

Chhaganbha

A Pole Star of Wisdom

Mohanlal Patel



He was an epitome of bravery. He was a valiant person. All through his life, Chhaganbha exerted for the elevation of his community, spreading education and the progress of the educational institute. He deserves to be called as a valiant soldier. Above all, he was an enlightened person. He was a man of unique wisdom. His heart was filled with the light of astuteness, which always illuminated his path, enabling him to fathom any unknown possibilities. He could perceive the future beforehand... More than that, even after half a century of his death, the inmates of the Ashram look at his statue with great esteem and reverence. They constantly feel the flood of affection and determination that flows from the face of the statue of this adept man of action. Evidently, even today when the students begin any auspicious work, or at the time of setting on for a trip or when they return victorious from some competition, they acclaim it by hailing the name of Chhaganbha with effusion of devotion, in the era, when the values are changing faster than ever. And on seeing them, we get convinced to the core that Chhaganbha's mortal body was not made of ordinary flesh and blood but of an exceptional matter. He was a person par excellence (Lokottar Purush) as he stood apart from his peers, radiating indissoluble beams of brilliance and loving kindness.

Mohanlal Patel



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2025



Chhaganbha

A Pole Star of Wisdom

Mohanlal Patel

Translated into English by
Nila Shah



Sarva Vidyalaya Kelavani Mandal

Kadi - 382 715

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Dedicated to

The entire family of various institutes
that has bloomed and blossomed
into a huge banyan tree with many branches
and off-shoots owing to the endeavours
of respected Chhaganbha

His agony resembles
a mother's shooting labour pain, or
to that of a bud about to blossom, or
to that of a moment before twilight
whose consequence is
a newborn babe, or a fresh tender flower or an early morning sun.

You are one of those blessed, rare individuals, who embodies
a slender streak of light that exists within the stark darkness.

Blessed you are, O traveller of the path of salvation!
Blessed you are, O savior of the community!
Blessed you are, O karmyogi!
Blessed you are, O guiding light of benevolence and righteousness!

Anami (Ranjitbhai Mohanlal Patel)

Introduction

More than nine decades ago Chhaganlal Pitambardas Patel (Chhaganbha), aged 56 wishing to lead a life of resignation and asceticism had gone to Swami Keshvanand at Kashi to get *diksha* of *sonyasta* but was advised to work for the welfare of the people of his society who were badly downtrodden, illiterate and victims of many evil customs instead of getting *diksha* of *sanyasta*.

With this inspiration Chhaganbha, with a burning spirit and a missionary zeal started his marathon march which led him to the establishment of a boarding house for students to live in and a school for their education.

In those days the path for torch-bearers of education in North Gujarat was untrodden, thorny and dark. People showed a very hostile temperament towards those torch-bearers. Chhaganbha was never a man to be discouraged by that kind of attitude of the people. He continued his efforts through much inconveniences and many difficulties but succeeded with flying colours at last.

The march which Chhaganbha started has flourished into a great educational galaxy comprising more than 60 educational institutions spread over more than 105 acres of land in various campuses at Kadi (North Gujarat) and Gandhinagar with more than 52000 students on roll.

I express my sincere and deep gratitude to Shri Mohanlal Patel (Retd. Principal, Sarva Vidyalaya, Kadi) who at the request of Sarva Vidyalaya, Kelavani Mandal, Kadi wrote a very commendable and praiseworthy biography of our great path-finder *Pujya* Chhaganbha in Gujarati. It was published

under the title '*Pragnadeep Chhaganbha*' by 'Sarva Vidyalay kelavni Mandal' in 1989. Its second edition was published in 2007. Looking to the popularity of the biography the Kelavani Mandal thought to get it translated into English language in public interest. Dr. Nila Shah (Rajkot) accepted our request to translate the above cited book into English language with a great earnest. On behalf of the Kelavani Mandal, I express a hearty feeling of gratitude and thanks to her. I am also grateful to Prof. Avadhesh Kumar Singh (Director, School of Translation Studies and Training, IGNOU, New Delhi) for going through the translation and making valuable suggestions.

Gandhinagar
27/12/2013

Vallabhbhai M. Patel
Chairman,
Sarva Vidyalay Kelavani Mandal
Kadi – Gandhinagar

Prelude

Shri Mohanbhai Patel accomplished his responsibility of writing the life sketch of Shri Chhaganbha and had handed over the manuscript to me.

I went through the biographical sketch written by Shri Mohanbhai thrice and found it so inspirational and enticing that it compeled many more readings. Shri Mohanbhai has very intricately weaved in the life details of Chhaganbha, a dedicated ascetic, who had strived hard for the upliftment of the community all through his life. This pen picture is so vivid that a live and animated image of Shri Chhaganbha, grieving over the evils of the society and urging us to join him in spreading of the education, emerges in front of us.

The biography of Shri Chhaganbha is so inspirational and universal that it will eternally continue to guide the workers and volunteers, teachers, rectors, and students from all walks of life in present and in days to come.

When I think of the endeavours that has gone into making of the biography of Shri Chhaganbha so vivid and motivating, my heart cannot help but utter, "We salute the prose style, insight and vision of Shri Mohanbhai Patel."

03/02/1989

Vakil Dhanabhai H. Patel
Secretary,
Sarva Vidyalaya Kelavni Mandal, Kadi

Chhaganbha's '*yagna*' of Benevolence

Publication of this edition of '*Pragnadeep Chhaganbha*' (Chhaganbha – a Pole Star of Wisdom) seems to be a noble act, written for the benefit of the society, and I am sure that the reader will definitely agree to it. I call this book beneficial to the society because the content of each chapter is narrated in such a way, that the book will prove inspirational to not only the educationalists but also to all the classes and cadres of the society.

The author has, at the outset, rightly presented a true picture of the contemporary society in a very enticing way so that the readers could perceive how thorny the path that Chhaganbha trod upon was. While following that path, how many trying situations he must have faced. The author has very appropriately and minutely narrated how, in spite of the financial crunches, the members of the community used to incur huge debts or mortgage their farms or properties for the sake of arranging a community feast after the demise of their kin; or used to invite trials like child death or death during the child-birth by arranging child marriages; or how they would grope in the darkness of ignorance by turning away from or close the eyes to education. Chhaganbha had found a panacea for all such evils and issues in the spread of education. Chhaganbha's personal objective was to attain self realization. To achieve it, he had decided to become an ascetic. And for that reason he approached Swami Keshavanandji. However, the Swamiji dissuade him from embracing asceticism and advised him to work for uplifting the society by spreading education. Swamiji's advice touched the core of Chhaganbha's heart and consequently he started his pious '*yagna*' from a regional centre called Kadi.

Chhaganbha had not studied any books on theory of education. But his insight into education would compel the educationists to contemplate. The readers will be able to perceive this insight in the chapter entitled 'The Mobile School of Chhaganbha.' The educationists insist that a school should be a centre of the community. However, Chhaganbha was a step ahead of that. He made the society a centre of education and carried the school amidst the society. He not only led the children amidst the society to build their character, he also educated the society by organizing value based programmes by the children in villages.

The author has depicted a vivid and touching picture regarding the contribution of Chhaganbha in this '*yagna*' and how he strove hard to spread awareness in the field of education. This pious '*yagna*' had a very modest start. *The Ashram*, initiated with only six students, gradually turned out to be an enormous and eminent cluster of institutes. Appendix 1 and 2 of this book support this argument. Thousands of boys and girls study in the campuses of Kadi and Gandhinagar, to be more precise, during the academic year of 2006-2007, total 37907 students were registered in these two campuses. And this figure was beaten by a large number at the beginning of the academic year of 2007- 2008.

One of the landmarks in the history of the institute is the status of university resulting from this pious '*yagna*'. Of course, this is not the end; the institute aspires and avows to achieve far higher goals. Owing to the strength of the righteousness of Chhaganbha, the institute has never felt a dearth of sincere and dedicated workers. And to add to that the former students and the well wishers of the institute from India and the US have always come forward to contribute to the progress of the institute. Therefore, there is no doubt regarding fulfilling those aspirations for the benefit of the public at large.

Kadi
12/07/2007

Maneklal M. Patel
Chairman,
Sarva Vidyalay Kelavni Mandal, Kadi

Preface

One hardly needs to underline the fact that, to write a biography of a person like Chhaganbha is a great privilege for any writer. Chhaganbha has left behind a huge banyan tree that explains the significance of his work. But very little documented information is available on his life. Among the very large number of his admirers, very few people who have actually worked with him or have seen him working are around today. That makes the availability of authentic information all the more difficult. It is observed that whatever information about Chhaganbha is available in written form, most of it is second-hand in the sense that it is not a direct narration of first-hand experience but an account received from some other sources. Most of it, again, is similar in content, widely shared by people who knew him. Moreover, a few hues of imagination seem to be added to the account at times. Consequently, the same event has more than one version with occasional instances of exaggeration. This is a dangerous and limiting factor for writing a biographical sketch. It is very likely that such phenomena would cause harm to the central figure of the biography. Under such circumstances, it was challenging to create a faithful pen picture of Chhaganbha. That is why, from all the available accounts – written or oral, only those pieces are incorporated in this book, which are authentic with supporting written documents. I have very liberally used information that could be derived from the reports of the institute, articles published in various periodicals and journals, articles and testimonials by Chhaganbha. Some of the details are based on Shri Bhailal G. Patel's experiences, as he had been with Chhaganbha, first as a student and later as an employee of the institute.

It is likely that those who are curious to know about Chhaganbha's personal life may be slightly disappointed with

this biography. But as mentioned earlier, in absence of any authentic information, I have decided to let this gap exist rather than indulging in speculation. Even then, the account deals with so many aspects of his biographical details, throwing ample light on his personal life.

This book covers the period up to his demise, which is also a very significant period for the growth of the institute. The history of the initial period of the institute is interwoven with the life sketch of Chhaganbha. The institute has continued to develop after 1940. With its innumerable branches and offshoots, it has turned into a huge banyan tree. The chronology of its development is rich and varied, and has been fortunate to have many competent leaders. Nevertheless, since this book is meant to cover life history of Chhaganbha, it would be incongruous to incorporate details of progress and achievements of other leading figures. A separate volume should be published to cover the account of their deeds and contributions.

It is hoped that this humble endeavour of narrating the biography of Chhaganbha will provide inspiration to a large number of people to some extent.

We are thankful to all the editors (living or not existing in their mortal bodies) of the journals and periodicals, from whose articles material has been used here. We are also grateful to the authors, from whose articles, we have borrowed freely. We also take this opportunity to thank those noted personalities, who have taken out some time to share their experiences with us. Above all, we are thankful to the executive members of Kadava Patidar Kelvani Mandal and Sarva Vidyalay Kelvani Mandal, Kadi, for vesting us with the responsibility to write this life sketch.

Mohanlal Patel
Convener,
Chhaganbha Life sketch Writing Committee

Upon publication of the second edition

The inaugural edition of this volume was released in 1989. Annexure 1 and 2 are included in this second edition to provide readers with an update on the institute's progress since the publication of the first edition. The remaining content of that edition remain unaltered.

The institute's progress during this period is evident when it culminated in elevation to university status in 2007. The institute founded through the pioneering and devout efforts of sri Chhaganbha, has witnessed significant growth under the vigorous leadership of Sri Maneklal M. Patel, chairman, over the past two decades.

I am honoured to have been entrusted by 'Sarva Vidyalay Kelvani Mandal' with the task of composing life sketch of assiduous personality called Sri Chhaganbha. I would like to express my gratitude to the insitute on the publication of this edition.

Ahmedabad
09/07/2007

Mohanlal Patel

**Committee for Writing Life Sketches of
Chhaganbha and Purushottamdas R. Patel (Daskaka)**

Shri Mohanlal B. Patel

Convener, Committee for Life Sketch of Chhaganbha

Shri Ishwarbhai H. Patel

Shri Bhailalbhai G. Patel

Shri Jayantibhai J. Patel

Dr. Mangubhai R. Patel

Convener, committee for Life sketch of Daskaka

Shri Prabhatkumar M. Desai

Shri Manubhai J. Patel

Shri Tansukhbhai P. Patel

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Chhaganbha :
A Pole Star of Wisdom



Mohanlal Patel

Translated by

Nila Shah

કર ભલા, હોગા ભલા

Do Good, Good Comes Back

- Pujya Chhaganbha

1

Aspiring to Soar High

A lively youth and an elderly man were conversing. The elderly person had set up an educational institute and that was the subject of their discussion.

The youth said, "One cannot run an institute without money. In the absence of adequate capital, the financial viability of the institute suffers and finally one would be compelled to close it and one becomes a laughing stock."

In response to this apprehension of the youth, the elderly gentleman said, "A real institute is like a tree. It sprouts out of a seed. One cannot fetch a fully grown tree from somewhere and plant. And even if one can do so, will such institute, without its firm roots sustain for long? Unnatural attempts can keep it fresh for a while but sooner or later it would wither. On the other hand, an institute that grows from a real seed may seem weak in the beginning but gradually it develops and becomes strong. As it takes roots, it becomes a huge tree. Since it is deeply rooted, we do not have to worry much about its sustenance. It will obtain nourishment even from the nether world and continue to provide much joy and bliss to the society."

The youth glanced at the elderly gentleman. An extraordinary self-confidence sparkled in that pair of eyes. He raised his doubt again, "It is easy to saw a seed but have you thought about the subsequent responsibilities? Don't you think it is a heedless adventure? What led you into such an escapade?"

The elderly gentle man's eyes shone brightly. As if slightly offended by the question of the youth, he remained silent for a couple of moments. Then he said, "Do you think it to be an adventure? It is definitely not. I have realized my *dharma* – my duty. This is a natural consequence of that realization. While following one's *dharma*, pleasure or pain, threats and distresses, hopes or discontents, success or failure all become immaterial. Once you realize your goal, there is no other way but to pursue. You cannot revert. The path may be steep and thorny but I have perceived it clearly. *Dharma* triumphs at the end. I have no doubt about my success."

"Don't you think appending your idea of starting an educational institute with the sense of *dharma* is unconceivable and impulsive?"

"My dear, better expand your vision. Are you aware, what you call an ordinary educational institute, has some special significance? It is a potent force that can be used to assuage a community from a ditch. Have you ever thought of the condition of the society? You do not have a personal experience of the dire condition of our community. You may tend to maintain your cool but my heart is highly agitated. I am deprived of even proper sleep. I am overtly perturbed by the evils and ignorance prevailing in our community. The frightened faces of people of our community unsettle me. Can you be just a mute witness to the pitiable plight of a community that harvest tons of food grains that sustain thousands of people? We need not go very far to find out the reasons. Infested by numerous social ills and evils, our community is getting subdued and inert. Evils like feast for the salvation of the soul of one's deceased relative, child marriage and inane expenses on other such trivial occasions have impoverished our community. It is deep into debts. It has lost its right to make any choices on its own, and survives on the mercy of the government and the money-lenders. I felt that mere speeches, meetings or passing of resolutions cannot free the community from the clutches of disastrous evil arms. On an auspicious moment, a thought

flashed through my mind that education is an only panacea that can set our community on the path of progress. It is an instrument for social reform. No other alternative can match its outcome. An educational institute can shape our thoughts and our lives are molded according to our expectations. Fortunately, I have met some like-minded youths who are willing to take my ideas further. And we established an institute. Initially we began on a low note; however, the seed had a latent strength. The consequence is in front us! “

The elderly dignitary we are talking about is Chhaganbha – Chhaganlal Pitambardas Patel. His thoughts merit attention for two distinct issues. One, he was greatly agitated to see his community steeped into ignorance and social evils. Secondly, he firmly believed that sermons, empty resolutions and campaigns will not deliver the ignorant people from the vicious fetters of social ills and evils. That all-pervading venomous gland could be removed only by amputating it from its very roots. Education was the magic potion that can cure it.

It was the time when darkness prevailed not only among that particular community but into the entire country. Although, sharp teeth of superstitions, poverty, social evils had sunken deep into the entire community, people were still not aware of these stark realities. It was the result of murky ignorance. Child marriage was one of the prime reasons of this downfall. Tender age at the time of the nuptials and conjugal relationship at such an immature age had given rise to many a problem. Death of a woman during the child birth and child mortality were two direct consequences of it. The 1921 Census report says that: ‘It can be assumed for all practical purposes that every woman is in the married state at or immediately after puberty and that cohabitation, therefore, begins in every case with puberty.’

What can be the outcome? Each generation witnessed 32,00,000 deaths during child birth. Among the newly born children, 20,00,000 would not survive, forty percent of them would die

within the first week of their birth, and sixty percent will not survive to see the day light beyond the first month of their existence. Although, obviously child marriage was the consequence of that unfortunate reality, the enormity of that perilous situation could not be perceived just by pointing to that evil practice.

Ignorance and orthodoxy also had their role in the mortality of pregnant women and infants. Whether hailing from a poor or an affluent family, whether a princess or a queen, irrespective of her status, a pregnant woman could not avail any medical facility. Only unskilled midwives were available to attend them. Strangely enough, they would even perform a small surgery, if required. The word hygiene was unheard of. Antiseptic medicines or liquids were yet to make their entry. Old tattered and infested rags were used during the child birth. Women of the house or the family was the final authority to take any decision. Male members of the family were kept away, their opinion or voice held no significance in this matter. Even during the most critical condition, no one would really be concerned or worried. Life was insignificant. Cow dung and water of Ganga were kept handy.

There was no dearth of sources of tribulations and trouble. Physical or mental mismatches of the couples, miseries of widowhood, cons in the name of superstitions and belief in ghosts and evil spirits are a few instances in sight.

The Patidar community was not an exception. It was fraught with a few more of such evil practices. Its custom of wedding was unprecedented. In Unjha, gates of the temple of the family deity of the Patidars were opened only once in twelve years and an auspicious day for weddings was announced. All the weddings took place on that day. If someone missed the date, one has to wait for another twelve years until the gates were opened again after twelve years. If a one-month old child missed its turn on that particular date, it had to wait for twelve years and then it would be twelve years and one month old. An

unmarried child of twelve years! Incredible reality of the time! Very iniquitous. How can one remain unwed until so long? One should be wedded irrespective of the age of the child on the announcement of the date. Consequently, there would be a wedding in each house. Who would be free to join a wedding party? Only members of one's family would remain present. At times, it happened that all the members of a family would have been gone to attend a wedding to some other place, and another family would have to fill their place. They would move in to someone's house to take charge of their affairs. They would look after their farms, mind livestock and milking of the mulching cows. Only those people who had undergone such situation would be able to visualize this peculiar situation, and be amused by its absurdity. However grotesque that may sound, it was especially poignant that an entire community was thrown into disarray owing to a callous custom. Will there be a greater irony than this, that an intellectual being like human being has to blindly follow such customs like a puppet?

After the law of prohibiting the child marriage was imposed in the state of Vadodara, in the year 1966 of Vikram Era, the practice of announcing a date for wedding continued. The entire community faced a sort of crisis. On one hand, they had to abide by the state-imposed law and on the other, a date was announced in the name of the goddess. How can one disobey the decree of the goddess? Displeasing the deity is more appalling than disobeying the ruler. How can one endure annoyance of the goddess? The entire community was in a chaos. Some worldly-wise guys found out a solution. "Ask for permission from the state," they said. Once again, the members of the community were in a state of anarchy as everyone was aspiring for the permission for arranging marriage of their under-aged children. People who could draft such applications for people, the vendors of the stamp papers required for such applications, and above all those who kept the atmosphere live by offering unsolicited advice had their time! Many elderly people would be still having memory of the

event that during the first quarter of the twentieth century, there was no dearth of gullible people that rushed to gift their sister with a utensil and a shell of coconut on appearing of a comet at night. Similarly, one can imagine what sort of vibes might have been created by this act of sending applications during that murky period. Only in Kadi District itself rupees two lac were paid towards stamp duty, at the rate of just two rupees per application! It can be ascertained that more than one lac marriages were arranged in the area around Kadi. The areas of Kutchchh, Saurashtra, South Gujarat, the districts under the British rule are not taken into account.

Another very strange and disgusting custom of pronouncing one's girl child as a widow prevailed during that time. Can anyone think of such an outlandish practice? Strangely enough, this was one of the ploys adopted by a person shackled by the customs and not prepared to get rid of it. What to do about a newly born girl child and very small girls who are not yet betrothed at the time of the announcement of the date of the wedding? How can they remain unmarried for next twelve years? They should be knotted into wedding ties somehow. But what if they are not affianced? Sadly, people found out a solution for this problem too. Such girls would be married to a ball of flowers! A ludicrous custom indeed! But such practices existed during those times. A nuptial was arranged with a ball of flowers, but then what? It was followed by a rite that pronounced the girl a widow. As soon as the wedding was solemnized, the members of the family would go to a well. The ball was dropped into the well, the girl was announced as a widow. Remarrying of such innocent widow was permitted among the Kadava Patidars. On getting a suitable match, they were wedded off.

This was the society of Chhaganbha's time. Another such gory practice was that of arranging feast on the twelfth day of a person's death. Feast was inevitable as the part of one's final rite. The deceased would be mourned for twelve days and on the thirteenth day, the family of the deceased had to arrange

for a community feast. They believed that by doing so the departed soul would attain peace. However unfounded the belief, an opportunity of relishing sheera could not be missed. One has to arrange for the community feast, irrespective of one's financial condition. It had to be performed even if one had to sell off one's farm, the only means of one's income. If required, one was forced to mortgage one's residence. But none would be spared from arranging a community feast. A few so called 'philanthropist' leaders would always be present to facilitate the process of selling or mortgaging the property. They would suggest names of some leech like money lenders, who thrived on the steep interest levied on the capital. Those so-called philanthropists would not waste a single moment on such occasions.

Chhaganbha had witnessed such vicious customs. His soul was feeling suffocated right from his young days by such practices. His mind was itching to revolt against them. At the age of thirty, he wound up his business in Ahmedabad and returned to Saradhav, his native. He decided to focus on farming. He also dealt with a business of trading of cottonseed on a small scale. Soon he became aware of the pitiful plight of the villagers. The farmers of his village were poor and pauper. Most of them were steeped deep up to their necks in debts. Practice of mortgaging of one's house and farm were quite common. The money lenders used to exploit the illiterate and needy farmers like anything. Young Chhaganlal could not bear such situation. Whenever possible, he would do his best to take some action against such customs. At times, that would generate some discord among the selfish people. But Chhaganlal knew how to handle friction. He constituted a committee in the village Saradhav to deal with the issue of repay the debts and espoused a human approach to solve the problem by giving utmost satisfaction to both the parties.

By the efforts of Shri Purushottamdas Lallubhai, Kadava Patidar Parishad, was founded. Chhaganlal supported the Parishad wholeheartedly. He used to be present in the meetings of

the Parishad. Inspired by the efforts of Shri Purushottamdas, the secretary to reform the society, he too started motivating enthusiastic youth and sensitized people to come forward and contribute to the campaign of reformation in their respective areas. He, being a sensitized person himself, could not keep away from noble cause of reformation.

Once Chhaganlal had been away to Kalol in connection to his business of cottonseed. On returning, he went directly to his farm, where all the members of his family had assembled. Surprised, he said, "Well, everybody seems to be here, who's going to take care of meal etc, at home?" Someone said, "We are supposed to go for a ritual feast at our relative's." Chhaganlal was shocked to hear about it and said, "But how can he even think of throwing a community feast? How did he manage?"

"He sold off his farm," someone replied.

"But he possessed just one farm, and he sold it off?"

"Yes, exactly."

"He had just one small piece of land to subsist on, and he sold that just to arrange for a feast for us?" Chhaganlal did not stay there for another moment. He raced to the place where the feast was arranged. Preparations were going on. It was almost the time for serving the meal. Chhaganlal addressed the leaders of the community present at the venue in his effective way. He explained them how this custom was detrimental to the society and how that would lead to incurring debts and ultimately ruin families. People listened to him. It was not that they did not understand what he said, but they were not willing to change. Some of them contended that since what had to happen had happened and the food was all prepared and just by refraining from eating would not change anything for the family that had arranged for the feast. They insisted that since people had assembled, they should have the feast, for not having food would just aggravate the woes of the concerned

family. People started sitting in the rows. But Chhaganlal was not a person to take defeat like that. He moved along the rows and tried to persuade people. But when he was convinced of the futility of his urges, he could no longer contain his anger and burst, "You are not relishing laddus, mind you, but you are eating blood and flesh of a poor farmer. Should one indulge in prayers for a departed soul or should one devise a doom for family of the deceased? You all are unscrupulous and ruthless. May you be doomed!"

Consequently, twelve people, whose heart were pulsating with kindness and compassion, got up and took an oath of not taking part food in such customary feasts.

The fact that only twelve people responded to his plea seems insignificant. One may tend to conclude it as a failure on the part of Chhaganlal. But in the context of contemporary time and circumstances, it was not a small achievement. One is aware of the plight of a reformist during that period. In the situations, when one was expected to meet with insult, slur and slight, a response as above is not a mean achievement.

Chhaganlal was an enthusiastic and energetic person, and had clear vision and ability to perceive the situation. He had capacity to make his way out of any trying situation. But above all, he was endowed with the foresight to envision an outcome of any action well in advance. From his endeavours of reforming the society, he was convinced that a person cannot be transformed by mere preaching and urging. A person would change the course of his life after a couple of eye-opening experiences. But people were vulnerable to the inherent weaknesses. Servitude to the orthodoxy is one of the greatest weaknesses of that time. Chhaganlal had no misgivings regarding the fact that it is not easy to unbound a person from his age-old orthodox beliefs. Nevertheless, his zeal to reform did not abate a bit on that account. On the contrary, he brooded over and again. His mind was preoccupied with seeking out a permanent and viable solution. He contemplated and searched for a more effective

way of reformation. Until he found an efficacious approach to solve the problem, he tried many different ways.

Chhaganlal ardently favoured the Law that prohibited the Child Marriage. He held that if the society could not think of its wellbeing, nothing was wrong, if the State decided to intervene by imposing a Law to make it tread on the right path. If the Government takes some measures to restrict this vicious custom, people would come to their senses. He had personally gone and urged His Highness Sayajirao to enact a law to restrict the custom of child marriage. His Highness was very pleased and had appreciated Chhaganlal's concern and attitude.

