

Padmabhushan
Karamshi Jethabhai Somaiya
(Profile of a Farmer – Industrialist)

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Biography
Originally Written in Marathi
by
Raja Mangalwedhekar

Translated into English
by
Dr. G. T. Sawant
(M.A.Ph.D.)

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Padmabhushan Karamshi Jethabhai Somaiya Biography

Author: Rajabhau Mangalwedhekar

Translation: Dr. G. T. Sawant (M.A.Ph.D.)

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(Shri Karamshi Somaiya *105th Birth Anniversary)

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Foreword

*Great fortune in wordly matters
and equanimity in spiritual elevation;
Balance in both is the right way.
That man becomes capable who
maintains balance in both respects.
Otherwise, comes useless frustration.
Frustration is caused by absence
of thought
Das says now be cautious.*

— Ramdas

A balance between material wealth and spiritual 'absence of desire' is the hall-mark of a realized soul. The imbalance results from frustration which is caused by absence of thought.

The confluence of wordly fortune and spiritual elevation by self-denial, go in the making of a powerful personality. Such noble hearted persons inspire society to move along the right path. They inculcate virtuous conduct among the individual members of society and lead it on the right path. These men act as beacon lights for the human ships sailing in the troubled sea of wordly affairs. Shri Karamshibhai, the main figure of this biography can be counted as one of them. A proper representation of the highly

developed personality of this man is made by a renowned social worker, an accomplished writer and an idealist, Mr. Rajabhau Mangalwedhekar. This itself is a promise of a sumptuous intellectual feast for the readers of this biography.

Both the writer and the subject of the composition are imbued with the spirit of the Indian Culture and Social Service. Readers will realize that the biography of Karamshibhai has acquired a status of a measuring rod of public estimation.

We believe in four ideals of human life : 1) Right Conduct (Dharma), 2) Worldly acquirements (Artha), 3) Right satisfaction of desires (Kama) and 4) Spiritual release (Moksha).

We find all the four ideals exquisitely co-ordinated in the life of Karamshibhai. The lack of co-ordination among these four ideals cannot ensure harmony and stability in the life of an individual or society. These four moral ideas are formed by the absolute and unalterable command of the Almighty. 'Artha' is life by the physical body; 'Karma' is life lived as a family, 'Dharma' is life to be lived for paying back the social debt, 'Moksha' is the living in the form of body-soul. 'Artha' is for wealth, 'Karma' for progeny, 'Dharma' for progress and 'Moksha' for spiritual course. Such is the paradigm of human life structure.

These four cardinal norms of wordly life were forgotten and all sorts of malformations in the human society ensued. 'Artha' and 'Kama' were viewed in the crudest form and humanism suffered. Those who advocated 'Dharma' as a myth in their attempt to achieve their individual selfish ends, ignored social good. Humanism was forgotten. The future of mankind is in danger with growing capitalism, growing violence and growing evil activities in the world. Free competition has worked to the detriment of small industries and unemployment is assuming grave dimensions.

The political leaders, leaders of business and industrialists are not aware of the word 'Yoga' in 'Udyoga' (Yoga – proper exercise; Udyoga – proper work). In such circumstances an owner and director of industries like Karamshibhai has achieved the unique feat of yogic success in the field of his work ethics.

In India we respectfully remember late Jamshetji Tata and Jamnalal Bajaj as the ideal industrialists. The heritage and tradition of these stalwarts of

industry is ably pursued by Karamshibhai, Navalbhau and Hastimal Firodia as observed by me from close quarters. Karamshibhai had to experience the rigours of poverty in his childhood. He encountered many financial and other difficulties. He somehow managed to study up to his matriculation class (present day S.S.C.). But he had to leave his studies halfway and could not complete his matriculation. His academic learning halted but the era of real self-education by experience commenced. This training was of a different type. It compelled him to develop strong memory and quiet and creative faculty. These were essential requirements in the school of real life.

Sant Tukaram had said, "We alone know the meaning of the Vedas." That is saints only can understand the innate meaning of the Vedas. This saintly saying aptly applies to Karamshibhai as he knew what was the meaning of life by having real concrete experiences which other people rarely have.

One has to pursue some occupation, big or small for one's livelihood. Karamshibhai had to earn money the hard way through difficulties and obstacles to make any progress. He denied himself the comforts of easy salaried jobs under some wealthy merchant or established firm. He was determined to start self-employment. He experimented with trade and industry getting kicks of failure, no bouquets of success. He cared little for prestige and dignity and took failures in his stride. He handled petty trades with a definite goal to establish his own business.

Sant Namdev says, "Do good trade and keep faith in the Almighty." This is a befitting description of Karamshibhai's business activities. Karamshibhai kept his unflinching faith in the Lord of all beings while carrying out his many sided business activities. The petty trade of selling husks of gram was taken up by him without hesitation in the face of public ridicule and humiliations. He least cared for either. Sant Tukaram says, "The power of determination is itself the fruit of action." Karamshibhai achieved success by dint of his hard work and strong determination. He experimented with different trades and commercial activities and in the end emerged successful. The sugar trade and industry turned him from a pauper to a business tycoon. Karamshibhai's sweet tongue and the sweetness of sugar combined to produce this effect. This sweet tongued merchant became famous as a big and popular sugar merchant in Maharashtra.

After achieving success and stability in sugar trading business, Karamshibhai contemplated to start a sugar factory of his own. He planned

to undertake sugarcane plantation in Belapur the place where he had started his sugar selling business. He decided to buy land for sugarcane cultivation in Belapur only. He made outright purchases of lands as well as acquired lands on lease or tenancy rights in parts of Kopargaon tehsil.

Karamshibhai started actual cultivation of sugarcane instead of supervising sugarcane farming and buying sugarcane for his factory from other farmers. He started many trades based on sugarcane business and became successful in all his activities. He was acknowledged as an ideal merchant and an agriculturist by all concerned.

Karamshibhai's sugar factory farms could produce more yield from every acre of land, more output of sugar from factories, better labour relations and higher developments of the surrounding areas. His Sugar Mills was acclaimed by the public as a model Sugar Mill. I need not furnish the details as they are provided in the biographical sketch itself.

What a wonder! A helpless youth caught in the formidable web of poverty in his childhood, without an iota of shame or fear prefers self-employment instead of serving others; he undertook petty trade and was not ashamed to handle inferior but honest trade!

Even when he had satisfied himself in retail sugar trade, he ventured into the production of sugar, cultivation of sugarcane and processing sugarcane juice for multiple uses. The union of these three different strains was possible by the Grace of God alone.

Karamshibhai, a poor man, who became a millionaire by his labour and industry, this man became a friend and a guardian of learned men is unique and unheard of.

The saintly saying, "Earning money by good business he conducts himself with least passion." This appears to be the description of Karamshibhai who lived upto this Sant Tukaram's statement. What attracted me towards Karamshibhai is his spiritual exercises and his lifestyle as saints recommend.

His creed and guiding principle taught him to treat culture as more important than wealth, spiritual exercise more important than enjoyment, honesty and integrity as more important than pride and prestige and helping others as more important than egoism. Kindness to all beings, protection to cow and other animals and food to the hungry was a salient feature of his outlook.

Sant Tukaram said, "Doing good to others; he avoids slandering others; he regards wives of others as his sisters." Tuka says, "This is the fruit of protection. This is the highest position of asceticism."

Thus the life of the 'Karma Yogi' (performer of pure actions) Karamshibhai proceeded. The protection of the cow, right conduct and loyalty to the nation were the foundations of his course of life as a householder – that is the stage called 'Grahastashram'. Karamshibhai claimed that human society can secure harmony.

Karamshibhai set up the Vidyavihar Complex prompted by his dedication to learning. Sanskrit language is the mother of Indian Culture and unless its impact is enhanced cultural unity cannot be properly sustained for a long time. As he discerned this essence he stimulated the spread of Sanskrit on a large scale.

This work is essential for the revival of Indian culture. He established an Institute called 'Sur Bharati'. I had an opportunity to express my views about this before the audience of Vidyavihar college on the occasion of a programme arranged by Sur Bharati.

Dr. Shantilal Somaiya, his son, is ably continuing the legacy of his father in respect of industry and learning with ease. This is surely commendable.

I hail from Ahmednagar district so I have closely watched Karamshibhai's achievements in trade and industry. Although we met on a few occasions the mutual respect was nurtured over the years.

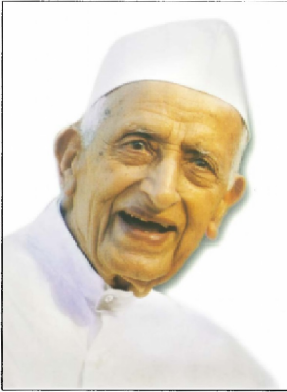
The national leader from Ahmednagar Raosaheb Patwardhan is my political mentor. He was the source of inspiration for the Workers' Union in sugar factories. So I had the opportunity of association many a time.

A proverb says, 'Simple living and high thinking' which is aptly symbolized by Karamshibhai. I have personal experience of his life-style. Nowadays the verse is reversed. 'High living and egoistic low thinking' is evidenced in the life-style of high brows on an increasing scale.

I believe a healthy change in the life-style and thinking process will come about in the sophisticated class after reading this biography.

– Balasaheb Bharde

About the author : **Raja Mangalwedhekar**



The writer of 'Padmbhushan Karamshi Jethabhai Somaiya Jeevan Gatha' (Biography of K. J. Somaiya) was an accomplished Marathi writer imbued with the nationalist spirit and deeply interested in social service.

He was engaged in his literary work for the last 50 years or so. He composed and edited literature mainly for children. He was inspired to write for child-readers when he came in contact with 'Sane Guruji'.

He profusely composed literature for child-readers with a view to entertain them and at the same time instruct them on various topics. He undertook a story-telling

tour of Maharashtra presenting his stories and songs to the young audience. He wrote a treatise on 'Story and Story telling' (Katha ani Kathakathan).

His outstanding contribution to Marathi literature includes a book on the life and work of Sane Guruji, Mitraya Namah (Salutation to friend), Mitra Devo Bhava (Friend is God), Mitraya Namon-Namah (Deep-felt salutation to friend), Tarun Mitra (Oh, Young friend), Kahani Eka Purusharthachi (Story of a manly virtue). Some of his above mentioned books won national and state-level awards for literary excellence.

Land-marks in his literary Career :

1985 : He presided over the child and adolescent literature conference held at Pune.

1995 : He won the 'Bal Seva' (Service to child-readers) award given by the All-India Sane Guruji Story Series (Katha-mala).

1995 : He was awarded 'Bal Anand Puraskar' (The Joy of Children award) on behalf of the Freedom Fighter Shri Mama Gaware Foundation, Kopergaon.

1999 : He achieved the prestigious G. D. Madgulkar (Gadima) award considered as a great award in the cultural life of Maharashtra.

Rajabhai was in close contact with Freedom Struggle, Rastra Seva Dal, Serial Stories, Anand-Bharati, Sarvodaya and such other cultural movements. He was connected with constructive nation-building work. He carried out his literary work with empathetic approach towards leaders, institutions and active workers dedicated to such nation-building struggle as he identified himself whole-heartedly with them. He died in 2006, deeply mourned by the people of Maharashtra.

About the Translator

Dr. G. T. Sawant hails from Vengurla, Sindhudurg District of Maharashtra. After taking M.A. degree (high 2nd class) in History he joined R. P. Gogate College, Ratnagiri as a lecturer. He organized extra-mural lectures at the college on behalf of the Pune University. He led a study tour of his under-graduate students to north India. They met Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Vice-President of India at that time.

He joined R. Jhunjhunwala College (Mumbai) in 1965 and later accepted professorship at Ulhasnagar College (now known as R. K. Talreja College). He edited the 'Internal Defence' Annual number of the college in 1966-67. He took the charge of the post-graduate wing (M.A. and M.Com.) of the college in 1968 which he continued till his retirement. He had to hold the position of an Acting Principal a few months in 1980-81. During this time he mobilised opposition to the ill-conceived demand for a separate Konkan University.

He received his Ph.D. degree of the Bombay University in 1984 for his thesis 'History of the Silaharas (AD 800 to AD 1300)' under the guidance of eminent scholar, Dr. George Moraes.

Dr. Sawant has written many text books for undergraduate classes both in Marathi and English. His 'History of Asia' for B.A. went into two editions and one reprint. It is in the reading list of books on Goa and Kerala.

Prof. Sawant commands a wide experience of teaching from F. Y. Arts to M. A. classes. He was engaged in post-graduate teaching at the R. K. T. Post Graduate wing of the college for 18 years. After retirement he taught History at the S.N.D.T. University for a few years. He also taught History to I.A.S. classes organized by the Municipal Corporation of Thane. He lectured to the Distance Education classes conducted by the University of Mumbai for quite a long time.

He wrote lessons for under-graduate and post-graduate classes of the Universities of Mumbai and S.N.D.T. according to their syllabuses from time to time, either individually or in association with others. Such journals number over 20 and were regarded as very useful reading material.

His non-History books are 'Sārtha Bhagavat Gita' and 'Sulabh Dnyaneshwari' in Marathi. His concise Eng-Eng-Marathi-Hindi Dictionary was published by Central Prakashan, Mumbai in April 2006 and now the translation of K. J. Somaiya biography is published by Somaiya Publication Pvt. Ltd.

Introduction

‘Kalaya Tasmai Namah’ (Salutation to Time)

I have an inborn curiosity about human beings in general. I crave for friendship, affection and close relationship with those around me. My contacts with talented, successful and famous persons stimulated my interest to have a peep into their inner self and study the making and fashioning of their personalities. This is my constant struggle to satisfy my curiosity about people around me.

I have the privilege to meet and mix up with distinguished men and women in different fields. I stay with them and observe their activities closely as they treat me with courtesy. I could strike friendship with them and see them in the proper perspective. One such distinguished personality is Sheth Karamshibhai Jethabhai Somaiya.

I was hearing his name and achievements being mentioned for a long time. He had held high successfully the standard of revolution in agriculture and industry. He had built up industrial empire of his group from scratch. He used his wealth to promote welfare of the people from the moral urge to repay the social debt. I was overwhelmed by his contribution to educational institutions, cultural activities, health care and allied programmes of welfare activities. Incidentally my friend in the Rashtraseva Dal and a member of the Socialist Party, Mr. Kishore Pawar, made a suggestion to me to take up the work of writing a biography of Sheth Karamshibhai. I gladly accepted the suggestion.

Kishore Pawar in fact was a labour leader in Somaiya Sugar Mills Ltd.

Karamshibhai was the owner of the Sugar Mills. It would be an experiment in dove-tailing conflicting interests or harnessing horses pulling in different directions. Notwithstanding this apparent clash of interests the relationship between Karamshibhai, his son Shantilaji and labour leader Kishore Pawar was of a special kind. It has to be called by some special name to express the cordiality among them.

Before I could take up writing the biography I had to do some groundwork like collecting evidence, letters, reports, published and unpublished matter and interviews etc. with great effort. However I wanted to hear the story of his life from Karamshibhai's mouth only. I expressed this wish to Kishore Pawar who conveyed it to Karamshibhai. He rejected the proposal outright. I still remember that incident.

Once I went from Pune to meet Karamshibhai accompanied by Kishore Pawar. He had told Karamshibhai that if he would not agree to such a dialogue Kishore would go on fast. Hearing about Kishore's fast Karamshibhai made a humorous comment, "The fast would improve Kishore's health and if he is on fast I cannot eat. This will improve my health also!" Karamshibhai thus shelved the proposal in this way. It was however a clear proof of the fatherly affection felt by him towards Kishore.

A few months later Kishore Pawar and Shetji's eldest daughter, Mrs. Leelaben Kotak, tried to find out a solution to the problem of foiling their repeated tactics to persuade him to talk about his life and work. They contrived to arrange an interview between Karamshibhai and me after a dinner on the terrace of his bungalow. I broached the topic by saying we have planned to write your complete biography and for that" Karamshibhai interrupted before I could complete the sentence.

"Why should you write my biography? Simply because I worked hard and earned a large amount of money? If I were not to earn big amount I would remain a small fry. Then you would not have thought of writing my biography!"

I persisted with my plan and said, "You have built such a great industrial complex from nothing. People should know about that." He laughed and said, "Look here gentleman, great men like Mahatma Gandhi and Pundit Nehru wrote autobiographies, biographies of other famous persons are also written by good writers. But who reads them? Then who will read my biography?"

Karamshibhai was disposing of my repeated arguments in favour of an interview concerning his life and work. I was repeatedly pleading with him.

The new generation if properly informed of your determined efforts, readiness to do hard work for a cause and the skill with which you handled the business would be inspired to follow your example. Prompt came the repartee.

“Those who desire to work, come forward and exert themselves. Well! So far I have in my life till now carried out my work and conducted myself in a fairly good way but what happens tomorrow if I am spoiled?” he said this with a dubious smile that shook me.

I was poignantly reminded of the fact Karamshibhai was aware of human failings. He therefore said, “It is in the fitness of things that such writings should be undertaken only after the person concerned lives no more.”

Our strategy to secure his consent for the interview thus failed miserably. I sedulously continued my efforts to gather first hand information from him. Once I accompanied him to Nareishwadi in his car. We chatted about many matters. In the course of our talk I told him about Maharashtra’s great saintly personality, Sane Guruji. I had written Guruji’s biography. Karamshibhai listened to the report of all events in the life of Guruji very attentively. Then he asked me a question, “When was he born?” I replied, “He was born on 24th December 1899. That is his birth date.”

Karamshibhai on hearing that remarked, “It means he was two years older than me!” I immediately caught him in his words and said, “That means you were born in the year 1902!”

He laughed freely and said, “Well! You have caught me unawares!” Now I was in my element and continued the talk to elicit more information about him from his mouth. So I said, “Now tell me the date and the month of your birthday.” He said pensively, “I won’t tell you that as I myself have forgotten.” Then humourously he pointed a finger to the sky and said, “If I remember it with some effort, He would say, “Oh, I have forgotten him. He must be brought here forthwith! He will then be in a hurry to recall me. I do not wish to go to Him so early as I have yet to do a lot of work here!”

Karamshibhai evaded mentioning the exact date of his birth. The definite date of his birth is not known. We had to keep the project aside for the time

being. The man whose life sketch I wished to draw up was least interested in disclosing the date or discuss the events that shaped his life.

In the year 1983-84 I had gleaned together information about Karamshibhai in the different areas of his activities by interviewing about 150 persons who knew him or had come in contact with him. I had also gathered relevant records which were necessary for telling the life story of the great man.

A few years passed by. Karamshibhai had passed the age of ninety. He was about 93 or 94 by then. He felt an urge to write something about himself. He had made an attempt to put down something about himself with the help of a stenographer but the exercise was abandoned half way.

The age was now telling on him. He was feeling exhausted and could speak with difficulty. The normal functions of the body like sitting, rising, walking about were gradually becoming difficult and painful. But the urge to put down something about himself in writing was becoming strong. He therefore approached me through Kishore Pawar. He called me and initiated the narration of the events as he remembered. I had to piece together the events as would fit in the biographical sketch and as was possible for him to recollect at that advanced age.

I have composed this biography on the basis of the information compiled by me from independent sources to corroborate the events and happenings. I read out the narrative drafted by me a couple of times. He suggested some corrections and improvements. The biography in its unfinished form was then read out to knowledgeable people. However the biography in its complete form could not be published during his life time.

Karamshibhai's sad demise occurred on 9th May 1999. After that on the Republic Day on 26th January 2000 he was posthumously awarded Padmabhushan by the President of India. This biography is being published on his 98th birth anniversary on 16th May 2000 in memory of the first death anniversary of Karamshibhai on 9th May 2000.

A tear of joy for completing the work glistens in one eye and the sad memory that Karamshibhai is no more brings a burning tear in the other eye.

Salutation to Time!

– Rajabhau Mangalwedhekar

Early Period : Colours of The Eastern Sky

Family History

रघूणामन्वयं लक्ष्ये।

I describe the family of Raghu

Family History

This is a story of the life of an industrious person. Not only in youth but also when he is nearing a century of his age, he is ever on the move like a busy ant. Whenever we see an ant we find it in a hurry always busy with its work. It is as if the ant does not know what is idleness or rest. This man lives in the same way. However this man is not of a small stature. He is tall, erect, sturdy and strong of body-frame, with long arms and his feet moving as if on wheels. His complexion is fair and pinkish. He is resolute in mind yet the expression on his face is pleasant. He is good-looking.

Clad in pure white khadi – dhoti, a kurta and a cap – typify his character.

Now in his nineties there is a bend in the lower back, hands tremble because of weakness and age. The gait and speech have slowed down. This is the natural state at this age, not a deformity!

There was fun a couple of times. This smart handsome man was riding in a car. The car was moving on but had to halt at the railway gate. A passer-by peeped into the car and shouted with surprise 'Nehru!' With the same feeling of astonishment he told the people around. "Oh! Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru is in the car!" The passers-by gathered and peeped into the car. The railway gate opened up in the meantime and the car crossed the track. This man with fresh, blooming, soothing gentle personality like Nehru was Karamshi Jethabhai Somaiya, Sheth K. J.

Somaiya or famous by the name of Karamshibhai among most of the people in the industrial field. The word 'Shetji' is offensive to him. He regards it as a bad word, an abuse. The younger members of the family affectionately call him 'Adha' that is Daddy or father.

It is necessary to have the details of Karamshibhai's original home, his ancestors and his relations in the narration in the story of his life.

The Somaiya family originally is from Kutch in Gujarat. The name of the village is Tera in Amdasa Tehsil. Kutch in Gujarat is situated on the West Coast of India. This part is known by the name of 'Gulf of Kutch'. This is separated from the main land and is formed like an island. Although this part of the country is arid, sandy and rocky, it contains hilly ranges, deep river-beds, hills and valleys brought under cultivation and extensive grazing grounds for cattle. This provides variety.

It is said that many years ago, the ancestors of the Somaiyas migrated from Central Asia in the north to the south in India and settled there. In the beginning they lived in the village by the name of Gundara and thereafter became the inhabitants of Tera village.

Somaiya family belongs to the Lohana clan. Lohana is a caste in Gujarat. These people are also known as Luhanas. They mostly inhabited nearby places. There are many myths about the origins of the Lohanas. Some of which are mentioned below.

The Lohanas believe that they are the descendants of Lord Rama through his son Lava – descendants of Lava became Lohanas.

According to another mythical story there are two brothers Lakho and Damo. After wandering a lot they arrived at Dhrangadhra in Kathiawar. The descendants of Lakho became Lohana and those by Damo became Depala. Thus they became the progenitors of Lohana and Depala clans respectively.

Another tradition says that the Lohana Clan originated from The Rathod Rajputs. King of Kanauj Raja Jayachand oppressed them greatly and in order to defend themselves they resorted to arms against him. They invoked the support of God Varuna, who built an iron fortress, without their knowledge and asked them to seek shelter within the fortress. They were successful against the oppressive king. After 21 days

the iron fortress disappeared. They changed their clan name Rathod to Lohana as they emerged victorious against the king and took up the name Lohana as they were saved by the iron-fortress.

An English researcher and scholar A.M.T. Jackson however opines that the word Lohana was derived from the word 'Lavana' in Sanskrit which means salt. The Lohanas in the past were engaged in the salt-trade. Even today there are many salt pans in Kutch. 'Kutch Salt and Allied Industries Limited', one of the groups of the Somaiya Industries, is stabilized there.

Apart from mythological tales there is a history of the Lohana clan. They have their peculiar life-style, customs and traditions. There are many Kutch-Lohana families in Mumbai. They are worshippers of the sea.

The two brothers Thakersibhai and Waljibhai Parpya lived in the village named 'Tera'. Waljibhai had no issues but Thakersibhai had two sons Jayarambhai and Jethabhai. By mutual consent Waljibhai had adopted Jayarambhai, the son of Thakersibhai as his son. As a result Jayarambhai came to be known as Jayarambhai Walji and Jethabhai as Jethabhai Thakersi. Both lived separately. The traditional occupation of their forefathers was to collect the scrap material and dust from goldsmith shops and glean tiny gold pieces from the dust. They resorted to the process of straining and smelting which was very hard and laborious. They were therefore nick named 'Dhul Dhulia' (dust refiners).

Arduous work and unproductive land made living conditions unbearable. There was no scope for improvement. Thakersibhai therefore left 'Tera' village and decided to seek better prospects in Mumbai. Mumbai was (and still continuous to be) the hub of industrial activities. It is the home of many professions and trades. So the people come here from all directions and by various routes. They all are engrossed here in earning their daily bread.

Thakersibhai arrived in Mumbai around the year 1857 and started seeking some trade or business. It is in the same year that he was married to Kalyanbai, the daughter of Gokulbhai Ukeda. His father-in-law Gokulbhai Ukeda was a contractor. He undertook developing marshy lands near the sea-coast. The low lands by the sea-side were developed

or sea-lands reclaimed by dumping heaps of stones, hard and soft and earth. The reclamation is thus bringing the land under the sea for construction work. The land near Nariman Point was reclaimed in this way. Gokulbhai Ukeda was stationed at Oswal bridge near Koliwada for his development and reclamation work. Thakersibhai incidently stabilized himself in that work and gained much in a short time. He became prosperous in his development works. He was caught in the mesh of gambling and lost all his fortune won by him over so many years.

Thakersibhai in desperation left Mumbai and tried to seek fortune at a new place. There was no definite plan, no definite destination, no proper idea of what to do. He had moved out of Mumbai to go to the south. After roaming about aimlessly he reached Manmad Station and sat down on the platform.

The human life is woven by different strands of events, instances, unimagined and unexpected circumstances. These chance occurrences are unscrutable to the person who experiences them, that is why they are called chance occurrences. They all of a sudden appear and change life altogether.

The Manmand railway station platform thus became a turning point in his life by chance happening. While sitting on the platform in a dejected state of mind he met a co-passenger. He was a barber as he was carrying a barber's kit on his shoulders. Thakersibhai thought that there was still lot of time for the train to arrive, it was convenient to have a shave as his beard had grown.

Thakersibhai sat before the barber for a shave. As the barber was sharpening his razor he opened his mouth as if to sharpen his tongue for an engaging talk. The barber was very talkative as practically all barbers of the time used to be. They talked and made the customers talk by holding their heads in an uncomfortable position and holding their heads between their own knees while cutting hair. The customer had to talk and hear what the barber talked. It was not an agonizing experience as the barbers provided lot of information about the town and the information was always very interesting. The barber's reports were a great pass-time.

While shaving his beard the barber inquired about Thakersibhai's

destination and purpose of his journey. Thakersibhai opened up his mind and narrated his plight. On hearing his unsavoury, sad story, the barber said, "Never mind! Now be ready to go to our village Malunja. It is near Belapur. You will definitely get some work there. In our village there are many kinds of trees such as lemon, tamarind, 'Tarwad' plants, gum-trees and other trees. Hardly anybody notices them. See if you can take up some work there or do something there!"

