of the people. This is a modest experiment to take the kids in the school atmosphere. So far Eighteen six monthly zero-grade hamlet classes in 2000-2001 were opened and one running successfully.<sup>194</sup>

**Health:** - Except in Pindval there is total absence of medical services and doctors in the rural Dharampur. For the purpose many programmers related to health issues are been executed by the Vedchhi Pradesh Sewa Samiti. They are being executed in cooperation with other NGO's and with the help of service oriented activist doctors.<sup>195</sup> Poverty is the root cause of all the diseases. This became apparent from people specially women and children, among them anemia and night buildness

<sup>194</sup> Bhikhubhai Vyas, 'Achievements At a Glance: Dharampur 12<sup>th</sup> October 1988-31<sup>st</sup> July 2003 (Report) p. 1 'the reputed Indian organization CRY (Child Relief and You) provided funds to begin with. One officer of CRY who visited at far away places', Kokila Vyas, *op. cit.*, p. 23, A major contribution for the growth of this organization is meted by the TUFF support of Sweden

<sup>195</sup> Bhikhu Vyas, 'Achievement at a Glance, *op. cit.*, p. 1

is very common; same is the story with scabies, diarrhea, malaria etc. They are common diseases in Dharampur. So the real issue is to eradicate hunger (poverty) and to educate people. For the purpose, the organization has implemented with reasonable success several programmes resulting into more food production and providing clean drinking water.<sup>196</sup>

To create alternative means of development several new steps have been taken. Under which spinning wheels have been distributed among the villages, advance technologies horticulture is taught. The dream project of Vedchi Pradesh Sewa Samiti at Dharampur is to provide education for all these tribal young-men women, and children, with two meals per day primary health care at the door steps of the people and expansion of forest and pure potable drinking water in all the villages. Dharampur is now a project 'of the people by the people, for the people'. It is difficult to measure the tempo of the development prevailing in the forests and hills of Dharampur-Kaprada block, with its obvious outcome. Certainly the organisation have tried to give with it's a pirated onward journey giving new hopes to the people of the region.

Gandhians came to work among the tribals with their certain set of values and principles. Their main emphasis was bringing social change through the educational work among tribal societies.<sup>197</sup> Along with the education there were certain activities raised by these Gandhians which were social reforms which were meant to bring

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<sup>196</sup> The concern for health of rural population grew since 1993 when twentyfive local health volunteers were trained by Dr. Dahsha Shah and her team. All these trained volunteers are working for Primary health care in remote villages, where there are no doctors. Approximately 20,000 patients get advice and free medicines from the volunteers. In serious cases more support is provided 'Mother Child care' Camps are also conducted for pregnant women and new borns each year. On an average four general health check up camps are being conducted every year in cooperation with other NGO'S 3 to 4 other training camps are also conducted every year'. In Achievement at A Glance: Dharampur

<sup>197</sup> 'So far in the's region 103 wells have been sunk and six bond wells have been drilled successfully. The work for check-dams and Rain -water harvesting is also going along with it. *Ibid.*, p.1



solutions to the problems existing in the tribal societies. For the purpose cooperative societies, women action groups and Tribal Associations were formulated in one or the other way these organizations brought desired results. With the presence of Gandhians tribals opened up themselves to the societies around. Their world vision got broadens. More so, Gandhians never tried to overpower the enlightened tribal communities. Once the communities became capable of dealing with the main stream people they took charge of their own people and their welfare and set guidelines for themselves. Infact first generation Gandhians proved successful in raising leadership among the tribals. They guide the tribal people the path to be chosen weather of materialism, simplicity, socialist environmentalism, or Capitalism become responsibility of their own.

Whereas Gandhians are nowadays silently working from the margins, where ever their support or guidance is required by the tribal communities they readily give them. On the contrary the next wave of neo-Gandhians is working on other nascent issues concerning human environment issues and conservation of indigenous knowledge system.

### **Growth of Gandhian Ideals of Tribal Welfare outside Gujarat: Contribution of *Bhartiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh*:**

The welfare activities of Gandhians among tribal communities of Gujarat were not limited to Gujarat only. The leaders like A.V.Thakkar went beyond the territories of western India and decided to serve the other deprived tribal communities of India for the purpose initially they went to Orissa and with the help of local tribal welfare activist began Orissa tribal welfare work (1932).<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> *Annual Report, Bhil Sewa Mandal, 1980. pp 8-10*

Later after the realization of much more scope to such tribal welfare throughout India Thakkar Bapa decided to begin a National level organization for the purpose. The institution was given the name Bhartiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh (hereafter BAJSS) the history of the institution dates back to the memorable day of 24<sup>th</sup> October 1948, when at the instance of A.V.Thakkar, thirty seven social workers were representing several institutions working for the tribal welfare since independence and few anthropologists together decided to constitute the BAJSS for the purpose of coordinating the welfare activities of the various institutions working for the tribal communities in the remotest and neglected tribal areas and for focusing the attention of the Government and the general public towards the tribal work, so that the tribal communities may be brought into the mainstream of the society with a view to enable them to take their legitimate place in the national life of the country as citizen of equal status. The main object of the Sangh is to work for social, economic and educational advancement of the tribal communities. The Sangh aims to bring together all the non-official agencies working for the welfare of tribal communities in different regions of the country.