On another occasion, Chhaganlal had approached His Highness Sayajirao with a proposal of a welfare scheme for the farmers. He firmly advocated that a piece of land should not be divided into small holdings, especially in different directions, with different boundaries. He believed that a farmer cannot handle a piece of land lacking proper marking of boundary; and his attention would be diverted and his labor increased. In spite of an extended family, there would always be a dearth of enough man-power to take care of the affairs. For instance, if one had to be on vigil during nights, if the land was divided into different plots, one needed more number of people, amounting to the increase in expenses of farming; leading to less profit. A farmer had to arrange for irrigation for all the fragments of his land. He might require to have separate wells for each fragment and needed to buy all the ancillary machineries for each well separately. Unless he managed to irrigate all the fragments round the year, had to be contented by having just one monsoon crop. if one's land was not in a single, large chunk, a farmer could not get the maximum benefit out of it. For such reasons, a cooperative model of farming was inevitable. Chhaganlal shared his ideas with His Highness Sayajirao. His Highness was a dynamic and visionary statesman. He was a pioneer in introducing many such welfare schemes. He liked Chhaganlal's ideas. But he was also aware of the psyche of his subjects. He knew that such a task could not be accomplished

by enforcing any law. He was wise enough to know that for not so inevitable matters, a ruler should not instigate public's sentiments. He thought of a practical solution. He suggested to Chhaganbhai, "Prepare your farmers, or a group of farmers of one village for a pilot project. Such a pilot project should be implemented by a general consensus of the farmers of one village. When the farmers of other villages will see the benefits, the state can intervene and implement a scheme for all the farmers under its constituency." The ruler's proposition was convincing and appropriate. On returning to Saradhav, he set about organizing all the farmers and explained them this scheme. He tried to convince them. But as we all know that a farmer is very closely connected to his land, and a sort of strong sentiment is involved in this matter. He would undergo a huge loss but would not be separated from his land. Land is like a mother to him, dearer to him than his life. Although, Chhaganlal's proposal would have proved beneficial to them, it did not materialize.

Mahatma Gandhi's ideology had a great impact on Chhaganlal. Gandhiji, after returning from South Africa, had established an *ashram* at Kocharab and had stayed there for some time. Chhaganlal used to go to Kocharab to meet him and thus was in direct contact with him. Meanwhile, Gandhiji started the *swadeshi* movement and in 1921 the foreign-made clothes were consigned to bonfires in Ahmedabad. From that day, Chhaganlal took a vow to wear *Khadi* only. Not only that, he started spinning yarn, and wove his own clothes. He continued to wear *khadi* till the last moment of his life. He often used to say, "Mahatma Gandhi is one digit above Lord Rama and Krishna, as Rama and Krishna had fought their political wars by using weapons but Mahatmaji has led the country on the strength of truth and non-violence. If people resolve to follow him wholeheartedly, they'll attain political, social, moral and spiritual freedom."

Noticeably, many years before Gandhiji initiated the campaign against untouchability, Chhaganlal had adopted it. He had no

qualms against sitting or talking with the workers of lower caste employed in his farm. He was very kind to them. His acquaintance with many monks and saints, his study of the Vedas and other scriptures, and above all his love for humanity were at the root of such sympathetic behavior.

The dialogue with a young man at the outset of this chapter vouchsafes the fact that Chhaganlal was very much perturbed by the miserable plight of his community. He made a tremendous effort to rescue his fraternity from that condition. Nevertheless, at the same time, he was aware that his endeavours were not adequate, or at least the time was not ripe to yield expected results of his efforts. He was constantly looking for a more effective solution. As mentioned by him, on an auspicious moment, it dawned on him that only education can salvage his community from the mire of ignorance. When did that auspicious moment occur? When did it happen? But before we delve in that story, we should also know that this man had a quest for something imperceptible. On one side, the attraction for this imperceptible phenomenon was getting stronger and stronger and on the other hand, the zeal to do something meaningful for his community was getting hold of him. Like a zealous warrior, he made efforts to uplift his community tirelessly. He moved around from one village to another with his fellow reformers to free his community from the shackles of social evils. He struggled relentlessly to achieve his aim. At times, the orthodox people of his community would not let him gather people for a lecture or attempt to interrupt such meetings. In one village, the orthodox group tried to attack him but Chhaganlal continued unperturbedly. Gandhian ideology motivated and strengthened his mission. Simultaneously, the seed of attraction towards that transcendental world was also getting nurtured every day. Consequently, at one point to time he thought of renouncing the world.

2

That Auspicious Moment

A quest for realizing God was very strong in Chhaganlal. On one hand, he was engaged in farming, business and reform activities; on the other, his mind was occupied with contemplation on spirituality and study of the Upanishadas and other philosophical treatises. His love for the study of the scriptures and interest in God was not spurious. The zeal for reformation started in his youth but attraction for the metaphysical field existed right from his childhood. In order to understand this characteristic of his personality, we need to have a peep in his early days and the background of his family.

Pitambardas Zaverdas Patel, father of Chhaganlal was a staunch devotee of the sect of Kabir. This sect gives much importance to serving the monks and hermits and associating with devotees. The saints were welcomed with warmth in his house and singing of bhajans and religious discussion were routine activities. Chhaganlal's mother, Krushnama was a loving and pious lady. She also followed the teachings of Kabir and served the devotees and saints with utmost humility. The atmosphere of the house was not only filled with spirituality but the standard of morality was also very high. Pitambardas was an influential person and everyone respected and venerated him. Even after his demise, people used to pay him tribute by saying, "Whenever people saw Pitambarbha on his way to the outskirts, none dared to indulge in any mischief. The sound of his footsteps was a strong signal to the notorious elements to be sober. Who can, though intensely agitated, continue to quarrel when he is around?"

Just a cautioning sound of his throat would calm down the womenfolk rowing in public.”

Chhaganlal was born to such a pair of parents in the darker fortnight of *Aso*, in 1919 of Vikram Era, in the village Saradhav. In the year 1925 of Vikram Era, Pitambardas moved to Ahmedabad in connection to his business. They used to live in Shambhuprasad Laskari ni Pole in Ahmedabad and ran a business of timber.

They continued to engage in devotional activities in Ahmedabad too. In fact, the prospects of meeting and associating with the saints and devotees increased there. Consequently, before dark lines of deceit and guile could streak the tender mind of young Chhaganlal; it was conditioned by values of love and devotion; and association with virtuous people, and singing of *bhajans* reinforced those virtues. Before he attained an age when a person is likely to succumb to temptations owing to peer’s pressure, his father, Pitambardas had initiated him to learn weaving of brocade on a handloom. A trade like that can also leave an indirect but deep impression on a person’s mind. The process of weaving, indirectly makes one focus on a certain point of mind, and in that way facilitating one to slip into meditative state. One continues to operate mechanically on a loom and mind can indulge in deep thinking. Of course, depending on one’s degree of virtuousness, one’s mind tends to soar high up or dip to a lower plain. At that point of time, Chhaganlal had not reached an age when one would like to indulge in deep thinking but the virtues and good values were ingrained deep into him and their positive impacts were obviously felt during his young days and continued to manifest later also.

Chhaganlal was made to learn weaving and other skills related to the family business at a tender age of eight, which was, in fact, an age of merriment and studying. He could not attend any formal school. However, associating with saints and virtuous people and listening to discussions about religion shaped his young mind. His prudence grew as he matured in age. At the

age of eighteen, he attained such an insight and had become well acquainted with many of religious theories, that he longed to have firsthand knowledge of those *shashtras*. But he was illiterate and the ocean of coveted knowledge was stored in various books in written form. Only because of his incapacity to read, he could not access those valuable volumes. He realized the real worth of education at that age. With the passage of time, this realization about the need of education got reinforced in different contexts and ways. He was so much convinced about the necessity of the formal education that in his enthusiasm of learning, without any feeling of discomfiture he enrolled himself in the school of Khundha Mehta in Lunsavada at the age of eighteen. Not only that, in his zeal to learn to read and write, he completed the study up to the level of grade four within a short span of ten months only. He also learnt book keeping and methods of accountancy.

Is not it a delightfully pleasant design of fate that a youth almost illiterate until the age of eighteen became a crusader of spreading education and illuminated even the remotest areas around his native place by lighting the lamp of education? It is in a way, a recurrence of the miracle performed by Kalidas, Premanand or Narsimh, who become renowned literates despite their late access to literacy.

Period of these ten months was the most important and eventful in the life of Chhaganlal. Why only for Chhaganlal, this period was a catalyst for changing the fate of the Northern Gujarat region. Had Chhaganlal not longed for education and not enrolled in the school of Khundha Mehta, he would have, then, confined himself only to the business of weaving brocade, or he might have indulged in trading or returned to his native village and tended the farming. But then, his qualities like thoughtfulness, understanding, entrepreneurship, patience among the others would have remained confined to his personal life and use. In the absence of various mediums of communication, public at large would not have come to know or benefit from them. He, too, would not have been a

champion of education in North Gujarat.

After receiving education from Khundha Mehta, Chhaganlal's life took an important turn and changed considerably. His vocation changed. He took a job at a shroff company of Professor Jethalal Swaminarayan's father Chimanlal Swaminarayan.

The period between eighteen to thirty years of Chhaganlal's life was important in a way. After working at the *Shroff* for some time, he started his own business of timber. He came in contact with different sorts of people and the field of his experience widened. The experience of this new occupation required the use of the skills he had acquired through study. Consequently, he emerged as a stronger person and his interest in reading also increased. On the other hand, the frequency of meeting and interacting with the saints and sages also increased and made him cultivate his genuine interest in the study of Vedant scriptures. He studied *Vicharsagar tattvanusamadhan Anusandhan* and some other scriptures from Swami Hridayanand Sagar at the age of thirty.

After he turned thirty, he wound up his business of timber and returned to his native. He started attending his family business of farming, and as mentioned earlier, also started trading in cotton and cottonseeds on a small scale. His interest in studying scriptures was getting stronger. Here, he focused and contemplated more on *Panchikaran*, *Vicharsagar*, *Vritiprabhakar*. His learning of these texts was so deep and intense that people, and at times, saints started approaching him for better understanding of those texts.

Chhaganlal continued to evolve spiritually as he lived through life. Soon he was thorough with texts like *Yogvashishtha* and *Brahmsutra* and simultaneously he continued to read biographies of great men, saints and spiritual *gurus*. He used to recite the *bhajans* of Kabir for hours together. He had memorized each and every stanza of *Vicharsagar* of Nischaldas. He used to quote profusely from teachings of *Rishi Astavakra*, *Guru Nanak*,

Guru Govindsinh, Joan of Arc, Abraham Lincoln, Booker T. Washington.

Constant study of the scriptures and his close acquaintance with the learned saints, made Chhaganlal internalize the principle of non-duality (*Advaita*). He developed loving kindness towards all the living beings. In fact, the base of his attitude of feeling oneness with every living being (*Atmavat sarva bhuteshu*) was developed at this stage. His life mission of '**Do Good Get Good**' is the fructification of this phase of his life.

Jagubhai, his grandson, reminiscing his childhood days, when the atmosphere of his home was highly charged with the talks on spiritual knowledge and *bhakti* (devotion) says, "My grandpa was very fond of being in the company of the saints and sages. He would be in a different mood in their presence. He would discuss the scriptures with them, and sing *bhajans* and *padas* of Kabir. At that time his face would light up. He used to chant the *mantras* of '*Shivoaham*' and '*Aham brahmasmi*'."

Jagubhai's narration shows how such an atmosphere proved to be conducive to the other members of the family. "Narankaka was always found lost in his own world and would cry aloud the word-chant "*Shivoaham*' every now and then. He started talking about his newly acquired knowledge of the vedant and patriotic feelings to anyone and everyone irrespective of their age and inclination. The following dialogue between grand-father and grand-son shows how Chhaganbhai's zest for Vedantic teachings was inculcated into the minds of the kids of the family:

"He used to ask me," says Jagubhai, "Tell me, who are you?"

"Jagu."

"Show me where is Jagu."

"I used to respond by showing my nose, ears and other parts of the body," continued Jagubhai, "But each time he will say that

that is an eye, ear, nose, so on and so forth. When I point at my body, he will laugh and say, 'You are not that body. You are one with Lord Shiva. Your body consists of five elements like earth, water, light, space and ether.' I used to respond to that by saying, "I cannot see such things in my body." he used to explain me, "See, our body is made of five elements. You are not that body because the body grows or shrinks. But our soul does not grow or shrink. You are christened but that is to identify the body. If you are named as Jagdish instead of Jagu, it would not have made any difference to your existence. And if you were just a body, you would not say 'Pa, my body is dirty, please help me to have a bath.' "

Between the periods of thirty to fifty-five years of his life, a dual facet of Chhaganlal's personality was distinctly visible. Both the facets were very strong and powerful, yet so distinct that while observing one, we might not have the slightest glimpse of the other. Let us try to create an image of Chhaganlal from the following description:

'Chhaganlal loved to be among the saints and hermits. He would be in a different mood and world in their presence. He would discuss the scriptures with them, would also sing *bhajans* and *padas* of Kabir. At that time his face would shine with a distinct glow. His used to chant the mantras of '*Shivoaham*' and '*Aham brahmasmi*' in a deep voice.'

Now try to imagine another picture:

'Chhaganlal, annoyed and infuriated, bursting at the people of his community, "You are not relishing *laddus*, mind you, but you are eating blood and flesh of a poor farmer. Should one indulge in prayers for the peace of the soul of the deceased or should one devise a doom for the deceased family? You all are unscrupulous and ruthless. May you be doomed!"

After studying the natal charts of Buddha, Mahavir and Hemchandracharya, astrologers had predicted that they would

turn out to be either a powerful monarch or a great ascetic. All these instances showed that they embraced the path of spirituality rather than yielding to the pleasure of the mundane world and temptation of being sovereign rulers. Their inclination had always been towards philanthropy. We are not aware whether Chhaganlal's horoscope reflected any such turning point in life, but he had two alternatives. Either to strive to lead the people of his community to the light of reforms or a path of asceticism, leading to self-realization. He had developed an ability to take leadership in both the fields.

His inners self pined to tread on the spiritual path of self-realization. He longed to remain engrossed in the universal bliss of non-duality by embracing the path of asceticism. On one auspicious day, he decided to follow the voice of his inner self and left for Kashi. There he undertook an in-depth study of *Vriti Prabhakar* under the guidance of Swami Keshavanand. Chhaganlal became a disciple of Keshavanand. Swamiji was not only illuminated spiritually with the light of knowledge, his eyes glittered with loving kindness for all. His behavior to the visitors of his *Ashram* was warm and benevolent. His personality had not a slightest trace of haughtiness. Chhaganlal aspired to embrace the path of asceticism. He wanted to be initiated as an ascetic by Swami Keshavanand.

One day, when Chhaganlal was climbing up the steps of Swamiji's *Ashram*, he saw a young man, sitting on the steps. He looked very depressed and gloomy. Tears were rolling down his eyes. Chhaganlal stopped by the youth, his heart filled with deep compassion for him. In order to soothe the young man, he said, "From where have you come, brother?" "I am from Kanpur." "Who are you?" said Chhaganlal. "I'm a son of a poor farmer," was the answer. "Why do you look so distressed? I can see tears in your eyes." The conversation drew attention of Swamiji. He came out. The distraught man had perhaps come there to seek solace at the feet of Swamiji. He could not control his sobs, as he saw him coming. Swamiji listened to the tale of his woes. He had lost his house and

belongings during the days of unrest at Kanpur. He had none to turn to. He saw no point in going back to his native and eke out living. He was illiterate and had no hopes for being employed.

Swamiji was aware of the pitiable plight of the farmers and the villages. He was filled with compassion to see the poverty and illiteracy of the poor people of Uttar Pradesh. Although the tale of the farmer youth was slightly different in nature, his hopeless condition shook Swamiji intensely. He gave some succor to the young man and later he said to Chhaganlal, "Did you notice that the young man is a victim of circumstances? Despite his age and strength, he is not able to do anything. Neither his body shows any sign of vigour nor does his face reflect life. Had he received some formal education, his plight would have been different. Chhaganlal remained silent but his eyes sparkled with an answer. Swamiji remained contemplative for some time. Then he looked straight into the eyes of Chhaganlal and said, "You often talk about your native..." He paused, Chhaganlal nodded in affirmation. Swamiji continued, "You are longing to become an ascetic, aren't you?" "Yes, Swamiji, I earnestly hope to tread upon the path of asceticism. I have been cherishing that dream for years." Swamiji gazed at the horizon and as if reading something from there, he said, "If you have faith in me, forget about following that path." "Why, *bapji!*" exclaimed Chhaganlal. "Go to your native, instead, and do something to improve the condition of your people." "What should I do?" "Help them come out of their gloomy condition. Do something to remove their ignorance. That is the only way for their wellbeing." Chhaganlal stared at Swamiji with total faith and earnest. Swamiji continued, "Your personal well-being depends on that." "Service to God, devotion, salvation and everything else can be accessed through it. Your soul would bloom with satisfaction of doing good," he added.

So many impulses flooded Chhaganlal's mind. He had cherished a dream of leaving behind this world of maya (illusion) and aspired to attain liberation by striving for realization of God.

In order to attain that, he had served saints and sages with great earnest. He had started to think that the moment of fulfilling his dream was about to arrive. On the other hand, Swamiji was pointing exactly towards the goal, for which he had strove so hard throughout his life. Not only that, he mentioned that both his purposes would be served by following that path. Chhaganlal was convinced about the inevitability of spreading education. Swamiji was perhaps aware of that, that is why he must have thought that, Chhaganlal would be able to implement it with conviction and would fulfill that to great extent with his undeterred efforts. Swamiji need not reiterate that measures taken for the well-being of the humankind was a great *yagna* in itself.

Swamiji, looking to the perplexity of Chhaganlal, said, "I know what perturbs you." Chhaganlal articulated his apprehension, "I know, the path showed by you is the best but from where should I begin?" "What is your problem?" said Swamiji. "I have taken initiative to bring in reforms but I have no experience in the field of education..."

"Don't say so, Chhaganlal," Swamiji interrupted him, "You've got everything required for that work." He picked a five-rupee note from a vessel and handing that to Chhaganlal said, "Now do not delay. You'll achieve your goal in due course. And once insight will be coupled with sincere efforts, there won't be any dearth of followers to help you to further in your mission."

As Chhaganlal held the five-rupee note, he felt that his meridians were vibrating differently. He could feel a surge of vitality and spirit. He realized that he was fated to be a part of some divine plan.

Union and Congregation

Chhaganlal was convinced about his life mission when he returned from Kashi. He had no doubts, whatsoever, that the sole goal of his life was to lead the members of his community out of the darkness of illiteracy. The only way in sight was spreading literacy. Swami Keshavanand had not only inspired him, but had attached a great significance to this noble work by a gesture of gifting him with a five rupee note. It was, in a way, an indirect blessing. Accepting that gift was an irrevocable promise to Swamiji. It signified a commitment to fulfill the long cherished desire of serving the community. Swamiji had provided a kind of motivation, which was in fact a greatest challenge. His faith was put on test. It was difficult to decide how to start the task and from where to start it. Chhaganlal was not even sure regarding how he should commence the work in the absence of any supporter or accompanists. None was really interested in the field of education in those days. There were not many people with whom he could share such thoughts. No doubt, some youth were already in favour of bringing reforms but the slow and supposedly sluggish process of reforms through education did not attract them much. They were dreaming of changing the society overnight. They wanted to prove their prowess in going against the flow of orthodoxies. They wanted to disintegrate evil practices, superstition and blind beliefs in just one go.

As the time lapsed, Chhaganlal was getting restless. His was not a goal that could be achieved by gathering a mass and

delivering speeches. It was really an uphill task with twofold responsibilities. He was supposed to not only spread education, but also to develop adequate infrastructure for it. People simply did not realize that education was necessary. Chhaganlal had to convince them to send their children for study. To establish schools and to accommodate those children was not easy, as that required a huge investment of money. But he had no fund available except the five-rupee note given by Swamiji. Nevertheless, there was no dearth of the virtues like patience and astuteness required to convince people regarding necessity of spreading education. Besides, Chhaganlal had experience of doing such a work. In order to accomplish his task, he took recourse to striking examples, arguments, anecdotes, and would even endure insults, if required. Surprisingly, he was capable of using highly intellectual and ironical language to shake a person to the roots. Here is one such instance. Of course, this had happened eight years after he had established an institute of his dreams but it is an appropriate example of wit and irony. It also exemplifies, how common man disliked the wise talk of spreading education and used to turn away from it. Chhaganlal recounts his experience in the following way:

“We moved from place to place and tried to convince the members of our community that education is the best medium to overcome our problems and can redeem us. But whenever we tried to put forth our arguments in favour of spreading education, we encountered arguments from the elders of our community, “How can education help us in any way? We are farmers and getting educated will not help us in any way in our occupation. See what education has done to Devkaranbhai of our village. Education has rendered him incapable of lifting a weight of forty kilograms of two maunds. On the other hand, the son of Dwarka of our village, after incurring debts after his father’s death, immediately shifted to Mumbai to work in a factory of a blacksmith. He earned twenty-five rupees a month and within five years was free of the debt. Tell me brothers, had he gone anywhere to study? Education has messed up

the situation for us. It breaks up marriages and people have started filing cases in the court. It leads to imposing fines on those who got their children married at an early age. And as if that was not enough, the government would imprison them. All such practices are initiated by the educated people. Don't even mention the word 'education' in front of us. I would rather advise that fellow, Moti, not to send his son to school, he would certainly run away. See what happened to my brother-in-law. He went to school to study and now he has turned against the rite of community feast on the thirteenth day of the demise of one's kin. He claims that child marriage is a crime. Were our elders fools that they had started those practices?"

I said, "How can we call our elders fools? But the elders of the other communities must be fools that they did not encourage such practices in their communities. Would you take some pain to think about the ancestors of those people who composed volumes of scriptures, studied the motion of stars and planets, studied science of earth, developed a branch of study like astrology, wrote treatise on the Vedas, invented boats, trains and airplanes to travel in the water, land and sky, who invented wireless and many other things, which we may not be able to count on our finger tips. Tell me, will you call them fools? Should we call them fools just because they do not follow the practice of marriages etc. like us? And you can choose to call their ancestors fools, but you cannot call our elders fools. Can't you see, their ancestors came here from Europe and are ruling us, indeed, they were fools that they could do so, weren't they?"

Then I would turn to someone to begin a new thread of conversation:

"Look here, brother, how many sons do you have?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"I'm just asking you."

“I have three sons.”

“What are they doing?”

“One of them works here in our farm, second one works in a factory in Ahmedabad and earns thirty rupees a month. And the third one is at Mumbai.”

“What does he do in Mumbai?”

“What do you mean by what does he do? He is a labour, what else would he do?”

“Where does he work? Many Patidar families live in Madhavbaug and are employed as labours at various places.”

“My ward lives with a Bhatia family and fetches thirteen rupees a month, exclusive of his stay and meals. Tell me, brother, what’s wrong in that? Do we really need to study to earn? Recently, during the wedding in the family of his employer, he was given a tip of five rupees.”

“He scrapes and scours the utensils at his employer’s house, doesn’t he?”

“Is scouring and scraping any mean job? One should be ashamed if one indulges in stealing and pilfering, or when one evades to spend on the final rites of one’s parents.”

“You deserve to be complimented. What to say of the descendants of ‘wise’ elders! Obviously, the forefathers of the employer of your son must be fools that he could manage to take away our children from here and make them scrape and scour in their houses. They were indeed fools that they did not encourage the customs like child-marriages, casteism, unnecessary expenditures on marriages and utilized that money in business and trading. Whereas, our ‘wise’ elders have left very precious ‘wise’ customs and practices for us so that we have started seeking employment in the houses of the descendants of ‘those so called fools’ and

have started accepting odd jobs not suitable for a son of a Patidar.”

But such persuasive conversation did not prove to be much effective. As the time lapsed, Chhaganlal was getting impatient. At last, as if a part of a divine plan, he received a letter one day. It was from a well educated youth called Naginbhai Vrujlal Patel, who was earnestly interested in bringing in reforms. The letter was lengthy and ambitious. Chhaganlal was elated to read it.

The letter runs as under:

“I have come to know that you are interested in social reforms and are very active in this field. I have also learnt that you have accomplished commendable work to fulfill the objectives suggested by the well-wishers of Kadava Patidar Parishad. But I feel that the efforts of our society and local groups are not adequate to achieve desired results and no significant reforms have been observed so far.

Purushottamdas Lallubhai, a well wisher of our community, contemplated a lot over a solution to resolve all the issues effectively and had reached to a conclusion that only by spreading education we can achieve the desired result. He thought of establishing an institute to impart ideal education. He has also thought of having it in Kadi, as it is a centre from where one can outstretch to the members of our community in the surrounding areas. Unfortunately, he died before the idea could be implemented. But we have kept the thought alive by continuously being in contact with the like-minded people. We also keep on meeting the leaders of our community in different areas. Almost a year has been lapsed but nothing concrete has been achieved. Consequently, we have decided that without waiting any further or depending on any group of particular people, on the day of '*Akshay Trutiya*' in the year of 1975 of Vikram Era, we'll set out to contact people for this purpose and visit different villages during next ten to twelve days. We

have also decided to campaign vigorously for this cause on the next full moon night at the fair of goddess Umiya at Unjha.

We seek your support in this regard, hence we have written this letter to you and a few others. We request you to remain present at the fair to support our cause”.

Chhaganlal read the letter. He read it again and again. With each reading, he felt his entire being pulsating with utter joy. He was amazed that the letter contained exactly the same matter as he was pondering over for past some time. Each word of the letter echoed his own ideas. He was happy and content when Swami Keshavanand counseled him. Now once again he had come across something in the letter of Naginbhai that reflected his thinking regarding how to spread literacy and education. He was immensely happy with this coincidence.