Thakesibhai was a sharp and astute businessman. He drew quick inference and assessed the possibility for a venture there. He decided to accompany the barber to his village near Belapur. The charges for shaving were very low, one 'paisa' (a quarter of a penny) but Thakersibhai pleased with the information that was provided, gladly paid him sixteen 'paise'. It was a very big amount as it was one fourth of a Rupee at that time! The barber was very much pleased with the reward. He accompanied Thakersibhai to Malunja which was at that time in Rahuri Tehsil (Taluka) of Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra. Now the village is in Srirampur Taluka of the same district.

In this Malunja village there is a big palace-like house of Bapurao Avati. Thakersibhai rented one room there and started his economic activities and set up his home also. He took up farming activity there.

During Thakersibhai's stay in the Avati's house, a sad episode took place:

One day at night two or three robbers pushed their way into the Avati house for the purpose of stealing. It was pitch dark and the robbers struggled to find out treasure. The members of the Avati family were fast asleep. The dacoits turned to the right towards Thakersibhai's room but by mistake turned to the left in the darkness. It was then that the eldest grandson of Thakersibhai, Dharsibhai got up crying. The dacoits got frightened and struggled to find out their way. At that time a pot fell down and the sound of the pot awoke Bapurao Avati. He heard the sound of stamping and shuffling of the feet. He shouted in a stern voice "Who's there?" the dacoits panicked and to avoid arrest they attacked Bapurao with a sharp weapon in the darkness and ran away. Bapurao Avati was killed! We know not how fatalities take place, suddenly and without the least suggestion they trap us.

Thakersibhai had a special knack in business matters. In a short time he purchased agricultural and non-agricultural lands and also managed to collect a lot of cattle in the cattle-shed. The most extra-ordinary thing that Thakersibhai introduced in the village was the Kirlosker iron sugarcane mill for crushing and straining the juice in Malunja village. Belapur the township famous for jaggery-market is nearby Malunja. In the Malunja area wooden apparatuses were used for squeezing sugarcane for juice. The use of iron sugarcane mill signified his commendable foresight and unknowingly indicated the plans of destiny to provide full scope for the abilities of his grandson (Karamshibhai) in future.

Considering his times, Thakersibhai had proved to be a progressive agriculturist and a businessman. Although, a stranger to the place he had won a position of prestige in Malunja and its surroundings. He had established very cordial relations with the people there.

Thakersibhai died in 1899. His head rested in the lap of his wife who was sorrow struck and wept all the time as he was breathing his last. Her tears trickled down her cheek and fell on his face. He suddenly stirred and said, "Why do you weep like this? When one has all the comforts of life, home, land, orchards, milch-cows and buffaloes and other things of life; one has to die one day! No one can avoid it. Live happily all the time!"

Thakersibhai had two sons, Jayarambhai and Jethabhai. Jayarambhai was childless but Jethabhai had two sons, Karamshi and Dharshi. With a view to continuing his genealogy he requested Jethabhai to allow him to adopt either of his sons. As Jethabhai did not like to part with his eldest son, Dharshibhai, he agreed to offer Karamshibhai. The ceremony of adoption was to take place after sometime. However, in the meantime a son was born to Jayarambhai and the big problem was solved. Karamshi Jethabhai remained Karamshi Jethabhai.

Karamshi Jethabhai the main actor, the chief personality of this biography, was born on 16th May 1902 in the rented room of Avati's house in Malunja itself.



Childhood

बुलभसौख्यं तावत् आलस्यं भवति।

Happiness in childhood is easily available

Childhood

Jethabhai, father of Karamshibhai was looking after the business of his father (the grandfather of Karamshibhai), Thakersibhai. He was also very industrious. He was an athlete, gymnast and was fond of wrestling. He used to take exercise daily. He had reserved two buffaloes exclusively for himself for milk. He was however very short-tempered and easily provoked. He could not maintain friendly relations with the villagers like his father Thakersibhai. His hot temper caused to spoil his relations with the people in a short time and they turned hostile against him. Among such people were the 'Bhils', the tribals who supplied fodder for his cattle. He clashed with the 'Bhils' over some trifling point. They avenged themselves on him by mixing up some poisonous substance in the fodder they supplied for his cattle. All his cattle perished after consuming the fodder. This was followed by similar hostilities of the people resulting in great losses. Jethabhai decided to leave Malunja village.

Around the year 1904 he left Malunja and shifted to Belapur where he set up a grain shop.

Although Jethabhai shifted to Belapur he had retained the house at Malunja where his wife and children still lived. In 1902 when Karamshibhai was born at Malunja, Jethabhai was at Belapur. When Jethabhai learnt about the birth of the second son, he recorded the date in some note-book. It was misplaced and the exact date of Karamshibhai remained a mystery. When a government official from Rahuri Tehsil (Taluk) visited Malunja for recording births, he was told 1st June 1902 as the probable date.

After many years an astrologer and palmist made his way to Jethabhai's home. He examined and read the palms of all the members of the family. Surprisingly the dates of birth told by the palmist – astrologer tallied with the dates actually recorded by Karamshibhai. At that time the palmist examined Karamshibhai's palm and firmly put down his date of birth as 16th May 1902 instead of 1st June 1902. Karamshibhai began to regard 16th May 1902 as his birth-date but did not allow anybody to know about it. The present author (Raja Mangalwedhekar) when he approached him with a view to writing his biography, was merely told, "I have forgotten my date of birth. God Almighty also must have forgotten it. Now if I attempt to remember it He might also remember it and would say, 'This one is now 80-85 and must be called back'. But a lot of work remains to be done by me."

His intelligent remark not only implied the native sense of humour but also the determination to continue his work even in his old age.

A few years later Jethabhai abandoned Malunja and established his home and business at Belapur.

Karamshibhai even today recalls the memories of his childhood. In a mood to reminisce he said, "I was about a year old that time. My paternal aunt was playing with me on the wall of the balcony on the first floor of our house. Somebody called out to her from the house so she left me in a hurry and went there. Nobody was nearby and I collapsed from the wall on to the rough metalled road. However by God's grace I was not hurt at all! I landed safely there!"

Another episode was about the school days in Belapur. It was a general practice that the pupil who could attend school in the morning before others would get a first rank in the class. This tempted me to seize the opportunity and get the leading position in the class. So one morning I got up before sunrise, ate mango and our customary bread (poli) served to me by my mother and went to the school before all. But the gate of the school was in front. I was struggling to open the gate when a barking dog ran in my direction and bit me on my thigh. After that encounter I nursed a secret fear about dogs. I was very much scared of dogs. However I learnt a lesson from that bitter experience; never to panic when a dog rushes at you barking fiercely. Stand still where you are and stare at the dog. After barking for a while the dog will go away.

An amusing belief was entertained by children in the school that if land is dug to the depth of a span of the hand by the little finger a camel emerges from that ditch! We all were therefore engaged with excavation work by little fingers.

Another idea that had excited the minds of children at that time was that if shells found in the sand are hit against the chest it would enable the person to fly in the sky. We were therefore also engaged in the work of gathering shells from the river beds. When we remember the childish, funs, foibles and foolish flights of imagination it makes us laugh now but at that time and at that age those ideas and beliefs had amused us a lot. We lived by them and with them.

The memory of celebrating the Ganesh Chaturthi (annual celebration in August, September) for propitiating God Ganesh (elephant headed God) is still fresh in the mind. On that day all pupils had to wash and clean, their slate-boards and inscribe 'Shree' on it with a slate pencil in a bold character and pray before it.

We had to learn the alphabets and learn by heart multiplication tables also. We had to recite the tables of integers from two onwards and also fractions from a quarter to a three and a half number. The recitation was known as 'Parvacha'. For writing on paper we had to carry an ink-pot and a piece of reed as an instrument to write with by dipping it in the ink-pot. We had to trace and copy the model script from the copy-book on the notebook with such reed-pen.

Karamshibhai tells about the childhood days with relish. He recollected an incident when he was about fourteen or fifteen years of age. "We had two horses and a two-wheeled carriage. My father used to ride in it for the collection of money from the customers who bought articles from the shop on credit. Once I happened to ride on one of the horses which was mischievous. As I mounted, it ran off. It crossed the stream. I pulled the bridle and turned it back but it frisked and ran off again. There was no way to control it. My feet slipped from the stirrup and I lost control over the bridle. I firmly caught hold of the hair on its mane. But I lost my balance and fell down in front of the horse. It suddenly halted. I stood still and did not move an inch. If it were to raise its leg and move a bit I would have been trampled under its hoofs, but it stood still. I was saved and escaped unhurt by God's grace!

At the age of seventeen I had another providential escape. It was the rainy season. The Pravara river of Belapur was in spate. I was sitting on its bank when somebody gave me a jerk and I fell down into the flooded river. I did not know swimming. The current was strong and I was being carried in the water with great speed. I was terribly frightened and shouted for help. Someone on the bank of the river heard my call and jumped into the river and pulled me out, taking the support of the chain fastened to a pillar in the river. I was saved from drowning by the Grace of God!”

The miraculous escape from the seemingly impossible situations on many occasions inculcated in him the faith in the God’s Grace and devotion to God in the early period of Karamshibhai’s life.

He cultivated interest in reading and listening to mythological tales. The child-devotees like Dhruv and Pralhad had fulfilled their wishes to perceive the vision of God in their boyhood only. These stories about the power of devotion had thus fortified his unflinching faith in God and whole-hearted devotion to God.



Education - School Days

क्रिया हि वस्तूपहिता प्रक्षीदति।

Education imparted to a deserving pupil bears fruit

Education - School Days

In Belapur we lived in a rented place in the premises owned by Hiralalbhai Mundhada. He was a studious and experienced Ayurvedic medical practitioner. He used to check his own pulse three times a day – in the early morning after getting up, in the afternoon and at night before sleeping. The variations in pulse beat and his own health led him to certain inferences about diagnosis of diseases. His unerring diagnosis made him a reputed medical practitioner. After talking about his residence at Belapur and about the medical practitioner Karamshibhai dwelt on the topic of education.

At that time I was about four or five years old. My father enrolled me in a Marathi school at Belapur. I used to go to one Abula Pathan for private tuition. He was a Muslim teacher but he had complete command over Marathi language. He used to instruct excellently. Pathan teacher was polished in manners and very affectionate to his wards. I was first initiated to the Marathi language by him.

I read upto second standard in the Marathi school at Belapur. After that due to the ill-health of my father, the whole family that is my father, grandmother, brother Dharshibhai, sister Basanti alias Basanbai and myself had to go to Mumbai. In Mumbai also I was enrolled in a Marathi school. There I was admitted to the second standard only. In this way I was enrolled twice in Marathi schools. Dharshibhai, my elder brother, was also with me. One teacher Mohanlal by name used to give us instruction. I remember having paid rupees eight as the fee for both of us. I was in that school for

only a couple of months. My father's health did not improve so we went to our 'Tera' village in Kutch. There my father was receiving medical treatment from his father-in-law Keshavji Shivji. We stayed there for about six months or so. We had a cow and its calf. We used to take the calf to a pond on the outskirts of Tera village. The calf was stubborn and very difficult to handle. It was strong and used to drag us instead of we pulling it. In majority of the villages practically every village has a pond in Kutch area.

At Tera I was admitted to the third standard in Gujarati school by Lalji teacher although I did not know the language. Lalji teacher used to conduct that school at Tera. He was a highly respected resident of the village. I had become familiar with a few Gujarati words during my study in the second standard of a Gujarati school in Mumbai. Lalji teacher might have considered me eligible to the third standard by my smartness and was confident that I could pick up Gujarati very easily. His nephew was in the fifth standard. He could not learn by heart even four lines of the poem 'Paresh Vishvesha' after struggling for four months. Lalji teacher read out the poem to me and within a short period of ten minutes I recited the same four lines of the poem. He said in admiration to his nephew, "See how sharp is Karamshi's memory!"

We returned from Kutch to Mumbai after sometime. I was admitted to a Gujarati Municipal School in Mumbai. This school was conducted by two teachers, Chunilal and Mohanlal. They had one flour mill in the 'Panjarpol' area (asylum for abandoned cows) and this school was a little distance away from this area. These teachers used to spend most of their time at the mill. All pupils were instructed by the teachers that in case any inspector from the municipality visited the school, they had to tell him that the teacher had gone to the toilet room and immediately one of the pupils should run to the mill and inform the teacher about the visit. In that Chunilal teacher's Gujarati school I studied upto fifth standard.

When I was reading in the fifth standard I suffered from an attack of typhoid fever. The sickness had caused my weight to lose and made me very weak. I was so weak and frail that I was not aware when the golden ring from my finger fell down. My father on noticing no ring on my finger was furious. At that time he used to stay at Belapur and used to visit us in Mumbai from time to time on his business trips. The sickness had affected my studies also. I was forced to be absent from the school for many days.

My father therefore engaged two tutors to coach me and make up the loss in studies. I was coached for two months by them.

After that I sought admission in Shri Devji Odhavji Chouthani school in Bhatbazar. The principal of the school was a Nagar Brahmin (high priest caste person). He was from Vadodara (Baroda). He took pride in telling us about his father who enjoyed great influence at the Court (Darbar) of the Prince of Baroda Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad. He was delighted in telling us that without the presence of his father, the Prince's procession would not be taken out. It was delayed if his father was late and so on. The school provided physical training for the pupils. I could not bear it. I used to perspire much and I struggled to avoid the exercise.

Later on I took admission in Gokuldas Tejpal school near my home in Koliwada. I was in the Gujarati sixth standard. In that school we had Mr. P. H. Shah as our teacher. He was a thorough gentleman, affectionate, intelligent and a great devotee of Gaurang Mahaprabhu. He put up in the house in Morarji Gokuldas Market in Kalbadevi. This residential place was divided into two sectors. One accommodated married people and other accommodated bachelors. Our Shah teacher was unmarried. He was specially attached to we three pupils. Ratilalbhai, Shankarlalbhai and myself. He used to invite us to his place, gave us refreshments and solve our problems in our studies.

In that school two terminal examinations were held. The first terminal was known as 'elementary' and the second was 'advanced'. There was a prize of eight annas (half of a Rupee) for the first examination and for the second of Re. 1/- The first terminal was conducted by the school and the second by the inspector. Some tests were carried out for Sanskrit literature also. Once I secured 80 marks in the test in Sanskrit and won the prize of Rs. 5/-

Once when our examination was in progress, the school management all of a sudden issued a notice that Shah teacher was transferred. We were shocked to hear about it. We protested but the school management removed Shah teacher from service for no reason. We were dejected.

In those days there was a convention to present an address to teachers after the annual examinations. We three went to Shah teacher's quarters and presented him an article worth rupees ten or so as an address and a present

to him. Thus we expressed our deep feeling of respect for him and sense of gratitude.

The holidays ended and the school opened again. The school management learnt about our presentation of an address to Mr. Shah. The school authorities summoned three of us and interrogated us to know the truth. Now I am really surprised to recollect how spiritedly I had argued with the authorities and silenced them. The authorities however sternly told us that if we wanted to continue in that school the three of us had to pay a fine of Re. 1/- each and express regret for the misdemeanour. We firmly replied, "We hold Shah teacher in high respect. We love him and therefore we shall not pay the fine. We are prepared to leave the school. Please give us our School Leaving Certificate." The authorities refused to hand over the School Leaving Certificates unless the fine was paid.

We three friends were contemplating on plans about our future move. In a moment I remembered Chunilal and Mohanlal teachers of the Gujarati Municipal School near Panjarapol in Mumbai. In the meantime the two teachers had shifted their school to Pirbhai building near Princess Street and Pydhuni. I along with my two friends met the two teachers I said, "Sir, we are prepared to pay rupees thirty each as the fee for six months which means ninety rupees in all. Our request to you is that kindly issue each of us a certificate that each one has passed the standard sixth examination in Gujarati. The teachers agreed. We paid the fees and obtained the Certificates.

Then after that I joined New High School, the present 'Bharda New High School' near Boribunder that is Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus Station, Mumbai.

'While in Gokuldas Tejpal High School, I was at the top of the class holding first position. I had won many prizes and presents at the monthly and terminal examinations.'

There were constant impediments in the academic progress of Karamshibhai. However because of his native intelligence and resourcefulness he was counted among the talented students. Having won a prize of five rupees, he had asked the headmaster of the school for a dictionary of English into Gujarati and Gujarati into English.

He was very much interested in Sanskrit from his school days. While in school he used to converse in Sanskrit. Later on with the expansion of his

sugar business he lost touch of conversation in Sanskrit. Nevertheless his love for the language did not diminish a bit. Later, for the propogation of Sanskrit language he started the institution of 'Sur Bharati' with the co-operation of Sanskrit scholars and those interested in the language.

Karamshibhai enjoyed the advantage of knowing seven languages – Kutchi, Gujarati, Marwadi, Sanskrit, Hindi, Marathi and English. However he proudly declared, "My mother-tongue is Marathi. I am born in Maharashtra."

Karamshibhai had proficiency in English. When he returned to Belapur after finishing his education and began his business he was the second person knowing English in Belapur. Besides him English knowing person was his friend Amolak Gadiya. But the latter pursued his studies at Ahmednagar city and therefore Karamshibhai was the only person to help the townsfolk in reading and correspondence in English. Karamshibhai with a sense of social duty read their letters in English, their telegrams and other government communications.



Marriage

अद्वैतं सुखदुःखयोश्चतुर्गुणं क्षणिकं क्षणिकं यद्-
विश्रामो हृदयस्य यत्र जस्रस्य यस्मिन्नहारायो रसः॥
कालेनाप्यवगात्ययात्परिणते यत्क्षणेह सारे स्थितं
भद्रं तस्य सुमानुषस्य कथमप्येकं हि तत्प्राप्यते॥

*Unseparated in happiness and sorrow,
equally involved in all circumstances,
the sublime love which comforts heart
and the flavour of which is undiminished
even in old age,
and which ripens after the veil of
shyness is worn off
that person is really fortunate
who possesses the essence of such a love.*

Marriage

Karamshibhai was born on 16th May 1902 at Malunja and his elder brother Dharshibhai was born in 1898 and his younger sister Basanbai alias Basanti on 8th February 1907. Their mother died of fire-burns by accident in the beginning of the year 1907. Karamshibhai was five years old and his sister Basanti only six months old. His elder brother Dharshibhai was already with his grandmother (wife of Thakersibhai) in Mumbai in 1899 since Thakersibhai's death. Dharshibhai thus received an affectionate treatment from his grandmother.

In a pensive mood Karamshibhai reflected "I was brought to Mumbai for school-education when I was five or six years of age. My elder brother and myself both of us stayed with our grandmother but I noticed a slight difference in treatment. She allowed Dharshibhai to sleep in her lap. I wished the same treatment for me. She never called me for that. I never could enjoy the intense love of my parents neither in my infancy, childhood nor in my boyhood!

Jethabhai, Karamshibhai's father had a second marriage after the death of Karamshibhai's mother. He married the daughter of Nagjibhai from Newasa in Saurashtra. Karamshibhai had two step brothers – Kakubhai and Sambhubhai. He was greatly attached to Sambhubhai but the latter died in accident and Karamshibhai was deep in sorrow.

Karamshibhai was married in 1916 at the age of fourteen according to the custom of that time. He was married to a girl from Kutch at Maska. She

was from a village, little educated and a simple girl. Karamshibhai regretfully admitted, "I did not treat my first wife in a fair manner. I was very rude to her. I realized this intensely when she died in 1920 at Belapur at an early age. Many years have elapsed but even now I repent for my crudity."

Karamshibhai like his father married twice. After the death of his first wife Karamshibhai married Sakarbai at Tera in 1922. His second wife was from Roha in Kutch.

Soon after the second marriage Karamshibhai went to Mumbai and Sakarbai had to live with her parents at Roha. She had to stay there for a year or so as Karamshibhai was still in search of some occupation and could not set up his home with his wife in Mumbai for want of money and accommodation.

Karamshibhai's father-in-law anxiously waited for his call. He did not receive it any way. At last he took her to Mumbai and kept her with one of his relatives, Dayalji by name. Even after that due to some internal conflicts in the family, Karamshibhai did not call her to his place. This added to the fears and worries of Sakarbai and she took ill.

Karamshibhai's father, Jethabhai was a hot-tempered man but at heart he was kind and sympathetic. He used to inquire after his daughter-in-law's health from time to time and used to provide her with medicines prescribed by the doctor. She recovered from the illness and after six months she was brought to her legitimate home as relatives began to criticize that a married woman was still away from her husband's home so long.

Karamshibhai explains, "My step-mother was a well-behaved woman. Notwithstanding this there were bickerings over trifles and there was no peace at home. We used to live in Vachhanwala Chawl a long narrow tenement in Mumbai. My father was born in a room on the second floor of that building. We had rented two rooms. One was on the first floor and the other was on the second floor. The room on the first floor was very dark and needed lamps to light it up even during the day. The rooms were very small. It was for this reason I could not bring my wife to live with me there!"

Karamshibhai was married but could not start his domestic life with his wife due to such difficulties faced by the young couple.



Origin of Ethical Discipline of Work-Scheme

उद्योगं पुरुषलक्षणम्।

Diligence is the Mark of Manliness

Origin of Ethical Discipline of Work-Scheme

After completing Pre-Matriculation education that is sixth standard school education at that time, Karamshibhai ended his school career. The formal education stopped but the education based on experience in real life began. In fact, human life itself is the never-ending open school until death! Karamshibhai came out from the four walls of a formal school and entered into the open school of life!

Karamshibhai's elder brother had himself received education upto the fourth standard but entertained a desire that his younger brother should receive higher education and become an I.C.S. Officer (ICS – Indian Civil Service of British times, now IAS – Indian Administrative Service). This was not to be. It seems destiny had designed not to place him in administrative position but to fashion him as an enterprising businessman.

When he left school, he had no occupation. He had to idle away his time. He lived in a two-room tenement in Vacchanwala Chawl (Mumbai). The two rooms, one on the first floor and the other on the second floor were not ventilated. The tenements were dirty. Even in such poor and disgusting conditions, he was full of high spirits. He wanted to leap out of darkness to catch light of life. He was building castles in the air.

The great problem before him was what to do next? What business could be started? Many plans crowded his over worked mind. At one time he thought that he should take up agency for distributing daily newspapers, open up branches and employ boys for selling house to house newspapers and collect cash every day!

Ideas about many business schemes were passing across his mind. He had an admirable attitude towards business. He never thought any honest business as low or inferior. He was not prepared to refuse any business simply because other people treated it as of little importance. He never thought it wise to accept only big business and ignore minor business. There is nothing high or low in the scheme of business.

While he was still pursuing in the young man's mood of indulging in the flights of imagination and building castles in the air, he was eagerly waiting for a breakthrough disregarding the stark realities of life. He was in search of an opportunity and was ready to seize it by the forelock.

He hit upon a plan to prepare and sell coffee. He whole heartedly began to work and give a concrete shape to the plan. He collected the seeds, fried them, made powder and added some other ingredients. He packed the material in the tin boxes of one pound each (pound = 0.45 kg). The advertisement on the pack was like this,

Somaia's

BEST

COFFEE

1 lb. nett tin.

Somaia Manufacturing Co. Bombay No. 3

The directions for preparing coffee for drinking.

DIRCETIONS

Use one table spoonful of Somaia's Best Coffee
to one pint of boiling water.

This coffee will be found to be a brilliant liquid.

Tins of Coffee of this description were ready for selling to the hoteliers and others. However, the lack of technical know-how about the preparation of the coffee powder affected the sales and could not compete in the market. It did not suit the taste of the people also. Hence the whole scheme had to be abandoned and the business wound up.

"What next?" was the threatening question again. He was in search of the solution to the big question. At that time one Arjun Gopal Somaiya

happened to meet him. He had opened a match-factory at Ghatkopar in Mumbai. Karamshibhai secured an agency for selling the match-stick boxes in Belapur from Arjun Gopal Somaiya. He was doing good business. Now Diwali festival was approaching and prospects for better match-box sales were expected. But as misfortune would have it, he received a telegram from Arjun Gopal that he could not send him any further supply of match-boxes as there was strike in the factory. The agency for selling match-boxes came to an end! The annoying question of what next taxed his brain again.

In Belapur he was evidently without any occupation or business. In that sullen state of mind one merchant asked him, "What are you engaged in at present?" Karamshibhai said, "Nothing at all! I am idle and have no work". The merchant said, "Would you sell husks of gram?" Karamshibhai accepted the offer.

Karamshibhai purchased empty sacks at one or two annas (one anna is $1/16^{\text{th}}$ part of a rupee) each and went to the merchant's house. At the basement in the cellar, heaps of gram husks were stacked. Karamshibhai filled the sacks with the gram-husks and sold them at a quarter of a rupee for a full sack. He made handsome profit out of the sales. "So I purchased dry red chillies and sold them in the market. Out of the gains from the sales I bought dates." These petty trades could not survive for long.

In Belapur just opposite Karamshibhai's home, there was a shop owned by Harakchand Gadia. Karamshibhai was very friendly with him. As he had no work on hand he used to give company to his friend in the shop. In the course of talk relating to business his friend proposed that Karamshibhai should open a shop to sell chilli powder and spices. The problem of finance had to be solved. A friend of Karamshibhai's elder brother, one Jethabhai Kanji was a partner in conducting such a shop in Mumbai. Karamshibhai's brother used his good offices with Kanjis and persuaded him to send such goods on credit to Karamshibhai. The necessary commission money was to be paid for the supply. The deal was made.

Now Karamshibhai could start his own shop in Belapur. Along with selling goods to customers, he had to maintain accounts of transactions, manage the supply of goods from Mumbai and keep the records up to date. He also had to keep the shop clean and in order. It was one-man show and an experiment in self-management in every sense of the term.

Karamshibhai had once ordered bags of turmeric. The truckload supply came but the porters demanded exorbitant wages for unloading the bags. He was not prepared to pay such a high amount. He therefore tightened up his 'dhoti' and folded up the sleeves of his 'kurta' and cleared the vehicle of the turmeric bags himself.

It is an old custom that a weekly market is held in Taluka-towns for all the villagers in the area to buy and sell goods on a large scale. Large quantities and variety of goods not available in their own villages are accessible in such weekly 'bazars'.

In Belapur the weekly market is held on every Sunday. Usually grain, food articles and other necessities of life are brought for sale. Karamshibhai now introduced articles of spices that flavour food-stuffs.

In the vicinity of Belapur there is a village 'Kolar' by name. A month long fair is held there for celebrating festival and worshipping goddess of that village. Karamshibhai used to shift his condiment shop there for larger sales.

Karamshibhai's shop in Belapur was getting stabilized and the business in general was satisfactory. However, Karamshibhai was not to enjoy the fruits of his honest work for long. His elder brother in Mumbai, Dharshibhai was in the habit of making money by speculation. He lost heavily in one of his bids. He had to borrow from one Maganlal Kalidas. Dharshibhai failed to repay the loan. So Maganlal sued him and obtained decree from the court. The decree enabled the creditor to seize Dharshi's assets. The creditor was aware that Dharshi's brother had a condiment shop in Belapur and it was the property of the joint family of Somaiyas. He brought an attachment on the shop. The shop was auctioned and thus Karamshibhai's business in condiment came to an end. It was another stroke of misfortune after the match-box agency. Nowhere to go again!