The aim of BAJSS is to improve the economic condition of the tribals and to provide opportunities to them for their educational and social advancement. While formulating the ideology of BAJSS, there were some people who advocated that the tribals should be isolated from the rest of the countrymen and preserved, as if in a sanctuary as strange specimens of humanity in some anthropological museum. On the other hand, there was another school of reformer who wanted to uproot the tribal people from their homelands and transform them into blind imitations of so-called civilized people. Both these extreme schools

of thoughts, were not approved by the ideas of BAJSS they found them to be unrealistic and ill-informed.<sup>199</sup>

According to the BAJSS proper approach to the welfare of tribals is not only to bring home to them all the benefit of modern science, such as good homes, roads, better agriculture, improved health, and sanitation and provision of essential social services and civilized amenities; but at the same time preserve the finer qualities of their nature and rich cultural heritage and fit them in such a way that they can make their own contribution to the enrichment of Indian culture and civilization.<sup>200</sup>

In order to achieve these objectives a large number of crèches, kindergartens, short-stay homes for women in distress, day care centers for the aged, ashram schools, leprosy eradication centers, women associations, *sarvodaya gramin* banks etc. are being opened and run by the sangh and its affiliated organizations are opened in various parts of the country.<sup>201</sup> With a view to further strengthen, streamline, and rationalize the work of inspections, monitoring and evaluation, and also to process future planning, the organizational set-up has its branches in almost all the states of India where tribal population is found, the branches of organization in Gujarat are as follows:

1. Mahua Taluka Gram Sewa Samaj, Village- Karchelia, Taluka-Bardoli, District- Surat.
2. Bhil Sewa Mandal, District: Dahod.
3. Gujarat Tribal Women Training Centre, P.O.: Jhalod, District: Dahod.<sup>202</sup>

A large number of projects and plans to promote welfare and development of tribal communities and weaker sections of society are

<sup>199</sup> *Constitutional Assembly Debates*, Vol. VII, /National Archives/New-Delhi, pp 208-220.

<sup>200</sup> Raja Nareshchandra Singh, "Tribal Welfare", *Vanyajati* Vol. IV, No. 3, July 1956, pp 5-6

<sup>201</sup> M. M. Wakhre, *Role of Bhartiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh in the Tribal development in the South*, New Delhi, 1980, p 90

<sup>202</sup> *Annual report, Bhartiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh*, 2002-2003, p 35

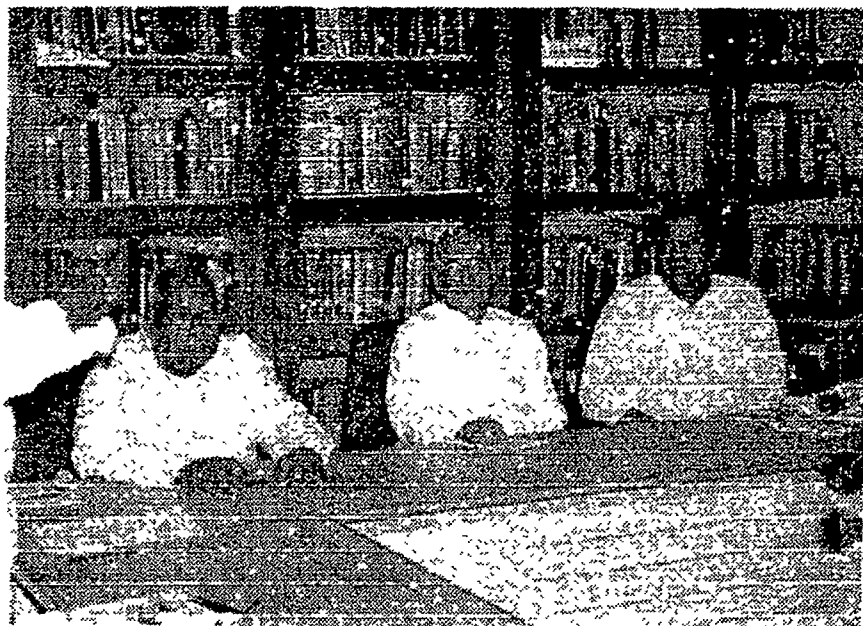
implemented by the Sangh and even though the sangh is fully occupied by the work, a lot remains to be done in the future. The main stress is to reach primitive tribal groups and expand in north eastern states with ameliorative programmes, particularly employment generation and female education. About working style and future prospects of BAJSS Shyam Manohar the present general secretary of the organization said;

The organization being one of the oldest in welfare of the tribals has percolated in each and every village of the tribal India. When U.N.Dhebar Commission was established the entire member units of the BAJSS were there in the commission. The organization has proven its workmanship among the tribal communities of India. It is because of its prestigious reputation that Five year Plan and Its steering committees when plan for tribal development in India they always appoint members of BAJSS in its council.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Interview with Shyam Manchar at BAJSS, New Delhi, on 15/06/2004

### Bhartiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh, New Delhi



Sh. Banwari Lal Gaud in the center

BAJSS in spite of being a prominent organization in the field of tribal welfare and research in India never tried to impose its ideas on the people they are working with. As they believe that politicization spoils the image of any organization. Thus it is important to be passive resistants. Tribals are given full freedom to live the way they want. BAJSS is merely a facilitator between government and tribals.<sup>204</sup>

<sup>204</sup> "As regarding the future of the Organization when I asked the Shri Banwari Lal Gaud (Director, BAJSS) to which he gave skeptical reply. He seemed morose regarding the lack of dedicated workers and financial problems the organization is suffering from. Still he feels optimistic on certain grounds as the new generation is coming up with the new ideas to work on in the organization. The most principled hurdle to which the organization is suffering from is that, it does not take any financial help from the non-governmental sources because of which many of its prospective works are pending or getting closed. In spite of all these hurdles the organization is continuing to grow and work for the cause. Possibly this is what BAJSS is meant to live with." In words of Banwari Lal Gaud; "we live with problems as it helps us to increase our immunity." As told on 15/06/2004 at BAJSS office New Delhi.