He decided to visit the fair at Unjha. The word ‘decide’ is not proper here as there was not anything that he needed to contemplate and then come to any conclusion. The scheme seemed to be his own and there was no scope of thinking that he was going to visit the fair to accept someone else’s invitation.

He reached Unjha on the full moon day of the month of *Vaishakh*. A few other like-minded leaders were also present there. As mentioned in the letter, the leaders from the Shertha village had come in a large number. Chhaganlal and Naginbhai met for the first time. They might have seen each other at some other conventions or gatherings but they were not acquainted. A feeling of enthusiasm was written all over Chhaganlal’s face. His eyes were shining brightly. He was quite advanced in age but he was agile like a youth in his mid-twenties. Instead of saying that he was under the influence of Gandhian thought, it would be better to say that his entire family was wedded to Gandhian ideology. He possessed an ability to grasp the situation and get a way out of that. He could judge a person within moments.

Chhaganlal was slightly over five feet and five inches in height but because of his Gandhi cap, five inches taller, and with rustic footwear he seemed six feet tall. He was slim but strong. A spot, showing his devotion to Lord Shiva, marked his forehead. Wrinkles revealed his advanced age but the sparkle in his eyes would put even a youth to shame. His deep voice sounded like a thunder cloud. Naginbhai, all though meeting Chhaganlal for the first time, was immensely impressed by him. The two struck up an instant rapport and immediately after a little formal communication, they started evaluating their toils. One of them called it like pouring water on a leaf to water a plant. Another compared it with an act of daubing the ground with cow dung. Nevertheless, both of them agreed to one thing, that their efforts whatsoever, had not gone in vain, and the seeds of reforms were sown. It had started sprouting and people had also started realizing its importance. At that moment, profound, pervasive, quick and long lasting efforts were required. The prerequisite was spread of education, as it reinforces the values inculcated in children. ...

Other invitees were also present around. Occasionally they approached them, greeted them, asked about their well-being, interrupting the conversation, but both of them paid a little attention to such interruptions and resumed their conversation immediately. Owing to the fair, a huge crowd surged around. The task was to identify the right people from that gathering. In the beginning, nobody seemed to be stopping at one place. They were moving, for some time to the backyard of the temple, to the square of the temple or at the gate of the temple, discussing the condition of the community, their customs, reforms and education. Evidently, Naginbhai's efforts yielded some fruits. Eventually, two leading figures emerged out of this entire affair, one was Naginbhai Vrujlal Patel and the other was Chhaganlal Pitambardas Patel.

4

From 'Chhaganlal' to 'Chhaganbha'

The fair of Unjha was a success in the term of mobilizing public contacts. A healthy atmosphere was created in favour of education. Consequently, leaders from different areas decided to meet again to contemplate and chalk out a concrete plan. They dispersed with renewed hope and faith.

Naginbhai continued his efforts. A gathering of the Patidars of Kadi and its adjacent areas was to be held at Saradhav on Sunday, on the tenth day of the month of *Jeth* (May 8, 1919). In this gathering also the issues of reform and spread of education for the alleviation of the community were discussed. An additional advantage of this gathering was that the delegates had assembled there specially for that purpose, so they espoused the idea of education being an instrument for social reform. They were required to think about the solutions and strategies. The base was already prepared and they did not lack in enthusiasm either. Therefore, they could function without any friction or apprehensions. They could come forward with constructive suggestions. They unanimously decided to establish an educational trust. What they required was to decide whether that institution be started in a form of a day school or a residential school, and at which place. However, they lacked in the skills and perception of starting such an institution. For them, the foremost aim of starting such an institute was character building of the children of the community. The purpose was to free their minds from superstition, calcified ideas and evil practices and train them to be polite, religious-minded and

patriotic. Moreover, a school has to follow the government norms and regulations and that may hinder in fulfilling the desired aim, or the result can only be partially achieved. Furthermore, until some sort of accommodation was provided, students of the remote areas could not avail this opportunity, and only the students of the surrounding areas would be able to attend the school. It was decided that a boarding should be established. The question was: where should boarding be started? One option was to have it in the area of North Gujarat, because there were limited number of schools. Among them, two places were considered to be central to Patidar community, one at Mehsana and the other at Kadi. The latter offered a better prospect as it was an administrative centre of the area and well connected with surrounding villages. Moreover, it was more convenient from the community's point of view. Naginbhai, in his discussion with Purushottamdas Lallubhai, was in the favour of this place. Purushottamdas believed that because of its location, Kadi was a proper place as communication with villages of Patidar community could easily be established from there. Naginbhai also held the same view point. However, everyone thought of reaching a general consensus in this regard. Finally, it was decided unanimously that the boarding should be started at Kadi only.

The direction was decided, the span was apparent and to execute that rapidly and properly, a society was formed. It was named as 'Kadava Patidar Kelavani Uttejak Mandal.' The proposed boarding was named as 'Kadava Patidar Vidyarthi Ashram.' The members of the executive committee were appointed. Naginbhai was selected as the Honourary Secretary. Everyone else present in the meeting promised to help the institute to the best of his capacity.

Nevertheless, one of the significant incidents of that meeting was Chhaganlal's vow. He declared in the meeting that "until the boarding was started, he would abstain from taking sweets." At a first glance, such a vow hardly merits our attention. Not touching sweets does not mean much because eating sweets is

not a necessity in any individual's life. Abstaining from it is not a great sacrifice at a personal level. A person can live for years without eating sweets. But the gesture of taking a vow should not be measured by an ordinary yardstick, as it symbolized a promise. It was a promise tendered to his community and society. It was a constant reminder to one's self, regarding the task one was determined to accomplish. This vow would continue to remind Chhaganlal on every occasion, auspicious or otherwise, about his mission. On each new occasion in his life, Chhaganlal would be compelled to think of his vow and he would continue to take stock of the situation; how much had been accomplished and what was yet to get done. Above all, such a gesture signified his commitment for the cause. In other words, indirectly he pointed out that even the enthusiasm of others might be on wane, Chhaganlal would continue to endeavour to achieve the goal. Even if all his companions were to leave him, he would continue to strive and would not rest until the end was reached. In his words, "People will watch over me owing to this vow, and I do not want to be a laughing stock for them."

Reflecting on his vow, Naginbhai had stated in his speech at the time of laying the foundation stone of the *Ashram*:

"Although in a ripened body, Chhaganlal is young in spirit. I was fortunate to be acquainted with such a sensitized, focused person. We have travelled together from place to place, village to village. I would say, we travelled extensively to fulfill our dream. Consequently, on the second day of the brighter fortnight of *Chaitra*, in the year 1976 of Vikram Era, with the inauguration of the *Ashram*, Chhaganbha's vow was fulfilled."

The period of nine months between the gathering of Saradhav and founding of the *Ashram* was full of activities for Chhaganlal and Naginbhai. Relentless work, extensive travel, working hard to collect funds to start and later maintain an institution, and above all, while doing it, experiencing indifference and mocking of people at times, all of these were an integral part of the

predicament. But there was no question of turning back. And such bitter experiences were not altogether unexpected. The pace of work and results were overwhelming. The leaders who had declared their support, proved true to their words. Support and willingness to be of some help of philanthropist leaders of Shertha and Adaraj looked very promising. As the institute was supposed to be founded at Kadi, frequent visits to that place were natural. Many a time Chhaganlal was required to stay there overnight. Although he was hardly alone, a couple of other leaders would be with him. The arrangements for their accommodation were also thought of. Chhaganlal, Naginbhai and other leaders that evinced interest in starting of the institute used to stay at Shri Vitthalbhai and Shri Purushottamdas (Daskaka). Kashiba, mother of Vitthalbhai and Daskaka used to look after the guests with affection and warmth. This arrangement suited all.

The society had the capital of rupees 85/- received as a donation from the people of Shertha village. The *Ashram* was started in a dilapidated old building at the south-west of Kadi with strength of seven students. On that very day, Chhaganlal was bestowed a title of 'Chhaganbha' and was addressed by that title only. In other words, a serious, brave, serene and unexciting person was on the verge of getting transformed into a person with a heart full of parental love and motherly affection for her children.

The inmates of the *Ashram* were unaware of how many ordeals their 'bha' had faced or how many more such trials still awaited him. But before we have an assessment of those trials and tribulations, we will have recourse to how the Ashram was managed in 'Bha's' own words:

"Shri Vitthalbhai Ranchhoddas accepted the responsibility of supervising the activities of the *Ashram* without any expectation of remuneration. Shri Khodabhai Zaverdas took the responsibility of maintaining the accounts.

Basically, the *Ashram* was run on the donation of cash and grain

from surrounding villages. The number of students increased after seven months. We realized the need of a permanent staff to supervise the conduct and study of the students. When the *Ashram* became financially stronger, Shri Kuberbhai Chhotalal Patel was appointed as a rector on the third day of the month of Kartik of 1977 of Vikram Era (28/10/1920). At that point of time the Ashram was supported by the villages around the Kadi region, the *panch* of *Mota Bar Gam* of Dandavya and *Kadi Ru Mahajan*. But occasionally, the Ashram faced financial crunch. On couple of such occasions of dire financial situation, the management of the Ashram realized how difficult it was to run an institute like this.

The Report of 1976-77-78 of Vikram Era reflects the financial status of the Institute:

“Up to 1976 of Vikram Era, in its initial days, for the first six months, to be precise, the *Ashram* was more like an ordinary inn, as most of the people from the management were preoccupied with other activities related to the community. For raising the fund for the institute they had to travel extensively in the surrounding areas. Consequently, no one could take care of the daily affairs of the Ashram. The members of the management would return with the collected money and deposit that to the shop of Shri Khodidas Zaverdas of Kadi. Vitthaldas Ranchhoddas would take this money from Shri Khodidas to buy supplies as and when required to run the Ashram. None could oversee the daily affairs of the students. Form 1977 of Vikram Era, a supervisor was appointed to look into the day to day administration of the Ashram. In the due course, other volunteers and leaders also started sparing more time for the activities of the *Ashram*. Those who visualized the idea of establishing this institute wanted it to be modeled after an ancient gurukul of our country. However, since they had also to shoulder the responsibility of raising fund, their dream of an ideal institute did not materialize. The level of their success largely depended on the perception on the hired local administrators. Now, we intend to focus more on the administration so that our aspirations can be translated

into success immediately.

A prayer meeting is organized in the morning as well as in the evening. And singing of *bhajans*, *kirtans* and delivering small talks are part of the evening prayer meeting. We intend to improvise this practice. We hope to introduce reading of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, followed by a brief discussion on the scriptures. The students recite 'Purushottam Yoga,' the fifteenth chapter from the *Bhagvad Geeta* at the time of morning and evening meals, which gets over by the time the food is served. Complete peace is maintained as the students are busy chanting the text and owing to it, a sort of deep religious serenity lingers in the air.

Towards the end of 1976 of Vikram Era, twenty-four inmates were registered in the Ashram, out of which twenty-one cleared their annual examination and three failed. Out of these three two students were promoted to the next grade and the remaining one, who had got admission just a month before the examination could not make to the next grade.

The next year, in 1977 of the Vikram Era, forty new students were enrolled and eighteen from the previous list left the institute. Consequently, forty-six students remained with the Institute. In 1978 of Vikram Era, from the first standard to the matriculation class, fifty-two students were enrolled."

This report contains a note on the general traits of the personality of students applying for the admission to the *Ashram*. A couple of samples of these notes are presented here to give an idea regarding the scope and nature of the task the administrators of the Ashram had to undertake. An excerpt of the report runs as under:

"The students are usually very simple and straightforward by nature. Since they hail from a rural world, they find this new world strange and full of wonders. They are never taught about what to do or what not to do. One has to train them

into how to sit, how to rise, how to eat and drink, how to talk, sleep or walk and how to wear clothes. They are to be taught everything like a tiny tot, not only that one has to pay lot of attention to make them 'unlearn' their deeply ingrained habits and behaviour. Consequently, each student that stayed with us showed a remarkable change in his language and behaviour.

Although the parents are aware of the addiction of *hookah*, they hardly advise them to abstain from such a bad habit as smoking tobacco or *hookah* was considered a sign of high life style among the members of the community. Moreover, at times, they are asked to light it by puffing it for their elders. Owing to that, the addiction to smoking has been observed in the new entrants. It was very difficult to de-addict them. They learnt to abstain from smoking in the course of time but they often stole a chance to smoke.

A child will not endure any discomforts or injustice and it is natural for them to complain or quarrel on that account. However, the same habit of intolerance is observed in the adolescents too. They have not learnt to tolerate, bear up, help or cooperate with others. They inherit such traits of character from their homes. Such flaws of character are more common in the students of our region than their counterparts elsewhere. It can be said that they reflect our society. The children of Patidar community are physically strong and can handle any physical task with agility. Nevertheless, they lack in skillfulness and cleverness. Because of that, it is difficult to divert them from their ingrained behaviour and beliefs.

To add to this, none of the boys could pursue his study continuously for four to five years and be in our company, because, within two to three years, he is asked by his parents to go home as by that time his wife would enter puberty, and he had to go home for the occasion of bringing her from her parents' home. Even if the boy is not willing to abandon his study for such a cause, he is forced to do so, and if he denies, the parents would threaten to stop to support his study. Thus

all our endeavours of raising fund, expenses incurred on each student and for grooming him go in vain. May God save us!

The building, in which we used to run the *Ashram* was called *Amin no Dehlo*. It was very old and after the rise in the number of the students, we were short of space. The ceiling leaked in the monsoon and if it rained incessantly, the students were put into great inconvenience. They had to shift their beds continuously owing to the leaking ceilings and at times, when finding a dry spot became impossible, they, all drenched and shivering, had to keep awake the whole night. This would disturb Chhaganbha to the core. As the time passed, this matter grew into a big issue. Temporarily, a part of the temple at *Khakh Chowk*, in a nearby area was hired. It eased the issue temporarily but that was not a permanent solution. Chhaganbha announced another of his resolution –he would eat just once a day until the boys get their own boarding house, in place of a rented building.

A new phase of work began for Chhaganbha. He had visualized an ambitious dream. He wanted to start such an educational institute where not just twenty-five to fifty students could study but a place where hundreds of them could be taught life skills besides the formal education. He wanted the light of this lamp of knowledge to be spread among all the villages and people of Patidar community. A building of one's own! To materialize the above dream, how huge that building should be? It was a great challenge but Chhaganbha was not a person to be intimidated by such challenges. When such an arduous task is set by one's self, one generates inner strength to face it. A very strong yearning was guiding Chhaganbha. His resilience was strong like steel bars. This invincible yearning motivated Chhaganbha to accomplish greater task each time. What a dream to have a huge building, resounding with gaiety of two to three hundred children! A place with large play grounds, a dinning-hall and a gaushala (cow shed), with many cows so that each inmate could get enough milk to nourish his body....!!"

This was a dream Chhaganbha wanted to transform into reality.

But at that particular time the management of the Ashram was facing an acute financial crisis, and an institute of his vision would require a huge amount of financial resources. From where one could get money? And how? Moreover, Naginbhai, his companion was preoccupied with the administration of the Ashram. Chhagabha perceived that he was required to raise money single-handedly. He had to shoulder the financial responsibility in order to reach his destination. But would such a challenge dishearten a person like him? He had realized from the experience of last one and a half year of running this institute that despite any such trying situations, their work had not come to a standstill. He had his finger on the pulse of the people. He knew that although short tempered, the members of his Patidar community were simple and innocent by heart and would never disappoint him in fulfilling his noble cause. If not in cash, they would support his Institute by donating grains and other items in kind. They would be rooting for him in his hard times.

Without wasting a moment, Chhaganbha commenced his work. He moved from village to village without respite. If one cares to probe into the sources from which he got support, one would realize the enormity of his efforts. It was a clear indicator of Divine Will. Chhaganbha had deep respect for monks and sages. We have already seen that he loved to extend his service to them and try to win their blessings. He used to get lots of support and blessings from such people. We already know that he received blessings and five rupees as a token to spur him on for this work by Swami Keshavanand. In the inaugural function of the *Ashram* building, Chhaganbha had quoted another such incident:

“Once we had reached the moment of imbroglio. Our coffer was totally drained off, and our immediate concern was how to feed the boys. We thought of setting off for begging to raise fund and told one sage about our intention. He said, “In that case, I will be the first to give you money in alms.” His contribution and encouraging gesture boosted our enthusiasm,

and from that day, our balance has never dipped that low.”

On another occasion, one saint said to Chhaganbha to spare a space for saints like him in the Ashram so that he and a few more saints could visit the place, stay there and teach the inmates the scriptures and virtues. Another saint said to Chhaganbha, “We’ll arrange for our stay. We’ll pay you Rs. 451/- as per your norms to construct a small room for our Swamiji.”

The most encouraging incident occurred in Vaishakh in 1977 of Vikram Era (06/06/1921), when the *panch of Mota Bar Gam* of Dandvya region donated us an amount of Rupees 6907.50 with the condition to buy and construct a building for the Institute. Then onward, we have continued to receive encouraging financial support from different villages.

A Report from Shri Chhaganbha and Shri Popatbhai as the members of the financial committee gives a clear picture of the surging response of the people in the following words:

“While working for this noble cause, we realized that nothing is impossible to achieve when one indulges in selfless service and painstaking efforts. Public is always ready to support good deeds. What we lack in is sincere workers. If we have adequate number of people who are capable of moving around to collect funds from village to village, the institute would never face any financial crisis.”

Kadava Patidar Vidyalaya

On a cold winter night, the administrators of the institute had assembled in *Ashram* of the section of *Khakh Chowk* building. Professor Jethalal Swaminarayan had come from Ahmedabad. Chhaganbha, Naginbhai, Chaturbhai and Kuberbhai, the warden, were engaged in the discussion of a serious issue. Kuberbhai had put forth a question regarding craze about private coaching among the students and their parents. The students were living in the boarding but were studying in a government-run school. They were tempted to have private tutors like their local counterparts. The inmates of the *Ashram* were supposed to follow a particular schedule of sweeping their rooms clean, attending the morning and evening prayers and mass drill. Barring these activities, they were literally free for the whole day and had ample time for study. Moreover, they could seek guidance from the warden, if required. Nevertheless, disregarding the warden's advice, the boarders had started joining for private tuitions. Consequently, their schedule at the *Ashram* and their commitment to their study suffered. The administrators of the *Ashram* had assembled to find a solution to this problem. Chhaganbha's abhorrence for the practice of private tuition was evident in his speech at the time of laying of the foundation stone of the boarding, "The decease of private coaching has spread among all the school imparting education through the medium of English. But its prevalence among the boarders of the *Ashram* makes one shiver. As a result, we felt a necessity to start a school along with the boarding. Then only the efforts of the *Ashram* would be appreciated and the hard-earned money of the parents would

be rewarded.” Chhaganbha reiterated the same opinion in the ongoing meeting. He strongly advocated the inevitability of starting a school of their own.

All the members consented to this idea. They dispersed with the conclusion of having their own school for not only curbing the evil of private tuitions, but also for imparting quality education, as to expect such a thing from a government run schools was futile. They believed, “Education imparted in the Government school or the private schools following the government norms and regulations makes the students bookworms. Their natural, inborn talents are not honed. They remain ignorant of practical ways of life. Their inclination for religion gets stifled. The education that does not teach the history of one’s ancestors and does not tell them anything about the exploits of the Aryans, and the tales of bravery, valour and grandeur of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* is not an education in the real sense. It seems that the scriptures have been devoured by the termites. And our experience says that respect for the elders is getting waned owing to this system and method of education. Dissatisfaction rather than contentment prevails. Debate on economics rather than spiritual topics is on the rise, giving way to materialism. Money is worshipped like a deity. The simplicity, contentedness and blissfulness of life have been displaced by dissatisfaction, dissension and desire for material pleasure. Everyone has started realizing this truth...”

After contemplating on such issues for quite some time, they came to a conclusion, “The experience of last two years has made it obvious that by enrolling the inmates of our boarding to government schools, our purpose of inculcating the values of altruism, kindling a true spirit of our ancient culture, making them tread upon a path of righteousness by teaching to purify body and mind, and teaching them to be self sufficient is not going to be served. In order to achieve our goal, we need to have our own school, otherwise the expense incurred on them is almost a waste. Under present circumstances, we cannot expect them to develop a will to do good. We cannot impart

education steeped in moral, ethical and religious aspects. Unless we have our own school, such ideals are not to be fulfilled. ...”

None had any doubt regarding establishing their own school anymore. Not only that, all were keen on having one. But a few were apprehensive about materialization of this dream. Somebody raised the doubt, “But how can we start a school?”

“Why can’t we?” said Chhaganbha.

“Do we have resources for that?”

“What resources do we need to have?”

“First and foremost, we need a building. Where would we otherwise take classes?”

“We have a building, haven’t we?”

“Do you mean this building?”

“Yes, we’ll ask the inmates to adjust to it.”

“But this building does not have adequate infrastructure to run a school here,” commented someone.

“If it lacks in some facilities, we will rent another building, what’s a great deal about it?”

“We may arrange for a building but what about other expenses? What about the salary of the teachers? That is the largest expenditure.”

Chhaganbha appeared casual in his talk on the surface so far but on hearing it, the expression on his face changed suddenly. He pulled on his hookah until the water made a gurgling sound, puffed out three to four rings of smoke and spoke in a heavy but decisive tone, “Why are you worried so much for the expenses? If we start such a great ‘yagna’, should we

be impeded on the account of lack of money? I'll manage for the required finance. It is not really an issue. Start working for starting a school."

Everyone stared at Chhaganbha. All knew how difficult it was to run an Institute without enough fund. Chhaganbha was talking as if money grew on trees. Had he something specific in sight? Had he come across a generous donor? Can anyone accomplish such task single handedly?

Someone said, "We can start a school in our enthusiasm but later if we have to close it down on account of lack of money, won't people ridicule us? In addition, the stability of the *Ashram* will be at stake."

Chhaganbha's eyes shone brightly. He could read the minds of his colleagues. "Don't think that we are in minority," he said, "If some people criticize us that does not mean that everyone supports them. Some enlightened souls are with us. Did you notice? The panch of Dandavya gave away even the last paisa of their collection in donation to us. Try to sense the sentiment of people from this incident. We can induce a person to donate all his savings to us but to convince a panch of a village to donate their collective income for a cause is an exceptional thing. I implore you to understand the situation. Are we insane that we fail to take advantage of people's sentiment? To plead a couple of philanthropists for generous donation is not so difficult but to convince such a big mass of people to part with a collective collection of money is more than a modest achievement. That too, in this case, from the panch of a community! I strongly believe that only irrational people will waste such an opportunity. I know a couple of competent people. They have promised to stand by us. I have already talked to them."

"Who are they?" someone asked. "Dhansha Bhagat and Madhavji of Adaraj."

Everyone stared at Chhaganbha with respect as if some huge burden was removed. They were trying to grasp the height of his towering personality. At that particular moment, he was not Chhaganlal Pitambardas Patel, an ordinary resident of Adaraj, or not even 'Chhaganbha', a popular parental figure of the inmates of the Ashram. He stood apart as a leader among his colleagues, a steadfast, enduring and adept person, determined to lead them out of all obstacles. Remarkable fortitude could be read all over his face, his eyes shone brightly and his lips curved in a smile displaying his truthfulness.

All said in unison, "Well, then let us convene a meeting of the administrative committee and pass a resolution to this effect."

A meeting was held and a resolution regarding starting a school up to the ninth standard was passed. The institute was fortunate to get sincere teachers dedicated to the Gandhian ideology. Shri Kuberbhai Patel, a government employee, was the student of Shri Kamalashankar Trivedi who had given up his job to render his service as a rector in the Ashram. Shri Popatlal Gulabdas Patel, who had not appeared in the final graduation examination in response to Gandhiji's call to boycott the British formal education system, and later had graduated from the Gujarat Vidyapith, was appointed as a principal. Among the other faculties were Shri Chhaganbhai Kalidas Patel, who had left his study like Popatlal at the intermediate level to be graduated from the Vidyapith and Shri Purushottamdas Ranchhoddas Patel, who was better known as Daskaka in his later days.

From the third day of the brighter fortnight of *Falgun*, of 1978 of the Vikram Era, (01/03/1922, Wednesday), with the approval from the State of Vadodara, a school called 'Shri Kadava Patidar Vidyalaya' was started. Initially a permission to run the school up to three standards was obtained. Seventeen students were enrolled in the first level English (up to three standards). Towards the end of February, total number of the students in the first three levels was seventy-nine. The building at Khakh

Chowk was not big enough to accommodate so many students so they shifted to a new building called Bandukvala Haveli, in the area opposite to Malhar Rao's palace. The next year they started the next level and the total strength of all the four levels was 101. And gradually, in 1924 -25, the fifth level was also introduced.

Within the six months of starting the school, Shri Nandnath K. Dixit, the Education Officer of the State of Vadodara, visited the institute and had written the following report, which gives a fair idea regarding how well the institute was run from the beginning:

"I observed the functioning of this school, which sustains on the donations. I also interviewed the students to assess the quality of education. They are taught up to the third standard English. Four teachers are employed, one of them holds a formal graduation degree and another of them has his training from the system of *Pathshala*. One of them also supervises the affairs of the *Ashram*. All of them have joined in the institute with a pious mission of serving their Patidar community. No wonder, owing to their selfless service the institute is run very satisfactorily. When people assemble to work together to serve, the result of such an effort is always good and quick. The sitting arrangement is exemplary. I am really pleased to see that instead of incurring unnecessary expense on the benches, they have adopted an arrangement in which a student can sit in a homely way, at a little distance so that his eyes are not stressed. It is heartening to observe that although the institute is supported by the people of the Kadava Patidar community only, the students of other communities are also enrolled. The Patidar community seems to have suddenly swayed by the wave of awareness. Many youths have come forward to serve their community. The community should take utmost advantage of their enthusiasm.

I would be glad to see the institute excel in all fields."

The management was really keen about an all-round development of their students. They introduced vocational training programmes in the institute. Training was provided for the courses like carpentry, weaving, printing and music. With that the institute made a dent at a national level and one of the consequences of this endeavour was a visit by Mahatma Gandhi at a later stage.