Subsequently Karamshibhai was doing retail sales of sugar by buying sugar from one of the three whole-salers in Belapur. They were Laxmandas Ramprasad Khatod, Eknath Sarjaram Khatod and Jethamal Shankarlal Bagadi. Laxmandas Khatod was supplying sugar to Karamshibhai but misfortune knocked him down again. Laxmandas Khatod withdrew from partnership of sugar business due to irregularities in another business pursued

by him. The supply of sugar stopped and Karamshibhai's foray into sugar business ended abruptly.

'What next?' was the insoluble question constantly staring him in the face. Although he had to end the sugar-selling business, he was once again up and fighting. The Khatod's were a big merchant community in Belapur. They were engaged in the big sale and purchase of sugar business. Also they had a ginning press factory. Shobhachand Khatod, a scion of the Khatod family, happened to be a class-mate of Karamshibhai in Marathi school. On one afternoon Shobhachand approached Karamshibhai and asked him whether he would like to serve in the ginning press factory.

Karamshibhai said, "Look! Our family is by tradition a well-to-do family. Although at present we have fallen on evil days and our business is not going well. I shall prefer to rise with independent enterprise. I shall not work as a paid servant of anyone."

Hearing Karamshibhai's spirited reply Shobhachand said, "O.K. Will you join us as a partner in our sugar business?" Karamshibhai gladly responded in the affirmative.

Shobhachand asked Karamshibhai to meet his cousin Ramdhanbhau Khatod. At that time Karamshibhai was alone in the house as his wife Sakarbai had gone to her parents' place in Kutch for delivery. He had a bath in the Pravara river and in the evening met Ramdhanbhau Khatod. Both of them had a long discussion and it was decided that Ramdhanbhau was to be capital partner and Karamshibhai to be a working partner in the sugar trade. Karamshibhai did not ask for the partnership agreement or the details about his share, the rate of interest or the amount of capital Ramdhanbhau would invest. He accepted the offer without any terms and conditions.

In the context of his partnership he narrated one episode which took place somewhere in the year 1927. He had gone to Ahmednagar city for some work at the Court of Law. There he stayed with a merchant whose name was Virjibhai Narayanji. He was looking after the business on behalf of Karsandas Mistry Firm. He had a prosperous business there. He had some customers at Belapur also. He was a hot-tempered man. He dealt with one businessman Gokul Vishram at Belapur with whom he developed difference of opinion over some transactions.

When Karamshibhai had gone to Ahmednagar, he was not doing any definite business. He was idle at that time. So Virjibhai proposed that Karamshibhai should join him in partnership business with him at Belapur. However, before Virjibhai could complete the proposal he declined it outright saying that his stars were not favourable for him at that time. But in the case of the proposal from Ramdhanbhau Khatod he eagerly accepted the proposal for partnership without any hesitation or asking for definitive terms and conditions. They say there are some chance happenings in the affairs of human life, may be destiny formulates the plans for such happenings.

After making a deal of partnership with Khatod, Karamshibhai came home and packed up his bags with clothes etc. and straightway went to the railway station to catch the Mumbai train. The sole agent of the Belapur Sugar Factory was Mulchand Mohanlal. Karamshibhai purchased one thousand five hundred bags of sugar from him. Then he began his tour to sell sugar. He visited Nasik, Khandesh, Birar, Nizam State (now part of Andhra Pradesh) and also visited part of Madhya Pradesh for selling sugar. He toured not only the urban areas but also the rural areas to promote sales. He established personal contacts with the merchants and was successful in doing good business.

In the first year of his sugar selling venture, he made a profit of Rs. 800/- that is in 1928. In the next year in 1929, he made a modest profit of Rs. 600/- However, Karamshibhai continued his sugar selling business jaunts without complaint. He had covered the whole of Maharashtra – Marathwada, Vidarbha and some parts of Madhya Pradesh for promoting sales. In the course of his business tours he saw a variety of places, natural beauty spots and closely observed the life of the common people of the areas. There are fluctuations in business and likewise ups and downs in the life of those doing business.

Karamshibhai told an interesting event of 1930. As he was returning home after his bath in the Pravara river in the morning, he met an acquaintance. This man inquired whether Karamshibhai was aware of the hike in sugar prices. He said the prices have gone up. I therefore went to Jethamal Shankarlal Bagadi's shop. He was a sugar merchant in Belapur. He was also a commission agent. His partner Kanayalal Lakhotia was not present in the shop but the manager of the company, Baburao Khandalkar attended to me. I asked about the price of sugar. I realized from his talk that the company was not aware of the increased rates.

The Belapur Sugar Factory at that time used to produce sugar of two types. Number one was pure white and Number two was slightly reddish in colour. Customers usually preferred the reddish type as they considered it indigenous and the white one as foreign one. It was a myth; except the difference in colour there was no difference in the quality of the sugar. I instructed the manager, Mr. Baburao Khandalkar, to make a note in his records and book my order for so many sugar bags of both white and red types as usual. Over and above I had also ordered and purchased more bags of red sugar. After my first order I asked the manager to record more bags of both the types. I further added some more bags in addition to the previous purchase of sugar, now totalled to one thousand and five hundred bags. This was my first largest purchase. At that time sugar was sold at Rs. 10/- per maund (12.5 kg. Approximately) and a bag of sugar for Rs. 25/-

I came home after placing the orders. Kanayalal Lakhotiya, partner of Jethamal Bagadi went to their shop. The manager of their company, Mr. Baburao, informed him of the big purchases I made. Kanayalal suspected some foul play. After some time he read the news of higher sugar rates and was visibly upset. He vehemently objected to my heavy purchases of sugar. Some other sugar merchants gathered at the shop of Magniram Fakirachand and all of them contacted the Mumbai office of Belapur Company and seriously objected to my transactions. The head office of the Company however informed them in no uncertain terms that they accept the transaction. They did not object to the purchases at all. This event gave a new turn to my business career.

While entering into the partnership business with Khatodas I never asked them how much investment they were ready to make, how much interest they would charge or how much share of the profit I would get and so on.

The accounts of the firm owned by Khatods like other firms and companies used to be finalized by Diwali (October – November). I secured 37.5% as my share of profit. They had charged 9% interest on the invested amount. In the subsequent financial year by Diwali I obtained 43.8% as my share of profit and 10% of interest charged on the investment. Eventually I secured parity with the capital partner as I was given 50% as my share of profit.” The gates of the progress of my business career were now wide open.

Karamshibhai had through personal experience evolved a system in the

sale-purchase business. He used to tour the areas, villages and towns alike. During these times the transport facilities were very meagre and the condition of the roads unsuitable for vehicular traffic. Karamshibhai did not unnecessarily magnify the difficulties. He took them in his stride and overcame the difficulties. He travelled by all sort of transportation and at times covered long distances on foot. He used to meet the merchants in the various towns and villages. He used to discuss the sales and used to book their orders. He had made it a point to value integrity in all transactions and always be prepared for hard work. He never resorted to unfair means in his business dealings. He used to charge same rates for all customers and maintained uniformity in the quality of goods. He was keen on maintaining quality of the material.

He insisted on equal treatment for all customers. In case by oversight he charged one customer more than another customer, he rectified his error by necessary adjustments later on. He used to make the necessary changes in the records and clear any doubt in the minds of those who placed orders with him. He impressed the merchants by his simplicity in behaviour, freedom from addiction and sincerity in his talk. His frequent visits to the merchants in different areas had made him a virtual member of their families.

Karamshibhai had developed inner confidence in his business and had also created confidence about his dealings among his merchants in general.

Karamshibhai used to buy sugar from Ravalgaon Sugar Factory of Walchand Sheth and from Maharashtra Sugar Factory of Dahanukar at Belvandi and Tilaknagar from Belapur Sugar Factory. Karamshibhai had become their big agent.



Protection of Cows

यो वै नित्यं पूजयति गां गेहे यथादिभिः।
तस्य देवाश्च पितरो नित्यं तृप्ता भवन्ति हि॥

*The man who always provides grass and fodder to the
cow keeps the manes and God always satisfied.*

Protection of Cows

The Hindus treat the cow with a dignity and respect proper to a mother. Like the universal-mother, mother-earth, birth-giving mother in the same way mother cow is held with high esteem. 'One who has a cow at home is blessed with the presence of the holy feet of God Vithal at his place. Such is the reverence for the cow.'

Karamshibhai entertained the same sentiment for the cow since his youth. He is a great devotee of the cow. Saving and serving cows has become his creed. This is the description of the situation when he was mobilizing his resources for trade and business afresh in youth.

Karamshibhai had then started a shop for selling spices in Belapur. However, the sales were not yet becoming satisfactory. He was managing his home with great difficulty with meagre means of livelihood. He did not have the economic means to provide grass and fodder to cows during the drought. He therefore gave up drinking cow's milk for several days. Later on when he began earning enough, he started drinking cow's milk after offering grass and fodder to cows.

There was a great famine in the Ahmednagar district in 1918. people were starving, the animals had become feeble and desperate for want of food and water. The intolerable drought had reduced cows to skeletons and many of them died. Karamshibhai and some of his friends became very sad at the sight of the dance of death. They intensely began to feel that something had to be done. Therefore they called a meeting of like-minded

people in a temple. He vehemently placed the issue of the death of cows etc. before the meeting. Some of those who had assembled there promised to contribute a sum of Rs. 30/- and Rs. 40./- A few promised to supply fodder. However this was not adequate to solve the problem.

The cash collection made by him so far was only Rs. 25/- In the next morning one of his co-workers saw some butchers tending cows towards the slaughter-house after buying the cows from the market at nominal price. Karamshibhai released the cows by paying Rs. 25/- to the butchers. More starving cows also gathered there. The big question now before them was how to feed all those cows. He had already stopped drinking cow's milk but the real big problem was how to save the lives of those several cows who were languishing for want of fodder and water.

As he was reflecting on the problems the name of Mahatma Gandhi came to his mind. He was considered a great leader of the masses at that time. He was considered a great devotee of the cow, as he had incorporated care of the cow, home-spun-cloth, village industries in his programme of freedom-struggle. Karamshibhai expected some guidance from Gandhiji on this matter. He focused his attention on the news about Gandhiji's tours in the country. He explained the dire condition of cows in the letters dispatched to the address where Gandhiji halted for some time. He continued this exercise of writing letters to Gandhiji on his tours but did not receive any reply. He therefore addressed a letter with such contents at the Sabarmati Ashram near Ahmadabad. He received a reply to that letter. Mr. Khandubhai Desai, a leader of the Congress from Gujarat had written to him that the letters sent to Gandhiji at the place where Gandhiji made a temporary halt could not reach him as by the time, the letters arrived, he had already moved to another place. Khandubhai further informed Karamshibhai that Gandhiji was devoted to the care of cows according to his plan, you should also make a plan according to the local conditions to protect cows. Gandhiji can hardly help you at the present stage.

Karamshibhai and his co-workers were much disappointed by Khandubhai Desai's letter. They felt that there was no point in being disappointed and remaining idle. Something had to be done. After discussion they decided to meet Gandhiji personally and seek his guidance.

The 35th session of the All-India Congress was convened at Nagpur on 26th December 1920 under the Presidentship of the great nationalist from

Madras, Shri Chakravarthi Vijay Raghavacharya. Sheth Jamnalal Bajaj was the chairman of the Reception Committee. Gandhiji was to attend the Nagpur Session of the Congress. Karamshibhai therefore decided to meet Gandhiji in Nagpur. His young friend from Belapur, Amolakh Gadia was to accompany him to Nagpur. He had stayed in Ahmednagar to prosecute his further studies. Both decided to proceed to Nagpur. However Amolakh did not turn up at Belapur station when the train arrived, so Karamshibhai had to go to Nagpur alone.

Gandhiji's Non- Co-operation Movement had stirred the nation. A new spirit had filled the nation. Unprecedentedly large crowds had gathered at Nagpur as a proper and favourable political climate prevailed to give vent to the longstanding pains and sufferings of the people and for releasing the pent up feeling of protest against the policies of the alien government. This was witnessed in the Indian National Congress. Thousands of representatives and workers crowded the session. In this very session Gandhiji's Non-Co-operation Resolution was adopted by a very big majority. Gandhiji's word became the command for the National Organization. The importance of Gandhiji was extraordinary. How to meet such a man among the huge crowds!

Karamshibhai had already come to Nagpur. His friend Gadia was to bring him his handy pot but as his friend did not show up he felt inconvenient without the all purpose pot (lota). He therefore purchased one from the Nagpur market. Karamshibhai sought accommodation in one of the tents set up for the Congress Session. There he met one of the volunteers, Manilal Girdharlal Jantraliya by name. He later on became his friend.

Karamshibhai like all others used to wear clothes made of foreign cloth right upto the time he attended the Nagpur Session. However he had worn clothes made of cloth made indigenously in the country. After his return from Nagpur Congress Session he made it a point to wear pure 'Khadi' clothes only. At that time 'Khadi' was of a crude texture.

Karamshibhai with determination made his way to Gandhiji's residence through thick crowds. There he found great leaders like Madanmohan Malviya and others anxiously waiting to visit him. In such circumstances it was impossible to call on him. He had to return to his tent with a dejected mind.

The Congress Session was a kind of a big fair. As usual all sorts of people with different purposes and attitudes, some light-hearted, some serious and some with evil intention to enjoy the gathering. Such type of people had pushed their way through the crowd. A few criminal minded had entered the tents and robbed some articles. Thefts on large scale were reported. In view of such unpleasant situations Karamshibhai abandoned his resolve to meet Gandhiji and straight away made his way to his home in Belapur.

In the meantime some influential person from Belapur had met the officer of the East India Cotton Association in Mumbai over Gandhiji's issue. The Association had sent Mr. Haridasbhai as its representative to Belapur. Mr. Haridasbhai himself was a great devotee of the cow. He used to deliver religious discourses. He made on the spot inspection of Belapur and gave substantial help to Karamshibhai and his colleagues who were struggling to save the lives of cows and bullocks.



Impact of Gandhiji

सत्य-अहिंसा यस्य बहुमता विविधधर्मसमता।
अपविग्रहता विश्ववन्धुता श्रीगीतामाता॥
विजयते भारतराष्ट्रपिता॥

*Victory to the Father of the Nation who loves Truth,
non-Violence, secular attitude towards all religious faiths,
indifference towards material acquisitions, universal
fraternity and love for mother Bhagavat Gita!*

Impact of Gandhiji

The impact of Gandhiji's personality, teachings, conduct and thoughts on the young mind of Karamshibhai went on increasing and strengthening with the passage of time.

Gandhiji to him was a political saint or a revolutionary saint.

Gandhiji had fortified the political activities of that time. Gandhiji reorganised politics in a saintly manner or invested it with spiritual tones. Gandhiji followed the example of his political mentor Honourable, Mr. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who attempted to put politics on spiritual foundations. It is for this reason that Gandhiji always insisted on the purity of the ideal and the means to achieve it. He therefore acclaimed Truth and Non-violence on all occasions and on the basis of these principles he created a new awakened, antagonist people's power of brave volunteers imbued with the creed of truth and justice. With such a power he could knock at the supposed impregnable imperial power of the British and finally uproot it.

The mysterious and revolutionary virtuous features in the personality of Gandhiji and the compassion for the suffering masses as immortalized by the verse (call him the Vaishnav man who realizes the sufferings of others) could charm all those fair-minded people who saw him struggling to redress their sufferings. Karamshibhai could not avoid being influenced by such a spiritual force as he was born with that and shaped in the same mould. The teachings of Gandhiji nourished these qualities which were latent in him.

The impact of Gandhiji on Karamshibhai was so intense that he observed fast every Saturday the day Gandhiji was sentenced to six years imprisonment in 1922 till his release after six years.

After returning from the Congress session at Nagpur, Karamshibhai gave up wearing foreign clothes and started wearing indigenous clothes in deference to Gandhiji's call to wear 'Swadeshi'. He became consumer of khadi. His dress now became an all-khadi outfit with a crude textured 'dhoti', kurta and a khadi Gandhi-cap. Not satisfied with this he opened a Khadi sales section – virtually a khadi-store-house, in his shop to promote and propagate khadi among common people.

In a bid to popularize Khadi he issued shares of ten rupees each for the khadi store house (Khadi bhandar) and collected a sum of two hundred rupees. He purchased 'khadi' from Jaipur and sold the Khadi cloth at the cost-price in Belpapur. It was no profit business in the strict sense, not only this, he bore all the costs, for all the transactions. He carried bundles of whole pieces of khadi-cloth on his back along with his colleagues through the streets of the neighbouring villages to popularize 'khadi'. A great wave of popularizing 'khadi' throughout the country had arisen at that time.

Slogans like 'Oh, natives of the country use khadi and save the nation!', 'We will win freedom by spinning Khadi cloth on spindles and spinning wheels'. They also sang such songs as 'Oh! This spindle of Gandhi throttled England'. Slogans and songs of this type made rounds throughout the country in the morning parades of Congress volunteers to popularize 'swadeshi' and 'khadi'. These slogans were shouted with vehemence and songs sung with enthusiasm and nationalist fervour to impress the importance of swadeshi on the minds of the masses. The people from all strata of the society, men, women, old and young joined the processions of this movement. Young Karamshibhai used to participate in such processions with great enthusiasm in Belapur.

It might be the year 1927-28, when Gandhiji's tour of Ahmednagar district had begun. He arrived at Belapur also. Karamshibhai was the leading light among the Congress workers to receive Gandhi. Raosaheb Patwardhan, Swami Sahajanand Bharati, Kundanmalji Firodia and others were leading the District Congress at that time. Gandhiji addressed a big meeting at Belapur. Karamshibhai escorted his wife to the meeting.

Gandhiji was presented with an address on behalf of the Merchants' Association of Belapur which was worded thus:

Dear Mahatmaji,

Your arrival here has filled us with great joy. We welcome you with great love and joy.

You were born in a reputed merchant community which considers it to be its duty as a class to endeavour for the promotion of economic prosperity of its own as well as of the nation. However, how can that narrow field, accommodate an extraordinary and high-souled person like you? You have been working in fact for the upliftment of the whole world by your uncommon intellectual ability.

You have been giving expression to and advocating the invaluable possibility of building a new world order by imbibing the principal tenets of all religious faiths. Your name shall be everlasting in the world because of your indefatigable efforts to establish peace in the world community.

You have shown the non-violent way based on truth and justice to the nations devoid of vitality and thus rendered helpless and struggling people under foreign rule, to fight against the most powerful states and win freedom. You have proved the power of your non-violent struggle by your example.

In the modern machine age you have offered the effective solution of self-employment by the use of the spinning wheel. This shall enhance the inner power of the people by the sentiment of unity.

We wholeheartedly pray the God Almighty Who is kind and gracious to grant you long life and good health for the all-round progress of the Motherland.

Merchants' Association,
Belapur

Karamshibhai used to give expression to his devotion to the nation and ardent love of his country by participating in the national struggle while carrying on his sugar business.

Karamshibhai had already undertaken the movement to boycott foreign cloth. He had also begun a movement to boycott foreign sugar and turmeric.

Sugar was being imported from Java, Sumatra and other countries. Turmeric was also similarly imported. Karamshibhai had actively participated in the boycott movements. His son, Shantilal, was a minor at that time but Karamshibhai started a lump-sugar producing factory in his name and advertised it as :

“Pure Lump-sugar producing Factory Belapur.”

The excerpts from English Encyclopaedia of Britanica, Dictionary of Arts, Sugar machinery, books written by European authors, views expressed by doctors, intellectuals also by our native intelligentsia, newspapers and Gandhiji's journal 'Navajeevan' regarding the harmful contents of the foreign sugar and turmeric were circulated by Karamshibhai with the help of Premji Harakchand and Jivanputra. The following remarks along with the excerpts of relevant information were added in Gujarati and circulated.

“Foreign sugar and turmeric are to be rejected by Hindus on the grounds of religious, economic, moral and health considerations.”

Karamshibhai in this was in the forefront in the national movement while diligently carrying on his business. Evidently the police of the British Government closely watched his political movements. It was for this reason that the evil eye of the police haunted him every where. In 1930 Gandhiji demanded the abolishing of the oppressive tax on salt. He started a national movement to protest against the unjust tax and break the anti-people law. He led a march from Sabarmati in Gujarat to the coast-line with a few selected satyagrahis (supporters of truth and justice) from all over the country and at Dandi symbolically picked up salt of the dried up sea water and declared 'break the salt law' and began 'Satyagraha or demand for justice.' Gandhiji's example was followed by people living on the coast-lines of India who broke the law. The oppressive foreign government used lathi-charge and opened fire on the protesters and law-breakers and arrested agitators on a large scale. Thousands of 'Satyagrahis' or protesters were sent to prison. These suppressive measures however made the people more determined to renew their efforts to fight for freedom. A new wind of independence blew over the nation.

Karamshibhai himself never participated in the law-breaking movement but provided all sorts of help all the time.

The Civil Disobedience Movement challenging the oppressive laws of the foreign government gathered momentum and the furious government continued repressive measures with vehemence. Those who actively participated in the movement were sent to jail but those who did not directly join the movement were arrested and imprisoned for some time.

The Belapur police station issued an arrest-warrant for Karamshibhai. However as Karamshibhai was away from Belapur the police did not get an opportunity to serve the warrant on him and arrest him. Karamshibhai was on his retail sugar selling tour. He was moving from one village to another. His elder brother Dharshibhai informed him about the arrest warrant at a place where he had halted for some time. Karamshibhai therefore did not hasten back to Belapur but continued his selling tour. The warrant lay at the Belapur Police Station awaiting his arrival.

Barrister Jaykar and Sapru were attempting to mediate between the Vice-roy Lord Irwin and Mahatma Gandhi for negotiating a peaceful solution to the problem. Their attempts proved fruitful and it was decided to hold talks at Simla. Gandhiji along with Sir Prabha Shankar Patni started for Simla by train. At that time Karamshibhai was at Baroda (Vadodara) station on his way back to Belapur.

An agreement was reached between the British Vice-roy and Gandhiji at Simla. This agreement came to be known as 'Gandhi-Irwin Pact'. According to this pact all political prisoners arrested in the Civil Disobedience Movement were to be released.

Karamshibhai after reaching Belapur straightway went to the Belapur police station for surrendering to the police on his own. The police did not arrest him but cancelled the arrest warrant against him.

Thereafter the growing business activities did not allow Karamshibhai to spare much time for national service in the usual sense of the term. Nevertheless the sugar factories, he started and the record yield of sugar cane cultivation should be treated as his national service. In the real sense this agriculture and factories provided employment to many countrymen and means of livelihood for their families and by increasing the badly needed production of sugar promoted national prosperity to some extent. The participation in national movement and going to the jail for that is no doubt a token of nationalism but the same spirit is reflected in the endeavours to

lead the nation to prosperity by undertaking enterprises to provide means for such adventures.

The interpretation of patriotism and nationalism will reasonably treat Messers Jamshetji Tata, Lalchand Hirachand Doshi, Ghanshyam Birla and other industrialists as great nationalists and patriots. We cannot forget that such imaginative enterprising and farseeing men contributed to the nation-building activity and led the nation on the path of affluence and prosperity and thus rendered great service to the nation. We should gratefully acknowledge their valuable contribution.

Karamshibhai by devoting all his time, money and labour for the development of agro-industrial field has served the nation to a great extent in the same sense.

Karamshibhai because of his expanding business could not participate in the National Movement in a big way. However he contributed to the National Movement while expanding his agro-industrial fields. He had taken a calculated risk for giving an invaluable help in the freedom struggle as the following event shows.

Gandhiji asked the British Rulers to quit India on 8th August 1942. the Congress passed the 'Quit India Resolution' in its historic session at Gowalia Tank in Mumbai on that day. Immediately the British Rulers started a campaign to imprison agitators. All national leaders of the Congress were jailed. Those leaders of less importance and who escaped arrest went underground from 9th August 1942. Gandhiji had called the nation to 'Do or Die' programme and thus destabilise the foreign administration. This was a romantic and mysterious political experiment. The great nationalists who went underground were leading the Quit India Movement. Among those leaders were Shri Atchutrao Patwardhan and Aruna Asafali. Other leaders who avoided arrest were eventually arrested. Only Patwardhan and Asafali escaped their net. The Government announced big prizes for their arrests.

Karamshibhai during this period was living in a flat at Marine Drive in Mumbai. He had given asylum to these two revolutionaries in his flat there. He had also sheltered Atchutrao Patwardhan and Mohalal Sopan at his bungalow at Panchgani. He had thus risked his position to save the revolutionaries and thus proved his nationalist spirit in a brave way.



Life Partner

कार्येषु मन्त्री करणेषु दाक्षी भोज्येषु माता शयनेषु रम्भा।
धर्मनुकूला क्षमया धर्मिणी भार्या च षाड्गुण्यतीह दुर्लभा॥

*It is rare to get a wife possessing the six qualities as a
secretary at work, slave-like at service, mother-like at
meals, enchanting beauty in bed, highly religious and
forgiving like mother earth.*

Life Partner

Fate plays a great part in the making and shaping of man. It is true man has to make efforts. It is also true that one can seek blessings of God only by efforts and hard work. But many times the blessings of Gracious God are not received only by diligent work in the form of success. This is our common experience. Karamshibhai had tried many trades for his livelihood but could not achieve success for this or that reason or as fate was not favourable to him at those different times. Fate played tricks with him. In such circumstances a common man is deeply disappointed exhausted and shattered completely.

However, those resolute and never-say-die men like Karamshibhai who are indifferent to failure and patiently work all the time without tiring and relaxing surely triumph in the end.

Karamshibhai after a prolonged struggle to settle in some trade and business opened a shop for selling chillie powder and spices in Belapur as told before. Then when he felt that his shopkeeping was stabilised he brought his wife Sakarbai from Mumbai.

Mrs. Sakarbai Somaiya while narrating memories about Belapur had told the present writer about events in her childhood. They are very interesting and pleasing. Those memories highlight the main features of the personalities of the husband and wife and also tell something about their families. We are quoting them as Mrs. Sakarbai narrated them. She said:

“I was born in my mother’s place at Roha in Kutch on 26th August 1909

(Hindu Calender – Sravan Shuddha Dashmi, Shake 1831). My father's name was Velji Monji Sachde and my mother's name was Meghbai. I had three sisters and one brother born after their births. I studied upto third standard at Roha. I stood first at the second standard examination.

My grandfather owned a grocery shop. My father enjoyed the rights of Jagir of fifty-two villages. My father used to collect Land Revenue. Jagirdars were paid a sum of Rs. 2,000/- and the remaining amount was paid into the treasury of the Bhuj princely state. My grandfather was 105 years old. My husband Mr. Karamshibhai when he became a rich man, my father jokingly told him, "Now, I don't measure up to the status of your worthy father-in-law!" the remark obviously implied pride for my husband.

My engagement took place when I was eleven years old. I got married at the age of twelve. My husband (Karamshibhai) at that time might be nineteen or twenty years old. His first marriage had taken place when he was fifteen. After marriage I stayed with my parents for at least a year or so. Then I went to my husband's home. It was at Vadgadi in Mumbai. At husband's home stayed my mother-in-law, my father-in-law and my sister-in-law as it was a joint family. The family business was at Belapur.

The name of my father-in-law was Jethabhai, the name of my mother-in-law was Laxmibai, my elder brother-in-law's name was Dharshibhai. The names of the three sisters-in-law were Vasanbai, Hiralaxmibai and Devkibai respectively.