Undoubtedly, the contribution of sincere teachers in the development of the institute could not be undermined but Chhaganbha was at the core, or say, he was the soul. Shri Bapubhai Gami, the principal of the Institute, had rightly stated in the condolence meeting held to pay homage to Chhaganbha, "To strive forth was the motto of his life. He was full of so much of the life force that within no time of initiating a project, he would start thinking about a few more. If someone would suggest of discontinuing the fifth grade of the Vidyalaya, he would say, "Let us introduce the sixth grade and also the matriculation class. We want to establish a college and also an ideal school for the girls. We should also start big industries. Having *gaushala* and agricultural farm of our own are must for us. It is also advisable that hostels for the students of other community are also started here."

Laying the Foundation Stone

The School was run smoothly in the building called Banduk Saheb ni Haveli. The building is known as Bakravala building these days, and is situated near the revenue office of the taluka. Along with the academic curriculum, spiritual, religious and ethical values were also inculcated in the young minds. Sincere and upright teachers did not leave a single leaf unturned to shape the character of the students. The Vidyalaya had carved a niche for itself with the department of education of the State. The visitors used to appreciate the activities of the *Ashram* and Vidyalaya.

Nevertheless, Chhaganbha was still restive. He constantly felt that one could not fulfill one's dream of creating an empire of academic institutions, unless one had one's own building for running the school. That was why he had taken a vow of having his meal only once a day. He was moving in that direction with constancy of aim and effort. And two steadfast companions in the form of Dhansha Bhagat and Madhavji Tribhovandas were by his side. Financial support from the *panch* of Dandavya *Mota Bar* proved to be as a catalyst to move forward in this direction.

Consequently, because of auspicious concurrences on the sixth day in the brighter side of *Chaitra* of the year 1979 of Vikram Era (19/03/1923), Monday, nine *vigha* of land was bought. Apparently, Chhaganbha could see no reason to hold back. He planned for the occasion of laying a foundation stone, and it was scheduled immediately, within a month of the purchase

of the land, on the fifth day of the brighter half of *Vaishakh* by Shri Durgaprasad Lashkari. A literal report of the event, published in the Annual Report of Shri Kadava Patidar Kelvani Uttejak Mandal (samvat 1979) runs thus:

The Occasion of Laying the Foundation Stone

Today is an auspicious day for those who strive for upliftment of the public at large. To add to the propitious nature of the occasion, a large number of Patidars, eager to alleviate their community and the country from suffering, had arrived at that early hour and were moving around with great enthusiasm, performing their bit of work actively. This particular morning was very special for not only the Patidar community but also for Gujarat, as a very heartening event was about to materialize, which was, in turn, supposed to dovetail the development of both, the community and the state. By collective efforts and strength of the members of the Patidar community, one of the leading communities of Gujarat, a foundation stone was going to be laid for an *Ashram* to cater to the need of the students of the Patidar community in particular and also of the other communities of the neighbourhood in general.

Shastri Manishankar, a noted erudite scholar had agreed to perform the rites. At the time of finalizing the auspicious moment of laying of the foundation stone, he suggested that an energetic person having the qualities of perseverance, loving kindness and fervor should dig out the first chunk of soil. Accordingly, Shri Rancchodlal Kalidas Patel of Adaraj was requested to dig the ground. He picked up a pickaxe that was specially consecrated with pious water of Ganga and *kumkum* and rice grains. He raised the pickaxe to dig a chunk of soil on a spot that too was consecrated for the same purpose in the same way. The atmosphere was filled with the chanting of the hymns:

Sahnnavatu sahnau bhunaktu sahviryam karvavahai

Tejasvinavdhitamastu mavidvishavahai. (Rigveda)

and

Sangachchhadhvam samvadadhvam sanvo manansi jeenatam

Samano mantra ssamiti ssamani saman manssah chitt maisham.
(*Rigveda*)

Facing the rising sun, Shri Ranchhodlal Patel brought down the pickaxe to the ground with great enthusiasm. His fair forehead streaked with a mark of *tripunda*, shone with satisfaction and pride and the joy of doing something noble for his community was written all over his matured face. Tiny drops of perspiration, reflecting the golden rays of rising sun created a very fascinating image of him, as if pointing towards an equally enthralling future of the students of Gujarat, who were going to avail themselves of education from *Ashram*. Once the digging was over, the rite of worshipping followed.

In order to facilitate the tender minds of the boys, who were yet incapable of conceptualizing the gravity and nature of the future path they were to follow, and in order to make that intangible world tangible for them, an image of Goddess Sarswati was invoked and later, this beautiful image was placed in the Ashram. Likewise, along with offering the pooja to Swamiji, an image of Lord Ganesha and the chunk of the dug soil were worshipped with utmost purity of mind and with the deepest reverence.

Around eight in the morning, all the invitees – local and from outside, assembled in a simple and beautifully decorated but uncluttered *mandapa* (canopy). The students recited a prayer – “*Sukhadayini Sarswati Mata tun*” (O goddess, mother Saraswati, you are the giver of all sorts of joy and happiness), befitting to the occasion. Thereafter, at an appropriate time of the laying of the stone, Shri Durgaprasad was ushered to the spot. All the invited guest followed him to participate in the worship. After the invocation of the deities, exactly at fifteen past eight, the foundation stone was laid. Jaggery and coriander seeds were

distributed as *prasad*. Again everyone, along with the idol of the goddess Saraswati returned to the *pandal*. The idol was placed at the centre and at the southern direction, ardent devotees of the mother goddess and reverential Swami Vidyanandaji and Swami Dayanandji took their places. A seat to their left was occupied by Shri Durgaprasad, who was always willing to entertain and support the devotees of the goddess. Shri Somnath Rupajee sat by him. After that other guests also settled depending on their positions and status. Shri Chaturbhai Radhabhai Amin, head of the Amin family, reputed not only among the Amins of Kadi but also among all the Amin families of the surrounding area rose to welcome all the invitees. He said that everyone was aware of the significance of the auspicious occasion. He presented a brief picture of the movement and efforts in the direction of spreading the education. He stated that owing to the benevolent intention of His Highness of the Vadodara State, an of awareness regarding benefits of education prevailed among the people. Consequently, many people had played their roles in bringing reformation in the community. He mentioned that as early as in 1963 and 1964 of the Vikram Era, an association of the farmers was founded and they attempted to introduce reforms but for some reasons that could not survive for long. However, they did contribute by stirring the minds of the members of the community and paved a path for the future. Its influence could not be ignored.

After that, many movements were observed in the Kadi area which had also left some impact. Again in 1975 of the Vikram Era the said Kelvani Mandal was established, and in the following year, in 1976 of the Vikram Era the present *Vidyarthi Ashram* was establish to provide accommodation to the students of the community. In 1978 of the Vikram Era, a school was also started for the wards of the *Ashram*. He further mentioned that he strongly believed that the credit of such noble work could be assigned to Shri Chhaganlal Pitambardas. Without his noble vision of bringing reforms at the community level, and his relentless sincere efforts, the dream of having an *Ashram* and a

school would have not been realized. His close associates and the leaders of the 'Bar Gol' have adopted this work as their own. Shri Amin added that he considered that by joining hands with Shri Chhaganlal and supporting his activities, the people had really honoured Shri Chhaganlal in the right spirit. By honouring him, they had merited honour for themselves too. Owing to their active indulgence, we have reached this stage and have expanded. He emphasized that from that particular point many more people should come forward to join hands. The first requirement of the *Ashram* is of having its own building. All of us should take it as the first priority. He concluded his speech by saying that the Honorary Secretary would provide more details in that regards.

The event came to a close amidst an atmosphere of joy and fervor. People's sportive mood was perceived On the occasion. A saint and some gentlemen announced to provide support for constructing fourteen rooms. A cash donation of Rupees 171/- was collected and a sum of rupees 1131/- was promised. Shri Naginbhai Vrujlal Patel, the Honorary Secretary of the trust said:

“We may have many more occasions like this in the future but today's event is the first and very special. It is a consequence of our determination and relentless endeavours. It fills our hearts with warmth and zest. I am short of words to articulate my feelings. At times, one has to confront criticism and abuse, and however rare, if such things might have taken place, those bitter feelings would be washed out from the memory by this continuous flow of benevolence. The hardship suffered by the leaders, may that be in a physical, emotional or mental form, or an internal or external affair of the leaders involved would have, I am very sure, is paid back today. They must have turned into an incident of past. Occasionally people question such efforts and ask what do the leaders get out of it. What personal gain did they derive from such acts? Today, such questions are answered by this august gathering. From the present response, I would say, if this upsurge of benevolence continues, then the days are not far when every household of

our community will reap fruits and benefit from this pious 'Yagna'. Those who are really concerned about the progress of the community will definitely feel happy and be content on this achievement. What else do we and can we expect to happen? If we can keep it up the same way, the days are not far when our community and through it, Gujarat will see tremendous progress.

My dear Patidar friends, I know that you struggle to survive. Your means of living are limited and yet your generosity is matchless. The flow of money poured by you is not an easy thing to do even for an affluent community. Those who have undertaken this enormous task would not have made it without your support and help. If at all we could take any pride in being born in this downfallen community, it is the fact that its roots are very old. It can boast of very powerful and accomplished ancestors. Its significance is still not lost all together. If we can replenish it with our joint efforts of will to do good, culture can again attain its lost glory."

The Catastrophe

The occasion of laying the foundation stone was over with much pomp and zest. The General Meeting of the board members was scheduled on the same day evening. None might have thought that this meeting will turn out to be a turning point in the history of the institute and that there would be lots of rows and disagreements. The agenda of the meeting was about framing the constitution of the institute. Naginbhai had drafted the constitution.

The meeting was held at Banduk Saheb's Haveli. Naginbhai proposed the name of Durgaprasad Lashkari to preside over the meeting. Shri Chaturbhai Radhabhai Amin seconded it and Shri Durgaprasad took the charge of the session.

As the meeting came in motion, Shri Naginbhai read the draft of the constitution. Those who could comprehend were shocked and astounded to hear it. Surprisingly, Naginbhai had made all the major posts like that of the President, Honourary Secretary and Warden permanent. It was a great blow to the very root of the idea of democracy within an institute; which was not congruous to the spirit of an institute that had reached its present stage by counting and saving small amounts and collecting donation in cash and kind. Obviously, Naginbhai wanted to have his and his sister's posts of Honourary Secretary and Rector respectively to be permanent. How can one consent to a constitution with undemocratic provisions? The debates and discussions turned into hot arguments. Finally, it was decided that the constitution should be reframed and for that a committee was appointed.

Following members were appointed in the committee:

1. Professor Jethalal Chimanlal Swaminarayan Ahmedabad
2. Shri Chaturbhai Hirdas Patel Chanasma
3. Shri Chaturbhai Radhabhai Amin Kadi
4. Shri Ramchandra Jamanadas Amin Vijapur
5. Shri Dahyabhai Balkrishna Ahmedabad
6. Shri Gokaldas Honsjibhai Engineer Ahmedabad
7. Shri Maganlal Govindji Engineer Ahmedabad
8. Shri Chhaganlal Pitambardas Patel Saradhav
9. Shri Vrujlal Jamnadas Patel Ahmedabad
10. Shri Naginbhai Vrujlal Patel Kadi

An ad hoc administration Board was formed to look after the affairs until a new constitution was drafted and it being enforced and a new committee took the charge. Shri Naginbhai Vrujlal Patel and Shri Papatlal Gulabdas Patel were appointed as Honourary Secretary and Co-Secretary respectively. The post of Co-Secretary was significant as it was induced by Naginbhai's ambition reflected in the draft of the constitution. The creation of this post was perhaps an indirect check on it. Nevertheless, all such measures indicated an imminent disaster. All the four teachers of the school were against the provisions of the constitution. They openly opposed it, especially Purushottamdas Patel (Daskaka) was very impolite with his verbal assaults and at times, his words were so harsh that they would scorch the listener like a live coal. Naginbhai could not tolerate it. He took some members of the committee in his confidence and one night he called Purushottamdas and informed him that he was relieved from the job. Daskaka later described this

incident during the Diamond jubilee celebration of the institute in the following words:

“Shri Nagindas drafted a constitution of Kadava Patidar Kelvani Uttejak Mandal. He made the posts of the President, the Honourary Secretary and the Rector permanent. We – Shri Popatbhai, Shri Chhaganbhai, Shri Kuberbhai and I – opposed it. We had just started the school. All the four of us, the teachers, decided to resign to show our disagreement with this provision. Had that constitution been adopted, the institution might not have bloomed the way it has developed today. How could we consent to a constitution that was dictatorial by nature when Gandhiji was fighting for democracy in our country? At that time, monthly salary of a teacher was just forty rupees. And there was hardly any scope of getting any extra income by tuition or any other means.

Shri Naginbhai called the members of the Executive Committee. He wanted them to be witness to the entire affair. They sent for me at twelve in the night. They all assembled outside the front gate of Amin’s house and informed me about my dismissal. I lost my job but the Institute was saved from dictatorship.”

The newly formed constitution committee commenced its work enthusiastically. Shri Naginbhai sent the copy of his constitution to all the members of the committee. After the committee was formed, they met after fifteen days, on Sunday, sixth day of the brighter fortnight of the lunar month of *Vaishakh* at the house of Seth Durgaprasad Lashkari at Delhi Darvaja in Ahmedabad. Professor Jethalal Swaminarayan had gone to Surat in connection to the national movement. Therefore, he could not remain present. Everyone else was present. After discussing and contemplating each and every aspect of the constitution at length for two consecutive days – Sunday and Monday, they finalized the draft of the new constitution.

This draft was presented to the Executive Committee on 01/07/1923 and the General Body meeting on 06/04/1924, and

was adopted and made effective with some minor changes. The moment the constitution was made effective, Shri Naginbhai realized that his plan was not going to work and he resigned from his post. He left the organization on the eighth day of the darker half of *Ashadh* (05/08/23) and shifted to Nagpur to join the Satyagrah movement.

The period of around three-months, from the day of laying of the foundation stone on the sixth day of the brighter fortnight of the month of Vaishakh to the eighth day of the brighter half of Ashadh was marked by uncertainties. It was a time of stalemate. The conflict regarding the constitution was not the only reason, lack of interest and indifference towards the administration on the part of Shri Naginbhai was also a crucial factor for this stalemate. Chhaganbha was preoccupied with collecting donations and raising fund for the institute. Shri Naginbhai was responsible for the administration. Reminiscent of those days, Daskaka once stated:

“Owing to the hard work of Chhaganbha, number of inmates in the Ashram rose considerably. At that time the fees for boarding and food was rupees five per month. Chhaganbha strove hard to convincing the parents to send their children to study at the Ashram and they would be ready for sending their wards to study; but at the time of the enrollment, they would express their incapacity to pay the fees. Chhaganbha would waive the boarding fee in such cases. Shri Naginbhai, his father and Shrimati Narmadaben, his sister used to look after the daily affairs of the boarding. But the triputee -Chhaganbha, Dhansha Bhagat and Madhavji were the souls of the boarding. They travelled from one village to another. But they could not raise adequate fund for running the boarding. Shri Naginbhai and his team were not aware of the reality as they hardly moved out to raise fund. They continued buying grocery and other things on credit. Consequently, they incurred a huge debt and the creditors were no more sympathetic. They stopped sending supply on credit. They were almost compelled to shut down the boarding. The Ashtsm's reputation was totally ruined in the Village”

After the discord regarding the constitution, the indifference of Naginbhai became more acute. Chhaganbha had to shoulder all the responsibility of managing the boarding. One could not afford to discontinue the fund raising activity even for a single day as the existence of the institute depended on that. On that account the local administration suffered. Consequently, almost for two months, from the day of the laying of the foundation stone to the tenth day of the darker half of *Shravan*, the construction of the building could not commence. In the words of Professor Swaminarayan, "Not even a single brick was laid during that time."

From the eighth day of the darker fortnight of *Ashadh*, when Shri Naginbhai quitted the institute, the situation became more complicated. Professor Jethalal Swaminarayan articulated his apprehension in the annual general meeting of 1923-24 in the following words:

"Last year at the time of the ceremony of laying the foundation stone, many people were apprehensive regarding the idea of raising adequate fund for such an ambitious plan. After this ground breaking ceremony, a few doubts were raised due to misunderstanding. Not even a brick was laid for the next six months. The only development was the resignation of Shri Naginbhai. Resigning and leaving the executive body by someone is natural for any organization and expressing regrets serves no purpose. When many people are involved in managing an organization, such changes are inevitable. And before the month of *Shravan*, it seemed that one might be compelled to shut down the institute or some more changes might be required."

The exit of Shri Navinbhai and the comment made by Chhaganbha in this regard reflect his innate sensibility and capaciousness. Chhaganbha has written in this regard: "This educational institution was established on the eleventh day of the brighter half of *Jeth* in the year 1975 of Vikram Era by very sincere efforts of Shri Naginbhai. The next year, by his endeavours only, on the second day of the brighter fortnight

of *Chaitra*, Patidar *Ashram* was established. And again after two years, in the month of *Chaitra* of the year 1978 of Vikram Era Shri Patidar Vidyalaya was started. Consequently, the Trust runs two institutes namely, *Ashram* and *Vidyalaya*.

I take this opportunity to express my regrets that Shri Naginbhai, who was instrumental in starting this institution, has left the trust on the eighth day of the darker half of *Ashadh*. It would be the greatest misfortune on the part of our community if we are destined to lose sincere workers and contributors on account of our internal differences. May the Almighty bestow upon us the strength to withstand the differences! May He help us in this pious work!"

Chhaganbha has also written the following account in the financial report of the trust:

"On 05/08/1973, in the month of *Ashadh* of the year of 1979 of Vikram Era, Shri Naginbhai left the trust to be part of a broader national level campaign of the freedom struggle at Nagpur. Temporarily we felt that the progress of the Trust will be impeded. But some type of activities are blessed by God, and we took it as a divine gesture. We were answerable to the panchayat chiefs of twelve villages and failing to run it would have put us into an embarrassing situation."

The above words reflect that Chhaganbha was aware of the gravity of the issue. He had contemplated over the new development but he was not intimidated by it. His will power was very strong and his faith in God was unshakable. Without a moment's dilemma, he accepted these circumstances as a divine sign and showed his willingness to shoulder the responsibility. He took it up as a challenge with full awareness that he had to fight single handedly. However, companions like Dhansha Bhagat and Madhavji proved to be a great relief and support.

A Dedicated Ascetic

After Shri Naginbhai left, Chhaganbha was vested with an additional responsibility. Even otherwise, he had taken all the responsibilities. He was the one who was struggling to keep the Trust alive. The inmates of the boarding were fortunate to receive unconditional love and care of Chhaganbha, despite all his busy schedules of fund raising and travelling. Shri Popatlal Gulabdas Patel, the Joint Secretary and the principal of the school and Chhaganlal Kalidas were by no means less competent than Shri Navinbhai in carrying out the routine of the school. Praising the work of Shri Popatlal Gulabdas Patel, Shri Jethalal Swaminarayan had once stated, "Popatlal got admission in the Vidyapith when the campaign of non-cooperation had just begun. He passed his examination and joined the institute. One can serve well when one is detached from the selfish motives. Those reveling into the worldly pleasures cannot think about the welfare of their country. Such things are unique to the *yogis*. Shri Popatlal would have earned Rs. 400 had he been a lawyer. But he could overcome his selfishness in order to serve his community and consequently win the love of the members of his community." Shri Chhaganbhai K. Patel and Shri Chunibhai Dhanjibhai Patel were also the graduates from the Vidyapith. They were filled with patriotic feelings. They had received the education that evoked national spirit. The institute provided encouraging atmosphere to the people heaving with patriotic feelings to work with full dedication. That was why some of the employees of the institute had vowed to serve it until the end of their lives. For that reason, Chhaganbha did

not require to worry much about the internal administration of the Institute.

Nevertheless, nobody of lesser stature could have put up with the kind of responsibility he had carried out. Chhaganbha was not striving for establishing a boarding school for educating the young boys. It was just an instrument or a first stride to reach his multi-dimensional goal of leading the whole community that was groping in the darkness of ignorance to the light by inculcating the ability of discrimination. His efforts were not limited to motivating the students or the parents of the children who had left their study, or to attract more and more students to get into the mainstream education. For him, the government and the government run schools were meant to carry out that task and were doing that to some extent. Chhaganbha dreamt of a multipurpose school where the children of the parents from the remotest areas, who have no connection or aspiration for education, could come and get enrolled. Right from the beginning, he wanted to construct a building that could house at least two hundred students. In the time when getting twenty students was considered very ambitious, to think of such a huge institute sounded like building a castle in the air. And that too when one's coffer was almost empty! When the construction started, they had just sixteen rupees on hand. But Chhaganbha was undeterred. The construction started on the tenth day of the brighter half of *Shravan*. One could estimate Chhaganbha's courage, confidence, patience and valour from this step. A person possessed with idea of fulfilling his goal would not leave any stone unturned. He must have thought of many a different scheme and idea to achieve his goal. A person who could dream of building a boarding that can accommodate two hundred students is surely made of some extraordinary substance. Let us have a glance at the 'Progress Report' of Chhaganbha's adventure in his own words:

"We had just sixteen rupees on hand when we began the construction of the boarding. But on the strength of that small amount the huge task was started and immediately on the

third or fourth day, a farmer of Bhatasan village near Kadi sent a donation of rupees one hundred and ten, and the next day another farmer of Untava village sent a hundred and one rupees. In another couple of days the leaders of the Adaraj village collected rupees four-hundred and fifty for the building. Soon after that Shri Ambalal Ichchhadas of Thol village also donated the same amount. Then, a flow of pledged donation started from the gentlemen of Ahmedabad. A little later, Sheth vChandulal Manilal of Viramgam sent a donation of rupees one thousand. As money poured in, the work continued to progress. Moreover, Shri Madhavji Tribhuvandas and Dhansha Jekarandas of Adaraj village travelled across the Kadi Taluka and surrounding areas and kept on sending the collection. Likewise, people of Viramgam, Anand, Patdi among the others continued to contribute for this purpose. Darbar Saheb of Patdi was generous to support the cause with rupees five hundred and one. Thus, slowly but relentlessly, our work progressed and became visible. Encouraged by its steady progress, many others joined in with enthusiasm and the financial problem eased to great extent....”

The work progressed earnestly. Within no time, construction of a huge hall was over. In spite of the ongoing construction work, the ceremony of house warming was held and they vacated the rented house of the *Ashram* on the day of *Dashera* and shifted the students to this new building. In Chhaganbha’s words, “It seems that the joy of the boys on that day was exceptional even to the gods. It was extraordinary and incredible joy that cannot be described in words.”

Among all these activities, Chhaganbha used to oversee the construction of the building. He had prepared a makeshift hut of tin sheets for himself, and he lived in that during those days. He used to sleep in that small hut at nights. In those days that place was in the outskirts, away from human habitat. Of course, the railway station was nearby but only two trains were scheduled to arrive and immediately after their departure, everyone would leave the area. The village was quite far from

the station and the six feet deep ditch quarries on the either side of the road added to the scariness of the scene. After the day dawned, a lone person would not dare to go that way. Beside a government rest house and a lone bungalow, nobody lived on that road. Rest house was used for a short stay of the government employees, otherwise, it remained unoccupied most of the time. The whole atmosphere looked lonely and creepy. The howls of the foxes could be heard from the country side at south side. And a person who occupied the tin-roofed hut, incapable of protecting him against rain-storm or scorching summer heat – as it would turn into an oven under the sun, worked undeterred for his cause. He was a *yogi* or devotee of the highest rank in true sense.

Daskaka often used to pay him a visit during evenings. However, Daskaka was not known as 'Daskaka' in those days. He was a youth of exceptional spirit and enthusiasm at that time and was known by his real name as Purushottamdas Ranchhoddas Patel, a novice lawyer. Reminiscing about those days, he has written, "I had just started my practice in Kadi. I was new to the field of law and could not understand its complexities. Whenever I went to the court, I used to develop headache. Owing to my young age and lack of experience, I hardly had any clients. It was difficult to spend the whole day in the court without any work. So I started going out to wear off the boredom and anxiety. But there was hardly any place in Kadi where one could go for fresh air as there were not any gardens or public places around. Therefore, every day I used to go to the hut of Chhaganbha and talked to that elderly fellow.

"Lack of fund does not seem to affect you. On the contrary, you keep on ordering supply of bricks and let digging continue. Won't you land up in trouble?" I asked Chhaganbha one day. He said, "You won't understand it. God will be concerned, won't he? I am doing this work on his behalf. He created the world, created human beings, isn't it his responsibility to take care of their education?"

I said, "People say that this old man is out of his wit. It is a futile effort. No students will come here for studying. And he wants to construct rooms. Does not matter, for they can be used to store cottonseeds."

"It is a wrong notion that the illiterate farmers are bound to be illiterate forever and their children will also abstain from getting education. If the farmer remains illiterate and steeped deep into the darkness of ignorance and superstitions, our country will never progress. The British empire will flourish day and night. If you want your country to progress, you need to spread education. A small lamp is enough to banish darkness. If you want to free you country from the foreign rule, if you are keen on eradicating the darkness and superstitions, then there is no other alternative but to spread education. I can see quest for education among the public. Children do not study in absence of good facilities," he said in a serious tone.

One day, on a chilled winter night we were sitting by a campfire. I thought that Chhaganbha would not survive the cold in that hut. I said to him, "*Bha*, it is extremely cold today. Won't you come to my place for a night? You can come here early tomorrow. Your presence is not required here as the labours are not going to work at night." I tried to persuade him.

"Brother, this is my penance. Even the throne of Lord Indra can be shaken by the strength of the vibrations of the energy of penance. I am determined to remain here. My dream is to start a school for children before I leave this physical body. Even if I die while trying to accomplish this task, what's wrong in it? My efforts will change the hearts of the well-to-do gentlemen of the society. They'll feel compassion and become generous. It will only accelerate the speed."

The work was in progress but the flow of income did not match the rising expenditure. Many a time it seemed that the lack of funds will cause termination of the work. But Chhaganbha would not let it slack despite acute financial crunch. Surprisingly,

some money would arrive from unknown sources. It would be worthwhile to know about such coincidences in Chhaganbha's words:

“The expenditure was much higher than my expectations. Money became scarcer and scarcer. How to pay the labours and workers? If we stop the work, we would be required to settle all the dues. But why should one worry in a selfless work like this? I was just contemplating over it, I received a mail. It was like a God personified. We had received drafts of rupees 3025 and rupees 1001 from Shri Mohanlal Hargovinddas and Shri Maganlal Muljibhai respectively, from Jabalpur. (Eleventh day of the darker half of *Jeth*, in the year 1980 of Vikram Era)

The Mobile School of Chhaganbha

Chhaganbha's efforts to raise funds, his accomplished goals and the essence of his work, taken together, were a great yagna in a way. It is not that he raised and accumulated funds only. Along with the fund gathering, a greater work of social reforms and edification was accomplished. Wherever he went, he talked about reforms. The psyche of the rural people could easily comprehend his unpretentious language, dotted with appropriate and convincing examples. During this period, Chhaganbha came across many people either individually or in groups which facilitated the spread of his ideas about reforms subtly but on a larger scale.

Sometimes, Chhaganbha travelled alone and sometimes leaders like Dhansha Bhagat and Madhavji accompanied him. At times, some teachers from the *Vidyalaya* or the *Ashram* and the warden of the boarding would go along. On some other days, he would send a group of students along with a teacher to raise fund. He himself would go with a group of the students. Involvement of the students and proper training through such activities were important aspects of character building. Now, it is considered very significant in education. Chhaganbha used to lead the students to the meetings and make them present small plays, dialogues, talks, songs among other things in front of the gatherings. Through this, the latent talents of the students surfaced and developed. It is expected of a school to be a centre of a society by building a bridge through social activities. By doing so the students could intermingle with the

society. Chhaganbha's fund raising activity served multiple purposes. Moreover, by traveling from one place to another and by creating rapport with the people, the skills of public contact, polite behaviour as well as organizational skills were developed. At times, they had to face some inconveniences regarding food and accommodation but that made them aware of the reality and helped them to understand the realities of life. Above all, they were able to be with Chhaganbha and could observe him very closely. There is no point in identifying number of benefits as many subtle aspects were involved in the process. Before teenagers turn into adults, an image of a hero is created in their tender minds, which becomes an idol and ideal for them. Knowingly or unknowingly, he imitates his idol. His vices and virtues go deep into the psyche of the teenager and stay there in the form of a seed that grows in due time and gets its root firmly grounded. Those adolescents, who were fortunate to get nurtured by Chhaganbha must have reached their ripe age today. But a survey of those people would definitely reflect an influence of Chhaganbha in their personality, as they were naturally exposed to Chhaganbha's knowledge and experience. Irrespective of whether they were staying at some place or travelling on foot, they would have the benefit of receiving knowledge as Chhaganbha would invariably tell them anecdotes, stories or incidents based on his own life. Incidentally, these days such activities are specially included in the curriculum of a school, and extra budget is allocated to them. For a cultural performance, it has become inevitable to expend huge amount for rehearsals, snacks, the services of the experts, guest artists and accompanists and for hiring a hall for the stage performance. At times, such events are organized at the expense of the study. Chhaganbha achieved it without any ado or expenditure. On the contrary, he raised funds out of such activities. That apart, it never hindered the regular teaching schedules as it was carried out on the holidays. The students were fortunate to have both, knowledge and training. Just imagine, he accomplished it at a time when no school provided any opportunity or extra activities to hone the personalities

of its students. The Patidar Vidyalaya was first and unique to provide training for industrial entrepreneurship and other curricular activities. It should be considered as a magnificent lamp that illuminated the lives of its beneficiaries. Chhaganbha had lighted that lamp. He was an avant-garde in a real sense in the field of education.

The words of Shri Pitambar Patel, an eminent literary figure of Gujarat, very aptly articulate the experiences of the students that were fortunate to travel with Chhaganbha, "I still vividly remember those days. At that time, I was studying in third grade of English. During the holidays on the festival of Janmashtami, the students were divided into small groups. Each group travelled to different areas, from one place to another. We used to perform skits, dialogues, street plays to bring awareness for reforms, and also collected donation for the institute. I was fortunate to be with Chhaganbha in the villages of Chansma Taluka. The other members of my group were –Chaturbhai Patel of Maniyari, Kalyandas of Lanva, and Kevalbhai of Ranuj among others. We moved from village to village, performing on the theme of social reforms. Chhaganbha used to give talks on necessity to bring reforms. I realized how forcefully and effectively he could articulate! People, who were not ready to listen to us, or refused to feed us, would very generously donate after listening to Chhaganbha's speech. The value of a rupee was much greater than what it is today, still we never left any place empty handed. Our journey ended at Patan. We had paused for a photograph at Ranuj station. I have preserved it even today. Then, I could not comprehend Chhaganbha's strength fully. But today, that picture has become my most cherished possession. The most valuable treasure of my life are the moments spent with Chhaganbha. I consider myself very fortunate to get an opportunity to be with an illustrious personality like him, and to listen to his enlightening words and serve him."

Late Shri Kalyanbhai G. Patel, the former Chief Rector of our boarding and former Principal of Nutan Sarva Vidyalay of

Visnagar, recounting his experience writes:

“During the holidays, Chhaganbha set out with a group of about fifteen students for collecting donation. They travelled from place to place, Chhaganbha, as usual was making them laugh by cutting jokes, typical to his personality. When he used to address the people in his colloquial language, his face shone with confidence. The villagers would get engrossed in his speech. Brief examples and anecdotes made his message easy to understand and digest.

Eventually, he reached ----- village with his team. They reached there at around ten in the morning, and stayed at a temple. Then the students walked around in the streets of the village in a procession. The sound of their songs rented the air. Men, women and children were attracted and drawn out of their homes to listen to their songs. Some of them appreciated their efforts whereas a few criticized.

They moved around for about two hours together. It was almost noon but no one from the village offered them meal. The students were famished. Chhaganbha considered the boys as his own children. He was deeply pained. No men or women of the village cared to invite them for lunch. A line of grief swept across his face for a brief moment, soon to be replaced by glow of faith. He handed the students empty cloth bags and asked them to go from house to house, begging for food. Strengthened by his faith, the students moved from house to house, saying, “Feed the students and be blessed.” In no time, Chhaganbha’s team collected a heap of pieces of rotlas. Some kindhearted women also parted with pickles and chillis. They sat together to have their meal. Their experience could only be compared with Lord Krishna relishing the tandul brought by his childhood friend Sudama.

The next day we set off for another place. A couple of students of our team were from urban areas, and had never been to villages. We collected fund from that place and prepared to

move further. As we were about to leave, some wise leaders of the village felt that they should invite the students for meal. Chhaganbha could not disregard their warm invitation. They served the group with sweet dish. At another place, Chhaganbha arranged that a student should be sent to each house. He instructed the boys that they should accept and eat whatever was offered to them with a relish. A boy was offered rotla and kadhi, which were not properly cooked. The boy could manage to gulp down the food somehow, but as soon as he stepped out of the house, he puked out the food. But the boy did not show any sign of complaint, and kept on smiling. A question of disappointment or pain does not crop up when one is carrying out a labour of love! Irrespective of the quality of the rotla and kadhi by the old lady, her love and affection for them were immense. Chhaganbha never missed a single chance to inculcate wisdom in the tender minds of his students. Travelling with him was in a way like attending a mobile school. The so-called educationist of today boast of adding a component of learning through self experience but Chhaganbha had made it effective long back. Such expeditions provided practical knowledge to the students.”

* * *

At nights, he used to discuss principles of *panchikaran* and *Vedanta* through simple examples. Whether a student was clever or dull in his studies hardly mattered to him, but any flaw of his character really perturbed him. Shri Bhailalbai G. Patel, a very close associate of Chhaganbha, who had worked with him until he was seventy, and looked after most of the administrative affairs in the trust office, vividly remembers a stimulating account in the following words:

“Once after completing the round of fund raising spree, we were returning on foot from Chhatral. To walk across the farms is an experience in itself. And Chhaganbha enhanced the joy by narrating numbers of anecdotes, jokes and witty tales. In order to amuse all, he used his own example to elaborate a

proverb like 'A scrawny labour is the fastest to wrap up his work'. A tale about how a person evaded a bear by deceptively sending him to a farmer made us all roll on the ground with laughter. However, at noon, hunger started mounting on us. But no human habitat was in sight. Chhaganbha asked the students whether they wanted to eat something. Everyone was extremely hungry. Chhaganbha was not unaware of their reply. He made us sit by a well and said, "What shall we do now?"

We had nothing that could be used to cook food, though we were carrying some wheat flour. Everybody stared at Chhaganbha. Curiosity was evident on the faces of the students. Chhaganbha, wanted to satiate hunger of the boys immediately. But he was testing them. After a while he said, "The real test is to cook food without proper resources. I'll show you how to do it."

Amidst the astonishment of everyone, Chhaganbha took out a clean towel and said, "Let us knead dough. He kneaded dough in the towel and asked us to collect some dry sticks and leaves to light a fire. A sort of hearth was prepared. But what next? What about a rolling stone and rolling pin? Under Chhaganbha's instructions, we prepared bati. We baked it on the fire. What to say of the taste of laddu shaped round bati cooked directly on the flame! Even today I can distinctly recollect its taste."

We come across several indications of *Bha's* exceptional speaking style, therefore It would not be incongruence to elaborate more on his eloquence. He was a magician of words. Those who have had a chance to listen to him would vouch for me. Pitambar Patel, looking back over his experience, says, "Chhaganbha could talk uninterrupted on reforms. His words felt like hot lava when it came to the matter of evil customs of the society. Yet his language was never loaded with pretentiousness and verbosity. His simple and direct language dotted with convincing examples from everyday life touched through the hearts of his listeners. His audience would stand enchanted! His effective and forceful style would compel even the most orthodox among the

orthodox to agree with him. Consequently, he would induce people to donate generously for his cause. He had never returned empty-handed from any place.”

On the occasion of the Second Student Convention on 4th and 5th November, 1928, Kakasaheb Kalelker in his presidential speech mentioned, “One hardly comes across speeches that can be compared well with those of Chhaganbha’s in their quality and style of delivery. In my entire life, I have not been fortunate to listen to such speeches on more than four to five occasions besides this. That is why, I would suggest you at the beginning of my talk that if ever you think of imitating someone, let Chhaganbha’s inspirational speaking style be your model. Because it is easy to understand and simple and not born out of verbosity. It is a direct outcome of his experience of working selflessly for many years. I am really impressed by his oratory.”

10

Fund Raising Activities

Once the institute was established, the next great challenge for Chhaganbha was to generate income and resources to run it. He was already sixty by that time. With an advancing age, the body slackens, the senses don't cooperate, and the capacity to work for long hours diminishes. The body and mind long for rest and relaxation. But the load on Chhaganbha increased day in and day out. At that age he was required to travel extensively to collect fund. Transport was not easily available. One had to walk a long distance from one village to another. One cannot reach the destination on time and one's schedules of taking meal becomes erratic. Moreover, one has to make many adjustments, physically as well as mentally while staying at different places at night. But nothing really perturbed Chhaganbha as if he was guided by some divine force. He was never weary of travelling or meeting people. He was always in good mood. He looked contented with the donation, irrespective of the amount. At times, he wrote account of his fund collection spree but has never mentioned his displeasure regarding receiving paltry amount. He also had some bitter experiences and some of them are known to all, but he has not mentioned them anywhere. Of course, lack of unity among people at any place would hurt him and he has expressed that briefly in his writing. He had deep faith in innate virtues of humankind. He saw moral rectitude everywhere.

His efforts carry more significance as the class to which majority of donors belonged was not an affluent one then. Many of them

out of which the donors who donated larger amount are as follows : were under financial debts. At times Chhaganbha had to be content with just a rupee or half a rupee contribution. Under such circumstances, to raise fund to construct such a huge building and to meet the recurring expenses of a developing institute was not a mean task, especially when the amount received in donation was so small. After a rigorous effort, when one would settle down to calculate, the final figure would be so small! The following sheet of account gives an idea of the low number tally:

On the first year, that is – the year 1979 of Vikram Era, total donation reached a meager figure of rupees 1297-9-0 and during the second year the figure reached to rupees 2039-1-0.

During the first seven years, barring the contribution from the community, village panch, panchayats (a group of village chiefs) and government agencies, only five people had donated rupees thousand or more. They were Sheth Durgaprasad Lashkari, Sheth Bechardas Lashkari, Sheth Somnath Rupjidas, Sheth Trikamlal Gopaldas and Shri Chandulal Manilal. Messrs Vardhaman Brothers limited, a company from Mumbai was also one of them.

During the eighth year, names of four more donors from Rangoon who donated more than rupees one thousand were added to the list. Among them all, only Sheth Somnath Rupjidas had contributed more than rupees two thousand and one. During all the eight years total number of donors who had contributed over rupees five hundred and one were seventeen. Twenty donors had contributed four hundred fifty-one.

Total collection of all the 137087-1-3, out of which the donor who donated larger amount are as follows :

His Highness Sayajirao	4060-15-0
Kadi Prant Panchayat	8300-0-0
Kadi Mahal Panchayat	1600-0-0
Dandvya Mota Bar Gam nu Panch	7981-9-0

Kadi Kalol 42 village Panch	3000-0-0
Vadhiyar nu Panch	2001-0-0
Sattavis Gam nu Panch	1000-0-0
Betalis na Sattavis Gam nu Panch	0500-0-0
Chorasi nu Panch	0500-0-0
Dandavya na Nana Bar Gam nu Panch	0451-0-0
Kadi Ru Mahajan	2549-10-0

These days, when we are accustomed to hear the figures of donation in millions, above figures appear surprisingly meager. That was not the time when one could amass fund in thousand or lac. That is why Chhaganbha and his supporters constantly travelled around to gather donations and try to reach to the farthest places to cover newer areas. When getting fund in cash was impossible, he had no hesitations in collecting food grains and wood. He never felt dissatisfied with whatever he received. He has stated in his account on fund raising pursuits:

“The figure tally shows that the trust has mainly survived on small donations. It is a brilliant example of what can be achieved through the donation of one rupee per house.”

* * *

While working for the institute we have realized that nothing is impossible to achieve for those who have altruistic attitude and can work relentlessly for their cause. Common people are always happy to support good cause. What we lack is willing volunteers. If one has sufficient numbers of volunteers, they can be sent to different villages, and the trust would never face financial crisis, and its activities can be spread all over Gujarat.”

In order to have clear idea about how Chhaganbha managed to raise financial resources, let’s have glimpse into his written account in this regards:

Visits of Villages

“We paid visit to Shri Gangaram Naththubhai of Vidaj on tenth December nineteen twenty six. He very benignly obliged us by helping us to collect six thousand kilo of dry wood. He himself also donated some pieces of logs. Then by going from door to door, he gathered rupees fifty for us. He accompanied us to Adaraj on twentieth December. The kind-hearted people of Adaraj collected paddy rice for us, then we visited the mukhi’s house, and along with Dhansha, Ranchhodlal and Prabhudas, I set off for Thol. There also we collected paddy rice. From there, Dhansha and others went to Vamaj and collected paddy rice from there. Then I went to Borisana. Where, a person called Maganbhai Visabhai donated a trunk of dry tamarind tree weighing about 4000 kilograms. Then Dhansha Bhagat, Ranchhodlal and I visited Vijapur, and from there to Hirpura.

We arrived at Ladol. There we stayed at Dhanjibhai’s place. At evening all the Patidars assembled there. They spared a small amount from the common fund of the village. They have been constantly supporting us. Raiben, a widow of Gopalbhai Dungarbhai has promised to donate for a room. Such generous hearted women deserve our highest respect.

From there, Dhanjibhai and I went to Malosan. We sat at the chora (courtyard) there. After a while, Kuberbhai, the village *Mukhi* (chief) and a few others came to meet us. Within a few hours they collected a big amount from the enthusiastic villagers. We found people of that village very warm and affectionate.

Immediately we set out for Gerita Kolwada. Revabhai, the *Mukhi*, was aware of our schedule and was waiting for us at his shop. We stayed with him. In the morning he invited all the leaders of the village. They all were also very cooperative and helped us generously. Our next destination was Chadasana. There we stayed at Revandas Bholidas. Many of the leaders were away, in spite of that Shri Magandas Kuberdas, Shri Tribhovan Bahechardas and Shri Ganeshji helped us generously.

From there we moved to village Vel. We stayed at a *chora* (courtyard). Soon the *Mukhi*, came and arranged for our meal. After a while the villagers assembled there and they collected donation from each house. We could collect a large amount from that place. People were cooperative and enthusiastic. They also subscribed to our magazine '*Kelavani*'. We left the place with satisfaction.

From there we travelled to Mandali. It is a small place. We stayed at a temple. At night people assembled and collected donation in cash. The next day we moved to Shri Kalidas's place. Many people came to see us. There also we got warm response. They showed lots of affection to us. Next target was Vasai, where our accommodation was arranged in a boarding. Owing to the efforts of Shri Ratilal Dahyabhai Amin, a rector (who later joined Kadava Patidar Ashram of Kadi as the Rector), Shri Ravi Shankar, the principal of the school and a few other leaders, eighty students are studying there up to fourth level English. Twenty-eight students live in the boarding. Four teachers are employed who work very sincerely. We were told that the school badly needs a good building. The village was supposed to get connected by railway line to improve the situation gradually.

We had decided to go to Gozaria. We came across a very good farm of guava fruits. Unfortunately, because of the wedding season of the Amins, most of the leaders were not around. So without stopping there, we returned to Kadi via Saradhav.

Later we went to Gomtipur in Ahmedabad. Shri Ranchhodlal Bhagvandas generously donated sixty kilo of guava fruits for the students of *Ashram*. We were fortunate to get some donation in cash as well. If people like Gangaram Naththubhai, the *Mukhi*, of Vidaj and Dhanjibhai Motibhai Patel of Ladol come forward to volunteer for fund collection from each village, things will be much better. I earnestly pray the Almighty to fulfill our above desire."

Chhaganlal Pitambardas Patel
Honourary Secretary

Regarding his two chief companions in fund raising activity, Chhaganbha has stated, "In fund raising efforts, Shri Madhavji Tribhuvandas, Shri Dhansha Bhagat and I were the key figures. It is necessary to note about brief biographical details of Dhansha Bhagat. Although he is a householder, he leads a life of austerity. His vigorous life style would put any youth to shame. Besides tilling and farming, he looked after the education of his son. He has reared his motherless son and competently ran the house. Furthermore, among these all, he would also steal time to set out for collecting donation for the trust. Such was his busy schedule and he is still leading such a busy life. On the other hand, Shri Madhavji, having an extended family, was always able to spare time for philanthropic activities.

Dhansha Bhagat and Madhavji, both were natives of Adaraj. They had significantly contributed during the initial stage of the Ashram. Their involvement was just not limited to the physical aspect only. It was much more than that. In order to highlight their efforts and project a real picture of the enthusiasm of the people of Adaraj, it would not be incongruous to cite one instance in Chhaganbha's words:

"On the tenth day of the darker fortnight of *Maha* in the year 1980 of Vikram Era, that is to say, on 15th Feb. 1924, on the occasion of consecrating the idol of Lord Ram in the newly built temple, the inmates of the *Ashram* were invited. On the insistence of the invitees, almost all the inmates of the *Ashram* had gone to take part in the ceremony. Who will not be elated to see so many little angels? The villagers had amassed at the outskirts to welcome the rows of lively and cheerful students. Everyone went to the temple. The chapter called "*Purushottam Adhyaya*" of the Geeta was being recited. The villagers, who knew it, also joined in reciting. After the recitation was over, people wondered how they can felicitate their young guests. Shri Dhansha Bhagat took a lead and donated rupees 101/-; and motivated by that, within a half an hour rupees 3855/- were collected from that village consisting of one hundred and twenty-five Patidar families. The villagers proved that

they just do not recite the chapters from the Geeta but also practice the message of that holy book. It is not that people of Adaraj are more prosperous, or god is more merciful to them or they receive more rain. But the gesture reflects their love for education. Not through mere preaching but by actual action, they set a precept that there is no other alternative for education. When such a love for education will build up in each village, the community will be elevated.”

While discussing an account of raising financial resources, one particular point merits attention. Once the Trust became self sufficient, the next requisite was to make it spread its branches in different direction like a great banyan tree. All know that in that matter the contribution of Sheth Shri Mafatlal Gagaldas and his sons is noteworthy. His donation amounts to lacs of rupees. But, when the Trust was still in its initial stage, and Sheth Mafatlal used to live in a lane of Ahmedabad. While living there, he and Chhaganbha had come quite close. Whenever in need, Chhaganbha contacted Mafatlal for some small favours. In this regards, Shri Bhailalbai, a student of the first batch of the school and a close acquaintance of Chhaganbha has quoted a well-known dialogue between Chhaganbha and Mafatlal:

“On a hot summer day, the students had just returned from their morning shift and were having their afternoon siesta after lunch. Chhaganbha was sitting upright and cross-legged by the door. Four to five students, eager to hear to his enthralling accounts, sat around him. Chhaganbha said, ‘I often go to a wealthy person for favours. He never disappoints me but I am not satisfied with small amounts he gives. But I accept whatever he pleases to part with. I would approach him again after some time and ask for a bigger amount. He would say, ‘This is enough for today, we’ll see next time.’ Once I told him, ‘Sheth, this will not do. If this continues, I’ll have to think of acquiring all of your wealth somehow. He stared at me with amazement. He asked me, ‘How will you do that?’ I said, ‘I’ll pray to the Almighty to give me a birth as your

son. And once I inherit your wealth, I'll donate that for the cause of education."

Interestingly, the trust received lacs of rupees from Shri Mafatlal Gagaldas and his family later. However, in the beginning, whatever small amount we received (although, in those days that 'small' amount was also not really very 'small'), we continued to receive that contribution till the end. Even today, the Trust receives rupees two hundred per month- that is to say, annually rupees 2400/- . A very good practice started in 1928, still continues and cannot be measured by any worldly yardsticks. It has transcended all the mundane boundaries of giving and donating and has become a landmark of noble sentiment. Its worth can never be judged in terms of money.

The administrators of the Trust had accomplished something more than just raising financial resources. As mentioned earlier, in the year of 1966 of Vikram Era, the Patidars of Kadi Prant (District) had paid about two to two and half lakhs of rupees in the state government treasury as fees against permission for exemption from prohibition of child-marriage act. With regards the refund of the amount paid, the state government had resolved that His Highness would take necessary action in the matter in near future. On 14/02/1925, a deputation went to request Divan Sahib to allot that amount for the cause of education to the trust. The deputation comprised of Sheth Shri Durgaprasad Lashkari, Sheth Shri Somnath Rupdasji, Professor Jethalal Swaminarayan, Sheth Chhotalal Shamaldas, Shri Prabhudas Bhavsangdas Patel, a member of the then legislative assembly, Shri Tulsidas Gopaldas Patel, Shri Chaturbhai Radhabhai Amin, Shri Chhaganlal Pitambardas Patel (Chhaganbha), Shri Dhanshabhai Jekarandas Patel, Shri Ramchandra Jamanadas Amin, the Secretary of the deputation.

In the beginning, Shri Prabhudas Bhavsangdas introduced the members of the deputation. Then Shri Ramchandra Amin gave an elaborate introduction of the Trust and explained the

purpose of the meeting and requested the Minister to donate the amount tendered as a stamp fee to the magistrate to the Trust for the educational purpose. Professor Swaminarayan stressed the fact that till the year 1979 of the Vikram Era, the said Trust did not have its own building and any financial resources. Nevertheless, within a short period of one and a half month Chhaganlal Pitambardas, Shri Dhansha and Shri Madhavji have collected twenty thousand to raise a building and on the auspicious day of *Dashera*, the ceremony of entering into the newly built house (i.e. *Vidyarthi Ashram*) was performed in order to occupy it.

To reinforce the request, Chhaganbha said, 'We are like toddlers. If the government, like a caring parent, provides us a little support by holding our finger, we'll be able to walk on our own. Moreover, we are like earning offspring of the State, and it is the government's duty to sustain us.'

Diwan Saheb replied, 'It is government's responsibility to support such activities. You (Kadava Patidars) are our worthy sons and it is our obligation to help you. Give me an application containing your demands and expectations. I will check with the provisions and orders of the government. I am on my official tour to Bahucharaji and Chanasma. At that time I'll visit your institute. It deserves our attention.'

As he had promised, Diwan Saheb visited the institute on 26/02/1925 and had expressed his satisfaction in the following words:

"His Highness intends to make his subject happy. In Amreli we had started classes and farm activity to bring reform in agriculture. I was fortunate to be part of that project but people could not take advantage of such efforts. I am pleased to say that the objectives of this Institute go well with His Highness's idea of welfare. It is the duty of the officers of the state to extend whole hearted support to such institutes."

Besides, an entry in the visitor's book he has written, 'This institute deserves encouragement. I am eager to see it prosper in the future.'

Consequently, an order was issued to help the institute with the sum of Rs. 2000/- for next three years, effective from the year 1925 -26- (from 21/09/1925, to be more precise) and it was increased up to Rs. 3000/- in the year of 1928-29 for the next three years.

Distinctive Identity of the Institute

The visit of His Highness Shri Sayajirao was an exceptional chapter in the history of the Institute. Not because an eminent and noble personality like His Highness had paid a visit but because during that visit, a unique and distinctive characteristic of the Institute came to the fore. Even today, in free India, there are organizations that go helter-skelter during an inspection by a petty officer. It was a different time. The institute was not against the sympathetic approach of officers. But at the same time, it was not willing to take any action that will tarnish its image. During the visit of His Highness, a sort of drama was enacted that revealed a brighter side of the institute.