My husband had opened a grocery shop for selling spices etc. at Belapur. His elder brother Dharshibhai proposed a partnership business. Dharshibhai was conducting business in partnership in which he had suffered loss. At that time my husband had told his brother, "If at all I start a business it won't be in partnership."

My husband had to travel places for business purpose. A big fair is organized at Kolar as a festival of the local goddess. My husband set up a temporary grocery shop at the Kolar fair. I used to send him tiffin from home. I was a favourite at my mother's home. I was very much fondled there. At my husband's home my grand mother-in-law was an old woman of a hundred years of age. She possessed great wealth mostly in the form of gold.

My brother-in-law, Dharshibhai was married twice. He had his second

marriage after the death of his first wife. The second wife also died after four or five years. Thereafter he did not marry for the next fifteen years. Dharshibhai had developed a bad habit of staking his fortune in speculation. He used to make heavy losses.

His third marriage was arranged with my third sister. I had already warned my parents about his evil habit of speculation. After his third marriage the two brothers set up separate homes.

In the course of time Dharshibhai had lost heavily in speculation and my sister, his wife, was in all sorts of troubles. People despised him. We could not save him from his distressing position as we ourselves were not financially sound.

My husband had two friends, Harakchand Gadia and Amolakchand Gadia. My husband was engaged in the sugar trade. He used to obtain supplies of sugar from Lalchand Hirachand Factory and the Haregaon Sugar Factory near Belapur. He used to make retail sales of sugar outside Belapur. He used to travel on foot to Malunja.

At Belapur we lived in the house rented to us by Dhakle. We lived with my husband's parents before staying in the house owned by Dhakle. When I came to Belapur I was in ill-health. I was suffering from continuous cold and fever. There was nobody to look after me. I stayed alone at that home. So I used to invite some women-folk from Dhakle's house to keep me company.

My husband used to travel to different villages to sell sugar. Some times he was in Padegaon, sometimes in Malunja. He used to travel by train or at times on foot. He had to work very hard.

When I arrived at Belapur I could not converse well in Marathi. My health was also not satisfactory. The place where we had set up our residence was very small and dark. I had to burn a kerosene lamp even during day-time. The servant boy had to fetch water from the river.

In 1927, when my husband entered into partnership deal with Khatods, my son, Shantilal, was born at my parent's place at Roha. I was at my parents home for a long time. According to custom we do not ritually name the first born son. In 1930 after Shantilal, daughter Leela was born. Shantilal was educated at Belapur in the beginning and later on in Mumbai.

When my husband had a grocery shop he used to participate in the Congress movement. He started wearing Khadi because of Gandhiji's influence. He boycotted European and foreign goods and cloth. When Gandhiji came to Belapur, Kasturba, his wife also accompanied him. So women also attended in large numbers Gandhiji's meeting along with men. As my husband had connection with the Congress leaders like Raosaheb Patwardhan, Atchutrao Patwardhan, Dr. Juwekar, Swami Sahajanand and others, they used to visit us very often.

One Sonyabhau was employed by us from his boyhood. He grew up at our place. Later on we arranged the marriage of his son also. He went to Mumbai. There he was addicted to alcoholic drinks, therefore we arranged his return and sent him to Sakarwadi. How can we abandon him in his old age? We do not know whether he is now reformed or not.

The name Sakarwadi to the farm area was given right from the time Sugar Mill was started there. I never knew that, (Karamshibhai's wife name was Sakarbai) similarly Laxmiwadi was named after my mother-in-law. I visited Sakarwadi factory, eight years after it was started. My husband loves to live in a simple way. Even now we find a straw mat in his room there.

I did not have the opportunity to talk about business with him. He is simple and affectionate but he flares up much at times. He is very stubborn from earlier time. He makes it a point to do everything himself. He was very affectionate to the children. He strived to see that everybody received education of sorts. We travelled a lot in later days. We had five daughters and one son, Shantilal. The names of the daughters are Leelaben, Savitriben, Divyaben, Nirupamaben and Pratimaben. Our five daughters and brother-in-law Dharshibhai's two daughters Jankiben and Bhartiben lived with us and grew up here. Like our own children we arranged their marriages also. We never entertained the feeling of discrimination towards the two nieces. The daughter of my second sister, Kasturiben also lived with us after her mothers' death. We arranged her marriage also.

While living at Belapur I was not in good health. It became worse. I suffered from pain in the stomach. I lived with it and did not let my husband know about it. When the pain became unbearable I had to tell him. He took me to Pune to Dr. Bhadkamkar for check up. I had to undergo surgical operation at Miraj Hospital. My husband kept me for a change of weather

in Ahmednagar, Pune, Panchgani, Devlali and Mahabaleshwar. He took great care of me during my illness.

Reflecting on the past events Mrs. Sakarbai said, "It is since last ten years, my husband has devoted his time for social work. The work of building schools, hospitals, farms and other works for the uplift of tribal is underway at Nareshwadi. Eye-camps are being held at different places. He works hard, travels on foot.

Sakarbai died on 18th July 1995 breaking the life partnership from 1922 to 1995 (a period of Seventy-four to Seventy-five years). She left for the eternal home on Ashad Krishna 7, Shaka 1917 – Hindu Calender.



The Story of Sugar

न लभन्ते विनोद्योगं जन्तवः संस्पदां पदम्।
सुखाः क्षीरोदविक्षोभमनुभूयामृतं पपुः॥

*Men do not produce wealth without industry,
Gods obtained nectar only after churning the Ocean.*

The Story of Sugar

Karamshibhai had directed his attention to sugar-cane farming about the year 1936 when he was seized of the idea of starting a sugar mill. Obviously sugar-cane was essential for sugar production. How can anyone produce finished goods without raw material? He went in search of land for the cultivation of sugar-cane. He found a piece of land which was for sale, some two miles away from Belapur town and about two miles from Belapur Railway station. The land was suitable for growing sugar-cane. Karamshibhai was happy with the land and so decided to buy this hundred-acre land.

Karamshibhai had an intimate friend Gowardhanbhai Patel by name. He was much experienced expert in agricultural matters. However in one winter season the land under his charge was enveloped in an unprecedented thick fog and all the farmers suffered heavy losses. Karamshibhai said, "I never saw such a heavy thick fog in all my life." At that time the standing crop of sugar-cane was damaged beyond repair. A large number of domestic and other animals died miserably. The onslaught of the cold was so severe that some farmers burned their wooden bullock-carts and kept themselves warm and safe from the cold wave. Gowardhanbhai Patel was greatly frustrated and desperately thought of giving up his sugar-cane farming. Gowardhanbhai had partnership with Ambalal Shah in Sugar-cane cultivation. Shah provided capital and Gowardhanbhai carried out the actual cultivation and production. One Khatod was their financier.

When Gowardhanbhai decided to be free from partnership with Ambalal

Shah, Karamshibhai asked him to work with him as his partner. He proposed that both should jointly produce sugar-cane. If there was loss Karamshibhai accepted to bear it alone and in case of profit it would be equally divided between the two. Gowardhanbhai was so much depressed that he could not make up his mind. Karamshibhai consoled him, "knowledgeable and smart men like you should not be gravely disappointed by losses. What has happened has happened. Now go ahead!" But Gowardhanbhai was firm in his decision. He took up employment with the Dahanukars.

Karamshibhai never thought of changing his decision. His determination to pursue the proposal did not sway a bit. He brought under sugar-cane cultivation the arid land of a hundred acres and in a way inaugurated the future prosperous production of sugar-cane.

Karamshibhai was unflinching in his mind about starting a sugar mill and therefore stubbornly followed his plan to cultivate sugar-cane on a large scale. He had mainly kept in his view the sugar factory near Akhuj at Malinagar in Sholapur district which was set up by flower growing community, then the Walchand Hirachand Doshi Sugar Factory at Rawalgaon near Malegaon in Nasik district and the Dahanukar Sugar factories at Velwandi and Tilaknagar in Ahmednagar district. He had substantial experience in the sugar business.

Karamshibhai was not a mere dreamer or conceiver of great plans but a man who would produce concrete results by pursuing his plans. He started buying or taking lands on lease or tenancy basis in Belapur and Vijapur Tahsils for the cultivation of Sugar-cane. The price of land compared to the current rates was insignificant or nominal. One could buy any amount of land at Rs. 80/- to Rs. 100/- per acre. Likewise the tenancy could be obtained for a rent of mere Rs. 8/- to Rs. 10/- per acre. The reason for this would be clear if we have a peep into the historical situation of the time.

It had become impossible for poor farmers to undertake cultivation in dry and arid lands. The vagaries of rainfall had made agriculture in such lands most untrustworthy. A portion of land in Pune and Ahmednagar districts was declared as drought hit zone. There was very little rain or no rain at all. Famine therefore stared the people in the eye all the time. Side by side with this the spectre of paucity of food and water and the large-scale exploitation of the farmers by ruthless money lenders made their lives miserable. The poor farmers of the Ahmednagar areas were caught between

the merciless heavens and wicked economic system like the blades of a pair of scissors.

The oppressed and the exploited farmers were stirred up with an intense unrest. The angry and hungry farmers in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the 20th century rose in revolt as if to prove the truth of the aphorism 'what sins are not committed by the hungry?' They burnt down the houses of the moneylenders and the documents relating to loans. They beat down the hated exploiters and indulged in violence, gave vent to their dissatisfaction. Those violent peasant risings were suppressed by the government with brute force. Notwithstanding this there was a search for the causes of the risings and some efforts began to redress the grievances. As a result of these efforts a railway track was being laid between Daund and Manmad and the Bhandardhara dam was proposed to be built as famine relief work. The Bhandardhara dam work was completed in 1918. Water was now available for irrigation.

The poor peasants could not afford to buy water for irrigation. They could not pay the water-charges. Besides this, there were certain superstitions and misconceptions about canal water. The farmers hesitated to use the canal water as they feared such water might 'spoil away' their land. The land might lose its fertility. The land might blow up or it might turn bald or plant-less. Therefore the farmers would not take up the expected amount of water from the dam. The government could not make up the money spent on the construction of the dam. The government was worried over the situation. In reality the British Government intended to build dams and cut canals to supply water for agriculture and also to promote sugar production as cash crop. During the World War I period from 1914 to 1918, there was great scarcity of sugar in India.

After World War I, the government made it a point to make India self sufficient in sugar production, so that there would not be a need to depend on import of sugar from foreign countries. Sugar was imported from countries like Java and Sumatra. India was a suitable land for sugar production which was under their rule. The Government had this plan in view while building canals in the South. The real objective of all those constructions was obviously production of sufficient sugar in India. But with canals and supply of water, the response from the people was cold and unenthusiastic. In order to overcome the apathy of the natives, the British Government

called on the European Companies to undertake sugar cane plantation and set up sugar factory in Belapur area. A large track of land about 7367 acres of land was acquired for that purpose and substantial amount was made available to them in the Belapur region. The Government and the Company entered into an agreement. Messers W.H. Brady and Company Ltd., Mumbai, opened a private sugar factory under the name of 'The Belapur Company Limited' around the year 1925 and started producing sugar.

In the first three decades of the 20th century that is about the year 1930 water was supplied from the dams built on rivers Pravara, Vira, Godavari, Girna and other ones in some districts in Maharashtra. But everywhere the same problem cropped up. Some of those native farmers who availed of the water supply from the dams for cultivation of sugar-cane could not get expected price for their jaggery due to recession in the market. They suffered heavy losses on account of that situation.

In view of all the unfavourable circumstances and to study the viability of the government water-supply system, the Government appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Mr. B.S. Kamat with six members on the committee. It had to recommend how the government canal water would be gainful for both, the government and the cultivators. A questionnaire was circulated among various government officers, owners of big and small orchards, the concerned individuals and institutions to collect relevant information on the matter. The information was collected from all these sources. In addition to that, places like Baramati, Belapur, Kopergaon were visited and all the owners of orchards using canal water from Nira, Godavari, Pravara, Girna and other rivers were visited. Interviews of all these horticulturists were taken and their testimony in the matter was recorded.

The committee headed by Mr. Kamat after studying and analysing the information collected by them came to the conclusion that if the Government wanted to increase its revenue from water charges, it had to expand the area for sugar-cane cultivation. The expansion of the area under sugar-cane cultivation to suit the approval of the sugar-cane producers must be supported by offering incentives to set up mills to produce sugar along with jaggery. There was a big demand for sugar at that time in the market. The Sugar produced in India was not enough to meet the demands within the country. A large quantity of sugar to the extent of about a million tons of sugar was imported in India at that time.

The Government accepted the recommendations of the Kamat Committee. The Government provided the relevant facilities and the above mentioned sugar factories were started in Maharashtra. Inspired by such bright prospects Karamshibhai decided to start a sugar factory of his own.



Anxious Struggle for Sugar Factory

यथा हयेकेन चक्रेण न बध्न्य गतिर्भवेत्।
एवं पुरुषकारेण विना दैवं न सिध्यति॥

*As a chariot cannot run on one wheel likewise fate does
not become favourable without efforts.*

Anxious Struggle for Sugar Factory

Karamshibhai was carrying on his sugar selling business with great efforts and energy. In a period of two to three years he had consolidated his position in that business. He was known throughout most of the markets by big and small merchants as an honest seller of sugar.

He was making good profit from the third year of his entry into the sugar-business. He was laying aside some money after meeting all the household expenses. The success enhanced his self confidence. Now the next step which he strongly felt was to set up his own sugar factory. He was seized of the idea that he should not be contended only with selling sugar in retail but must also start a sugar factory. It became a passion with him. Evidently he was going to start the sugar factory in partnership with Khatod who had shown his favourable trend to it right from the beginning.

Karamshibhai was planning to set up a factory with a capacity to produce one hundred tons of sugar per day as he did not possess more capital for a more ambitious enterprise. He was aware of the fact that such a factory would be very small. Subsequently when he made a sizeable profit in sugar selling business, he set his sight on starting a factory with double that capacity. He began to increase his turnover and his profits also increased proportionately. With the rising figures of profit in sugar trade he was settling for a factory with three hundred and then finally decided to start a factory with a capacity to produce four hundred tons per day. He set his target

according to the growth of his sugar-selling business and the margin of profits.

After being mentally prepared for a moderate size factory he began to look to the other aspects of starting such a factory. It was necessary to import machinery for the factory from a foreign country. The cost of such a machinery, customs duty, setting up the machinery, the remunerations of the technicians and experts and the purchase of sugar-cane for the factory all these matters needed a sizeable amount. Mr. Khathod, the partner was prepared to invest only Rs. Seven Lakhs that is Seven hundred thousand only. Even with shortcomings, Karamshibhai did not think of retracing his step.

Karamshibhai booked a demand for the necessary machinery with a foreign Scoda Company. This proved to be a far-sighted move as World War II broke out in Europe in 1939 and all international transactions came to a standstill. Fortunately the machinery which Karamshibhai had ordered had arrived in Mumbai port before the outbreak of war. It was sound and safe in the port.

The machinery had arrived in the Mumbai port, Karamshibhai needed an amount of ten thousand rupees to clear it from the port. He was worried about mobilizing funds so suddenly. While he was engrossed in thought, he received an envelope containing a cheque for Rs. 10,000/- from the king of Nepal to pay the amount necessary for buying the shares of the proposed sugar factory. Karamshibhai was freed from his anxiety in a moment. His difficulties disappeared and the transactions were smoothly completed.

Karamshibhai was blessed with such sudden happy events many times in his career. He therefore immensely believes in Divine support and gratefully offers all the credit of his success to the Grace of God.

As Karamshibhai was mobilizing his resources to set up a sugar factory, the news reached Walchand Hirachand, Dahanukar, Mr. Joseph K. and other sugar factory majors. These factory owners did not approve of the efforts of Karamshibhai to leave the prosperous business of sugar distribution to retailers in towns and villages and take up production of sugar himself. They had already told him that in clear terms.

Karamshibhai wanted to start sugar production but was bent upon continuing his sugar-selling business. He used to buy sugar from Belapur

Company, Dahanukar, Rawalgaon, Falton, Malinagar and others totalling eight to nine sugar factories. Karamshibhai had established very cordial relations with them as individuals and as businessmen. His enterprise in starting production of sugar might adversely affect the business relations and they might end in the stopping of sugar supply. In order to avoid such an eventuality he had to resort to telling a lie once.

The incidence was like this: Once Walchand Hirachand himself had directly asked Karamshibhai about his sugar factory. He was greatly perplexed at the inquiry. If he were to tell the truth, he thought that sugar supply from Walchand Hirachand and Ravalgaon Sugar Factory would be stopped. He therefore told a blatant lie. He told Walchand Hirachand that he was not starting such a factory but his friend Mr. Ranachhodbhai Kotak was starting it. He somehow saved himself from embarrassment for the time being.

Karamshibhai however was deeply disturbed by that. His God fearing mind was tormented throughout his life by the painful fact that he misled somebody by telling a lie. In his nineties also he feels ashamed of the unpleasant act.

The mental torture that he suffered for telling the lie became unbearable. Subsequently when the sugar factory began functioning he met Walchand Hirachand and confessed his offence and begged his pardon. Walchand Hirachand taking into consideration the prevailing situation at that time generously forgave him. The cordial relationship between the two remained as before.

Mr. Ranachhodbhai Kotak was an intimate friend of Karamshibhai. He had left Mumbai for Burma (Myanmar) and lived there for a number of years to carry on his business there. He returned to Mumbai by the time Karamshibhai was busy preparing to set up a sugar factory. Karamshibhai had made all transactions relating to the sugar factory in the name of his friend Ranachhodbhai Kotak only.

Once Karamshibhai decided to set up a sugar factory he began to inspect sites for it. He had nearly approved a site near Samvatsar Village in Kopergaon Tehsil. But he needed a hundred acres for the factory whereas only 80 acres of land was available at Samvatsar. He therefore left it. Karamshibhai had sufficient lands with him which were meant for sugar-cane cultivation. Those lands received water from the Godavari dam. The left side canal of the Godavari dam flowed through that region.

Incidentally during this period Karamshibhai was travelling from Mumbai to Belapur by train. After changing over the railway track at Manmad he met Punamchand Multanchand Sanchet in the bogie by chance. He was also known by the nickname Babusheth. They struck friendship in their first meeting only. Originally Babusheth was from Wari village. He had extensive land there. All the cultivation there was under his supervision. This information accrued when Karamshibhai inquired about him in the course of their talk. Babusheth knew by name Karamshibhai as an honest sugar dealer. Karamshibhai sounded him whether a sugar factory in the area would be welcome there. Babusheth answered in the affirmative. He said, "Oh yes, it will be possible very easily. Nothing is impossible." He further added, "I offer you my land for a sugar factory. You start your factory only at Wari."

Karamshibhai regarded that as a very auspicious occasion. Later on he accompanied Babusheth to inspect a suitable site for the factory there. The land in Wari was favourable for a sugar factory. Besides, Kanhegaon, a small railway station on the Daund-Manmad track was nearby. This would facilitate transportation of sugar. A railway station in the vicinity of a factory is obviously a great advantage.

Karamshibhai decided to set up his sugar-factory only in the Wari region. Babubhai Sheth not only gave his own land to Karamshibhai but also procured lands from neighbouring farmers. He had taken great pains to obtain those lands. He thus became Karamshibhai's trusted colleague. Karamshibhai assigned him many types of work of great responsibility which Babusheth discharged with appropriate care and caution. Karamshibhai had entrusted large funds with him for defraying various charges.

Babubhai and his brother divided the paternal estates between them. Then he shifted to Kopargaon from Wari. Karamshibhai had established his office in the beginning at Babusheth's Kopargaon house only. He had assigned the responsibility of the office only to Babusheth. The work of the office was being conducted under the name of R.S. Kotak and Company as already referred to above.

When such preparations for setting up the sugar factory were in full swing. Karamshibhai had to confront with a very unfortunate situation. Karamshibhai wished to set up the sugar factory in partnership with Khatod. The latter had advanced large funds for the partnership in the initial stages

and had willingly accepted the partnership. The same Shobhachand Khatod proposed to withdraw his partnership with Karamshibhai on account of some misunderstanding. The misunderstanding arose because the company was established in the name of R. S. Kotak. It was a big shock for Karamshibhai. Karamshibhai put in all efforts to explain the position and convince Khatod about the real situation and remove his misunderstanding. But Khatod was not in a mood to believe it. He demanded his capital back. Karamshibhai respectfully told him, "You have to take the decision in the matter and communicate it to me. I shall refund all your money."

Khatod had withdrawn from partnership at a critical point and it was obviously a severe blow to Karamshibhai. However Karamshibhai was not a weakling who could be shaken by such blows. He quietly released Shobhachand Khatod from his partnership without any argument or quarrel. Later on he paid Khatod all the capital invested by him earlier and did not allow this separation to affect their family relations. Furthermore he continued his partnership with Shobhachand Khatod in sugar distribution trade even to the present day. This exemplifies the broadmindedness of Karamshibhai.

Another example of his generous approach of this type is clear from the information by Navalbhau Firodia. The latter was practising Law at Ahmednagar at that time. He said, "It might be the year 1940-41 when Shobhachand Khatod wished to buy an agricultural farm when Karamshibhai had started his sugar factory. He confided that to Karamshibhai. Karamshibhai selected an agricultural farm for Khatod and finalized the bargain also. Both of them then approached me in Ahmednagar. They said, "We have settled this bargain. We are going to direct our representative to take possession of it. We want you to explain to us the legal implications and aspects of the deal."

After minutely going through the documents relating to agriculture, I told Karamshibhai and Shobhachand Khatod that the deal would not be valid as the other legal heirs of the owner of the farm would not allow you to obtain clear title to the farm. Karamshibhai remarked, 'This deal is a very profitable one.' I said, "As a merchant what you say might be true but it would not be legal, this is what I feel.' Karamshibhai then proposed to go to Mumbai and requested me to accompany them.

We then went to Mumbai and consulted Mulla and Mulla Company who served a notice to the owner of the farm to make the deal legally tenable. The bargain was finalized. The deal was made for Rs. 1,10,000/- The heavy investment however proved to be lucrative as Khatod earned many times his investment during the next three years. Although the deal of the farm was that of Shobhachand Khatod, Karamshibhai had striven to put it through considering it to be his own deal in the essence. This shows his magnanimity.

Karamshibhai had meticulously carried out the necessary obligations and duties of partnership with Khatod in the sugar trade. Khatod had stood by him when Karamshibhai was in dire straits financially. Karamshibhai had cherished the feeling that Khatod was his colleague for all the time. He never discriminated against the Khatod family and regarded them as their own kith and kin. Shobhachand Khatod was a hot-tempered man. He had angrily told Karamshibhai that he was not interested in continuing his partnership with him and that he wished the accounts with him to be closed. Karamshibhai had responded in this way, "The accounts would be as you may state. I don't wish to break the partnership. And Karamshibhai remained his trusting gentleman partner throughout his life in the sugar distribution trade.



Acquisition of Lands

माता भूमिः पुत्रोऽहं पृथिव्याः।

The Earth is my mother. I am her son.

Acquisition of Lands

After finally deciding to set up a sugar factory Karamshibhai was busy acquiring lands for cultivation of sugar-cane. We have already referred to the prevailing condition in Ahmednagar. He had kept in view the policy of outright purchasing land offered for sale or accepting tenancy for a settled rent for some period. He began a search for lands on all sides. He acquired lands by his determined, tenacious attitude, gentle talk and polite behaviour. Along with the acquisition of lands he also gathered very useful men around him.

Mr. G.D. alias Gowardhanbhai Patel was Karamshibhai's old friend. He was an expert economist as well as an expert agriculturist. He wished to acquire land near Srirampur for sugar-cane cultivation with the help of Gowardhanbhai Patel. The scheme did not materialize for some reasons and Gowardhanbhai joined Dahanukar Sugar factory as already mentioned.

Karamshibhai approached his friend Gowardhanbhai Patel again when all plans for starting a sugar factory were finalized. Gowardhanbhai extended his hand of friendship to Karamshibhai also. He left the service in Dahanukar factory and joined Karamshibhai. Gowardhanbhai joined as a manager of The Godavari Sugar Mills, Ltd. which was to start functioning shortly. However Karamshibhai was also in need of a man who possessed reliable information about agriculture and farmers in that area as well as one who had contacts with them to facilitate acquisition of lands. The name of Mr. Janardan Ramchandra Kulkarni was suggested by Patel, Shah and

Yashwant Vaidya, the head of agricultural school in Puntambe. Mr. Janardan Kulkarni had been working as a postmaster at Puntambe. He was therefore known by the name Janardan Master (a term mostly used for a teacher and also to address a gentleman in the country side). Janardan Master was well conversant with the transactions relating to lands. This is the report of how the master joined the service of Karamshibhai as told by him.

Once a man came in a hack-victoria and said to me, 'Oh, please come with me, Shetji has called you.' I rode in that victoria and reached Sakarwadi. Karamshibhai met me. We had discussion on usual matters. He offered service to my son with him. 'I demand Rs. 100/- per month?' He told me he would pay Rs. 125/- per month. This was his method to pick up men for his service and keep them with him.

Then we went to Rahuri and proceeded to a government bungalow at Puslewadi in two victorias. Shetji there held a map before me and said, 'We want to buy lands in this region.' I said, 'who knows me here in Rahuri? I could do anything in Puntamba Belapur region.'

"Those were the times when people offered lands for sale or on tenancy basis on rent. We used to obtain one hundred to one hundred twenty-five acres of land every day. There was dire poverty among the farmers and peasants. A millet (Jowar) bag was sold for Rs. 2/- only and a wheat bag was sold for only Rs. 6/- The poverty of the people heightened money lending business. There was no return per acre absolutely. People believed they get more by land rent. I had a relative in Taklimiya village. We took 150 acres of land on a lease of thirty years at the rate of Rs. 10/- per acre as rent. Lands were available so cheap.

Shetji wanted to take land at Changdev. He wanted to introduce lift irrigation there. So we halted the work at Rahuri and returned to Puntambe. We began purchasing lands there. We used to enter into an agreement for more than ten acres of land as a piece. There also we acquired around 300 acres of land.

The Brahmins (priest community) in Puntambe had extensive lands, we were looking out for lands near the station. Now Shetji could put trust in me as we had acquired many tracts of the land here.

I had a friend Karale by name. He owned a field of 100 acre sugar-cane land. He was ready to sell the land with standing crops of sugar-cane. We

struck a deal with him for the land with the standing crops for about Rs 90,000/-.

Kashinath Balmukund was a Gujarati settled in Shingane but originally hailed from Yeole. He owned a large tract of land in Shingane. On the river Godavari there was lift water arrangement. We had purchased lands irrigable by Godavari lift water arrangement. Kashinath Balmukund also had kept lift arrangement in view while buying lands. Subsequently we proved to be superior in the acquisition of such lands and had an edge over him.