It would be worthwhile to know about it in the words of Daskaka, a firsthand witness to this drama:

“His Highness of Vadodara State, Shri Sayajirao arrived in Kadi on 03/01/1926. He used to visit all the eminent institutes, during his tour of his State. The administrators of the institutes were informed in advance regarding his visit. According to the schedule, he was to visit the institute on 04/01/1926 at eight in the morning. Sheth Shri Durgaprasad Lashkari and Professor Swaminarayan, the two key figures of the Institute had come from Ahmedabad. Everyone was busy with the preparation to welcome His Highness.

On the previous night of the scheduled visit of His Highness, the Commissioner of Scout of the Vadodara State approached us. He insisted on founding a scout troupe in the Ashram. He

wanted the scout flag be handed over to the scout troupe by His Highness. At that time, a scout had to take an oath in the name of 'God, King and Country'. Popatbhai, Kuberbhai, Chhaganbha and I debated over this issue with the Commissioner. The talks continued for two hours. It turned out to be a hot argument. We believed that many kings ruled this country and were forgotten. Even on the throne of Vadodara state, many rulers had reigned over the time. Therefore, we were not in favour of taking a pledge in the name of any king. Moreover, in this pledge, the term 'king' meant the king of England. The British ruled over India in his name. India wanted to become free, taking an oath of faithfulness to the king meant, accepting his sovereignty forever. That denotes betraying the aspiration of independence of India. We clearly stated that our students or we could not take such a pledge. We would take an oath to be faithful to our country only.

The Commissioner was offended and returned to Kadi Rest House. He reported it to Diwan Saheb that the Institute was rebellious. Diwan Saheb talked to His Highness, and with his permission called off his visit. We received the message regarding the cancellation at one in the night.

Chhaganbha, Prof. Swaminarayan and Sheth Shri Lashkari were intimidated immediately. Everyone was unhappy. Prof. Swaminarayan returned to Detroj by five o'clock train in the morning. Sheth Shri Lashkari returned to Ahmedabad by his car. However, the students were not informed and unaware of the change, they prepared the band in the morning for a drill. They were all ready in their drill uniform.

His Highness, along with one of his ADCs, set out to have a stroll at the station at around eight in the morning. The Ashram was just across the road. He thought of visiting that institute of rebels. He decided to observe the rebelliousness of the Institute. He crossed the railway tracks and moved towards Ashram. As the students saw him approaching, they assembled at the gate to receive him. The band played the welcome song.

His Highness walked behind the band troupe and entered the premise. The students and the teachers followed him.

The Rest House was not far from the railway station. As Diwan Saheb and others came to know about His Highness's changed plan, they rushed to the Ashram.

His Highness peeped into the rooms of the inmates, he checked their school bags and books. He also saw the spinning wheels. All the students were dressed in handspun khadi. He also learnt that spinning wheels and handlooms were part of the school curriculum. He noticed piles of spun khadi. In the library he flipped through the books. He also visited the printing press and inspected the printed literature, and finally he took his seat on a cushioned couch spread for him at the southern end of the kitchen area.

Chhaganbha delivered a welcome speech in his honour. His Highness continued to stare at him and finally, in his speech he mentioned, "The previous night, I was informed that your institute is an insurgent and I had cancelled my visit. But as I was having a morning stroll, I took a fancy of coming here. I have very closely observed everything and I feel that if my officers call it a rebel Institute, I wish, such insurgency should exist in each village. I had dreamed of having such institutes in Navsari and Amreli, but I failed in my mission. Here I see my dream coming true."

His Highness returned to the Rest House, much pleased and content about the Institute.

At around three, we received a message that His Highness had arranged for a feast for all the inmates of the Ashram at seven in the evening. He had decided the menu and had asked us to intimate him when the boys had finished their meal. He said that he would have his dinner only after the boys had finished.

One More Hue of the Rainbow

The institute was about to complete ten years of its existence. Chhaganbha had created a world, almost out of a void. A huge building with a large square was already constructed. In the southwest corner of the square a circular platform was built. This platform was used for morning and evening prayers. The students would sit in the crystal clear sand and recite the chapter of *Purushottam Mahatmya* from the *Geeta* in an even and rhythmic tone. They also sung selected *bhajans* from the '*Ashram Bhajanaavali*' in melodious tone. Chhaganbha, the principal of the institute, and invited guests would address the students from that platform. From time to time, skits or dialogues based on moral issues were also performed.

On the northern side of the huge square building, stood a strongly structured gate with an arch that reminds of an ancient sculpture. As one enters the gate, one comes across another similar arcs and two raised *otlas* (an open space for sitting) of the height of the plinth. Chhaganbha used to sit on this *otla* (an open space for seating) watching the small children indulging in innocent chats and joviality. Once that large gate was closed, the world of these children would be closed in, safe from the outside encroachments. It was planned that with the construction of a couple of rooms on the south-west side, the entire area would become secure as a fort. And they hoped to accomplish that soon.

At the back of this square building, stood another rectangular structure, adding to the tight security situation. In that enclosed

square area, the east and south sides were secured by the walls of the dining hall. The workshop, press, library and reading rooms were constructed on the west. In between these two sections, area of around ten feet was left open for passage. It was an ideal plan by today's standard as well.

Opposite to the building of the *Ashram*, surrounded by eight feet high walls, an open swimming pool was constructed. Beside the pool, a well was located. Every day, at dawn, water was pulled from the well and the swimming pool was filled with warm ground water, and the students enjoyed a vitalizing bath in the pool.

The number of the inmates had reached over one hundred twenty –five. In the year 1979 of the Vikram Era, at the time of its beginning, the whole idea was criticized by the comment, "This building will at least be useful to store the cotton seed." But within five years of its inception the critics were silenced by a consistent rise in the number of students. The number tally shows a steady rise – in the year 1979-80 the number of students was 63. It rose to 87, 95, and 129 in the years 1980-81, 1981-82 and 1982-83 of the Vikram Era respectively. In the year of 1982 -83, owing to insufficient facilities, 40 students were denied admission. All the one hundred and twenty-nine students were from 70 different villages.

Chhaganbha derived immense pleasure in watching these students playing, merrymaking or working in the newly developed garden. He watched them with great affection. While watching these agile adolescent and teenagers, Chhaganbha contemplated over a thought, "Can't the institute have its own cows?" The inmates, employees, servants, teachers and the families of the Rector and the Principal, making about more than one hundred and fifty people required milk. It was impossible to acquire an adequate supply of pure milk for them. Only cow's milk could provide real nourishment.

One day Chhaganbha spoke out his mind to his colleagues. He

was the head of a large family of a hundred and fifty people. His ideas, desires and decisions were meant for the well-being of these large groups of people, not only that, he had successfully led the group out of many trying situations. Therefore, everyone was keen to support his ideas and work towards their fulfillment. His idea of having their own cows was quite sound and useful. But to accomplish it was almost impossible. Minimum twenty-five kilo grams of milk was required in the morning and almost as much would be required in the evening. In between, some other arrangements can also be done. Chhaganbha did not believe in half-hearted measures. Once a decision was taken, he would start working towards achieving it. He would not pause or stop until the goal was realized.

Everyone had faith in his capacity. Whatever task he decided to deal with, he would see that it was accomplished. Everybody agreed with him regarding having their own cows. Chhaganbha started public contact. A couple of donors promised to help him. In 'Kelvani', the tri-monthly magazine of the institute, following advertisement was published:

A request to Contribute to Raise a *Gaushala* (cowshed)

Around one hundred and seventy-five students are studying in the school and the boarding of the trust. To our sincere belief, they are doing well in the area of physical exercise and other physical tasks. To obtain double benefit from the morning schedule of the exercise, it is necessary that the students are provided with milk.

Our experience shows that it is not convenient to get enough supply of milk for such a large group. Nevertheless, to get adequate supply seems almost inevitable for the wellbeing of the boys, so we have decided to have our own cows. Sheth Shri Chandulal Manilal Desai of Viramgam has whole heartedly supported this idea. He has already doled out rupees five hundred for the construction and maintenance of the cow shed. Similarly, Sheth Shri Gordhanbhai Mohanlal of Viramgam has

promised to donate twenty-five mulching cows. We are short of at least five thousand rupees to build the *gaushala*.

Therefore, the altruistic and kindhearted gentlemen are requested to donate generously for this pious cause.

Chhaganlal P. Patel

Honourary Secretary

K. P. K. U. Trust, Kadi

After achieving his target of having the cows in the institute, Chhaganbha did not just think about the issue of getting milk, but he continuously mulled over other allied problems. One particular issue was about the bullocks. The bullocks were very instrumental to the farming and agriculture. That was not the time when a farmer could set an engine on the well to draw water or have a tractor to till his farm. To draw water for irrigation, plough the land, transport the yield from the farm or bring and spread manure in the farm, only bullocks were used. And one would require a good amount to buy a bullock. If a farmer had domesticated cows, he would have calves but most of them would turn into oxen and would not be used in the field. So they were required to sell them away or send to the animal asylum. They would not fetch good returns.

However, if a farmer himself managed to castrate a male calf, he could avail a bullock without spending any extra sum for that. But in those days such a thing was unthinkable. And to insist of doing so or to do a campaign for it was even a greater task than fighting against the evil practices of the society. It was really a radical idea. No ordinary person could undertake such a task.

Chhaganbha decided to work in this direction. He was aware of the likely resistance he would face from all the sections of the society. But he was made of different stuff. Fear could not deter him from his chosen path. This was a cause, which, if taken in a good spirit and with proper understanding, could save millions of rupees for the farmers.

With the cows at the *Gaushala*, things seemed easy. Along with the she-calves, he-calves were also born. It provided a good opportunity to set an example. Chhaganbha put his radical idea into practice and that generated ripples in the society. "Who dared to take such a step? Is the institute meant for such things? It cannot be tolerated even for a day. The old man, responsible for such a heinous work, does not deserve to breathe for one more day."

One night, an agitated crowd armed with sticks, sharpened scythes and other weapons rushed to the Ashram. A relentless assault of abuses and verbal attacks added to the fiery atmosphere. The mood was savage and bloody.

The inmates were threatened by this sudden attack. The employees, wardens and teachers were also aghast. The doors of the rooms clinked shut and the huge gate of the *Ashram* was shut securely.

But Chhaganbha was very calm and stable. He did not approve of panic. He came out of the office. He lovingly scolded the frightened inmates and consoled them. He also comforted the wardens and the teachers. Without getting perturbed in any way, he came out through a side door and stood on the step of the raised *otla*.

Fearlessness has its own impact. For a while Chhaganbha stood, surveying the mob. And the mob too, as if mesmerized by this towering personality froze for a few moments. The rage had not diminished but they were just calm in a curious daze. Chhaganbha wanted exactly this to happen. "You have come to kill me, haven't you?" he said in an even voice.

Many a people grunted in affirmation. "Here I am very much in front of you," he said.

The fury of a mob lies in chasing. It shows itself for a while at a person standing unperturbed in front of it but then gradually

wears off. Moreover, the people of this mob were gentlemen. They were not the individuals with anti-social bent of mind. In no time, they got pacified. As the agitation of the mob came down, Chhaganbha seized the opportunity to put across his thought. He talked about the benefit the farmers would derive from it. He enumerated all the aspects in detail. He also invited the leaders of the mob to the Ashram to discuss the issue at length if they were not still convinced. The leaders also realized that they had been rash in planning an assault. They thought of striking some compromise to save their face and decided to stay back at the *Ashram* and give Chhaganbha a chance to prove his point. A few of them stayed back and the mob dispersed, though some of them were still grumbling, after giving vent to their anger. But they too had no other choice but to return home.

A Visit by Mahatma Gandhi

We are already aware that Chhaganbha was influenced by Gandhian ideology. He used to go to Gandhi Ashram at Kocharab and had also met Gandhiji. After establishing an educational institute, besides the welfare of the community, he strove for the welfare of the country as well. He was a patriot to the core. Many a time, during his talks and deliberations, he would bring in the issues of the nation. That is why, the constriction of casteism or community-centred attitude was not evident in his efforts. Of course, he had started his campaign for the upliftment of the community but it was philanthropic and inclusive by nature. Philanthropy and patriotism are not two opposite poles. As the scope of Chhaganbha's endeavours widened, they broke the barricades of the interest of the community. For instance, he has mentioned in the preface of third chapter on the finance of Kadava Patidar Kelavani Uttejak Mandal: "Although the title of the Trust is indicative of a community-based activity, but the children of all the communities can avail the benefit. The chief aim and objective of this Institute is 'education for all' and is open to all."

Owing to his altruistic attitude, he was often contacted by social workers. Especially, he had frequent meetings with a well-known social worker called Dr. Hariprasad Desai. The latter was aware of Chhaganbha's ideas and activities. He was acquainted with the Trust and its activities. Chhaganbha cherished a desire that Gandhiji should visit his institute, and Dr. Hariprasad also wished that to happen. He had informed Gandhiji about Chhaganbha's work. Gandhiji was always eager

to meet and motivate those who cared and worked for the cause of the nation. He had also promised to pay a visit to Ashram at some convenient time. That promise materialized on 23rd July, 1929.

Gandhiji arrived in the morning by eleven o'clock train. Kasturba, Pyarelal and Dr. Hariprasad Desai were with him. Gandhiji observed each and every activity with interest and expressed his pleasure and satisfaction. Before he left by four o'clock train in the evening, he delivered two speeches. One was for the students, teachers and workers of the trust, and another was at a public gathering. Both of them were published in the 41st volume of '*Gandhiji no Akshar Deh.*'

In his address to the students and the workers of the trust, he said that it is necessary that the students receive vocational training, though, inclination for vocational courses is not in vogue yet. Here, 85% people are occupied in agriculture, it is desirable that remaining 15% should indulge in vocations related to agriculture. The British government rules us through just 5% of that remaining lot of people that is really strange and embarrassing. One should go and analyze, the situation by visiting the government offices that if those five percent would not cooperate with the colonizers, they would find it difficult to manage to rule our country. In the absence of our people in the courts – right from the position of a magistrate to the policeman, from the interpreters and lawyers, how would they manage? Take an example of Almoda. There, the bonded labourers - like obstinate bullocks that would not budge despite several prodding, - refused to work. Consequently, the practice of bonded labour was abolished. Similarly, if those five percent people in the government jobs, refuse to cooperate, the government would come to a standstill. These five percent of people are not from any vocation or trade. They are scribes. They can move their tongues and pens but cannot move their limbs or legs. We have turned away from vocations, thinking that pen is better than the plough.

Later, Gandhiji advised the students to develop inclination towards carpentry, spinning wheel and weaving cloth for one's own requirement. He also told them to try to put an end to the practice of untouchability. He appreciated Chhaganbha for his commendable efforts.

After his address to the students, Gandhiji addressed a public meeting. The open square and the *otlas* in front of each room were all crammed with people. Gandhiji said:

"I had been eagerly waiting for an opportunity to visit this Institute for a year. When I heard that Chhaganbhai and others have devoted their everything to this Institute, I thought of coming here. It is desirable that such an Institute should be fostered and nurtured by the people of Kadi and the State of Vadodara. Your wards will receive quality education here. Over and above the literacy, they will learn values and ethics.

I congratulate the Secretary and other administrators of this Trust for their transparent and untainted management. However, I am not happy about one thing; the management and people have not been able to sort out the problem of untouchability so far. I cannot think of Hinduism without solving the issue of social segregation. I would have abandoned practicing any religion if it contains some evils or if its roots are steeped in some unwholesome practice. This is the time of erudition; we cannot tolerate frictions or conflicts in the name of religion. I am not complacent because I am born in a Hindu family. It is not a great challenge to tread upon a frequently trodden path, but a failure to do so is not acceptable. Hindu religion is noble but the untouchability is a blemish on it.

... in spite of a leader like Chhaganbhai, the issue of untouchability exists because of social pressure. Through the welfare of Kadava Patidar community, all other communities and Hindu religion will also benefit. Through the welfare of one community, welfare of public at large can be achieved. ... By believing that a person is untouchable by birth, one cannot do proper service to one's own community. ... If I have to choose

between the practice of child marriage and untouchability, I'll chose child marriage as a lesser evil. Well, among the so-called higher community of Patidars, the practice of child marriage prevails. At many other places in Hindustan, this practice does not exist. Had it been prevalent everywhere, the society would have collapsed. But still, I can afford to be patient with this evil. But untouchability cannot be tolerated even for a moment. ... Along with it, I advise you to adopt spinning. ... Tell your children not to have fascination for ornaments and jewellery. Teach them to spin ...

If you believe in patriotism, you have to respect Hindi language. It is not difficult to learn. It is a functional language. Any transaction can be communicated through this language. The campaign of Mahasabha is proper, easy to adapt and pervasive. ... Its chief motive is the boycott of the foreign goods and campaign in favour of homespun *khadi*. A single thread made in foreign country should be strictly banished.

The production of liquor yields huge revenue in this state. But we do not want to be affluent on that strength. On any account you can organize a picketing movement at the liquor shops or try to convince the addict to quit consuming liquor. An addict ruins his life. His faculty to discriminate between a woman and a sister gets blurred.

These days, instead of protecting cows, we devour them. Many cows are exported to Australia by Hindus because they prepare meat worth millions of rupees. If I describe the process of doing it, you may tend to cry. They slaughter cows in great number. Perhaps, that figure is greater than the goats slaughtered on the festival of *Bakri Id* by our Muslim brothers. From Gujarat, especially from Kathiawad region, a large number of cows are exported. In that way, we directly participate in a sin of killing cows. Having a cow in your courtyard and worshipping it every day is not cow-worshiping in real sense. If you want the cows to survive, do not domesticate buffalos. We reared buffalos for milk and sent cows to the slaughter house for meat. Cows

and their calves are helpful in many ways. Everything related to cow is useful, whereas buffalos cannot be used the same way. It is mentioned in our scriptures also. At this juncture, I only insist that it is our duty and responsibility to protect cows. ... We are selfish to the core. We need to castrate the male cows to save the cows. We are no more able to use bones as fertilizer. If distributed freely, the farmers will avail that. There is not a single leather works factory in India that operates only on the skin of dead cows. Only I run such a leather works. To master this profession, we have employed a person especially for this. If you really want to save cows, castrate the male-cows and increase the number of cows. A good pedigree cow will yield 20 *sher* (a *sher* is almost half than a kilogram) of milk. We need more oxen to multiply the number of cows. It is the State Government's responsibility.

During Gandhiji's visit, Popatbhai G. Patel was handing the *Ashram*. Reflecting on the event, he writes:

"Not much fuss or ado was observed during his (Gandhiji's) visit. He addressed people from a raised platform at the centre of the campus. In order to provide him some shade, a small canopy was erected. The students, volunteers and workers, people of Kadi and surrounding areas sat under the open sky to have his glimpse and listen to his speech. No microphones were available then.

* * *

The schedule of Gandhiji was very hectic, right from the moment of his arrival by the eleven o'clock train until he boarded the four o'clock train. Twenty minutes prior to his speech, he said he wanted to have a short nap. Soon he was fast asleep and exactly after twenty minutes, he got up by himself. Then he addressed the crowd, had a meeting with the workers, a dialogue with the students, and then moved around the campus for an hour to observe its various activities."

Gandhiji's visit was one of the greatest events in the history of the Institute. A personality like him showing his interest in

the activities of Kadava Patidar Kelavani Uttejak Mandal, was an exceptional thing. He was required to spare at least six hours to visit the institute. After 1920, every single minute of his life was crucial. Why would he have taken out six precious hours from his busy schedule? The institute was still in its developing stage. Not even a decade was completed since its inception. It had been able to construct just single building, having a strength of around hundred and fifty students and the number of teachers was limited to one digit only. In spite of that, why must Gandhiji have thought of visiting this Institute? The great men have inherent capacity to tell about fruits by just looking at a sapling. He could sense the ability of a person who had not gone beyond his fourth grade in school. Gandhiji could perceive the vision and the mission and the rarity of nature of his character. When Gandhiji heard about the type of seeds sown by that individual, he had no doubts regarding the yield and spread of that plant. He was keen about seeing the outcome personally after he heard about Chhaganbha from Dr. Hariprasad. Evidently, what was the need of the time was actually happening at the institute. Such an endeavour, though occurring at a small scale, was very momentous in its own right. Six hours, spent for this Institute was worth and well spent. It was more of an informal visit but with much deliberation. And this could happen only because of Chhaganbha. The visit of Gandhiji is worth hundreds of volumes written in appreciation of Chhaganbha's contribution.

Reflecting on this event, Papatbhai writes:

“When I look back and contemplate on the event, I feel that the role of the Institute was not that significant at that time that would inspire Gandhiji to visit it. But he, with a stature like the Himalaya, serene like a deep ocean and shining like a sun, would have something specific in mind when he decided to visit the institute. One thing is clear, Gandhiji was impressed and attracted by the astuteness and altruism; and he must have thought of encouraging it by his personal visit. The institute was immensely benefited.”

An Unfulfilled Dream

We often hear it from different quarters that Chhaganbha's dream regarding women's education was not fulfilled. He had cherished it right from the beginning. It had always remained at the back of his mind. When in the year 1979-80 of Vikram Era, the foundation of the *Ashram* was laid, and construction was in progress, Purshottamdas (Daskaka), a novice lawyer, often used to have talks with Chhaganbha. He had once asked Chhaganbha, "Bha, you insist education for the boys. But won't that cause misery in their lives? They have got married in a very tender age. When they receive education and are exposed to a new world of letters, and later when they'll go back home, they'll have to deal with their illiterate wives, still living in the fourteenth century world. Won't that create incompatibility between them? Won't they be unhappy then?" Daskaka had observed that Chhaganbha was much perturbed regarding this issue. He had replied in a serious tone, "I also feel so. I am planning to bestow new vision upon these boys. They'll be considerably matured, but back at home, they'll find that their better-halves are still puerile. A mountain of the size of the Himalaya will stand between them. If their conjugal lives are ruined, I'm to be blamed. I am planning that those boys, who stay with us and pursue further study, their wives should be brought from their father's house to school and they became literate. Even otherwise, the evils of the society cannot be completely eradicated until the women are not educated. Every day I pray to God to grant me back

my youth, keep me fit and healthy so that I can accomplish that target as well.”

Above words express acute pain and sensitivity of Chhaganbha. He believed that if the girls remain illiterate, they would fail to adjust with their educated husbands. If their lives were turned into a nightmare, he would be responsible for such a situation. That is why he cherished a dream of long life so that he could contribute a bit to the area of women education.

His desire to do some concrete work for the women’s literacy did not arise at some later stage but it existed alongside the idea of starting an educational institute. As the time passed, that unfulfilled desire disturbed him much. This acute and desperate aspiration was articulated in a conversation with Shri Pitambar Patel, a writer of repute, in the following words:

Shri Pitambar Patel: “*Bha*, you have accomplished a lot.”

“I’ve given my best. Nevertheless, some of my wishes have not materialized.”

“There is a limit to an individual’s life-span and his strength. What is done is also commendable.”

“My son, it is so fulfilling to see a well-groomed person like you. nevertheless a voice comes from within. Two compatible wheels are required to run a car smoothly. From where will we find another wheel to match it?”

“Well....”

“One of my greatest desires was to start an institute for girls to match that of the boys. It is badly required to balance the two wheels of the vehicle. My another dream was to uplift Kadava Patidar community to the level of other higher communities. Unfortunately, I could not do much in that direction either.”

And his deep old eyes were covered with gloom.

“Why do you say so, *Bha*? What you’ve done, anyone else would have hardly thought of doing it. You have wrung yourself to keep the lamp of knowledge alive. You have carried that little flame from place to place. You’ve conferred vision and mission upon many a person like me.”

“That could be done by the grace of God. But what about striking the balance in conjugal life?”

“That will also happen. You have stimulated many a mind, and have opened the flood gates of awareness.”

“I have no doubt regarding that, my son. All of you are my hope,” he said, “I am fortunate to have so many sons. Won’t my children fulfill my wish? Assure me my child, that you will strive to achieve that incomplete dream.”

It is already mentioned that after working for long sessions of six hours for two days, the committee had drafted the constitution of Kadava Patidar Kelvani Uttejak Mandal, and that was adopted, with some modifications on 06/04/1924 by the General Body Meeting. Among the five objectives of the constitution, the fourth one is: “In order to achieve this aim, alike the males’, the female welfare will also be paid equal attention in this regard.” And the fifth one is regarding the future action. It is mentioned that in order to fulfill the objectives of the constitution, once an *Ashram* is founded for the boys, another one should be started for the girls too.

It is clear from the above document that spread of women’s education was intended right from the initial stage. The constitution committee must have deliberated a lot on this issue. Chhaganbha was also part of this committee, and he must have stressed the necessity of women’s education during their discussions. But it would not be incongruous to know Chhaganbha’s ideas of women’s education at this point. Girls could be admitted in Patidar Vidyalaya. And if the girls get enrolled, the purpose of women’s education would be served.

But Chhaganbha had something else in mind. By simply admitting a girl in the institute would not have satisfied him. Only local girls of Kadi could get into the institute. But the Patidar community was not confined to that area only. It was spread over a vast geographical area. How can girls from far off places can avail benefit of that institute? Therefore, he had visualized a girl's hostel, where girls from the remotest areas could stay and receive education. He had cherished a dream of a boarding school like that of the boys, where the girls could hone in the various skills to turn them into ideal home-makers.

By altering and compromising with his dream, in 1934, Chhaganbha had started a hostel for girls. It was started in the building at the western end of the Ashram, which was, before 1984, was used as the boys hostel of the students of standard 5 -7. But he did not succeed in running the girls' hostel and it was closed in 1937. One might not require to go into details regarding the circumstances and reason of its closer. It could be concluded that Chhaganbha's dream hostel for girls could not be visualized properly.

The point here is, did Chhaganbha really fail in materializing his dream of women's education? Did that dream remain incomplete? Could his intense desire not fetch any result?