We then turned to Khanapur. There we came across more abject poverty than in Shingane. The peasants rushed to sign land deals with us there. We took many lands about 900 acres of land there. We then proceeded to Malewadi. We took many lands there on lease rent basis. We were busy trying to get lift-water arrangements in any of the regions comprising Khanapur, Malewadi and Puntambe. There one Mr. Kale, who was a government officer was known to me as he happened to be a friend of one of my sons. The man appeared to be a fair dealer and upright in money matters. We met him along with Shetji. We explained to him our purpose and point of view. He permitted us to make lift water arrangement in 900 acres of land in that region. He had laid down certain terms and conditions as per Government Rules while granting permission. We had fully complied with those terms and conditions. With the lift water facility we started sugar cane cultivation there.

In the course of time Karmasibhai Shetji asked me to supervise the work of recruiting labourers for cultivation work. He said he would appoint a manager to oversee the work on the lands and the cultivation of sugar cane. You will supervise his work. I rendered highest possible assistance to Shetji in the recruitment of workers on the land.

At that time we had acquired approximately fifteen thousand acres of land for sugar cane cultivation as necessary for a sugar factory. The cultivation was in full swing in increasing proportions. This activity continued unimpeded till the Government appointed a Corporation of Land and Agriculture and began looking after these matters.

Shetji exerted himself a lot for the cultivation. Whether any vehicle was available or not he was to take a round on the sugar cane fields. He was scrupulous about every aspect of cultivation and was keen to set right any

fault or deficiency as quickly as possible. He was bound to give directions to the people working there.

He received the award for his efforts in the form of money. Notwithstanding this he never boasted about it. He treated all big and small with equal affection. He extended hospitality to all; invited people to his home and entertained them to dinner. I was his great favourite. He loved me. He helped me greatly with medical treatment to my daughter when she was ill.

Janardan Master narrated the information regarding the occasions and events during the acquisition of land. Janardan was also accompanied by Balkrishna Yashwant Khurjekar who was working as a leasing officer. Karmasibhai was on good terms with him. His brother Mr. M.Y. alias Rajabhau Khurjekar later on joined the company of Karmasibhai. He provided the following information concerning that period:

“There was no Land Ceiling Act to prevent purchasing of black soil land at that time. It was therefore not difficult to acquire any amount of land for sugarcane cultivation. My brother had helped Karmasibhai in acquitting lands. It was possible at that time to procure land at a nominal rate of land rent. I had offered my own land measuring ten acres of land for Rs. 350/- as annual land-rent. A good land would fetch a rent of Rs. 10/- to Rs. 30/- per acre. Jaggery too was not in demand. I had to sell my jaggery at the rate of Rs. 9/- per quintal (100 kg.). A bag of sugar was being sold at Rs. 10/- The transportation charges to carry jaggery to the market were more than what one could get by selling the jaggery transported. The charges for carrying goods even by bullock cart were Rs. 2/- to Rs. 2.50/- at that time.

During such a period of recession and falling prices Karmasibhai ensured proper supply of raw material that is sugarcane by acquiring such extensive lands. It displayed not only his spirit of adventure but also a foresight of an astute trader.

A reputed merchant and an agriculturist Mr. Chandrabhan Rupchand Dakale from Srirampur was an equally capable person. He was younger than Karmasibhai by about seven to eight years. He had also scaled higher position and earned a lot of wealth in trade and agriculture by the dint of his efforts, a sense of practical wisdom and the spirit of adventure. Karmasibhai and Dakale Shetji knew each other well. Karmasibhai's family

was living in the house of a Dakale in Belapur. Dakale Shetji also had bought a lot of agricultural land simply because he loved agriculture. It was his hobby to acquire agricultural land. While Karmasibhai was on land-buying spree for sugarcane. What happened at that time is reproduced below as narrated by Dakale Shetji. He said:

“I know Karmasibhai from my age of eighteen. He was engaged in sugar trade. Subsequently he started a sugar factory when he was acquiring lands. I said ‘I wish to sell my farm-land’. Karmasibhai replied, “I am prepared to buy it but you must finish all matters relating to the deal in one meeting only.” I said, ‘You first see the farm-land and then decide.’

Karmasibhai saw the farm-land and the deal was finalized for an amount of Rs. 1,51,000/- Karmasibhai asked me about how the money had to be paid. I told him, ‘Initially you pay ten percent of the amount and the remaining amount may be paid in instalments with interest in a period of two to three years.’

“It was settled to hand over the farm except for a cow, a house and the household vessels. I applied an auspicious red mark on his forehead (Tilak) and gave him a coconut and a sweet lemon (grape fruit) and wished him success.

Babasaheb Dahanukar came to know about this transaction. This farm was near Dahanukar’s sugar factory. He was afraid that the transfer of the farm which was so close to his factory might cause shortage of sugarcane for his factory. He therefore quietly poisoned the ears of Shobhachand Khatod. The deal between Karmasibhai and Dakale could not materialize. Karmasibhai realized that the deal of the farm-land would not be allowed to be finalized. He wished to end the deal. Therefore Karmasibhai and Dakale both decided to withdraw from the deal.

Karmasibhai wished that a sugar factory be started in partnership with Dakale at Takali during 1942-43. Karmasibhai wanted Dakale to look after the administration and general supervision. As the latter expressed his inability to shoulder the responsibility, the matter ended there.



Model Farming of Sugarcane

° डपुतं ढुकृतशीजं हि ढुक्षेत्रेषु महत्फलम्।

Good seed sown in good land produces good fruit.

Model Farming of Sugarcane

While the campaign for acquiring lands was in progress, the preparation of the land for cultivating sugarcane and growing good sugarcane were carried out side by side. Karamshibhai was assisted by experts in agriculture like Mr. Gowardhanbhai Patel and Mr. A. A. Amin. Both of them had pursued a policy of scientifically cultivating sugarcane right from the beginning. Karamshibhai was prone to go to the root of everything that he took up for work and collect complete information about it. Besides this, he also attempted to improve agriculture by various experiments inspired by his native shrewdness and intelligence.

Karamshibhai had divided the lands acquired by him according to his intention to obtain excellent production from the lands and the availability of water supply in the areas. These divisions of lands were called 'wadi' (something like a ranch). Some of the names of those enclosed lands were Ramwadi, Laxmanwadi, Bharatwadi, Hanumanwadi thereby remembering the great Epic Ramayana. There were other enclosures bearing the names Shinganwadi, Sakarwadi, Laxmiwadi. Sakarwadi farm subsequently was divided into three parts: 1) Laxmiwadi-Agricultural office, 2) Dashrath, Ram, Laxmanwadi was another and 3) Bharat and Hanuman wadi was the third part.

Every 'wadi' or enclosure was under the charge of an overseer. He had to supervise over a thousand acre sugarcane farm.

Agriculture was one of Karamshibhai's favourite hobbies. Although he

was a reputed merchant and an industrialist, he wished to be known as a farmer by which he got mental satisfaction and felt a sense of pride. While cultivating sugarcane if he came across any information by any source including newspapers etc. concerning the kind or variety of seeds, he not only implemented it on his farms but also conveyed it to other horticulturists in the neighbouring areas. He used to make them use that variety of seed about which he had read or heard. The variety of sugarcane CO-740 was already nurtured by Karamshibhai at Padegaon much before it was introduced on Government Sugarcane Research Centre. Karamshibhai had popularized the variety among the neighbouring horticulturists before the guidance from the Research Centre.

Sugarcane farming needs plenty of water-supply. When Karamshibhai was engaged in cultivation and setting up of his factory at that time, the right bank canal and the left bank canal of the Godavari river were set in action. The new dam construction had facilitated watering of dry land. However the farmers were ignorant about the know-how to use the water. Karamshibhai had mastered the technique to utilize the water supply. He had developed his own method of irrigating fields.

Karamshibhai had developed great liking for experimenting for improvement of agriculture every time in a new way. He was always struggling to see that the supply of fertilizers was proper and in time, the regulation of water supply was as per plan, the maintenance of the crop was vigilant and the tonnage of sugarcane production was on an increasing scale.

Karamshibhai in order to keep the right temper of functioning used to travel from Mumbai down to the farms once in eight to ten days. He used to inspect the cultivation and used to take decision after consultations with his agriculture officers. At times he used to advise them about better course. If he happened to read about useful information concerning sugarcane production he used to dispatch the cuttings from the newspapers or magazines to the agriculture officers for information and necessary action.

He had made a few experiments to provide good fertilizer to the agriculture. He tried cow-dung as manure for sugarcane and found it very successful. The story about the manure is briefly described here:

When he was about to attempt the experiment of cow-dung as manure,

he was confronted with the problem of getting cow-dung on a massive scale. It struck him that the Aarey Milk Centre in Mumbai could solve his problem. At the Aarey Colony thousands of animals were kept and heaps of waste were available. Nobody thought of making use of the animal waste at that time. He directed his attention to the waste matter and decided to use it as a manure for his agriculture. He made the necessary arrangements with the Aarey authorities and managed to secure railway wagons to fetch the manure from Mumbai to Kanhegaon. Incidentally Kanhegaon is the nearest station to Sakarwadi. The wagons loaded with the manure touched Kanhegaon station. A section of the people at that time had ridiculed the idea of bringing cow-dung from Mumbai. Some of the people had considered him a big fool. Karamshibhai was not any ordinary man to care for such ridicule or scorn.

Karamshibhai was inclined to pursue tenaciously a course of action determined by comprehensive thought about it. He thus made use of the animal waste on his sugarcane fields and reaped a huge profit. Those who had considered him a fool now became fools themselves. The people now admitted that there was a method in his madness. Those very smart men who had laughed at him after witnessing the actual benefit of using such a manure quietly started using it in their fields to increase the yield. In the course of time the Aarey dairy farm itself was facing the problem of how to meet the increasing demand for supplying the animal waste. Earlier they were worried about how to dispose of the accumulating animal waste in the yard. The Kopargaon farmers called the animal-waste from Mumbai as 'Mumbai manure'.

Another novel experiment performed by Karamshibhai on his sugarcane farm which amply proved beneficial to the farmers in the region, was the method of supplying water to the sugarcane. This became a blessing not only to Karamshibhai but also to all those who followed his example.

In the year 1953-54 Karamshibhai's son, Dr. Shantilal Somaiya, led a delegation to survey and study the cultivation of sugarcane in the Hawai islands, one of the sugarcane growing foreign countries. Dr. Shantilal was accompanied by one of the agriculture-officers, Mr. Amin. After studying the sugarcane farming in the Hawai islands and in view of his experience of Godavari water-supply he conceived of a new irrigation method. This method is called 'graded furrow method' or 'lay-out'. The farmers called it

as 'contour method'. This method made the supply of water to long stretches of land very easy.

The graded furrow method requires level land but relies on cutting long furrows some two hundred to two hundred and fifty feet long taking into consideration the gradient of the land. The sugarcane has to be planted in that manner. This results in the economy of water, availability of more land for plantation and maximum supply of water by a minimum number of labourers. This method was popularized by the Godavari-area farmers by instructing the neighbours by demonstration of the method. Even big farmers in the region upheld the graded furrow method. It seems the Indian farmer once he is convinced of the efficacy of a new, useful method comes forward with courage to abandon the traditional method and adopt that new profitable method. The farmers in the Godavari region had become a model farming class.

A young man in his twenties with a B.Sc. (Agriculture) degree joined service in the Godavari Sugar Mills Ltd. in 1945. His name was Jadavbhai Narshibhai Patel and hailed from Nikara Village in Broach District in Gujarat. He loved agriculture from his boyhood days. He was appointed as an overseer of agriculture. After a period of fifty years of dedicated service he rose to the position of a General Manager.

Mr. J. N. Patel was personally known by the farmers in the outlying areas of the Godavari river. He was treated as a family member by most of the farmers there. The reason for his popularity in the region was not only that he improved his cultivation of the Godavari fields but also extended technical know-how to improve their agriculture in the neighbouring area by practical guidance. Only recently he completed 75 years of his age. Talking about his long experience he said:

"I took charge at Savalivihirwadi as an overseer in 1946. Mr. Amin was the Agriculture officer there who was an experienced agriculturist. He used to take me to the 'wadi' assigned to me. I began to be ready for the work at 5-5.30 in the morning every day. We were provided with horses for inspection of the cultivated fields as no vehicles were available on bad roads for such a work. We had to depend on horses only.

Mr. Amin's disciplined guidance enabled me to grasp the essentials of sugarcane plantation, maintenance and other aspects of sugarcane

production in a matter of four to five months. With such an expert training I could discharge my responsibility creditably during the four years of my tenure there.

Once Karamshibhai Shetji came to visit his sugar factory, I got the message that Shetji was expected to visit Savalivihirwadi in the afternoon. Shetji was accompanied by manager Mr. K. K. Bhargav and Mr. G. D. Patel. All of them expressed satisfaction after reviewing the sugarcane cultivation. Shetji turned to me and said, "show me the best and the worst plots." Without hesitation, I quietly replied, 'I have no bad plots here.'

'Shetji made inquiries about me in a considerate manner and looking at my frail frame he jokingly said, "When are you going to put on flesh?" I replied in a matter of fact manner, "Well! I eat and drink, work hard. It's not within my powers to become fat." He laughed with pleasure and satisfaction. This was my first meeting with Shetji. The bonds of relationship were united here. The writ of my future progress was inscribed here. I had the good fortune to receive blessings from a veritable prophet.

The fate however intended otherwise. I left the service with Karamshibhai and joined some other farm. I got disgusted there and came back to Godavari Company. Mr. Amin used his good offices to reinstate me. Somaiya Shetji generously took me back in his service. Shetji appointed me on a low yield Shingwa farm. There with the active help of Mr. Amin. I improved plantation and could produce 76 tons of sugarcane per acre.

In appreciation of my achievement Karamshibhai Shetji promoted me as an agricultural inspector in 1953. I had under my charge about 900 to 1,000 acres of sugarcane area comprising Ramwadi, Dasharthwadi and Laxmiwadi. During the ten year period from 1953 to 1963, I worked there as an agricultural inspector with great ability. I made many new experiments in sugarcane farming. I cultivated very good relationship with the farmers in that area during my ten-year term. We could get very good production of sugarcane by excellent cultivation, proper use of manures, the graded furrow method of irrigation and the plantation of the right variety of sugarcane suitable to the land under cultivation. We could get tremendous production. We had actually established a world record of production of sugarcane in that period.

In one year we expected a bumper crop. We had estimated that the average

production would be over 85 tons per acre. However we suffered a huge loss on account of nuisance of the rat. We had to encounter such a heavy damage that the average production per acre dropped to a mere 56 tons. This evidently meant that the loss was to the extent of 35 to 40 tons per acre. We therefore had to undertake a campaign to destroy the rodents that destroy the sugarcane. We used pesticides but along with this measure we offered a quarter of a rupee per rat to the 'vadars', a special class of tribal, specialized in rat catching. We had to take such steps to end the rat menace.

When I was posted at Dasharathwadi, I held the charge of three 'Wadis' that is enclosed fields and five overseers worked under me. Our relations with each other were so cordial that we never felt the distinction of such as an officer, overseer, foreman or other subordinates. All worked as a team. There was no boss and no servant. The general atmosphere at the 'wadi' was light and playful. The officers of that time were Messrs Chougule, P. N. Kulkarni, Chitnis and Patel. We used to arrange dinner parties and mixed up freely irrespective of ranks on different 'Wadis' from time to time. We used to talk about our home matters and matters concerning our work. One does not come across such people who care to know one another and work with the spirit of unity and mutual respect. The teamwork and the climate of freedom prevailed everywhere. My relations with the higher officers and the Shetji were cordial. I felt at home with them. Mr. Amin was a king among officers. He treated everybody with consideration and affection. One felt so relaxed and free in his presence.

The hybrid millet, (Jawar) hybrid seed, had become a favourite topic of discussion in the region. We also decided to try our hand at producing hybrid seed. We could get a satisfactory return. Mr. Nanasaheb Lonkar was our trusted friend. In fact he was an orchard owner who acted as a publicity machine for us. He used to disseminate the details of the new techniques and improvements to all horticulturists and agricultural officers who went to him. The government ministers also visited our farms and gathered information about our cultivation and the tonnage per acre of sugarcane production. Some of the leading ministers who showed keen interest in our farms were Messers Yashwantrao Chavan, S. K. Patil, Annasaheb Shinde and others.

With a view to providing his son, Dr. Shantilalji, with upto date information about the agriculture and the sugar factory, Sheth Karamshibhai

used to call him to Sakarwadi from time to time. After completing his education Shantilalji visited foreign countries also. The managerial career of Dr. Shantilalji commenced in the year 1956. The Godavari Sugar Mills scaled greater heights under the capable guidance of Dr. Shantilalji. This was true especially of the factory's agriculture department.

In the sugarcane cultivation the success achieved under his efficient guidance was brilliant and far-reaching. The milestones in the progress made under his guidance may be mentioned as 1) producing a new variety of sugarcane, e.g. C.O.641, 2) propagating a good kind of sugarcane e.g. C.O. 740, 3) Adopting new technique of sugarcane cultivation on a large scale like the graded furrow method, 4) deep ploughing to the extent of 32" (81 cm approx.). These are some of the noteworthy features of the progress.

An international conference on Sugarcane and Sugar experts was held at Sakarwadi in the year 1955. This was actually the beginning of Dr. Shantilalji's agricultural career. He inspired his people to undertake experiments with C.O. 740 variety of sugarcane on a large scale and the actual plantation of that variety enabled Godavari Sugar factory to provide guidance to the whole of Maharashtra. At present 90% of the area under sugarcane cultivation in Maharashtra extensively makes use of this variety. The origin of this adoption of the method is evidently to be traced to the cultivation started by this sugar factory in 1956. Dr. Shantilalji was keen to see that the maximum production was available with minimum expenditure.

It is because of this unspoken criterion that the farming at Godavari Factory is considered as a model farming not only in and around Kopergaon but also in the whole of Maharashtra. At present those who live in the region and had acquired affluence like Messers Lonkar, Dharmalkar, Borawake, Sasane, Jagtap, Rohamare and other farmers refer to the Godavari farm with pride and are full of praise. It seems there was a healthy competition between the experts on the Godavari farm and the progressive plantation owners in the region. In this very period former Minister of State for food, Hon. Mr. Annasaheb Shinde was accompanied by many progressive farmers. They had visited the sugarcane fields here and expressed satisfaction at the progress.

Dr. Shantilal Somaiya was the president of the Deccan Sugar Technologists Association. The Hon. Minister Mr. Shinde had attended the conference of the Association. In his introductory speech he had admitted

that the Somaiya family had contributed much to the progress of Maharashtra, especially to the Ahmednagar district in the area of agriculture. They attain progress in their own agriculture and at the same time help other farmers achieve progress in agriculture by extending technical knowledge and guidance to the farmers in the neighbouring areas.

In the year 1962 the Godavari Sugar Mills established a new world record of producing an average crop of 71 tons per acre by planting Adsali, Khodwa and Suru variety of sugar cane in their fields. The figures of sugarcane production in the Godavari agricultural fields at that time favourably compared with the figures of any of the developed countries in the world. In the following years the mechanized sugarcane farms at Sakarwadi and Laxmiwadi covering an area of 16,000 acres owned by Godavari Sugar Factory set new records of sugarcane production.

The team of Messers Gowardhanbhai Patel, A. A. Amin, J. N. Patel, Fakirbhai Patel, N. G. Kulkarni, S. B. Chougule, B. M. Murugkar, P. K. Vaidya, Prabhakar Bhise, M. Y. Khurjekar and other agricultural officers ably assisted by other colleagues could match world production by Godavari factory and farms. The figures like 107 tons of sugarcane production per acre, 13.4 percent production of sugar and a production of 14.16 tons of sugar per acre, would compare well with the production levels of the advanced nations.

The credit for the success obviously goes to modern technological oriented agriculture adopted and directed by Dr. Shantilalji. The credit equally goes to Karamshibhai as he was the prime mover of the advanced techniques and one who guided the functions. He was the man who discerned the talents in different men and gathered them to give their best and take the whole concern to the peak of success. The experiences of those men are thought provoking and inspiring. We have presented full details of the work-experience of Mr. J. N. Patel as it reflects the way in which Karamshibhai developed and shaped his agricultural fields and at the same time how the officials and men working on the sugar-cane fields were trained and modelled.



Narration of Experiences by Agricultural Officers

उदाहरितानां तु यन्मुधैव कुटुम्बकम्।

*The world is one family for those who are large-hearted
people full of kindness.*

Narration of Experiences by Agricultural Officers

The narration of experiences by Agricultural Officers who came to guide Karamshibhai is also instructive. The many faceted personality of Karamshibhai is revealed through the factual account made available by them. Every special feature of his character receives attention that it deserves.

Mr. Prabhakar Dattatray Bhise, a young man, who held a Diploma in Agriculture joined the service as an Agro-overseer in Godavari in 1947. Mr. Bhise told us about his unforgettable experience. He said, 'In the beginning Karamshibhai sent me to his private farm in Khanapur. The process of boiling the sugarcane juice was in full swing. Shetji (Karamshibhai) arrived at that time on the site. The foreman was not very attentive. He reprimanded all the workers and exhorted them to be alert all the time. He used to observe very closely all the processes that produce sugar. Once a crusher was in operation and the juice was dripping. Shetji instructed to tighten a screw of the machine. I said, "Sir, it may affect the colour and may burn out." He said, "No nothing of that type will happen. You do as I told you." We tightened the nut and a few drops of the juice splashed. He said, "Did it burn out?" At times I never listen to anybody's suggestions or advice. This is not right. When I next go to Mumbai I shall send a crusher with someone known to me." He sent three crushers. Shetji used to take quick decisions and used to act on them expeditiously.

He was carrying on his trade in jaggery along with his sugar-selling business. He used to instruct me to go and inspect the jaggery making process

followed by others in the periphery of our area and focus attention on the colour of their jaggery and note down the flaws in the processes followed by us. He used to sanction the amount necessary for adopting that process or for renovating the functioning of the machines.

“Once Shetji arrived at the site, when the boiling of the sugarcane juice was under way. Mr. Deshpande was the Manager of the factory at that time. The jaggery in one of the cauldron turned black. He lost his temper. I was nearby. He asked me the cause of such discolouring. I explained, “Sir, we collect the stumps of the sugarcane at the end. This is the last product of such stumps so the colour of the liquid turns black.”

He used to watch the processes and operations very minutely. A model sugarcane farm was at Harigaon. He used to direct us to go and find out why the growth of our sugarcane was less in quantity or inferior in quality or deficient in the end production. He used to force us to correct any error that might have crept up. He had such an inquisitive intellect. He used to have a through examination of a candidate seeking employment in his farm or factory.

“Whenever he visited his own sugarcane farm he used to have a close look at the farming of the neighbouring fruit gardens also. He used to compare the farming of the neighbours with his own farm. While looking over the condition of agriculture of other people he noticed that our tractor had transgressed into the neighbouring field. He warned us that our farming should never damage the crop of other people.

He always wished to experiment with planting of a new variety of sugarcane in his farm. Once we had tried with cotton plants on a private land. Whenever Shetji came he used to examine each of the cotton plants very carefully. In case the plant was not growing properly he used to inquire about the fertilizers used or any change of fertilizer needed for a healthy growth. He used to give necessary instructions in such cases.

On one occasion in 1948 our sugarcane crop grown on 47 acres of land got burned. We faced the problem of where to crush and process about two thousand tons of our sugarcane juice. The boiling and straining operations were already under way on other bunches of sugarcanes. It would take at least twenty days to reduce the juice to solid jaggery from such a huge stock. I began to ponder over the problem. This was a conspiracy of someone cherishing ill-feeling towards us. As I was proceeding to inform

about the problem to the authorities concerned I accidentally met the officers of the Maharashtra Sugar Factory. I was well acquainted with them. They inquired about my problem. I explained to them my problem. They said, "What have you decided to do about the big problem?" I replied, 'It would be better if you would take all the juice from the burnt stock.'

The authorities of the Maharashtra Factory in a matter of fact manner said, "How would you take the decision in this matter?" I said, "I shall ask the owner Karamshibhai but I am confident he will grant his permission for this." I went to Shetji and the Manager and explained to them the problem and the solution I proposed. Shetji immediately gave his consent to the proposal.

Shetji had a 5,000 acre farm at Bhopal where he had sent me. Aminsahab also accompanied me. He contemplated to start of sugar factory there. Later on he abandoned the plan and used the land for wheat and other crops.

"Once he was to visit the farm at Bhopal so we made all preparations as if to receive a minister. We received him with the customary bouquets and garlands at the railway station. After viewing all the arrangement he grimly remarked, "I am not a minister of the government. You should not have received me in this way."

Whenever he visited the agricultural field he used to make inquiries about the ploughing of the land. He used to continue discussion about the work while eating with us at dinner. There was never a shortage of good seeds and fertilizers. Aminsahab also provided useful guidance.

In case of sugarcane farming there was a rivalry among the officials to secure more height for the sugarcane and bigger tonnage of the yield. Shetji used to lose his temper if anything went against his wish. However he never used bad words. Whenever he used to meet the person concerned for inviting his displeasure he used to forget all the bitter things and used to have a friendly talk with him and make inquiries about his family and personal problems.

The workers on the Malawadi-Khanapur fields had struck work and were demanding higher wages. The wages at that time were approximately less than Rs. 1.20. Comrade Madhavrao Gaikwad was leading them. The prices for jaggery had fallen steeply so there was no sign of any compromise on

either side. The strike continued for a long time which exasperated the workers. They sent a message that they wished to have a personal talk with the Shetji. Shetji met the workers and their leader Comrade Gaikwad. He gave them a patient hearing. The leader put forward the demand that the owner of the plantation should at least raise the wages by twenty-five paise (quarter of a rupee). Shetji firmly told them. "There is no demand for jaggery at present and therefore it would not be possible to raise the wages. Moreover it would not be possible to raise the wages every time you strike work. Then the discussion turned to the other benefits enjoyed by our workers as against those in the neighbouring farms. It was evident that the workers on our farms enjoyed more benefits than the other workers. A compromise was arrived at and a minor rise was agreed to by Shetji to save the position of the leaders of the workers. After the departure of the leaders Shetji very generously gave half a bag of jawar to each of the workers who were present. He said, "ultimately our workers should be assisted by us only." The welfare of the employees is the concern of the employer. He would not flinch once he is convinced of anything. He would not retreat. He would take quick decision. Workers had a high regard for him. Shetji used to express his views very frankly before the meeting of the Deccane Sugar Technological Association when he was its President in 1955-56. He thus kept his mind open and was ready to receive useful suggestions.

Shetji had real affection and attachment towards all those who worked in his farm or factory. One horticulturist, Mr. G. P. Deshmukh, was working with us. He used to provide guidance on horticultural matters in respect of Sakarwadi, Laxmiwadi and the gardens in the Shetji's premises. In his old age Mr. Deshmukh expressed a wish to stay in the guest house at Sakarwadi. Shantilalji, the son of Karamshibhai Shetji, sent Mr. Deshmukh to Sakarwadi and instructed us to take care of him and give him good treatment at the guesthouse. After that Mr. Deshmukh was accommodated in the guesthouse. Mr. Deshmukh took ill after staying there. The physician after examining him advised that someone from Deshmukh's family be called. Our manager Mr. Kale contacted his son who was staying in Mumbai. Shetji was informed in Mumbai. Shetji without hesitation and delay immediately caught the train from Mumbai to go to Sakarwadi and in the early morning after a night's rigorous journey straightaway rushed to meet Mr. Deshmukh at the guesthouse. He met Mr. Deshmukh there, inquired after his health. He had a warm talk with him and then left for Mumbai by the next train in the same

morning. Soon after Shetji's departure Deshmukh's son arrived. He had halted at Nasik to minimize strain of the troublesome journey. His son avoided strenuous journey at night but Shetji faced the strain of the continuous journey and met his ex-employee. He showed how much he loved and cared for his employees.

Another example of the loving care for his present and past employees is evident in the case of our Estate-manager. Mr. G. D. Patel alias Gowardhanbhai Patel. He was suffering from cancer. He was admitted to Tata Hospital. His health deteriorated and Gowardhanbhai had expressed the wish to meet Karamshibhai Shetji himself. Shetji was contacted on phone and informed about Patel's wish. He immediately went to Tata Hospital and met him there. Mr. Patel inquired about Shantilalji, Shetji's son. He wished to see him also. Shantilalji had to attend a meeting at Delhi and was making preparations to proceed to Delhi. Karamshibhai telephoned to Shantilalji and told him, "the Delhi meeting would take place in future also but meeting Mr. Patel may not be possible again." His son Shantilalji left all his work and rushed to the Hospital to meet Mr. Patel. Mr. G. D. Patel died. Shetji participated in carrying Patel's bier to the cemetery in the funeral procession.

Shetji was curious to know all about agriculture. When he learnt that the recovery at Kolhapur was better than at other places, he immediately sent persons to find out the reasons for a better yield. He was keen to know everything about such matters. He had a liberal attitude towards sugar business. When co-operative sugar factory was started he did not oppose the move. In fact Mr. Vikhe Patil consulted Shetji and received his help in collecting useful information.

Shetji had to deal with all sorts of problems. Some mischievous trouble makers with an evil intention to create ill-feeling used to write anonymous letters to the Shetji at Mumbai about the sugar factory. Shetji used to collect all such letters and take them to his office. He used to instruct the officials to read out the letters in the meeting. After the reading of the letters was over he used to say firmly that he never trusted the unknown writers of those letters. The contents of the letters would have no effect on him. However, if anything is really amiss, there is scope for improvement. If the writers of such letters were present in the meeting such statements of Shetji were a timely warning and remonstrance at once.

While travelling from Laxmiwadi to Kopargaon at about 11 o'clock in the morning Shetji saw some sheep grazing in his Ramwadi field. He immediately contacted the employees cautioned them and alerted them. Shetji was very keen to keep everything in proper order.

Shetji and his son, Shantilal, were very particular to make use of modern appliances and materials in agriculture. They kept the latest appliances on even small farms. They used to supply the modern equipments to the workers and urged them to make use of the modern methods and appliances. He took much care to see that the crop was never affected by want of proper material and tools. At the same time he wanted his officers to know about the outer world and the developed technology in the West. He sent Mr. P. P. Shah, Mr. Amin, Mr. Khuja and Mr. Kshatriya abroad to be familiar with latest technology. He never hesitated to pay heavily for their tours.

In the areas earmarked for growing sugarcane there was a healthy competition to increase the tonnage of the sugarcane produce. Special prizes were given for excellence in work to workers who irrigated the fields and those who supervised the work like the overseers. They used to get bonus along with others and also were given special bonus. The salary for a worker during irrigation work was Rs. 45/- but the bonus paid to them was Rs. 50/-

Whenever and wherever Shetji travelled, he never forgot to inquire about all concerned and the meals and other facilities provided for them including that of the driver. Once we had accompanied Shetji on his journey. As we were about to return, it struck him that the driver of the car carrying his guests had not eaten his meals. He immediately asked all to get down from the vehicles. The return journey started only after the driver took his meals. Recollection of such events have enlightened me a lot."

Mr. B. N. Murugkar who became the manager at Laxmiwadi remembers his past experiences. He said, "In 1963, I went to Godavari Sugar Mills to seek employment in agricultural department. Mr. Atchutrao Patwardhan my friend and a great patriot had advised me to join the service there as agriculture on commercial basis in Maharashtra was being carried out in the Godavari Sugar Mills. 'You need not hesitate to serve there. The field, which you have chosen for service there, has good prospects.' He gave me a letter of recommendation. This was the main reason why I joined service at the Godavari Sugar Mills.

Karamshibhai had formulated a nationalist programme of reclaiming and developing uncultivated and fallow lands in the pre-Independence period. A socialist thinker like Atchutrao Patwardhan might have treated the transformation of lands whether by capitalists or others as of less importance. He had attached more importance to the work with a nationalist view. Karamshibhai and Atchutrao knew each other for a long time.

In the 1942 'Quit India Movement' when Atchutrao went under ground Karamshibhai gave him asylum at his own home inspired by the nationalist sentiment disregarding the dangers of British Governments' displeasure. He thus indirectly rendered assistance to the Movement. He also provided help to agitators in the freedom struggle.

Karamshibhai developed lands which he purchased or took on tenancy basis by investing money and labour and adopting modern technology to improve the yield. His example was followed by other agriculturists and horticulturists.

Every farm (wadi) of Godavari Mills Land consisted of a thousand to twelve hundred acres. The land was cultivated by adopting modern technology. He showed keen interest and determination in making new experiments in agricultural work.

In the past oil cakes were used as fertilizer in agriculture. An account was kept of the proportion of oil cakes used and the produce realized by such utilization. Karamshibhai's standing orders to the workers were to stock all empty bags of oil cakes in the general stores. The amount of fertilizer (oil cake) could be calculated by counting the number of empty bags. He meticulously examined all such details to maintain proper account.

Karamshibhai essentially is a born farmer. He has trudged through muddy waters in the fields, has travelled by bullock-carts. Whenever he read about any information about agricultural matters, he used to make contacts with the persons or institutions concerned. He used to gather complete and upto date information. Although he was largely engaged in trade and commerce, he was more interested in agriculture. The whole structure of the Godavari Sugar Mills is agro-based. Its foundation is really based on agriculture. The graded furrow method adopted by Godavari Mills was widely discussed in several conferences organized by Deccan Sugar Technological Association at that time. The government also at that time did not possess the technique

of internal cultivation, the ploughing of land by the use of T.D. 18, D7, TD24, D/4 tractors or obtaining better result by making the soil light and dry. Karamshibhai had adopted advanced technique and a new method in the agricultural production. In fact he offered a new technique to Maharashtra and the country at large in the beneficial use of land. He had already put in operation the lift irrigation on rivers before the government planned it. He provided water by such irrigation methods. He sunk wells 40 x 40 even when canals existed. He saw to it that not a single drop of water was wasted.

“We had once visited ‘Lal Baug’ at Banglore with Karamshibhai. He closely examined the several trees in the garden. He made intimate inquiries about the plants with a view to knowing whether such plants would survive or grow in our land.

In 1966, he contemplated to set up a sugar factory in Karnataka for the first time. He sent his officials to Kolhapur and Sangli areas to estimate the prospects of starting a factory there. He had told us to inspect sites with a view to exploring fertile area and for growing better quality sugarcane.

Mr. P. K. Vaidya, a practising advocate at Erandol in Jalgaon district met him in the month of May 1938. The mobilization for setting up the Godavari Sugar Mills was underway. Karamshibhai needed a competent legal consultant for such an enterprise. Mr. Vaidya approached Karamshibhai on the recommendation of Shobhachand Khatod. Karamshibhai appointed him Stores Superintendent at Sakarwadi in the beginning. He was sent to the general office at Laxmiwadi after starting the factory there. He used to attend to the work connected with agriculture and legal cases relating to agriculture. Mr. Vaidya thus had to handle court cases at Kopargaon and Sholapur also. He looked after such work upto 1974. Thereafter he came to stay in Pune. Karamshibhai had asked Mr. Vaidya to deal with legal affairs of the factory as and when they came up at Pune. Mr. Vaidya spoke about his experience during that period in this way. “I had the privilege to work with him for a period of forty-five – forty-six years from 1938 to 1984. He is industrious and unbending. He stubbornly pursues his objective and never relents his efforts to achieve it. He does not care for his meals. ‘Work comes first’ was his guiding principle. He is used to work in the office upto ten o’clock at night whenever he came to Mumbai.

He used to take a round at Sakarwadi once in a week. He outlined a programme to visit factory first, then calling a meeting of the heads of

several departments. He used to affirm that the office records have to be handled properly and in an orderly manner as the records have to be maintained for a very long period. He used to inspect the records very carefully and minutely. In case some error occurred he used to guide properly. "If such errors were committed how can the work of the factory make any progress?" This is how he admonished the officials. He used to make the necessary corrections. He never raised his voice even when he was very angry with unsatisfactory situations. He never used bad words or abuses.

The son of Mr. P. K. Vaidya, Mr. Vinayak Vaidya also joined Godavari Mills after taking a degree in agriculture. He had grown up in the precincts of the Sakarwadi from his school days. He had witnessed the growth of the industry. When in 1948, he took up his degree in agriculture, Karamshibhai asked him 'What next?' Mr. Vinayak Vaidya said, 'I shall seek service.' He joined the service. He was taken up in the Godavari Farm. While narrating his experiences he said, "Karamshibhai when he once came to the farm asked me why there was difference in the yield of two places. I explained the soil here is fertile while the soil at the other place is full of crumbly rock. Shetji then questioned 'What were you taught in the college? Can the crumbly soil be improved or not?' See if you can improve the inferior land after consulting your senior officers. We must get a rich harvest even from such lands. The gains in agriculture promote real profits in the sugar factory.

Karamshibhai was of the view that farming should be undertaken on commercial basis. He used to pursue the activity which was practicable and profitable. In order to increase the yield he made use of cow-dung manure, watering the land by the method of graded furrow, making use of modern equipment. He also offered incentives for excellence by encouraging competition and rewarding best workmanship by giving prizes.

Once an experiment was started, Shetji never bothered about expenses. He took decision by focusing his attention on future developments. He looked at the future of an experiment with equanimity enough. He used to say, if the experiment is successful, we reap the benefit and also we get the satisfaction and joy of having done some research work, he stated.

He hated to see pieces of sugarcane fallen on the street. He held the officials responsible for such delinquency. The year 1962-63 is a high watermark of our success. We read papers on agriculture at BSFA and STA and discussed the contents. We received a warm response.

Many a time Shetji used to travel by train. Once he noticed some information about sugarcane in a magazine with a co-traveller. He marked out the portion carrying the information and brought the magazine to his office. He called Govardhanbhai and showed him the matter and asked him to study it and see if we could do anything worthwhile about it. He reminded Govardhanbhai when he met him again.

We also attempted an experiment to see how the sugarcane production comes out with the use of additional seeds per acre. We found the experiment economically disadvantageous and we stopped it. However we had to send the reports about it regularly.

Once the secretary of the extra-mural lectures organized by Pune University happened to meet Karamshibhai Shetji. He proposed to start an extra-mural lecture centre at Sakarwadi. Shetji went through the list of topics of the lectures and found that agriculture did not figure in the list. Shetji firmly said there ought to be lectures on agriculture also. The secretary quietly replied, 'we do not find any person to lecture on the subject'. Shetji turned to me and asked me whether I would take up the assignment. I replied in the affirmative. I obtained sanction for the assignment from the head-office expeditiously. I toured Maharashtra lecturing on agriculture on the extra-mural platforms of the Pune University. I was however instructed to submit my travelling and lodging bills not to the Pune University but to the Godavari Company. He considered this as an indirect contribution to the extra-mural council of the University.

In 1968 the agriculture of the Godavari Company was taken over by the State Agriculture Corporation. Its general manager once happened to visit the company's guest house. He said to me, 'why don't you join the government service?' The Company might have decided to continue you in the service but...

In August 1968, I accepted the appointment in the State Agriculture Corporation as a senior estate manager. However differences of opinion between me and the general manager over some matters made me quit the service. I met Shetji and explained to him all the matters. He listened to me patiently and said, "O.K. Our doors are open to you all the time. You may go to Sakarwadi and start working." Karamshibhai as he loved his agriculture, also cherished the same love for his officials also.



Narration of Experiences by Farmers

प्रजानां विनयाधानाद्रक्षणादभरणादपि।
क्ष पिता पितरस्ताक्षं केवलं जन्महेतवः॥

*That king becomes the real father of his subjects who
provides instruction, protection and nourishment
to his subjects not the parents who give birth.
They are only for the sake of name.*

Narration of Experiences by Farmers

The narration of experiences by the agricultural officers attached to the Sugar Factory is informative and instructive; likewise the experiences of the farmers around the area throw light on many aspects of sugarcane cultivation and the sugar factory. These farmers are not necessarily connected with Karamshibhai's farms or factory. They are independent.

Mr. Bansilal Rupchand Sacheti was one such farmer. He tells his experiences as a farmer in the following words.

"I came in contact with Sheth Karamshibhai around 1960-1965. There was no sugar factory in Vaijapur at that time. I had to go to Sakarwadi factory to supply sugarcane. The general manager of the factory at that time was Mr. Huja and the manager was Mr. Khurjekar. I met them and told them that I would like to supply sugarcane to the factory. In fact they were not in need of sugarcane, the raw material for the factory at that time. They told me that way. I said, 'I would offer about ten to twelve thousand tons of sugarcane from the region. The Managers contacted the Mumbai office and after the approval of the high authorities in Mumbai they began receiving the sugarcane after the necessary written agreement.

I managed to supply about two thousand tons of sugarcane within five to six days to the factory. The bulk of the sugarcane was brought to Sakarwadi by the route nearer to Vaijapur. Mr. Huja, the General Manager, called me to his office and said, 'you have made an agreement with us to supply

sugarcane. However, the supply does not come via Kopargaon but by a nearer route. You have therefore cheated us regarding transportation as the route followed by you is profitable for you whereas we have to pay Rs. 7/- to Rs. 8/- more for the same. The matter was then referred to the Shetji by Mr. G. D. Patel.

Sheth Karamshibhai after receiving all the quantity of sugarcane as agreed sent for me. Mr. Huja was also present at that time. Shetji said, 'He (Bansilal Sacheti) has supplied us about ten to twelve thousand tons of sugarcane by the nearest route, so pay him the full amount of the bills, in addition to that pay him an amount of Rs. 10,000/- by way of his commission.'

"Thereafter the relationship between us began to grow closer. At that time I was not well-versed with agriculture commercially. My father had died but I could receive fatherly guidance from Sheth Karamshibhai. I constantly received help from Shetji in the form of capital for extensive plantation, expert guidance regarding sugarcane production and related matters.

The quantity of sugarcane supply from Vajapur at that time was around ten to fifteen thousand tons only. Shetji offered loans to the farmers to the extent of Rs. 1000/- to 1,500/- per acre for improving the yield. This measure stimulated the required improvement in agriculture. Shetji distributed an amount of Rs. 15/- to Rs. 20/- lakhs by way of crop-loans. He also extended financial assistance for sinking wells and installing machines for pumping out water etc. As a result of this reforming activity the supply of sugarcane to the factory rose to sixty to seventy thousand tons of sugarcane. The rise of co-operative sugar factories in Kopargaon Tehsil, I think had left no options for him than to rely on Vajapur.

"I am an adopted son. After adoption I came to possess land to the extent of ten to twelve thousand acres of land. The Land Ceiling Act was about to be enforced. I consulted Shetji about what was to be done about the land. I acted on his advice and was amply benefited. It was because of the know-how and guidance provided by the Godavari Sugar Mills that I could harvest a crop of 104 tons per acre when the average production of sugarcane was about 65 tons per acre.

Karamshibhai used to call us the farmers and take into consideration the opinion of the farmers while determining the price of the sugarcane. The

farmers used to tell him that he will have to pay the rate set by the co-operative sugar factory. It should be a little more than that or at least equal to that so that he could get the supply from the region. The rate per ton was then fixed after discussion. His calculations were more or less comparable to our calculations but he consulted us before taking any final decision in the matter.

He used to say that the progress of the farmers depends on the progress of the sugar factory likewise the progress of the factory depends on the progress of the production in the agricultural fields. He was keen to obtain fresh sugarcane. He used to reprimand the officers in case stale sugarcane was received. He attached greater importance to the freshness of sugarcane than to the number of tons of sugarcane crushed.

Shetji loved agriculture very much. I have seen him fondling plants. He used to say, "I wish to know the difficulties of plants and trees and understand them. The trees talk to me. They tell whether the water and food supply is unsatisfactory. So one should always be in touch with agriculture. If you have never gone to the fields how can you know it?" He saw to it that the actual cultivators should prosper along with the agriculture. He used to plant new varieties of sugarcane. He only had supplied us the 740 variety of sugarcane.

"I planted grapes some four years ago. At that time in 1981, Karamshibhai Shetji came to Vaijapur. He spent about two to two and a half hours reviewing my grape orchard. He closely looked at the trees. He spoke to the workers. He inquired, "How long are you working here? What amenities do you get?" He got information on such matters as relating to their work and condition of work.

The Godavari Company gave financial assistance to the farmers but if some such recipient of assistance failed to supply sugarcane he was liable to be sued but Shetji was averse to going to that extreme. He used to direct his men to inquire the reasons for failing of supply of sugarcane and help him to stand up again on his feet and see that he was able to supply us sugarcane again.

Shetji used to tell me to speak to him in Marwari language in which he was proficient and it was my mother-tongue. However by the force of habit, I used to converse with him in Marathi.

I belong to the Shwetamber Jain sect (white clothed Jain). Whenever our high priest arrived in Shrirampur Shetji used to call on him. Once I asked him, "How do you meet our Jain Swami?" Shetji replied, "Well! He is a preceptor, a spiritual guide. We receive blessings from such great men. This is what we gain. Do we lose anything in that?" Such are the things we remember about his greatness!

Mr. Bacchubhai Doshi is another such farmer and a contractor. Bachhubhai was from Kathiawar and Karamshibhai was from Kutch in Gujarat. Karamshibhai was familiar with the father of Bachhubhai. In the beginning Bachhubhai was engaged in the business as irrigation contractor. He worked in Kopargaon in Ahmednagar district and in the district of Nasik. During that period the work of setting up sugar factory at Kopargaon was in progress. The father of Bachhubhai introduced his son to Sheth Karamshibhai. As a result of that Bachhubhai took up a minor irrigation work. In 1952 Bachhubhai took a tenancy of a land at Belapur in that region. He asked Karamshibhai, "What should I do with this land?" Karamshibhai told him, 'Grow sugarcane and supply it to the factory.' Bachhubhai spoke, "Well sir, I do not have that much money." Karamshibhai assured him, 'we shall make the necessary arrangements.' Thus from 1952 onwards the supply of sugarcane to Karamshibhai's factory continued till the end.

In 1960 Karamshibhai talked to Bachhubhai in this way, 'Look! You are supplying your sugarcane to our factory. Please see that other farmers also do the same thing. Bachhubhai suggested that Karamshibhai should appoint commission agents for the work. Karamshibhai liked the idea very much. Among the several agents appointed by Karamshibhai, Bachhubhai was one of them. Bachhubhai continued to arrange supplies for Godavari Sugar Factory from 1960 to 1969.

Bachhubhai had met with an accident. Karamshibhai bore all his hospital charges when he was kept at Shrirampur for seven months and at Pune for four months in hospitals. Karamshibhai's company had defrayed all the clinical as well as the medicinal expenses.

One horticulturist Mr. Prabhakar Gujarati, had grown sugarcane in a four acre land. He had received financial assistance for purchasing land and cultivating sugarcane in it by Karamshibhai's company. He had entered into an agreement with the company for four years. After termination of the four year agreement Mr. Gujarati wanted to renew the agreement but the

manager of the company Mr. Anjaria declined to renew the agreement. The matter was referred to Karamshibhai. He advised to take up the matter with Shantilalji who was now looking after the managerial work with interest. Shantilalji spoke to Mr. Anjaria and Gujarati's difficulties were removed and the agreement was renewed.

Many farmers and other people who came into contact with Karamshibhai, speak about the events and memories relating to Karamshibhai's love of agriculture and his adroitness in cultivation. If you look at the academic aspect only, Karamshibhai never took an agricultural degree from any university or institution. He turned to agriculture by the force of inner tendency towards agriculture. As by nature and occupation he was a trader and merchant. He used his commercial talent and the spirit of taking risk in agricultural matters. He boldly undertook experiments in farming and production of sugarcane, taking the advantage of progress in sciences and technology. He thus learnt much by experience.

He turned the once arid, parched, abandoned and drought hit land into blooming green fields of sugarcane spread over several thousand acres of land like a paradise. Under his stewardship the world records for sugarcane production were broken and the treasure in the form of technical experience that he possessed was distributed to the neighbouring horticulturists and the agriculturists as a free gift. He was thus instrumental in enriching their fields.

It is Karamshibhai who inspired the movement of Co-operative Sugar factories in the nearby areas since 1950. They followed his example and the sugarcane cultivation in their fields began to grow and blossom. Even today the highly respected leaders of the co-operative movement are known to be saying, "It is Karamshibhai who has taught the cultivation of sugarcane not only to us but to the whole of Ahmednagar district. Karamshibhai is our mentor (Guru) in the cultivation of sugarcane."

Karamshibhai cherishes intense love for agriculture and agriculturists. He loves to be called a farmer and agriculturist. Among the many sided aspects of his personality, the aspect of a farmer precedes the rest.



The Recollections of the Officers of the Sugar Factory

व्यतिषजति पदार्थानान्तरः कोऽपि हेतुर्न
बलु अहिकपाधीन्प्रीतयः संश्रयन्ते ।
विक्रमति हि पतङ्गव्योदये पुण्डरीकं
द्रवति च हिमवश्मापुङ्गवे चन्द्रकान्तः ॥

*Some invisible inner cause unites two things.
Love does not depend upon external attributes.
Lotus blooms after sunrise and the moonstone begins
to trickle tenderly after moonrise.*

The Recollections of the Officers of the Sugar Factory

The disciplined vision of Karamshibhai had endowed the Godavari Sugar Factory with an excellent tradition. This tradition shaped the personality of some men. They learnt much here. Some of them recollect their experiences in the following way.

Mr. Kapilrai Harivallabh Parekh was the chief chemist at Sakarwadi. He recollects:

“I came from the States (U.S.A.) and went to Sakarwadi on the recommendations of Shobhachand Khatod (Shobha uncle). Mr. R.S. Kotak and Mr. G.D. Patel appointed me as the chief chemist in the factory. The factory had started functioning in 1939, since then upto 1944 I was in the service of the Godavari Factory. Thereafter I went to Haregaon.

Karamshibhai used to conduct the administration of the factory from the Godavari office in Mumbai. However he used to visit the Godavari factory at least two to three times in a month. He used to inspect every minor details of the factory. He used to personally examine the details of how many men were employed on the work and how necessary was their employment in the factory. He had already reviewed many factories with a view to increase the production of sugarcane and sugar. If he were convinced about any experiment he was ready to spend any amount to perform that experiment in the factory. He would offer to spend any amount. All his attention was focused on the objective of making great profits by adopting the modern scientific view coupled with the commercial approach in the whole work.

Karamshibhai paid close attention not only to agriculture and the factory but also to the well-being of the employees there. Gowardhanbhai Patel was his intimate friend and adviser. They were like real brothers. After the death of Gowardhanbhai he gave very kind treatment to the members of his family. Mr. M. C. Joshi was the Chief Engineer in the factory. He retired on superannuation. His children were young and to be educated and their marriages to be arranged in the course of time. He was therefore seeking employment so that he could meet the growing expenses of the family. Shetji came to know about it, he sent for him and appointed him a paid consultant to the Chief Engineer. After the death of Mr. Joshi, Shetji also gifted a substantial amount of money for the expenses of the wedding ceremonies of his children. 'I had gone to Haregaon on a job but Karamshibhai was showing all sorts of consideration to me and inquired about my well-being, when he met a member of my family.' Mr. Avinash Anant Zende joined the Godavari Sugar Mills as a manufacturing chemist in 1967. He narrates his experiences:

"Shetji was very particular about the quality and finish of the sugar production. He had a scientific sight and a fund of scientific knowledge. He used to study minutely the colour of the sugar, the grain of the sugar manufactured in the factory. He used to see whether the grain was thin or damaged. He used to carefully watch all the details so much so that he used to instruct how many stitches should be there for the bags of sugar ready for delivery. He actually used to verify whether there were fourteen stitches on the bag filled with sugar.

"I had gone to Cuba to attend The Eighteenth International Sugar Conference. The Conference is held every three years at different places. India was represented by twenty members. Among them we three were from Godavari factory namely Dr. Narsinh, Mr. Bhatia and myself from Sakarwadi. The programme for the conference consisted of general survey and discussion about modern sugar technology and reforms in agriculture.

Karamshibhai humorously used to remark, 'You Mr. Zende, you should fly the flag (Zenda) for sugar there!' He was keen to have the best technologists with him and he always tried to secure their services. Karamshibhai had a lion's share in the constitution of the Deccan Sugar Technologists Association. One cannot imagine what and what type of information he may demand. At times he would like to know the temperature

of the day-time. We were therefore kept on our toes on all points of possible information. We were watchful and alert all the time and had to keep our information upto date on wide-range of subjects. He is like a head of a family who holds the key for everything and the mainspring of all family activities. Even with an old machinery our factory runs well. When the factory had the capacity for crushing only 1050 tons we used to crush about 1300 tons. However we used to feel the shortage of sugarcane.

“I purchased a first class railway ticket for Shantilaji as needed by Karamshibhai. He jokingly observed, ‘Well! Once you sleep in the railway coach who cares whether it is first class or second class. All are the same.’ He possesses that simplicity.

Mr. Kantilal Chunilal Shah who worked as a storekeeper in the Godavari Sugar Mills said, ‘Originally I belonged to Mehasana district in Gujarat, when I joined service at Sakarwadi. Mr. A. T. Shah and Mr. G. D. Patel were the two trusted officers of Karamshibhai. Mr. A. T. Shah was my brother-in-law. He called me to the factory after consulting Mr. G. D. Patel and Karamshibhai. I was at that time at Bhavnagar. I had passed my matriculation examination and was working in the Agriculture Welfare Department of the government. The main work of the department was to provide water by sinking wells. The work used to continue for eight months a year.

“After joining service here Shetji kept me at Samvatsar. Then I was made an overseer and then a clerk! Later on I was appointed as a storekeeper at Sakarwadi. I served in the Godavari Company upto 1950, thereafter I served in other firms and by 1971 returned to the Godavari Company.

“Shetji on visiting the sugar factory used to ask me information about the stores in minute details. As I worked under his vigilant eye I was so completely trained that when I joined other factories, I did not encounter any difficulty in handling stores.

“Once I was very ill and there was some commotion in the Laxmiwadi stores. There were two clerks working there. They had committed some mistakes. Shetji came to know about it. He was much displeased. He called me and although I was in ill-health he took me to Laxmiwadi. He arranged for my medical treatment and accommodation there. He instructed the manager there to personally pay attention to my well-being there. He ordered the manager to dismiss the two clerks who had committed the mistakes. Shetji loved discipline. He treated his good workers with great kindness.