Before attempting to answer these questions, one need to realize that it was not possible for Chhaganbha to concretize that dream into reality in those days, under the given circumstances. Unless an independent campus like that for the boys, was founded, it was impossible to accomplish Chhaganbha's dream for women's education. The Institute, for which he was working day in and day out, required all his time and energy. Moreover, the other institute that he longed to start would have needed even more time and strength. At that time, when one had to beg the parents to send their wards to school (although after 1935, the situation had favourably changed), to think of getting

adequate number of girl students was almost inconceivable. Moreover, to support just one institute was financially very demanding, as it hardly received donations in lacs. To raise another institute would have required another Chhaganbha! This was of course not possible. Moreover, he was not getting younger! After 1935, when an awareness regarding women's education was increasing, Chhaganbha was much advanced in age. Although he was younger than any youth as far as enthusiasm was concerned, but his physical body had started showing signs of advancing age. Therefore, it is not exaggeration to say that manifestation of his dream of an institute for women's education was not viable at that time.

Although his dream for the women's education remained unfulfilled, its significance was far reaching. It is a general tendency of our people that they are more concerned about the unmanifested desires of their ancestors than their achievements. Their incomplete work becomes a matter of ardent pursuit for us. Chhaganbha had carved a place as one's own beloved '*bha*' in the hearts of his admirers. Undoubtedly, his unfulfilled dream became their ultimate goal. At various places, during the routine conversations, in discussions, speeches and talks, conferences and celebrations, his followers and fans used to mention about his dream and gradually all became desperate to realize that dream.

It is worthwhile to see what has been articulated in an editorial in the issue of the month of April of a monthly magazine titled '*Dharti*'. It states. "Your contribution is huge. But your dream regarding girl's school could be not translated into reality. We have vowed in front of mother goddess Umiyaji to accomplish your dream.

And today, we bow to the idol of the mother goddess and leave the temple only after taking some decisive measures to fulfill that dream."

May it be a battle or a struggle, it first takes shape in the

minds of a multitude and then develops into a larger image. The issue of women's education was one such issue of a stature of a great struggle. Chhaganbha's inner reflections were no more his own, but had become a cherished dream of many. Who would now say that his dream remained incomplete? All institutes of women's education run by the present trust owe their existence to the dream of Chhaganbha.

Self-Appraisal and Self Assertion

The most fruitful period of Chhaganbha's life was the span of last two decades of his life. During those two decades, he accomplished a seminal task in the field of education. His Institute, along with all its branches and constituent institutions played a key role in spreading education in the Northern parts of Gujarat. It changed the course of the public inclination, dispelling darkness of ignorance. In previous chapters, we have already observed, how commendable Chhaganbha's efforts were in those years. We are also aware of the guiding forces behind those efforts. Circumstances stirred his soul and the awakened inner-consciousness motivated him to work relentlessly. That apart, it should be noted that his religious orientation and faith have also played significant role in making him conscious regarding his work.

After he crossed sixtieth year of his life, he published an article entitled, "I Made a Mistake: You be on guard" in the issue of '*Kadava Vijay*' in the month of *Aso* of the year 1978 of Vikram Era. The article touches upon many facets of Chhaganbha's personality. The article runs as under:

I Made A Mistake: You be on Guard

"My body is getting old. I crossed sixty this year. Everyone addresses me as '**bha**' or '*kaka*'. I have passed through both, rough and fair weather. On different accounts, I have travelled across the width and breadth of Hindustan. I have come in touch with many types of people of different communities and

trades. Many people have faith in me and believe me to be a mature and experienced person. They often seek my advice, and by following it, they get desired results. I, very cautiously follow my conscious in dealing with worldly matters. I do it in a straight forward way, and many intelligent people would vouch for that. In the course of this long life, I have tilled as a farmer, supervised farming, tried many a vocation, worked as an accountant for a while. I have never been idle even for a moment. The world considers me industrious and versatile. Nevertheless, for some reason, when I try to mend one, thirteen other things will go asunder. Many of my peers have become millionaires. By following my advice, many have improved their financial position and they often acknowledge that to me. I too have tried many things. I have never been dishonest nor have I cherished any sort of ill will towards anyone. After striving very hard, I have seen the cup of success approaching me but as I stretch my hand to hold it, it vanishes. Consequently, I remain at the same spot. In spite of toiling very hard, my little coffer remained empty. Thwarted by failures, I decided to retreat for a while and to spend time in worshipping the Almighty.

One day, after chanting God's name for some time, looking for the solutions of my problems in the scriptures, and contemplating on the situation, I dozed off. At the late night I had a dream. I was on a journey and was travelling on foot. I saw an ascetic in the dream and as I always do on seeing a hermit, I approached him. He seemed to be a very illuminated person. I bowed down to him and just looking at his enlightened frame, I sat at his feet. He was very knowledgeable. He said, "What is perturbing you? Why do you look so forlorn?" I narrated an account of my life right from the beginning. On hearing it, the ascetic started laughing and said, "Have you heard anyone getting anything without giving? Follow me, I'll show you something." Saying that, he rose from his seat. I was clueless regarding where we were heading to and how long we were supposed to walk. After a while, we reached a big city. We approached a huge house on a very broad road. It seemed to

belong to some very affluent person. On reaching closer, I saw a bearded *Pathan* watchman at the gate. As we tried to go in, he yelled at us in a forbidding voice, "Where are you going? None is permitted to go in without my employer's permission."

The hermit replied, "We are ascetics. We do not need anyone's permission. We have not come here to take anything." The watchman said, "You have not come here to give anything either. Get lost. If my master comes to know, he'll punish us." At that moment, someone came running from inside and said, "O *Pathan*, what is this commotion about? From where have you collected all these beggars? And why are they shouting like that? The Master is angry. Get them out, or he would shout at you." Then turning to us, that man said excitedly, "Go away. Do you think this is your father's house? You rogues, get out of my sight or I'll break your jaw." The hermit said, "Brother, why are you so cross? We have come to see this stunning building. We don't want anything from you."

We heard an arrogant voice from the direction of the building, "If you don't want anything, then why have you come here, to suck my blood? Get lost immediately. If you want to see a building like this, bend down and toil hard. Earn money and get a building built for yourself. O *Pathan*, what are you waiting for? Hold them by the scruff and throw those scoundrels out," saying this, the master went inside his house. Before he finished the sentence, the watchman and the servant pounced on us like furious dogs. We became alert and moved away quickly still we had tasted their wrath. They continued to push us backward, till we reached the outer boundary of their estate. A passersby stopped to watch and said to us in scolding tone, "Hey, why did you go there? What do you want from there?" Another fellow said, "Don't get impressed by the looks of that huge palatial house..." Yet another said, "Better set a fire to such a lowly house. Has he ever offered a glass of water to anyone? One would be obliged if one is not belittled in that house. Who cares for such a mean person or his bungalow?" Another fellow said, "From where such a miserly person has come to our city?"

He has blemished the reputation of our city. He is a blot on our honour." We continued to hear such remarks while we were walking away from that place. We sat down at a distance. All the while, I was thinking about that incidence. The ascetic said, "How did you find it?" I said, "O saint, it was not at all a good experience. But I am baffled by something else. Kindly explain it to me. When that rich man came out and yelled at us, I was amazed. He was clad in expensive silken clothes and was having gold and diamond jewellery on him. But had he worn my clothes, he would have looked exactly like me. When I saw him, I had a feeling as if I am standing in front of a mirror, looking at my reflection. The only difference is, since I am not so rich, I am clad in coarse clothes and *khadi*, whereas he was wearing silk and jewelry. Can two people look alike?" The hermit said, "That was you only, none else."

I woke up, I heard someone shouting my name. I saw an ascetic, whom I was familiar with. I went to him. We sat together and talked. But I was not able to push aside the words of the ascetic in my dream – "It was you only, none else." That hermit had said, "Have you heard anyone getting anything without giving?"

Suddenly, with a flash, I had a revelation. The hermit was right. That millionaire with huge house, servants and all the luxuries of life was none else but I. I had, in my past life been that rich person. However, 'Can anyone get anything without giving?' I had not parted with a single coin, despite being filthily rich in my previous life, and the comments of those passersby vouched for that. I did not donate anything to anyone and to add to that, I insulted people without any reason out of pride and arrogance. Alas! In spite of my prosperity, nothing has come with me in this birth. I had indulged in false pride and spent my time in multiplying it, without sharing it with anyone. Ultimately, when I left that body, nothing really came with me. Since I had not given anything to anyone, however hard I am toiling in this life, my coffer remains empty. As you sow, so shall you reap. What is so strange about it?

I am not a person who will sit with my hands folded on the chest, pondering over the past. It is never too late to make a fresh beginning. I started contemplating that what I should do in this birth to regain my lost prosperity. The hermit's sentence resounded in my ears, 'Have you heard anyone getting anything without giving?' But I did not have enough money. My inner voice said, "Give whatever you have." I sought within me. What do I have that can be shared? I realized that I had a weak, weathering body and a not so sharp but experienced mind. I could employ them in service of the society. Then I also realized that I have dedicated my body and mind to my community, with which I was pretty familiar and therefore could understand their woes and predicaments in a better way; and based on that I could also think of some very viable solutions. This large community is a significant and key part of this country. By utilizing my body and mind for the service of the community, I am sure, if I will not be rich and prosperous in the next birth, at least I'll be bestowed with a very strong body and acute intelligence. It is mentioned in the scriptures that your smallest donation comes back to you thousand fold more. I have decided to offer this sacrifice in this birth only. I regret that though I was a millionaire or perhaps billionaire but had not spent a single *paisa* for anyone and invited this penniless state. I had committed such a grave mistake, I should not have faltered like that. Today, I appeal to my countrymen and the members of my community at the top of my voice, "My brothers and sisters, be aware, discard your selfishness, misery, arrogance and egotism and use your body, mind, wealth and knowledge, whatever you have in the service of the needy. Else you'll have to suffer like a pauper. Then you'll regret it forever after. Therefore, be aware."

The Great Departure

Chhaganbha was over seventy-five. The body had evidently withered. The muscles were getting weak. But his enthusiasm and inclination for work had not slackened a bit. The institute had considerably stabilized. The worries regarding its sustenance had eased. Patidar Vidyalaya had become 'Sarva Vidyalaya'. From 1935, the matriculation class had been started. Prior to that the students of the Institute had to go to other local schools, or to Ahmedabad, or some other cities to sit for their matriculation examination. The students of the institute were not able to appear in any public examination, as the institute was not eligible to run matriculation class. Therefore, its standard and qualitative work were not made visible to the society. Moreover, the preference for the productive work and extracurricular activities were under censure. Once the matriculation class was started, the brilliance of the students became evident and the detracting remarks regarding the standard of the institute were pacified, and its reputation amplified.

The institute had obtained 150 *vighas* of land at a distance of three kilometers from the main establishment of institute. It had all the necessary provisions to tend the cows. A few houses were also built for the supervisor and the employees working there. A part of the land was used for farming as well. Chhaganbha had built a team of competent people to look after the affairs of the institute. Social workers like Shri

Bapubhai Gami, Shri Popatbhai G. Pate, Shri Chhaganbhai K. Patel were not simply teachers or rectors in the institute, but were its pillars, ready to serve it at any extent. The responsibility of running the institute was divided among them. Until 1927, they were appointed as a principal by rotation. Only after 1927, Shri Bapubhai Gami became the principal and retained the post until his death. Shri Popatbhai had been vested with the responsibility of running the *Ashram* and Shri Chhaganbhai supervised the workshop. All were required to watch over the students. During the holidays, everyone would go out with a team of students for collecting fund. Once, Shri Popatbhai went as far as Rangoon with Professor Swaminarayan to raise fund.

Chhaganbha occupied the first room on the right from the gate. After Gandhiji's visit of the Ashram, Chhaganbha had abstained from smoking his hookah. He spent his time in discussing various issues regarding the institute with the other co-workers, contemplating on the spiritual topics and reading religious books. At times, he would take his seat on the *otla* inside the gate watching affectionately the boys playing and merry-making. At some other times, the students would sit around him and relish his talks on various topics. They enjoyed listening to his talks dotted with anecdotes, citations from the religious texts and tales of wit.

Occasionally, Chhaganbha went to Saradhav or Ahmedabad to stay with his sons. On some occasions, he visit some nearby villages. All the time he was concerned about collecting fund for the institute. On his return, he always carried back bags and sacks filled with seasonal fruits like berries and guavas among the others, generously donated by some kind hearted well-wishers. He enjoyed giving them out to the students. And at the time of distribution, the children informed him about the affairs that had taken place in his absence. They also voiced complaints regarding various issues, and however

insignificant some of these grumbles might sound, Chhaganbha used to listen to them with sympathy. It was like an extended family to him that kept him very happy and content. Nothing skipped his keen eyes, whether a moment of immense joy or intense unhappiness. The stability and progress of the institute had provided him a sort of satisfaction. Nevertheless, he was concerned regarding the condition. They were using the Ashram building to run the school. A huge separate building for the school was needed. Then only more space could be provided to the inmates of the *Ashram* and no students would be denied an admission in the school. But Chhaganbha did not survive to achieve that dream. The time for great departure was closing in.

Chhaganbha was running seventy-eighth year. The chill of the month of *Magshar* was still lingering. In those days, Chhaganbha was staying with Jethabhai, his eldest son at Ahmedabad. The last moments of his life were spent there. Bansilal, his grandson, recollects that event quite vividly in following words:

“It was around six in the evening. That great man, with his broad shining forehead was sitting on a low wooden seat by the kitchen. It seemed that the slanting rays of the evening sun, like a beautiful queen in her attire of orange hue had just paused to have a glimpse of that bright face. Chhaganbha asked my mother to prepare *rotla (bred)* of millet and curry of black bean. As if he never had his meal with such a peace of mind, he relished it with a smiling face. Why did he look so tranquil that day? Did that joy reflect a feeling of fulfillment? His state of mind was like a strange traveller from some unknown world, who seemed to have set down, on reaching his destination after a very long journey, to pluck out the numerous thorns from his feet. He would remove them to the best of his capacity and let the remaining thorns continue to prick his bare but agile feet. And amidst all the waves of difficulties, when he had reached his destination, won't that

traveller be ecstatic? Is it possible to find adequate words to articulate that idyllic state? The ecstasy of that moment, the moment of bliss is beyond any type of expression – it is intangible, not to be captured by an artist’s brush or words. Even the ancient book of *Shriti* is incapable of expressing it and in an attempt of describing it, it stops abruptly with an expression of ‘*neti neti*’(not this, not this).

After having his meal, *Bha* asked my father to lay a cot for him. His physical body, worn out by hard work of many long years, reclined on it. My father sat by him on one side of his pillow and on the other, his disciple Popatbhai took his place. He discussed topics from *Vedanta* and other related subjects with them until the midnight. At around one in the morning, he said, “I wonder why my legs are aching today?” However, no trace of pain was visible on his face, as if his legs had no right to cause him pain. He hardly paid any attention to that. My father awoke my elder brother. He started pressing his legs. *Bha* smiled serenely at him and said, “Gopal, are you pressing my legs or your own?” The whole night was spent like that, in good spirit, chatting and laughing in a blissful state.

The queen of the dawn appeared in the eastern sky to bestow peace upon the fatigued body of this old warrior. Cool breeze blew across the land. The Sun God seemed in no hurry to get out of his golden couch, as if waiting for someone. *Bha*, the composed, tired warrior turned to my father, “What’s the time?” At that very moment our Japanese wall clock issued a soft sound of a stroke indicating half past six. The worn out body of that serene warrior smiled, and with that smile of his, he mounted the cool, soft waves of early morning breeze, forever, to his journey to that unknown world, leaving his immortal memories behind.”

It is not proper to call Chhaganbha a tired warrior. Although his body bore the signs of aging, his spirit was very high

until the last moment. His enthusiasm for the welfare of the institute had remained unabated until the fag end of his life.

His enthusiasm for doing something worthwhile for the institute persisted until the last breathe. Enthusiasm is a latent permanent state of *Vir Rasa*, and it was very conspicuous in Chhaganbha till the end. He was an epitome of bravery. He was a valiant person. All through his life, Chhaganbha exerted for the elevation of his community, spreading education and the progress of the educational institute. He deserves to be called as a valiant soldier.

Above all, he was an enlightened person. He was a man of unique wisdom. His heart was filled with the light of astuteness, which always illuminated his path, enabling him to fathom any unknown possibilities. He could perceive the future beforehand. Or else, how can one think of constructing a hostel that can house two hundred students in a time when one had to struggle hard to seek for students, to beg the parents to send their wards to the schools and tolerate their angry frowns of the people at the very mention of education. Which sane person, on crossing the age of sixty, instead of thinking how many more years remained along the timeline for him, would single handedly take up such a huge task of raising a school, hostel and a *gaushala*? However, Chhaganbha attempted it as he could foresee. He had a vision that enabled him to feel the pulse of the demand of this country.

It is not difficult to assume how the news of his demise must have struck like a thunderbolt on the institute and how the members of that family would have felt. That shock was not limited to the people affiliated to the institute only. Most of the northern Gujarat was aware of his relentless efforts and lives of many a youth had shined by the torch he had lit for them. A whole new class of his admirers had emerged. Each one of them felt this loss and was engulfed by dark cloud of grief and sorrow. No pair of eyes that

turned out to pay him a homage could remain dry. Everyone pledged to take his life mission further from where he had left it.

Bapubhai Gami, the principal of the institute, while paying a tribute to Chhaganbha said, "The unique characteristic of his personality was his optimism. Despite the worst circumstances or the moments of despair or amidst the storms and squalls of adversity he had never uttered a single word that expressed his despair. He used to say, 'Even if the institute is destined to face an unforeseen calamity, and we are strangled of supply of any fresh air or our vital energy, we need not lose our courage. Even if we are imprisoned in a castle of calamity, we will learn to make our way out of it. We will cultivate the courage and fervor to face such adversity.' His words are befitting to an audacious combatant striving to win."

On 29th and 30th of April in 1951, seventeenth conference of the 'Kadava Patidar Parishad' was held at the institute. Two sessions were allotted to the alumni. On the 30th morning, in front of the original structure of the *Ashram*, a function of unveiling a bust of Chhaganbha was organized. In spite of a decade of his demise, his memory was still alive and distinctly felt. Reverence and deep love for him were increasing with the passing of time. Many children and adolescents, who were not fortunate to see Chhaganbha in his physical body, were immersed in the ceaseless flow of loving kindness of that great soul called Chhaganbha.

More than that, even after half a century of his death, the inmates of the *Ashram* look at his statue with great esteem and reverence. They constantly feel the flood of affection and determination that flows from the face of the statue of this adept man of action. Evidently, even today when the students begin any auspicious work, or at the time of setting on for a trip or when they return victorious from some competition, they acclaim it by hailing the name of Chhaganbha with

effusion of devotion, in the era, when the values are changing faster than ever. And on seeing them, we get convinced to the core that Chhaganbha's mortal body was not made of ordinary flesh and blood but of an exceptional matter. He was a person par excellence (*Lokottar Purush*) as he stood apart from his peers, radiating indissoluble beams of brilliance and loving kindness.

Appendix 1

A Chronology of the Progress of the Institute:

- 1919 Establishment of the Trust (08/06/19)
- 1920 Beginning of the Vidyarthi Ashram (22/03/20)
- 1922 The Patidar Vidyalaya (Sarva Vidyalaya) was started (01/03/22)
- 1923 purchasing 9 *vigha* land for the Institute opposite to Kadi Railway Station
- 1926 His Highness Sayaji Rao Gaikwad visited the institute on 04/01/26
- 1928 Established Gujarat *Gaushala* (cowshed)
- 1929 Gandhiji's visit of the institute on 27/07/29
- 1934 Kanya Kunj, Girls' Hostel was started on 15/06/34
- 1935 Matriculation class was started on 01/04/ 35
- 1939 Administration of Sheth G. C. High School was acquired (26/03/29)
- 1941 A branch called Nutan Sarva Vidyalaya was started in Visnagar (20/11/41)
- 1942 Foundation stone laid for Sheth Shri Pransukhlal Mafatlal Saraswati Sadan (23/04/42)
- 1942 Administration of Sheth M. H. Chhatralaya of Pilvai acquired
- 1942 Administration of Navin Sarva Vidyalaya, Vadnagar acquired
- 1942 Vidyarthi Nivas, Visnagar was established (01/06/42)
- j1944 Celebration of Silver Jubilee of the Institute
- 1945 Inauguration of Sheth Shri Pransukhlal Saraswati Sadan

- 1951 Meeting of the alumni of the institute and unveiling of the bust of Chhaganbha (30/04/51)
- 1952 Mitra Mandal Sarva Vidyalaya, Balol was established (01/03/52)
- 1956 Adhyapan Mandir was established (June 56)
- 1960 Inauguration of the auditorium (Sanskar Bhavan) of Sarva Vidyalaya (28/06/60)
- 1960 Technical section was started in Sarva Vidyalaya
- 1960 Foundation stone laid for the building of workshop of technical section
- 1964 Inauguration of the building of D. M. Hostel (04/06/1964)
- 1965 Pre-vocational Training Centre was started (01/01/1965)
- 1965 Science College was started (24/05/1965)
- 1966 Laying of the Foundation Stone for the building of Pre. Vocational Training Centre (23/02/1966)
- 1966 Junior Technical School was started (15/06/1966)
- 1967 Foundation stone laid for the building of Junior technical school, (11-4-67) workshop and Hostel
- 1968 Foundation stone laid for the building of Science College(4-12-68)
- 1970 Golden Jubilee Celebration and Parivar sammelan (2-5-70 and 3-5-70)
- 1970 Inauguration of Science College – Hostel (3-5-70)
- 1970 (12-6-70)
- 1977 Foundation stone laid for the building of Sheth Chandulal Madhavlal High School at Gandhinagar(3-11-77)
- 1984 Amrut Mahotsav - Alumni meet and Cultural Programme (25-2-84) Platinum Jubilee Celebration (26-2-84)
- 1984 Inauguration of the new building – H. K. Sadan of Das Pustakalaya (26-2-84)

- 1994 Inauguration of Building of Shree B. M. Patel Vidyarthi Bhavan (26-2-84)
- 1988 Inauguration of Building of Smt. Menaben Mangaldas Guest House (26-2-84)
- 1988 Foundation stone laid for the building of Shree Sankalchand Kalidas Patel Industrial Training Center (6-1-88)
- 1989 Renaming of Science College as Pramukh Swami Science College
- 1990 Pre Primary School : Primary School
- 1992 Shree Nathalal N. Desai Primary School
- 1993 With introduction of the Faculty of Arts, the college was renamed as Pramukh Swami Science and Hargovinddas D. Patel Arts College
- 1996 Shree Dashubhai A. Patel Technical High School (Renaming of Technical High School)
- 1996 Meghana Niranjana Shishu Vidyamandir
- 1997 Shree Arun Hargovinddas Patel Bhojanalaya
- 1997 Shantaben K. Patel Uma Vidyarthi Ashram
- 1998 Purchase of offset and other latest technology for Patidar Mudranalaya (Printing Press)
- 1999 Inauguration of Center of Post Graduate Studies and Research Section in Pramukh Swami Science College
- 1999 Kadi Nagrik Sahakari Bank Primary School
- 2000 Shantaben Maneklal Keshavlal Primary School
- 2000 Raiben Gopaldas Patel Science College Hostel
- 2000 Narsinhbhai College of Computer Studies and Management
- 2000 Mamta School of Information Technology
- 2001 B.C.A. Boys' Hostel
- 2001 M.B.A. Boys' Hostel
- 2001 P.G.D.C. Boys' Hostel
- 2001 Smt. Surajba College of Education for Women
- 2004 Hostel for P.T.C. and B. Ed Colleges's Girl students

- 2004 Hostel for the girls studying in various colleges of Kadi campus
- 2005 Building facility for the library for Madhuben P. Patel P.T.C. College and Surajba College of Education
- 2006 Biotech department started in Pramuikh Swami Science College
- 2006 New Building constructed for Sharadaben Dharmabhai Patel English Medium Primary School, Sarva Vidyalaya Secondary and Higher Secondary English Medium School and Gomatiben Rambhai M. Patel (Kindergarten)

Ghandhinagar Campus

- 1979 Sheth Chandulal Madhavlal High School and Higher Secondary School
- 1979 Vitthalbhai Madhavlal Patel Kumar Balmandir
- 1979 Janatkumar Bhagubhai Primary School
- 1982 Sheth Shree Purshotamdas Bhikhabhai Patel Hostel
- 1982 Mahendra Mills Hostel
- 1989 R .G. Girls' Hostel
- 1989 M. B. Patel Primary Girls' School
- 1991 Uma Arts and Nathiba Commerce Women College
- 1991 Tribhuvandas Lallubhai Patel Girl's Hostel
- 1992 Shree Babubhai S. Patel and Ramanbhai D. Patel Hostel
- 1992 Kashiba Keshavlal Patel Bhojanalaya
- 1992 Smt. Hiraben Vitthaldas Patel Kanya Balmandir
- 1994 Shivabhai Vasantbhai Patel (Fudeda)Sivan Varg
- 1995 K. B. Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research
- 1997 English Medium Primary School from K. G. To Standard 7
- 1997 Raiben Gopaldas Patel and Smt. Savitaben Babubhai Patel Uchtar Madhyamik Shala (R. G. Girls' High

- School Renamed)
- 1997 Smt. Savitaben Babubhai Patel Uchattar Madhyamik Shala
- 1997 S. K. Institute of Business Management and Computer Studies
- 1997 Savitaben Govindbhai Patel English Medium Primary School
- 1997 M. B. Patel Institute of B. B. A. and B. C. A.
- 1998 Mamta Computer Training Centre
- 1998 Mamta A. M. A. Centre for Management Development
- 1998 Shri Bhagubhai H. Patel English Medium Secondary and Higher Secondary School
- 1998 Shri Somabhai Chaturdas Patel (Untava) Kumar Chhatralaya
- 1998 Shri Baldevbhai Gopaldas Patel (Dingucha) Uma Kanya Chhatralaya
- 1998 Shethshri Khimji Visram and Sons (Mumbai) Sanskar Bhavan
- 1998 Lodariya Brothers Parivar (Sarsav) Uma Kanya Chhatralaya
- 1999 Brahmani Krupa (Dingucha) Memorial Hall
- 1999 Higher Education Vignan Pravah Uma Kumar Chhatralaya A and B
- 1999 B. B. A., M. B. A. Hostel C
- 1999 Pharmacy College Hostel D
- 1999 Manguben Narandas Choksi (Rajpur) USA. Hostel Bhojanalaya
- 1999 Menaben Mangaldas Patel (Sarsav) Madhyasth Karyalay ane Joitaram Mangaldas Patel N. R. I. Guest House
- 1999 Bholabhai C. Patel Institute of B. B. A and B. C. A.
- 1999 Mamta Institute of Information Technology
- 1999 Mamta Centre for A. M. A.
- 1999 Ashwinbhai Amritlal Patel (Paliyad) English Medium