“Once he had given instructions to a clerk working at Sakarwadi, that while he was working in Laxmiwadi he should not return to Sakarwadi without completing the work and without his permission. However the clerk ignored his instructions. When Karamshibhai learnt about the breach of discipline he ordered the manager to dismiss the clerk by name Mr. Kale, forthwith. Mr. Kale, a young man who had married only recently would be in a quandary. I went to Shetji to plead on behalf of Mr. Kale. I explained to him the actual situation. Shetji firmly said, “Breach of discipline must be punished.” I pleaded for remission, as the punishment was too severe. He gave a patient hearing to my pleadings with him. He relented and pardoned him. He was reinstated in service. Such was his discipline and kindness. He respected truth and never tolerated falsehood.

Everything in the factory was kept in perfect order when the news of Shetji’s visit to the factory was made known to the employees. He commanded respect tinged with fear. Shetji never tolerated indiscipline. He would never tolerate bits of sugarcane falling around. He wanted to see everything clean and tidy.

A chief chemist of the sugar factory who had put in fourteen years of service Mr. P. P. Shah said, “I was the chief chemist in the factory owned by Nanji Kalidas Mehta in Uganda in East Africa. In 1939, I came to India. I met Mr. Trivedi from Dhulia on landing from the steamer. He was an oil-cake dealer. I used to live at Nandurbar. Mr. Trivedi inquired about my calling and the purpose of my visit. I told him that I was visiting my native town as I was on leave. Mr. Trivedi requested me not to go back to Africa as the war had broken out. I told him that very few people know me here. Mr. Trivedi gave me the information that shortly a new Sugar factory is going to be set up in Ahmednagar District. You better go and meet Shetji. I met Karamshibhai as directed by Mr. Trivedi. He offered me a chair and made inquires about me and my calling. After sometime Karamshibhai said, “Look you need not go overseas. You may take it for granted that I have appointed you in the factory. After that I joined at Sakarwadi as a deputy chief chemist. I was not given the appointment letter. Also nothing was said about my salary. It was a period of recession, the prices were low and falling. Mr. Athley was the general manager of the company at that time.

“Our first season passed on very successfully. We had crushed all the available sugarcane. Subsequently after two years Shetji started another sugar

factory at Laxmiwadi by transferring some of the machinery from the Belapur factory. Sakarwadi chief chemist Mr. Parekh was transferred to Laxmiwadi and I was appointed chief chemist at Sakarwadi.

I could learn so many things while working in Karamshibhai's factory. Among the owners under whom I worked so far I never came across such an owner. We used to discuss factory affairs freely. In case any person experienced any difficulty or problem and Shetji was apprised of it, he immediately helped him out of the difficulty. No body went back empty handed. Our relations with him during and even after the end of the service were affectionate.

So far the officers of the factory and farmers have narrated their experiences. It is now one Ramsingh Rameshwar Pawar nicknamed Dada, a worker in the factory, who speaks out his recollections of his experiences:

"I was only fifteen when I was taken as an assistant fitter in the Sakarwadi factory. I was in the service when the factory was under construction. Later on I was sent to Laxmiwadi. In the beginning the trade union here was led by Mr. Dhole and Mr. Humane. Later on Raosaheb Patwardhan started his new worker's union. Kishore Pawar, the leader of the workers was my younger brother. He was working in the Sakarwadi factory to start with but later on left the service as instructed by Raosaheb Patwardhan. He became a full-time Union Leader since then.

A sugar factory workers' conference was organized at Wari Village. Then we decided to hold a rally in the open space 'Gandhi Maidan' within the boundary of Godavari factory. The permission had to be sought from the manager of the factory or the owner Karamshibhai for holding public meetings there. The management of the factory would not grant permission for the rally as the relations between the management and the Worker's Union were strained at that time. The police had taken all security measures. The police prevented our entry into the 'Gandhi Maidan'.

The Union leader Kishore Pawar assured the management that the meeting would be peaceful and the union would be responsible for any damage or loss suffered by the factory. Karamshibhai allowed us to hold the meeting. Mr. Nanasaheb Gore addressed the rally. Karamshibhai then realized that this workers' union adopted a constructive attitude towards solving labour problems.

The sugar factory at Laxmiwadi in the beginning crushed 500 tons of sugarcane. Now the quantity is 1300 tons. The increase in the machinery and the improvement in the techniques and other matters resulted in the factory functioning well. In the course of time the relations between the workers union and the factory management improved. Shetji had held the view that a sincere worker must get his due and his rights. Our labour union also was keen to instil in the workers the sense of duty along with the demands for their rights. A constructive attitude of the workers and a sympathetic management produced a healthy climate of opinion. The labour problems therefore were being solved by discussion and mutual understandings.

“Shetji had planned to visit the U.S.A. So we went to Mumbai to call at his residence there. He humorously observed, “You have come to send me off!” He spoke to us as if to the members of his family. He treated us in the spirit of friendship and arranged for our breakfast. He inquired about everybody even Mrs. Sakarbai made inquiries with affection. The couple urged us to dine with them. We had also attended the wedding ceremony of his daughter. He behaves like the head of a family. We all regard him like a father.”

Karamshibhai in this way had greatly contributed to the prosperity of the nation by undertaking agro-industrial projects with imaginative intellect and hard work, made record production in both agriculture and industry. While pursuing these enterprises he discovered talented, hard working and expert men in the areas and brought about record production in agriculture and industry. At the same time he established very friendly and intimate relations with them. The magnetic power of his personality is such that once a person comes into his contact he continues to go to him even after his work is over, his service or trade with him comes to an end. Karamshibhai amicably continues his work relations. One hardly finds such cordial relations between master and servant, employer and employee!



The Godavari Sugar Mills Ltd.

डधमः आहभं धैर्यं बुद्धिः शक्तिः पराक्रमः।
षडेते यत्र वर्तन्ते तत्र देवः सहायकृत्॥

*God becomes favourable and helpful where hard work,
adventure, courage, intelligence, strength and
valour are united.*

The Godavari Sugar Mills Ltd.

Karamshibhai after deciding to set up his sugar factory on the soil of Wari near Kanhegaon railway station got on with his plan.

The withdrawal of partnership by Shobhachand Khatod had put him into financial difficulties. However he was saved from embarrassment by a chance happening. While narrating that event he said, "During that World War II, the economic order of the nation had been upset. Even great industrialists like Birla felt the financial crunch. Even in such circumstances I boldly accepted the financial challenge."

Mr. Amritlal Hargovindas from Ahmedabad was a great financier. He had financed both the sugar factories of Dahanukar in Ahmednagar district. He held the permanent agency of selling sugar from the Dahanukars. Besides that he held certain shares of the factories. Dahanukar wished to get rid of all these encumbrances for future dealings. He managed to spread a rumour that he was not keeping good health, he was ill. In view of the uncertainties of life he felt to be relieved of the debts and liabilities in the form of companies' shares and loans. On hearing this rumour Sheth Amritlal Hargovindas demanded his money back from Dahanukar.

Amritlal Sheth got back his money from Dahanukar. It was a very substantial amount. Amritlal was an astute financier and merchant. He did not like the idea that such a big amount of money should lie idle and that he should lose interest. He was therefore in search of a person who would accept it as a loan and pay the interest handsomely. I asked him about the

modalities. Amritlal Sheth offered the amount in the form of debentures. I never wanted it in that way. So I declined the offer. However I told him that I shall accept the amount by way of preference shares but not in equity shares of my company. Amritlal refused to accept these terms and the matter ended there.

“I remember at that time we were living in a bungalow on the first floor at Walkeshwar in Mumbai. I had gone to Pune for some work and returned to Mumbai in the evening. As I turned to climb the staircase I heard a telephone ring and also a bunch of letters delivered by the postman. Among the letters I could see a letter from Gowardhan Patel. As I skipped though the letter I came to know that he had negotiated with one Mr. Haridasbhai from Mumbai regarding finance. The letter related to the agreement proposed with Mr. Haridasbhai. He wanted me to meet him at the Dadar railway station for personal discussion. I rushed to Dadar station. Both Gowardhanbhai and Mr. Haridasbhai were waiting at the Dadar Station. We met, we talked but I did not mention the matter of finance. Both were puzzled. As the time of departure of the Ahmedabad train was approaching I told Gowardhanbhai, “Please tell him that I am ready to offer debentures of the company to Amritlal Sheth.” The train started moving and they headed towards Ahmedabad.

“Next day I received a telegram from Ahmedabad saying Mr. Amritlal is prepared to supply finance as proposed by me.” In fact Amritlal Sheth was anxious not to lose interest on the big amount.

“The same day I left for Ahmedabad and discussed matters regarding the loan amount. All the relevant points were written on a plain paper not a stamped paper.

“In the meanwhile the market was full of the news that the prices of sugar had gone up. We had a big stock of sugar. I had sugar from my own factories and also sugar supplies with me on commission basis. Immediately I returned to Mumbai. I took stock of the market sentiment. Then I went back to Ahmedabad. Amritlalji and myself signed the formal agreement with slight changes in the original plain paper. I received an amount of rupees seven lakh fifty thousand. I handed over the stipulated debentures after one and a half years. Amritlal greatly trusted me and hence he paid me such a big amount in advance.

"I consider it as a great divine favour that the money refunded by Dahanukar to Amritlal Shetji came in my possession."

"The arrangement of the capital was made, the machinery had already arrived. Only one part of a machine was lost on ship. The proto-type of the part I got it made from Richardson & Crudas Co.

"After mobilizing the necessary material a joint stock company, the Godavari Sugar Mills Ltd. by name was established on June 1, 1939. The managing agents of the Company were Messers K. J. Somaiya & Sons (Pvt.) Ltd."

"This company set up its first sugar factory at Sakarwadi (Dist. Ahmednagar) on the left bank of the river Godavari in 1940. The river Godavari enjoys a place of honour among the Indian rivers. In the hoary past epic hero Ram and his wife Sita had spent most of their self-imposed exile period at Panchavati near Nasik on the banks of river Godavari. In fact Nasik received the recognition as a holy pilgrim place by virtue of its nearness to the river Godavari. Nasik is counted among the chief holy places in India. Here on the banks of Godavari, Kumbhamela is held every 12th year as in Hardwar and Allahabad. People in this area call Godavari as 'Ganga' of the south. Karamshibhai therefore chose the name of the holy river Godavari for his sugar mills. This points to his religiousness.

"Karamshibhai named the factory after the river Godavari and the name of the place where the actual factory was set up was given as Sakarwadi, as Karamshibhai's wife's name is Sakarbai. The name Sakar reconciles with the word Sakhar meaning Sugar. Karamshibhai was aware of the role of Sakarbai, his wife in the making of his eventful life and had appreciated her indirect contribution to his industry. He gave expression to that delicate feeling by naming the place of the factory after her. The sugar factory at Sakarwadi had the capacity of crushing one thousand metric tons of sugarcane everyday.

"After starting the factory at Sakarwadi his company started another sugar factory near Savlivihir on the right bank of the river Godavari, some eight miles away from Sakarwadi. This project is known as Somaiya Sugar Factory at Laxmiwadi. Karamshibhai named the place as Laxmiwadi after his mother Laxmibai. This shows his love for his mother.

The reason for setting up another factory at Laxmiwadi in a period of

two years was in the logic of events. At that time the Belapur Company had offered its old machinery for sale as the Company wanted to install new machinery. Karamshibhai had acquired sufficient experience during the two years at Sakarwadi. He had gained much self confidence. He therefore wanted to buy the old machinery offered by the company at Belapur and start a new factory. The machinery offered for sale by the company was old but still workable.

“There was one more reason. It is more of a sentimental nature. He believed that his prosperity sprang up from commercial dealings with the Belapur Company. It was in the fitness of things that he should buy the machinery of the company which proved so beneficial to him and set up a new factory and develop it. He therefore purchased the machinery of the Belapur Company.

“In the initial stages some difficulty was experienced in running the factory as the machinery was old and overused. The worn out parts had to be replaced by new ones. However within the next two to three years the machinery was in good shape and the factory began to run smoothly. This plant had the capacity to crush 750 metric tons of sugarcane everyday.

Karamshibhai used to watch every bit of details while setting up of the factory, the construction work of the building and the fitting and installing of machinery very attentively at every stage of the work. He never tolerated disorder, carelessness or waste. He was keen to see everything in proper order, clean and neat and made with sensible economy.

He used to visit the factory once in eight to ten days. The Mumbai train used to reach Kanhegaon railway station at 4 o'clock in the morning. After getting down from the train, without taking any rest, he used to go straightaway to the factory on foot. Then he used to go round the factory area to inspect things for himself. While taking round in the factory if he found any nut, bolt or such trifles, he would pick it up and hand them over to the persons concerned with them. He used to warn them, “we have paid for these articles, they should be kept properly. You should pay attention to such things all the time.” On his round in the workshop, he used to visit every department and get first hand and complete information about big and small things and activities. He used to talk to the chief chemist, chief engineer, storekeeper, manager, agricultural officer, and all others in authority. He used to collect information, ask them about their difficulties and problems

and used to think out the plans to mitigate or remove them. He was very fond of discipline.

Once he came to Kanhegaon from Mumbai and went to the factory. The watchman stopped him at the gate. Karamshibhai asked him, "Do you not know me?" the watchman replied, "No, I do not know you and according to the discipline here you will not be allowed inside."

Karamshibhai then went to the guesthouse instead of the factory. He contacted the manager at that time, Mr. Khurjekar on telephone and told him, "Pay rupees twenty five to the watchman at the gate. We need such disciplined persons."

The respective laboratories at the Sakarwadi and Laxmiwadi factories carried on various experiments. The main emphasis was on cultivation, sugarcane production, sugar production and such related matters from the point of view of safeguarding the interest of the factories. These in fact were the centres for maintaining a high-quality production of sugarcane and sugar.

The sugar mills had a twenty-one mile long trolley line of its own (about 34 km long). Besides this the factory was equipped with 160 cane tracks, six diesel engines and three steam engines.

The A, B, C and D quality fine grain sugar was produced from both the factories at Sakarwadi and Laxmiwadi. The colour of the sugar was better than 29 ISS. Subsequently sugar was produced of 30 ISS quality.

The growth of both the factories depended on Godavari sugar farm. The production of quality sugar from the factories depended on the high quality sugarcane production. Karamshibhai had realized that high quality sugar is not produced in the factory but in the sugarcane field. So an extraordinary importance was given to the cultivation of sugarcane in the fields of Godavari Sugar Mills.

The bagasse which remains after crushing the sugarcane, is disposed off as a by-product after the production of sugar. Godavari Factory started manufacturing at its distillery at Sakarwadi the rectified spirit in 1947. It had the capacity to manufacture 1500 gallons of rectified spirit per day. Later on in 1962 a plant was set up at Sakarwadi near the factory to produce acetic acid. These were manufactured as by-products from the bagasse or the molasses.



The Sky Invaded by Clouds

छिन्नोऽपि बोहति तक्रः क्षीणोऽप्युपचीयते पुनश्चन्द्रः।
इति विमृशन्तः श्रन्तः श्रन्तप्यन्ते न ते विपदः॥

*A slashed tree grows again the emaciated moon regains its
form and shape again considering this, great men are not
embarrassed when surrounded by tragedies.*

The Sky Invaded by Clouds

The record production of Godavari Sugar cane and Sugar was being acclaimed not in our nation but in foreign countries also. 120 tons per acre sugarcane producing fields of Godavari factory were not merely a gift of nature nor its magic. It was the saga of human capability and valour. It was a sweet fruit produced by the combination of three factors namely scientific approach, sustained hard work and progressive industrial policy. The Godavari factory by adopting scientific methods and techniques of sugarcane production had broken the record established by the Hawaii Islands in this field of sugarcane production. Starting with a mere 600 tons per day sugarcane crushing, the Godavari Sugar Mills in a period of twenty-five years gradually rose to the level of crushing 1350 tons of sugarcane per day. A high quality pure white fine grained sugar means Godavari sugar, was the equation firmly planted in the public mind in our country. The Godavari Company had established a record of crushing 1500 metric tons of sugarcane in a day with the help of fifteen sugarcane mills of 24" x 48" size.

Following in the footsteps of Sakarwadi factory Godavari Sugar Mills started another sugar factory of Laxmiwadi in 1942. In this factory also the capacity was raised from 900 tons per day to 1700 tons per day by stages. The Laxmiwadi D-30 sugar was awarded first place on All-India basis. Even in the export field Laxmiwadi sugar had always attained the premier position. The quality of its raw sugar was of first grade position. In this way this sugar factory had also achieved brilliant success. It was the period of

Karamshibhai's spectacular success founded on hard work and extra-ordinary abilities during the twenty-five years. It was a period of great prosperity. The clear sky of accomplishments was signaling progress, was inviting advancement.

However the evil eye spoiled everything. The clear sky was enveloped by dark gathering clouds. It was a spell of ill-fate.

The Government of Maharashtra in 1965-66 brought a land-ceiling bill in the State Assembly. This bill prohibited the holding of agricultural land beyond the specified acres limit. The surplus land beyond the specified limits was to be taken away from the landlords and was to be given to those who did not possess any cultivable land and wanted to cultivate the land thus given by the state. Mr. Yashwantrao Chavan was the then Chief Minister and in defence of the Bill he said, "We are going to rock the cradle of socialism by nationalisation of agricultural land in this way." Mr. Yashwantrao Chavan had energetically defended this theoretical point of view in his lecturing tour of Maharashtra. The Bill was piloted by Mr. Vasantrao Naik who was the Revenue Minister of that time. Subsequently he became the Chief Minister of Maharashtra.

There was not much difficulty in the re-arrangement or re-distribution of land in the case of farmers who themselves cultivated their lands. The sovereign government of India and the different power centres were commanded by the Congress Party which had adopted the policy of socialist reconstruction of social order in principle.

This however posed a great problem in the implementation of the policy in Maharashtra. The problem was that of large areas of land were being held by private sugar factories. The private sugar factories had thousands of acres of land under sugarcane cultivation. Out of the eight or nine sugar factories in the whole of Maharashtra, Ahmednagar district alone possessed six factories. The Godavari Sugar Mills Ltd. owned 15,000 acres of land thriving with sugarcane cultivation.

The impending land-law created the big question of what to do with such an extensive land. The then Chief Minister had firmly stated that the surplus lands possessed by the private sugar factories will be legally acquired by the government just as the surplus land with any farmer shall be liable to be forfeited to the government. How can the government then allow the

private sugar factories to retain the lands? All are equal before law therefore these surplus lands with the sugar factories have to be nationalised.

Mr. Yashwantrao Chavan had called the senior workers' leaders like Mr. Gangadhar Ogale and Mr. Kishore Pawar from Ahmednagar district and explained to them the situation and appealed to them for a wholehearted support.

In 1964 Kopergaon Taluka Education Society had started an Arts and Commerce College. The college grew rapidly and began to feel the need of its own building very intensely. Then Karamshibhai and his son Shantilalji Somaiya donated funds. The foundation ceremony of the college building was inaugurated by Mr. Yashwantrao Chavan on auspicious day of "Ganesh Chaturthi" on 7th September 1967 in the presence of Karamshibhai and Shantilalji. An announcement was made that the college will be known as K. J. Somaiya College of Arts and Commerce.

Speaking on the occasion of inauguration of the college building Mr. Chavan said, "I wish to congratulate Mr. Karamshibhai Somaiya. He takes great interest in the matters of education. People know him as an industrialist. I do not know him as an owner of factories, but I know him as the most religious minded person. The information that he has gathered by trekking on foot the Himalayan region, very few people in India possess it. I therefore went to meet Karamshibhai when I assumed the portfolio of Defence Minister of the Union Government. I am really delighted to find an industrialist with right predilections and impulses among us here.

This was the time when The Land Ceiling Act was due to be implemented. A lot of discussion about it was going on in full swing. Mr. Chavan had also visited the Godavari Sugar Mills. Mr. Chavan at that time had profusely praised Karamshibhai for his industriousness and especially his commendable progress in sugarcane cultivation. It was definite that surplus lands now flourishing with sugarcane were to be taken away from the owners but the question was after dispossessing the farmers of sugarcane lands, would the sugarcane production be maintained at that level? Even Mr. Chavan might have sensed the danger. He had therefore in some ambiguous manner remarked, "we are not only going to nationalise the surplus lands of Karamshibhai but we are going to nationalise his expertise in the sugarcane cultivation."

Karamshibhai with a great foresight had severely opposed the nationalisation of lands that the government had undertaken according to the maximum limit of landholding by individual farmers and institutions at that time. The surplus lands acquired from big farmers were to be handed over to State Farming Corporations. Karamshibhai visualized a huge loss in the production of sugarcane and consequently a huge loss to the government. The loss in the production of sugarcane meant loss in the production of sugar. The government would sustain a big loss and the whole nation would have to suffer because of shortfall in production.

The slogan loving leaders of socialism did not foresee the implications of the take-over of surplus lands in this way but level-headed practical men like Karamshibhai who were involved in the agricultural matters had realized the danger. Those who despised them as 'selfish', 'capitalists' and 'exploiters' called themselves as progressive, little realizing the national loss by such measures. Karamshibhai was a true nationalist. He had participated in the national 'Freedom Movement'. Now he was determined to fight against Government's misconceived measures in the constitutional manner by going to the Supreme Court if necessary. Actually he took the issue to the Supreme Court. He lost his case in the Supreme Court but the economic loss to the nation could not be avoided.

The lands seized as surplus lands by the Government from private industrialists were transferred to a State Farming Corporation. This body had to manage the agricultural affairs of the state. The high-ranking officers, motor-cars, tractors and costly agricultural equipments displayed much activity outwardly but the spirit of purposeful utilization and performance was lacking unfortunately; in all government machinery the real urge to perform is lacking.

The human tendency or nature needs to satisfy the feeling of possessions something which the man can call his own. This acts as an incentive to perform as the man expects enjoyment of fruits of his action as desired by him. Where this incentive is absent, man is reduced to the position of a screw in the big machinery. He is in no way concerned with the profit or loss in the performance. He knows that if there is profit, Government gets it; if there is loss, Government suffers it. I shall get my fixed salary. Men develop aloofness or indifference to the work in hand in the absence of personal interest and incentive springing from inside.

The great upheaval of disintegration of the Communist regime in Soviet Russia points to the same conclusion. The Communist regime after the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia (1917) seized thousands of acres of lands from the people in the name of nationalisation. The regime set up big farms consisting of several acres. Only small pieces of lands were allowed to be retained by private farmers. After the experiment of community farming it was found that the tiny lands held by private owners could produce more in comparison with the community farming. The absence of self-interest and the urge to cultivate the land for his own good, made the difference.

The same thing happened in the case of state farming in Maharashtra. A farmer from this region Mr. Bhausahab Teke said, "When the cultivation of our lands was in the hands of Godavari Company the work used to commence at six or half past six in the morning but after the take-over, the Government farm officers arrive at the field at ten or half-past ten or even after that in the morning. What work could they do? What production could they give?

Another farmer, Mr. Shankar Dagdu Veer, said, "When our lands were transferred to the 'State Farming Corporation' we were distressed. We regarded the Godavari Company our mother, had married us to some other person and sent us to that husband's home. During the company's management, everything was well, the sugarcane production was satisfactory. Now everything has been spoiled. The sugarcane cultivation of the factory passed over to the State Corporation in 1968. The per acre tonnage of sugarcane was becoming progressively less than our production.

The average production of sugarcane per acre was now 40 to 42 tons by the State Farming Corporation whereas the production by Godavari Company was on an average 68 tons of the three varieties of sugarcane, namely 'Khodwa', 'Suru' and 'Aadsali'. In 1963, Mr. Patel was the Chief of Ramwadi, Dasharthwadi and Hanumanwadi. The average production of the three varieties of sugarcane in 1967 was 68 tons when Mr. Patel and Mr. Chougule were the agricultural officers.

The workers and the officers must have personal attachment to agriculture. The agricultural production does not become satisfactory only on turning files when orders from above are received. It is negligence that produces evil effects like this. The Government and the nation suffer because

of this.

We believe that the lands are owned by the farmers and the State Farm Corporation holds it on rent. Now I happen to read in the papers the land-rent by the Government is paid, supposing it to be the price of the lands. It means now the Government that is the State Farming Corporation becomes the owner of the lands. This is the claim of the Government. The State Farming Corporation holds my thirteen acre land and I used to give 390/- as land-rent. Considering the amount received by me so far I mean the Corporation has purchased my twelve-acre land only for 12,000/-

The Government had not given us a clear idea of the transaction and people shall agitate against this. The original owners of the lands are bound to feel attached to their lands. My father or grand-father or great grandfather might have purchased the land and cultivated it and my son might cultivate it and make his living on it. This very concept is now destroyed. The factory owners were better than the Corporation. They used to pay regularly. There were no complaints about it.

"The farmers suffer loss and at the same time due to short production of sugarcane, the factories do not receive sufficient supplies. The nation also suffers because of this. I feel that the co-operative field does not deserve any thought. I have witnessed the administration of the co-operative societies in the town for the past two or three years and the politics in the co-operative field has kept me away from it.

"The officers of the co-operative societies and the elected representatives are obsessed with the belief that the affairs of the societies should be carried out only according to their objectives. A person approaching the co-operative society is evidently treated as a needy person who has to accept what they tell him. I do not subscribe to this style of functioning. I therefore remain aloof from the societies. Therefore I am not a member of any co-operative bank and not a member of any co-operative society. I guess the production of sugarcane in the co-operative cultivation is diminishing. The reason for this is that the co-operative sugar factories while determining the price of sugarcane consider the amount of profit for the co-operative sugar factory. As a result of this higher prices are paid for the sugarcane irrespective of the quality of the sugarcane. Consequently the quality of the sugarcane from the farmer members of the society has deteriorated. The farmer-members

assured of the fixed rate so he neglects quality. This affects the tonnage. It has fallen from 70 tons per acre to 35 to 40 tons per acre.

- The attention of the farmers instead of being focused on agriculture is diverted to political activities. This has contributed much to the neglect of agriculture. The Godavari Sugarcane fields used to produce 65 to 70 tons of sugarcane per acre and now after the nationalization and politicizing of the co-operative societies, the production has slumped to 12 to 13 tons per acre causing a huge loss.

In this way by nationalization of land the cradle of socialism did not rock but resulted in the destruction of national wealth on a large scale and a great loss to the nation.

After a bitter experience of twenty to twenty-five years the slogan shouting ardent socialist leaders now openly admit that it was a great blunder to have taken away lands from private factories and given them to the State Farming Corporation. We have learnt a lesson that Government should not dabble in the business of agriculture.

The government had not stopped at the nationalisation of lands but had also adopted a policy that caused great loss to agriculture in sugarcane and the sugar trade in general.

The first co-operative sugar factory was set up at the end of 1950 at Pravaranagar near Sakarwadi in Srirampur Tehsil of Ahmednagar district. The internationally known eminent economist Dr. Dhananjayrao Gadgil and then Minister for Co-operation in the Nehru Ministry and a pure Gandhian leader of high integrity, Mr. Vaikuntabhai Mehta, had extended their support for setting up this co-operative sugar factory. A high-profile farmer from Loni, Mr. Vithalrao Vikhe-Patil, with his colleagues had set up this Pravara Sugar Factory under the directions of Dr. Gadgil and Mr. Mehta with great efforts.