- Commerce College
- 1999 Narottamdas Bechardas Patel (Paliyad) USA Uchch
Sikshan Kanya Chhatralaya
- 1999 Raibahen Narsinhbhai Lalitkala Academy
- 2000 Hirabahen Dahyabhai Foundation Institute of Post
Graduate Studies in Pharmaceutical Bio Technology
- 2000 English Medium Kumar Hostel
- 2000 Higher Education Vignan Pravah Kumar Hostel
- 2000 Raibahen Chandubhai Patel (Mokhasan) Secondary
and Higher Secondary School (Vignan ane Samanya
Pravah)
- 2000 Shri Narsinhbhai Patel Vignan Prayogshala
- 2000 Sarva Vidyalaya Umiya Kumar Chhatralaya
- 2000 Varshabahen Rameshbhai Narottamdas Diwan
(Paliyad) USA Uchha Shikshan Umiya Kanya
Chhatralaya
- 2000 Ambalal Gopaldas Patel (Dingucha) Kanya
Chhatralaya
- 2002 P.T.C., B.Ed. ane Commerce College (Englsih –
Gujarati Medium)
- 2005 L. D. R. P. Institute of Technology and Research
(Engineering College)
- 2006 V.P.M.P. Polytechnic Institute (05/09/06)
- 2006 Central Library for Ambalal Vaghjibhai Patel
Education College
- 2007 As per the provisions of Act no. 21 of 2007 of
Government of Gujarat Sarva Vidyalaya Kelvani
Mandal was declared as a university and was known
as Kadi Sarva Vishwavidyalaya
- 2007 Commencement of M.Sc. Bio-Technology Course

Pilvai

- 1939 Took over the management of Sheth Girdharlal
Chunilal High School (relinquished the administration

from 1964 onwards)

- 1944 Took over the administration of Sheth Mangaldas Ranchhoddas Chhatralaya (relinquished the administration from 1964 onwards)

Visnagar

- 1941 Na. M. Nutan Sarva Vidyalaya, (established as a branch of Sarva Vidyalaya Kelvani Mandal, Kadi, (relinquished the administration from 1950 onwards)
- 1942 Vidyarthi Nivas (Chhatralaya) (administration was handed over to K. P. Kelavani Uttejak Mandal, Kadi (relinquished the administration from 1980 onwards)

Vadnagar

- 1942 Took over the administration of Navin Sarva Vidyalaya
- 1950 Took over the administration of Navin Sarva Vidyalay Chhatralaya

Balol

- 1952 Took over the administration of Mitra Mandal Sarva Vidyalaya; the institute was renamed as I. M. J. Sarva Vidyalaya (currently no more in charge of it)
- 1956 I. M. J. Sarva Vidyalaya Chhatralaya (currently no more incharge of it)
- 1990 I. M. J. Balmandir (currently no more in charge of it)

Shertha

- 1953 Took over the administration of Pragati Vidyalaya (It was handed over to Shertha Kelvani Mandal from 1958)

Appendix 2

Activities of the Institute

Sarva Vidyalay Campus, Kadi

1. Pramukh Swami Science and H. D. Patel Arts College
 - Pramukh Swami Post Graduate Centre (Chemistry)
 - Pramukh Swami Post Graduate Centre (Industrial Chemistry)
 - Smt. Hirabahen Babubhai Patel Bio-Technology Department
 - Raibahen Gopaldas Patel Science College- Hostel
2. Narsinhbhai Patel College of Computer Studies and Management (B.C.A./B.B.A.)
 - Narsinhbhai Patel College of Computer Studies and Management (M.C.A./M.B.A.)
 - Kadi Nagrik Sahakari Bank College of Post Graduate Diploma Computer Appliances College (P.G.D.C.)
 - antokba Higher Education Umiya (M.B.A./M.C.A.) Boys Hostel
 - Pashiben Shambhubhai Hargovandas Patel Umiya (B.Ed/ P.T.C. Boys Hostel)
3. Shri Vanmalidas Galshadas Patel College of Education
 - S. V. B.Ed. Umiya Kumar Hostel
4. Dr. Rambhai M. Patel P.T.C. College
 - S.V. P.T.C. Kumar Hostel
5. Smt. Manekben C.K. Patel Lalitkala Academy
6. Mamta School of Information Technology
7. Ra. R. Shethshri Pra. M. Vividhlakshi Sarva Vidyalaya

- High School- Kalupur Bank Umiya Vidyarthi Ashram
8. Shri Dashubhai A. Patel Technical High School
 - Technical Vidyarthi Ashram
 - Dh. Mo. Technical Vidyarthi Ashram
 9. Shri Sankalchand Kalidas Patel Audyogik Talim Sanstha
 10. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University Abhyas Programme Centre
 11. Smt. Shardabahen Dharmabhai Patel (Bhatasan) English Medium Primary School
 12. Kadi Nagrik Sahkari Bank Prathmik Shala
 13. Sarva Vidyalaya Secondary and Higher Secondary English Medium School
 14. Smt. Gomtibahen Rambhai Patel Kindergarten
 15. Meghana Niranjana Shishu Vidya Vihar Prathmik Shala
 16. Kamubahen Vari guruh ane Bore well
 17. Menabahen Mangaldas Patel Madhyashth Karyalaya
 18. Dr. Jayantibhai M. Patel Atithi Gruh
 19. Smt. Shantabahen Maneklal Keshavlal Patel Primary School

Smt. Urmilabahen Govindbhai Desai Kanya Kelvani Sankul

1. Surajba Khodidas Patel College of Education
2. Arvindbhai G. Patel Higher Education Girls' hostel
3. Harjivandas Ambalal Patel bhojanalaya
4. Smt. Urmilabahen Govindbhai Desai Kanya Chhatralaya
5. Gautambhai Harjivandas Patel Bhojanalaya
6. Shakribahen Kalidas Madhavlal Patel (Saldi) Seminar and Conference Hall
7. B. M. Patel Chhatra Nivas
8. Smt. Madhubahen Popatlal Patel P. T. C. College

Gandhinagar Campus

1. Kalupur Bank Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research

2. D. R. Patel Centre for Advanced Studies in Pharmaceutical Bio-technology
3. Brahmani Krupa Memorial Hall (Dingucha)
4. Gan. Sva. Ichchhabahen Kantilal Patel Umiya Kumar Hostel
5. Shri Ambalal Keshvlal Patel (Nardipur) Umiya Kumar Hostel
6. Smt. Mangubahen Narandas Patel (Choksi) (Rajpur) Bhojanalaya
7. Shri Godaddas Kasaldas Patel Parivar (Chanasma) Umiya Kumar Hostel
8. Patel Amthibahen Revandas Shivdas (Dingucha) Umiya Kumar Hostel
9. Sva. Patel Dahiben Bholidas Amthidas (Dingucha) Umiya Kumar Hostel
10. Revabahen Manilal Shankardas Patel (Saldi) Kumar Hostel
11. Menabahen Mangaldas Patel (Sarsav) Madhyasth Karyalaya
12. Joitaram Mangaldas Patel (Sarsav) N.R.I. Guest House

Sarva Vidyalaya Higher Education of Management and Computer Shikshan Sankul

1. S. K. Institute of Management and Computer Studies (M.B.A./M.C.A.)
2. Bholabhai C. Patel College of Computer Studies (B.C.A.)
3. Bholabhai C. Patel College of Business Administration (B.B.A.)
4. Mamta Computer Training Centre
5. Mamta A. M. A. Centre
6. Asvinbhai Amrutlal Patel (Paliyad) English/Gujarati Medium Commerce College

Maneklal M. Patel (Kadivala) Sahshikshan Sankul

1. Sheth C. M. Secondary and Higher Secondary School
2. Sharadbahen Shantibhai Patel College of Education

3. RajendraKumar H. Patel English Medium B.Ed. College
4. Sharadbahen Shantibhai Patel P.T.C. College
5. Shri Vanmalidas Galshadas Patel English Medium P. T. C. College
6. Ambalal Vaghjibhai Patel (Sipor) Educational Colleges' ni Central Library
7. Raibahen Chandulal Patel (Mokhasan) Secondary and Higher Secondary School
8. Shri Narsinhbhai K. Patel Vignan Prayogshala
9. Raibahen Narsinhbhai Patel Prathmik Shala
10. Jantkumar Bhagubhai Prathmik Shala
11. V. M. Patel Kumar Balmandir
12. Raibahen Narsinhbhai Mahila Hostel
13. Hiraba Bhojanalaya
14. Viththalbhai Madhavlal Patel Kumar Balmandir
15. Shri Mahendra Mills Umiya Kumar Chhatralaya
16. Shri Purushottambhai ane Bhikhabhai Umiya Kumar Chhatralaya
17. Shri Ramanbhai D. Patel Umiya Kumar Chhatralaya
18. Shri Babubhai S. Patel Umiya Kumar Chhatralaya
19. Smt. Kashibahen Keshavlal Patel (Vamaj) Bhojngruh
20. Pashibahen Kalidas Umeddas Patel (Rajpur) Madhyasth Vari Gruh

**Jagdishbhai Natvarlal Patel (Dangarva)
English Medium Campus**

1. M. B. Patel English Medium Secondary and Higher Secondary School
2. Savitabahen Govindbhai Patel English Medium Primary School
3. Shivkorba Kalidas Patel Kindergarten School

Kalupur Bank Kanya Kelvani Sankul

1. Uma Arts and Nathiba Commerce Mahila College

2. Shethshri Khimji Visram and Sons (Mumbai) Auditorium
3. Kalupur Bank Computer Science Center
4. Smt. Sitabahen Narandas Patel (Dangarava) USA Girls College Library
5. Raibahen Gopaldas Patel Madhyamik Girls' and Smt. Savitabahen Babubhai Patel Uchtar Madhyamik Girls' High School
6. Smt. Mrudulabahen Bharatbhai Patel Prathmik Kanya Shala
7. Smt. Hirabahen Vitthaldas Patel Kanya Balmandir
8. Shri Baldevbhai Gopalbhai Patel (Dingucha) Umiya Kanya Chhatralaya
9. Lodariya Parivar (Sarsav) Umiya Uchtar Shikshan Kanya Chhatralaya
10. Varshabahen Rameshbhai Narottamdas Divan (Paliyad) USA Higher Education Umiya Kanya Chhatralaya
11. Ambalal Gopaldas Patel (Dingucha) Umiya Kanya Chhatralaya (Annexe)
12. Narandas Gopaldas Patel (Dingucha) Umiya Kanya Chhatralaya

Raibahen Narsinhbhai Lalit Kala Academy

1. School of Applied Arts and Multi Media
2. Mamta I. A. S. Training Centre
3. School of Classical Arts and Hobby (Sangeet, Nritya, Chitra , etc)
4. Mamta Sports Centre
5. Shivabhai V. Patel Sivan, Bharat, Gunthan
6. Vyaktitva Vikas Vargo
7. English Speaking Vargo
8. Photography, Videography
9. Computer Shikshan Vargo

**L. D. R. P. Institute of Technology and Resaerch
V. P. M. P. Polytechnic**

1. C. K. and A. K. Patel (Sarsav) Girls' hostel
2. Shri Govindbhai Shivabhai Patel (Paliyad) Girls' Hostel
Bhojanalaya
3. Smt. Jayashribahen Vinodkumar Patel Ane Smt
Sharmishthabahen Harshadkumar Patel (Mokhasan)
Boys' Hostel
4. Shri Baldevbhai Shankarbhai Patel (Rajpur) Boys' Hostel
Bhojanalay
5. Shri Prahladbhai Ranchhodbhai Patel (Saldi) (Motipura
-Veda) Boys' hostel Bhojanalaya

Appendix 3

The Office Bearers of the year 2006 – 2007

Sarva Vidyalay Kelavani Mandal, Kadi

President	Shri Bholabhai C. Patel	Visnagar
Chairman	Shri Maneklal M. Patel	Kadi
Vice President	Shri Keshavlal V. Patel	Sidhdhpur
Hon. Secretaries	Dr. Rambhai M. Patel	Kadi
	Dr. Kanubhai D. Patel	Ahmedabad
	Shri Vallabhbbhai M. Patel	Kadi
	Shri Manubhai J. Patel – Chanasma	Kadi

Sarva Vidyalay Kelvani Mandal – Gandhinagar Branch

President	Shri Laxmikantbhai Bhagubhai	Ahmedabad
Chairman	Shri Maneklal M. Patel	Kadi
Vice President	Shri Dineshbhai B. Patel	Kalol
	Shri Mahendrabhai A. Patel	Kalol
	Shri Gopalbhai Shivilal Patel	Ahmedabad
Vice Chairman	Shri Tansukhbhai P. Patel	Ahmedabad
Hon. Secretaries	Dr, Kanubhai D. Patel	Ahmedabad
	Shri Mohanlal B. Patel	Ahmadabad
	Shri Ambalal S. Patel	Vamaj
	Shri Bharatbhai A. Patel	Gandhinagar
	Dr. Mangubhai R. Patel	Ahmedabad
	Lt. Colonel Hasmukhbhai M. Patel	Ahmedabad

Shri Kadva Patidar Kelvani Uttejak Mandal, Kadi

President	Shri Keshavlal Viththaldas Patel	Sidhdhpur
Chairman	Shri Maneklal M. Patel	Kadi
Vice President	Vakil Shri Dhanabhai H. Patel	Ahmedabad
Hon. Secretaries	Dr. Manibhai M. Patel	Kadi
	Shri Manubhai Ambalal Patel	Ahmadabad
	Shri Khodabhai H. Patel	Kadi
	Dr. Jayantibhai M. Patel	Kadi

Kadi Sarva Vishvavidyalay, Gandhinagar

President	Shri Maneklal M. Patel	Kadi
Directors	Dr. Rambhai M. Patel	Kadi
	(Retired owing to age from June 07)	
	Dr. Kanubhai D. Patel	Ahmedabad



Appendix 4

સંસ્થા પ્રશસ્તિ ગીતો

સર્વ વિદ્યાલય રાજે

(બિહાગ : ત્રીન તાલ)

- સુંદર સર્વ વિદ્યાલય રાજે !
શિશુ-અંતર જનની-દર્શનથી સુખ ભરતી ગાજે... સુંદર
- ભારત-ઉપવન કમનીય કુંજે, ગુર્જર ભોમ પ્રકાશે,
ઉત્તરમાં ત્યાં એક ક્યારડે, વિધવિધ ફૂલડાં હાસે.... સુંદર
- કૈંક ઝરણના કલકલનાદે સરિતા સાગર ગાજે,
એ સાગરના ગર્જનાઘોષે ઝરણની કિંકિણી બાજે.... સુંદર
- આ મનના કણકણમાં બીજના અંકુર કુમળાં હાસે,
સુરમિત કુસુમિત નવપલ્લવ આ ઘટા અડાબીડ ભાસે.... સુંદર
- આ જ કુટિરમાં ટમટમતો જ્યાં દીપક મંદ પ્રકાશે,
અગણિત તારક અંકિત સૌમ્ય મયંક ગગન વિહાસે.... સુંદર
- શાન્ત દાન્ત જીવનની ધાત્રી, ધીરવીર રસ પાજે,
જ્ઞાનશક્તિ ને મંગલદાત્રી, યાત્રી અમ સહુ આજે.... સુંદર
- ફૂલ-પરિમલથી, કલકલનાદે, નવપલ્લવને વાસે,
તારકતેજે ભરતભૂમિને પુલકિત કરશું હાસે.... સુંદર

- અનામી

પ્રિય સર્વ વિદ્યાલય સોહે !

પ્રિય સર્વ વિદ્યાલય સોહે
પ્રાણથકી પ્રિય અમ અંતરનું
પરમ ધામ ઉર રાજે....
પ્રિય સર્વ વિદ્યાલય સોહે
લીલુડી ધરણીને હૈયે,
નીલ વ્યોમામ્બરને છાંયે,
હૈયે હૈયાં જ્યાં ડોલે,
પ્રતિદિન નીરખીએ તોયે અમને
નિત્ય નૂતન એ ભાસે.... પ્રિય,
રસભર આંબાની ડાળે,
શીતળ સુરભિભર કુંજે,
જ્યાં પંખીડાં નિત કૂજે,
જ્યાં અરુણરંગી પરભાતતણા ને
સાન્ધ્યરંગ નિત સોહે..પ્રિય.
જ્યાં જ્ઞાનકિરણ ફૂટે છે,
સેવાનાં સૂત્ર શિખાવે,
અમ જીવનને અજવાળે,
અમ જીવન તન મનને વિકસાવે
સ્નેહસરિતા રેલાવે...પ્રિય.
અમ બેન બંધુને હૈયે,
વિદ્યાલય ગુંજે પ્રાણે,
અમ જીવન જીવન એ વ્યાપે,
અમ ભાઈ ભાઈને એક મન એ
સ્નેહસૂત્રથી બાંધે... પ્રિય

- સ્વ. ઉમેદભાઈ

હો શત શત પ્રણામ!

આ સર્વ વિદ્યાલય
એ કોઈ નગર, મહાનગરમાં
વિદ્યાવિક્રય કરતી
લોખંડ સિમેન્ટ - કોન્ક્રીટ બનેલી
નિષ્પ્રાણ
ઈમારત નથી.
આ જ્ઞાનાશ્રમ છે
એક કૃષિ-ઋષિના સપનાનો
ઘેઘૂર ગરવો
કબીરવડ છે
જ્ઞાનવડ છે
અથવા તો -
આ ખરડતા ખાખરાઓના -
ધૂળમાં ઊડતા - આથડતા
ગોટમોટના વેરાન - ટપ્પામાં પડેલો - જડેલો
પારસમણિ છે - જ્ઞાનમણિ છે.
જેના સ્પર્શમાત્રથી બની છે કડી
સોનાની દડી,
આ સંસ્થા એટલે -
વૃક્ષોનાં નિબિડ ઝૂંડ વચ્ચે ટોળે વળી ઊભેલાં
નિર્જીવ તોતિંગ મકાનોનો સરવાળો - ગુણાકાર નહીં
આ તો છે
પરંપરિત
જ્ઞાનગંભીર આચાર્યમનીષીઓની
તેજસ્વિની તપોભૂમિ
કર્મભૂમિ.

હે સર્વ-બાંધવો, મિત્રો,
આ સંસ્થા આપણે સૌને માટે
વિદ્યાનું આલય માત્ર નથી,
આ તો આપણી સર્વની વાત્સલ્યમયી
જનની છે જનની !
જેણે આપણો પુનર્જન્મ કરાવ્યો છે
જનમફેરો સાર્થક બનાવ્યો છે
આપણસૌનાં હૈયે કોતરાયું છે એનું જ નામ !
આ જ્ઞાનદાત્રીને હો શત શત પ્રણામ!!

- રમેશ ત્રિવેદી

Appendix 5

શ્રી મોહનલાલ પટેલનું લેખન-સર્જન

નવલકથા :

૧. હેતનાં પારખાં (૧૯૫૭, ૧૯૯૩)
૨. ખાલી ખેપ (૧૯૫૯)
૩. અંતિમ દ્વીપ (૧૯૬૦, ૨૦૦૧)
૪. સાંજ ઢળે (૧૯૭૬)
૫. જલતા હિમગિરિ (૧૯૭૭)
૬. શમણાં ન લાગે હાથ (૧૯૭૯)
૭. નયન શોધે નીડ (૧૯૮૧)
૮. ટહુકે પંખી કોઈ ઘટામાં (૧૯૮૧)
૯. રણમાં છાઈ શ્યામ થટા (૧૯૮૨)
૧૦. પડદા જરી-કિનખાબના (૧૯૮૫)
૧૧. અંધારી રાતના ઓળા (૧૯૮૫)
૧૨. ભાસ-આભાસ (૧૯૮૭)
૧૩. રઝળપાટ (૧૯૮૮)
૧૪. સૂકી સરિતા, ભીના તટ (૧૯૮૪)
૧૫. ઘૂથવે નિર્જળ દરિયો (૧૯૮૫)
૧૬. લાંછન (૧૯૯૭, ૨૦૦૪, ૨૦૦૮)*
૧૭. ભવપ્રપંચ (૧૯૯૮)
૧૮. ડેડ એન્ડ (૨૦૦૦)*
૧૯. દિયર-ભાભી (૨૦૦૩)
૨૦. બંધન (૨૦૦૪, ૨૦૦૯)*

વાર્તાસંગ્રહ :

૧. હવા, તુમ ધીરે બહો ! (૧૯૫૪)
૨. વિધિનાં વર્તુળ (૧૯૫૬)
૩. ટૂંકા રસ્તા (૧૯૫૮)
૪. મોટી વહુ (૧૯૬૬)

૫. પ્રત્યાલંબન (૧૯૭૦)*
૬. કોસરોડ (૧૯૮૨)
૭. મોહનલાલ પટેલની શ્રેષ્ઠ વાર્તાઓ (૧૯૮૮, ૧૯૯૦)
૮. મત્સ્યવેદ (૧૯૯૮)
૯. મોહનલાલ પટેલની પ્રતિનિધિ વાર્તાઓ (૨૦૧૧)
૧૦. રણ ખજૂરીની છાયામાં (૨૦૧૩)

- લઘુકથા :
૧. ઝાકળમાં સૂરજ ઊગે (૧૯૯૧)*
 ૨. ૯૯ લઘુકથાઓ (૨૦૦૧)
 ૩. વિકલ્પ (૨૦૦૩)
 ૪. આવર્તન (૨૦૧૩)

કિશોર સાહિત્ય : ગુજરાતની ગૌરવકથાઓ (૨૦૧૧)

- નિબંધસંગ્રહ:
૧. હાસ્ય ઝરૂખે બૈઠકે (૧૯૯૪)
 ૨. યક્ષકર્દમ (૧૯૯૭)
 ૩. હસતાં... હસતાં... (૨૦૦૬)
 ૪. હાસ્યમર્મર (૨૦૦૬)*

પ્રવાસ : ૧. ગુડ મોર્નિંગ, અમેરિકા (૧૯૯૪)

- વિવેચન:
૧. ટૂંકી વાર્તા : મીમાંસા (૧૯૭૯)
 ૨. સાહિત્યસંકેત (૨૦૦૧)
 ૩. ટૂંકી વાર્તા : આસ્વાદ (૨૦૦૩)
 ૪. લઘુકથા : સ્વરૂપપરિચય (૨૦૦૮)
 ૫. વાગ્વૈભવ (૨૦૧૦)

અનુવાદ : ૧. મોપાસાંની પ્રતિનિધિ વાર્તાઓ (૨૦૧૩)

- સંપાદન :
૧. ૪૦ લઘુકથાઓ (૧૯૯૪)
 ૨. ગુજરાતી પ્રતિનિધિ લઘુકથાઓ (૧૯૯૫)
 ૩. કર્મચૂડામણિ માણેકલાલ (૨૦૧૦)
 ૪. ગુજરાતી લઘુકથા સંચય (૨૦૦૭)

- શૈક્ષણિક :
૧. નિબંધ લેખન (૧૯૯૨)
 ૨. ભૂગોળ પરિચય (૧૯૯૩)

૩. ગદ્ય આસ્વાદ (૧૯૯૪)
 ૪. ગુજરાતી ગદ્ય સમીક્ષા (૧૯૯૪)
 ૫. ગદ્ય પરિમલ (૧૯૯૫)
- સામાન્યજ્ઞાન : ૧. ભૌગોલિક જ્ઞાનવિજ્ઞાનશ્રેણી
 (૬ પુસ્તકોનો સંપુટ) (૧૯૯૭)
- ચરિત્ર : ૧. પ્રજ્ઞાદીપ છગનભા (૧૯૮૯, ૨૦૦૭)
 ૨. બ્રહ્મસ્વરૂપ યોગીજી મહારાજ (૧૯૯૧)
 ૩. બ્રહ્મસ્વરૂપ પ્રમુખસ્વામી મહારાજ (૧૯૯૫)
 ૪. મહેસાણા જિલ્લાના સ્વાતંત્ર્ય સૈનિકો (૧૯૯૮)
 ૫. ધ્રુવતારક (શ્રી માણેકલાલ પટેલની જીવકથા)
 (૨૦૧૩)
- આત્મકથા : ૧. ટાઈમ કેપ્સ્યૂલ (૨૦૧૩)
- અંગ્રેજી પુસ્તકો : 1. The Profligate (૪૭ દૃશ્યોમાં સ્કીન પ્લે)
 2. Millennium History of Patan (પ્રકા.: નેહજ એન્ટરપ્રાઈઝ, મુંબઈ)
 3. Bhaktamara Stotra (માનતુંગ સુરિશ્વરજી રચિત સ્તોત્રનો અંગ્રેજી (અનુવાદ. પ્રકા. : નેહજ એન્ટરપ્રાઈઝ, મુંબઈ)

* આ નિશાનીવાળાં પુસ્તકો રાજ્ય સરકાર - ગુજરાત સાહિત્ય અકાદમી દ્વારા પુરસ્કૃત છે.

“The unique characteristic of his personality was his optimism. Despite the worst circumstances or the moments of despair or amidst the storms and squalls of adversity he had never uttered a single word that expressed his despair. He used to say, ‘Even if the institute is destined to face an unforeseen calamity, and we are strangled of supply of any fresh air or our vital energy, we need not lose our courage. Even if we are imprisoned in a castle of calamity, we will learn to make our way out of it. We will cultivate the courage and fervor to face such adversity.’ His words are befitting to an audacious combatant striving to win.”

*Bapubhai Gami
Principal,
Sarva Vidyalay, Kadi*