Karamshibhai had welcomed the establishment of a co-operative enterprise. He had extended the necessary guidance and advice on sugarcane cultivation. At this time in fact a rumour was making rounds that Karamshibhai had opposed the co-operative movement. It was a blatant lie. This rumour was spread by someone styling himself a progressive person bent upon deliberately maligning capitalism.

The setting up of the first co-operative sugar factory at Pravara inspired the political leaders in Maharashtra to start co-operative sugar factories in their respective regions and such co-operative sugar factories started in Sangli, Kolhapur, Satara and other places. Even in Ahmednagar district in Kopargaon Tehsil itself, close to Sakarwadi and Laxmiwadi, two co-operative sugar factories were started by two Congress leaders. This created a great need for the raw material, sugarcane, for the manufacture of sugar.

The setting up of Pravara and other co-operative sugar factories in Ahmednagar, Sangli, Kolhapur and Satara Districts evoked great enthusiasm for such ventures. The government policy of granting licenses to such co-operative enterprises was bent to please political leaders. The local leaders in towns, tehsils and districts wanted to start co-operative sugar factories in their areas for political advancement and stability. The mounting demand for licenses created a great pressure on the authorities. The licenses were granted for such co-operative bodies irrespective of the possible availability of raw material that is the sugarcane in the area. The irrational granting of licenses was obviously prompted by the ambitions of the leaders to corner all the votes in the region for their political party only. The evil of bloc voting vitiated the whole atmosphere. Many co-operative sugar factories sprang up to serve political purpose rather than sugar production.

The mushroom growth of sugar factories however could not increase the land under sugarcane cultivation. It was not to increase and the sugarcane production also was not to increase. As a consequence, the high principle of co-operation was trampled under the feet and competition took an ugly turn. They began to raid each other's fields and sweep away sugarcanes. Some of the factories could not run because of inadequate supply and many were reported sick. The unhealthy state of affairs resulted in misappropriation of funds and illegitimate gains. The co-operative sugar factories became strongholds of power politics.

Instead of marching from co-operation to socialism it gave rise to new feudalism. It was a great tragedy that the cradle of socialism did not rock here also.

The Godavari Sugar Mills could not escape the scorching heat of these political developments. The two factories at Sakarwadi and Laxmiwadi were deprived of sufficient supply of sugarcane due to the loss of lands and the sweeping raids on the sugarcane fields. Some of the so-called wizards of

co-operative movement conspired to prevent sugarcane supply to Karamshibhai's factories.

An influential co-operative supporter said, "We regard Karamshibhai as our mentor as he taught us cultivation of sugarcane on proper lines but as we need the sugarcane from his fields; he is our foe. This had created the question of our very existence. If we were not to get his sugarcane, we would be utterly devastated. We were therefore left with no alternative but to block him from all sides and destroy him. This was our justification for what we did."

Karamshibhai had to wind up both of his factories. Karamshibhai and his son, Shantilalji, perceived the changing trends of the time and with a heavy heart decided to close down the two factories.

Both the father and son had to witness the downfall of the creative experiments and endeavours with which they had built the towering success and prosperity. One can hardly imagine their anguish and mental torture.



Reminiscences of His Sugar Business

वल्देशः फलेन हि पुनर्नयतां विद्यते।

*The realization of fruit for one's labour lends a new form
to them, i.e., the labours vanish.*

Reminiscences of His Sugar Business

After deliberations with Ramdhanjibhai Khatod, Karamshibhai Somaiya accepted partnership with him. Mr. Khatod was engaged in many kinds of business but Karamshibhai confined his partnership with Khatod only to sugar selling business. On finalizing the terms of partnership Karamshibhai left for Mumbai the same day for purchasing sugar. He believed in the maxim 'earliest is the best' for beginning a work.

Karamshibhai started his sugar factories few years after his sugar selling business which is already referred to above. Even after being busy with sugar production in his factories, he continued with his sugar selling business not only in Maharashtra but also in Madhya-Pradesh, Andhra-Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujarat and other areas. He was regarded as one of the leading sugar merchants in these regions. He was bringing into the market the sugar produced in his factories as well as the sugar obtained from others, from the beginning through agencies of other sugar factories. He was a prominent merchant in the sugar selling business. He was in fact a decisive voice in determining the prices of sugar on day-to-day basis. The big sugar merchants used to focus their attention on the fixation of rates of sugar. He was nicknamed 'Sugar King' on account of his prestigious status in the sugar market.

The leading sugar merchants from Maharashtra Mr. Walchand Hirachand Doshi, Mr. Dadasaheb Dahanukar along with Karamshibhai mooted the idea of giving a systematic organized form for the sugar business in Maharashtra. Thus was established the 'Deccan Sugar Technologists Association'. Karamshibhai had graced the presidentship of this when his

turn came by rotation. Subsequently his son, Dr. Shantilalji, also had presided over the Association. The father and the son from the Somaiya family had the privilege to be Presidents of the foremost institution of sugar business in Maharashtra.

In this way Karamshibhai was engaged in sugar business for a very long time. The memories relating to the sugar business are still lingering in his mind even today. Some of his reminiscences are given below:

He reminisces the developments on the first day. He says, 'After setting about the partnership with Khatod, I left for Mumbai from Belapur. I carried on the business of buying and selling sugar and returned to my home in Belapur after about two and a half months. The distance between the Belapur railway station from my home was about 3 miles (5 km). The hack victoria service was available. So I had informed one of the men about my arrival at night. The victoria-man did not turn up; either he was dozing somewhere after a drink or might have taken some other passenger. I decided to walk down the distance as no other victoria or transport was available at or near the station.

I had to foot out my way through the darkness of the night alone. As I proceeded on my way a dog from the nearby field came towards me barking fiercely. I was frightened but did not run. I stood still. I knew that a barking dog would not bite if one does not run away in panic. The dog's barking slowed down and I resumed trekking my way home.

This is the story of the third year of my business. The brown coloured sugar from the Rawalgaon sugar factory had piled up as it could not be sold. When I came to know about it I straightaway went to Mr. Walchand Hirachand and bought it all. The margin of profit in the sale was negligible but my self-confidence in commerce was awakened. Secondly, I began to get sugar from other quarters for sale. I got a firm footing and it helped to expand my business.

"We were buying sugar from Messers Dahanukar and Walchand by verbal contract. We had secured permanent agencies from them. However when the sugar factories were permitted to sell their own sugar, they took advantage and began selling it.

"We used to buy sugar from our suppliers in spite of the obvious deterioration in the quality of production. We honoured our commitments

and kept our word. As it was generally known that we remained true to our plighted word we began getting supplies for sale from more producers. The Phaltan Sugar Factory supplied us their No. 2 grade sugar at a margin of Re. 1/- per bag. That sugar was not saleable in the market but without a murmur we accepted it and sold it. He was very much pleased with us and in the next month he supplied us his sugar at the reduced rates. The loss suffered in the previous deal could be easily made up. The pragmatic approach to business enabled us to win the confidence of the sugar factories.

When the price control on sugar was lifted we purchased sugar from the Krishna Sugar Factory at the rate of Rs. 460/- per bag. We were going to sell it at Rs. 465/- per bag. The prices of sugar suddenly slumped and a bag of sugar could be had only at Rs. 335/- which meant that we had to suffer a loss of Rs. 125/- per bag. Many of the dealers told me not to pay the deposit with them, but I persisted in honouring my commitments and took a firm stand on the issue. We had to suffer a loss of rupees fifteen lakhs in that month.

“We were meticulously keeping our word which generated a sense of reliance and confidence in us, in the business world. Our reputation had spread far and wide. We therefore received an offer of eight thousand sugar bags in the next month only from Pyari & Co., Madras (Tamilnadu). We accepted the offer. Only the next day they offered us seventeen thousand bags at a reduced rate. In the same month we purchased the entire production of sugar for a month from Mr. Vasantdada's Sangli Factory, Mr. Mohite-Patil's Krishna Factory and the Kolhapur Sugar Factory. By the Grace of God, the sugar prices shot up and we could make a profit of Rupees Eighty lakhs (eight millions). If we had gone back on our word when we suffered loss we could not have secured the opportunity to buy such a big stock. The commercial policy that I followed all these days enabled me to gain a high place in the estimation of the merchant community and prestige in the market. Nobody taught me how to conduct business but some invisible power was behind me and was guiding my actions.

Uttar Pradesh was regarded as the province of sugar production before the rise of sugar factories in Maharashtra. Sugarcane was grown on large scale in the Uttar Pradesh. So private sugar factories were coming up there. This episode relates to that period.

The sugar season in U. P. was yet to begin and some new sugar factories

were about to start functioning. In view of this situation Karamshibhai decided not to rush for purchasing sugar for a month or so. But the Belapur sugar factory impatiently sold off its sugar to a big merchant, Palanji. Karamshibhai propagated his opinion that the sugar prices are expected to fall and if we buy sugar at the current rates we are bound to suffer a big loss. The prices of sugar began to fall for three successive days in April. His rivals in the market could hardly make any change as Karamshibhai's name and directions ruled the market. Those merchants who used to go to Mumbai for purchasing sugar were advised by Karamshibhai that high quality sugar at lower rate would be shortly available. So make no haste.

In this way Karamshibhai held up the market for twenty days. Belapur Sugar Factory could hardly sell a hundred bags of sugar with difficulty during this period. The Belapur producer went to Karamshibhai. He received a telegram 'Delivery is pure pay the full amount.' We are selling all the sugar to Arpit Ltd. Belapur. We accepted the transaction. They were satisfied. In this way some of the rivals of Karamshibhai in this field were eliminated.

In business at times one has to adopt the approach of conflict. Karamshibhai speaks about one such instance:

"I had to enter into a first conflict at the close of the sugar season regarding the balance of sugar remaining with the sugar factories. I cautioned the purchaser to wait for fifteen days and purchase new sugar when the sugar season begins after this period. The old sugar at the end of the season develops defects such as formation of balls etc. and the quality suffers. As a result of my propaganda some merchants approached me for purchasing sugar. A few merchants could not effect sales. Incensed by this some of them went to my partner, Mr. Khatod, and complained that they were sustaining loss on account of the propaganda by Karamshibhai. My partner never interfered in my transactions. He told them politely, 'This is Karamshibhai's business!'

Karamshibhai enlightened us on how he could win 'good-will' in the market. I had decided a 'modus operandi' in the determination of rates of sugar for which demand was placed in a sequence. Whenever I toured a region for selling sugar, I used to note down the demands of the prominent merchants there. Similarly, I used to note down the demands in other regions after that. In case I had to reduce the rate due to some reason to the latter merchants, I used to contact the former merchants and note down their

previous demands at the new reduced rates. This type of transparency in business practices was praised by all.

Karamshibhai achieved great reputation in sugar business. But in the initial period he had to labour hard and go through a harrowing period. He recollects, "When I entered into the sugar selling business, I did not know who the merchants were and where they were. I used to plan my trading tours by reference to railway time-table and used to visit district and tehsil towns and meet the merchants there. I used to book their orders.

Once I reached a village in the evening in Khandesh District. It was a very small village. I saw a lamp burning in the square. The sun had set and it was dark everywhere. I made inquiries and learnt that there was hardly any trade in that place. There was no place to lodge at night. I asked someone whether there was any temple in the village. I was shown a temple of God Dutt. I approached the priest attached to the temple and requested him to allow me to stay overnight. The priest rejected my request. Then I proposed that he keep my belongings inside and allow me to sleep outside the temple. My request was rejected again. I spent the night by keeping awake. In the morning I saw a milkmaid going. I took milk from her. I had no pot so I drank milk from her pot from above, without touching the measuring pot with my lips. That would have been obviously objectionable.

Then in the morning a tradesman offered me shelter. He took me to his home and served me meals. I will never forget the display of humanism by the man at an obscure place. I have somehow or other forgotten his name. Later on I visited the place again but I could not locate the man. This rankles in my mind even today.

As he was carrying on his sugar selling business and planning to set up a sugar factory, Karamshibhai conceived of an idea of starting a lump-sugar factory. While staying in Mumbai he happened to ride in a hack victoria. There was a lump-sugar factory on the way. He halted at the place and entered the factory. The factory belonged to a Gujarati. Karamshibhai met the owner and asked him whether he would show him the technique of making lump sugar as he wished to start such a factory. The owner said, "Only yesterday we have shut down our factory. The whole machinery and the trained personnel are also ready with us. Karamshibhai made a deal with him. The question of place and supply of water posed a problem.

"At Belapur there was a two acre unoccupied land. It was for sale for the

last two years, but nobody wished to buy it as it was unusually shaped – shaped like a tiger's face. Karamshibhai with a view to buying the land met the manager of the Belapur branch of the Bombay Provincial Co-operative Bank. However, the manager told him that he had no right to sell the land. The right lay with the Manager of the Kopargaon Branch of the Bank. Karamshibhai met that Manager and an agreement was signed for the price quoted by the Bank Manager.

There was a small godown in the land. The land appeared to be desolate as there was scarcity of water in the area. It was very difficult to reach water even at a considerable depth. Karamshibhai met a man who had a well in the neighbourhood of the area. He told Karamshibhai that the area was absolutely dry and there was no water underneath.

Once Karamshibhai happened to go to the place near Belapur station from Belapur town with his friend. His friend suggested one place near about. Karamshibhai accepted the suggestion and started working on the project to sink a well there. God favoured him once again and water was struck at the depth of 28 feet only. The supply of water from the well was sufficient not only for his factory of lump sugar but also could satisfy the need of the villagers. It could also meet the demand of the pilgrims, who used to attend the 'Ramnavami' fair at that place. Karamshibhai further said, "Subsequently when we found that running the lump sugar factory was economically unprofitable we decided to close it down. The day we closed down the factory the water in the well dried up. Now there is not a single drop of water available in the well!"

A few days after that, the work of setting up the Sakarwadi factory began. Then this Belapur lump sugar factory was shifted to Karamshibhai's Sakarwadi factory near the Kanhegaon railway station. It could run smoothly for sometime but because of labour problems it was shut down and all attention was now concentrated on Godavari Sugar Mills.

Belapur Company was carrying on sales. Mr. Mulchand Mohanlal was the agent of that company and he was a merchant from Kanpur. He used to come down to Belapur and call some merchants and sell five hundred sugar bags to each of them. The sugar of the Belapur factory was of good quality. So every day many merchants used to frequent the place for purchase of sugar. These merchants and their representatives used to sell this sugar at lower rates to other merchants by touring several places. These activities

scaled down the prices in the market. This resulted in loss to the merchants who used to take sugar from Mulchand Mohanlal. They were forced to reduce the prices to maintain their sales. It was strange that when sugar in Mumbai market was being sold at higher rate it was sold in Belapur at lower rates. Karamshibhai brought this phenomenon to the notice of Mr. Moviar, the Manager of Belapur Company in the Mumbai office. Karamshibhai suggested that instead of distributing sugar to several merchants for sale which results in lowering the prices due to competition; it would be in the interest of the Company to allot it to one merchant. This will put an end to competition among merchants and stabilise prices.

The Belapur Company did not respond favourably to Karamshibhai's suggestion of a single stockist. The Company appointed two officers, Mr. Sanjiv and Mr. Appasaheb Devlalkar for the sale of sugar at Belapur. Mr. Sanjiv used to travel in first class railway compartment with a typist. The other officer, Mr. Devlalkar, was an independent person easily accessible and fond of conversation and a man who knew much about the business. During that time sugar was not much available. Karamshibhai at such a time had gone to Indore for selling sugar at the non-seasonal period. He was returning home after selling the balance of his quota. Mr. Sanjiv met him in the first class cabin at the railway station. Karamshibhai after usual inquiries came to know that Mr. Sanjiv had come to Belapur for the management of sugar sales of the Company. He had no right to do business directly with the customers. He also learnt that both the Company's officers had not effected any sale during the month of their stay there. Mr. Moviar became aware of the inaction of the officers and without wasting time handed over the full stock to Karamshibhai for sale. Karamshibhai thus became the trusted sole agent of the Company for selling its sugar. This state of affairs continued upto the Government Control on sugar in 1944.

"Usually I used to leave Belapur to be in the market on every Wednesday, but I could hardly get the benefit. My wife, Mrs. Sakarbai, suggested that I should go on some other day instead of Wednesday to the market. I agreed and I started on some other day and was successful to reap the benefits."

"These were the days of agitation. The freedom fight symbolized by the 'Quit India Movement' was going on. The patriot, Karamshibhai actively sympathized with the agitators. He says, "I had clean shaven my head. I used to wear a Gandhi cap, Kurta, dhoti and Chapal (footwear). I used to

work in my office up to 12 o'clock at noon. After that I used to go round in the neighbouring villages. I never used to deliver speeches but I used to enlighten villagers about Freedom Struggle and the objective of the movement.

Once I was cautioned by my partners that I should desist from such activities. We are trading with foreigners. The Belapur Sugar Factory was owned by the British. If they come to know our connection with the Quit India Movement, it will have an adverse effect on our business. We might lose the business. He replied, "Although these people have come from foreign land they are aware that we are fighting for liberty. They know it pretty well. If they come to know that we actively sympathise with it, they may praise us."

"My statement proved to be right. The Belapur Company never interfered with us. They did not trouble us. Our business was fully prospering. The British Officers of the Company never raised any objection against my work, instead I received praise."

The head office of the Belapur Company was at Mumbai. Mr. Sanjiv was the manager there. Mr. Subhedar and some other friends of Karamshibhai were working under him. Mr. Subhedar was an educated and highly religious person. He had learnt by heart the verses of Maharashtra's great saints, Dnyaneshwar and Tukaram.

Karamshibhai was planning to buy shares of the Belapur Company. Even though he was connected with the Belapur Company by way of big business transactions. However he did not have direct contacts with the head-office. The head office of the Company was near the Bombay Stock Exchange but Karamshibhai did not show any interest in it. He requested Mr. Sanjiv to buy some shares of the Belapur Company for him. He promised to try for them. He exerted but could procure only 10 to 15 shares for Karamshibhai. It was difficult to get Belapur Company's Shares at that time. When he saw that the share market was close to this Company's head office, he got into touch with a share-broker and purchased shares of the Company straightaway from Mr. Dorabji Paramanandji, the broker. The number of shares to his credit rose to a thousand. Those shares were to be transferred in his name. An officer of the Belapur Company and a member of its Governing Council Sir Joseph K. was very friendly with Karamshibhai. Sir Joseph advised him to dispose off some of his shares. Karamshibhai followed his advice and

disposed off some of his shares as Karamshibhai was favourably inclined to the Company, Sir Joseph and other officers of the Company. He had a sense of gratitude towards them as he regarded that their support helped him to enjoy the current prosperity and hoped that it would bring about brighter days for him in future.

Karamshibhai used to move about from place to place months on end selling sugar. While on tour he never stayed at a hotel or a lodge. He used to keep his luggage with some merchant and go round the place booking orders for sugar. Once the work was over he used to catch the next train and go to the next town or village. In this way Karamshibhai used to reach at least three marketing places every day. If he had to halt at a place at night he used to keep his luggage in the porch of a shop. His diet was simple, some dried grams or groundnuts, five or six packets of dry-fruit, fresh sweets, buttermilk or plantains. This light diet used to keep him trim and energetic. Much time was saved and health was maintained.

Once Karamshibhai had gone to Pune on his sugar selling tour. There he happened to meet Mr. Narayandas Govindram, a big merchant from Bhavani Peth (Sector) in Pune. He was engaged in the work of making powdered sugar from lump sugar. He lost his temper when Karamshibhai quoted the rates of Belapur No. 1 and No. 2 powdered sugar. He blurted out, "You are quoting very high rates. Do you think we are ignorant of doing trade? Have you come here to cheat us?" He continued in that vein for sometime. He did not book his order with Karamshibhai. However the same gentleman became Karamshibhai's fast friend in the course of time. He purchased several thousand bags of sugar from Karamshibhai. This transformation was caused by the civility and patience in Karamshibhai's behaviour towards others.

We have already referred to the circumstances that led to the partnership with Khatod when Karamshibhai was idle and without any means of earning. Karamshibhai recollects an incident of that time, "I was alone at Belapur at that time as my wife had gone to her parent's place for delivery. I gave my consent to the partnership and the same night I left for Mumbai. I was touring several places for selling sugar for about two and a half months. During this period of five months I received a letter while travelling on the Jalgaon-Wardha route that a son was born. The happy news of Shantilal's birth and I becoming father was received by me when I was on my sugar selling tour.

Karamshibhai hardly knew whom to contact when his plans to set up a sugar factory were maturing. He was acquainted with Mr. Morarjibhai (Leader of Congress Party and sometime Prime Minister of India). Karamshibhai met Mr. Morarjibhai and sought permission for the factory. Mr. Morarjibhai was a nationalist to the core. He was indignant at this proposal. He shouted, "You are out to enslave the farmers. They sell their lands and you become rich. It is good that I am nobody in that department of the government. I would never have granted you permission for that." Mr. Morarjibhai directed him to Mr. Nuri, the Head of that Department. Mr. Nuri granted permission to Karamshibhai.

"We had started cultivation of wheat in Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh in 1945 at our farm named Narmada Farms. We had taken one thousand acres of land on lease. We cultivated wheat in that land and the yield was excellent. Whenever I used to look at the well grown up and fully developed crop, I used to clear the soil round the plants quietly. It was astonishing to find some twelve hundred grains borne by the plant that sprang up from a single grain of wheat.

"In 1945 or thereabout we took a thousand acre land at Bundi near Bhopal on lease. It was an excellent land for growing wheat. We raised a farm there under the name of 'Narmada Farms'. Subsequently we organized a conference of sugar technologists. An international delegation of sugar technologists was scheduled to arrive there. We were going to demonstrate to the delegates how sugar was manufactured in India in the ancient times. We were therefore busy gleaning together artifacts. As we were discussing ancient technology we were informed by the agricultural officers on the 'Narmada Farms' that old remains of statues were scattered about. The statues and images were about twenty to thirty feet in height. The place was on the other side of the river which was about two miles from Bundi. We rushed to that place. We saw the old apparatus with which our ancestors used to crush sugarcane and get the juice. We also saw a stone grinding mill there. There was no stone handle but a hole was made there. I inserted my finger into that hole and quickly took it out. I saw a female mouse coming out. It was frightened. It rushed back into its hole and came out with its small ones. The love between mother and small ones is seen in the lower creatures also.

Karamshibhai had once gone on his trip to attend a jaggery auction sale during summer season of jaggery production. It was the Hindu month of

'Chaitra' (March-April). The solid jaggery lumps were arranged in three rows in the godown. Suddenly shouts of distress were heard as jaggery godown was in flames. Karamshibhai moved towards that place. He happened to stumble on a drum in the godown. Jaggery was melting because of fire. He slipped his foot and he fell on a lump of jaggery. The hot liquid jaggery splashed on his foot. He swiftly managed to come out of the godown. He sustained burns on his foot. He could not get first aid or medical treatment for the burns there. The burns on the foot swelled like a balloon. Karamshibhai had to go to Ahmednagar for treatment. He was hospitalized for fifteen days.

Karamshibhai had cherished deep regard for the famous industrialist, Mr. Walchand Hirachand. The young Walchand, son of a cloth merchant in Sholapur was not willing to be enmeshed in the hereditary trade of his family. Karamshibhai admires how the young man entered the field of civil construction against the wishes of his father and rose to the position of a leading industrialist by the dint of his hard work, tenacity and adventure. Karamshibhai was always attracted towards him and admired him immensely. Karamshibhai had virtually penned a short essay depicting Mr. Walchand Hirachand's work in the sphere of industrial development.

Mr. Walchand Hirachand built railway tracks. He successfully excavated the tunnels in the Khandala hills. He was engaged in agriculture, sugarcane production and running two sugar factories. Not only this but he was also busy with shipping, that is, building ships. Along with that he set up plants to build air-crafts and motor cars with great confidence and courage. In this way he has left his impressions on the three fields representing the three elements, earth, water and sky. The achievement of this outsized man had made a great impact on the mind of Karamshibhai when he was young. He came into contact with him and they developed great friendship also. Karamshibhai used to buy sugar from him on a large scale for the trading purpose.

It is but natural that a young ambitious man should be attracted towards a successful industrialist who built his industrial empire from scratch. It was not a mere attraction towards such outsized men but also the ambitious young man got the inspiration and incentive to follow his example. Karamshibhai has developed his personality from a similarly sustained struggle in his own life.



Sameerwadi

नात्युच्चशिखरो मेकनर्तिनीचं रक्षातलम्।
व्यवसायद्वितीयानां नाप्यपावो महोदधिः॥

*In the eyes of a man who vigorously follows the trail of
industry, the summits of the Meru Mountain are not high,
the sea bottom is not very deep and
the ocean is not difficult to cross.*

Sameerwadi

The agric wadi and Laxmiwadi were to be returned to the government under the Maharashtra State Land Ceiling Act. The supply of sugarcane for the sugar factories was to decline progressively from the fields of the factories and from outside. Karamshibhai and his son, Shantilalji, perceived a dark future for both the factories. They began to think in terms of shifting the factories elsewhere. They had initiated the survey of tracts of land in other states from 1966 with the help of their agricultural officers.

The responsibility for this survey was assigned to two officers – Mr. J. N. Patel of Sakarwadi and Mr. Nurugkar of Laxmiwadi. In order to survey lands both the officers toured Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka states. They also considered the ‘Narmada Farms’ tract spread over 4000 acres of land belonging to Godavari Sugar Mills in Madhya Pradesh. They also gave a serious thought to Tawa dam being built in Hoshangabad district from the point of view of supply of water to the area. Also they considered Pochampad Dam catchment area and in Madur area in Mandia district of Madhya Pradesh. New canals to the Tungabhadra river in Sindhanur tehsil in Raichur district of Karnataka were ready for utilization. They also estimated a rich potential for the sugarcane cultivation. A meeting of the farmers was convened with the help of the Karnataka government to grow sugarcane and set up a sugar factory in the area. It was decided to acquire land for sugarcane cultivation and setting up of a sugar mill.

A sugar merchant from Kolhapur met Karamshibhai and told him that Mudhol area in Vijapur district in Karnataka was more suitable for setting up of a sugar factory. Karamshibhai was in contact with many traders throughout the country concerning sugar purchase and sale. He was also familiar with the quality of sugar and jaggery from different regions.

The Mudhol area was adjacent to Kolhapur district which produced excellent quality sugar and jaggery in the country. Sharp-witted Karamshibhai could at once perceive the possibility of a very suitable area for sugarcane cultivation and sugar factory in the Mudhol area.

After deciding to open a sugar factory in Mudhol, Karamshibhai had a meeting with the then Chief Minister of Karnataka, Mr. Nijalingappa, in 1968. Karamshibhai proposed to shift his Laxmiwadi sugar factory to Mudhol which was welcomed by the Chief Minister. He promised full co-operation in the establishment of the project.

The sugarcane fields at Sakarwadi and Laxmiwadi were taken over by Maharashtra Government in 1966-67 and practically at that time Karamshibhai made purchases of land in the Mudhol district of Karnataka. The backbone of the development of sugar factories in Maharashtra was the sugar fields owned by the factory establishment. The modern technology with which the yield per acre of land was enhanced was made available to the farmers in the surrounding areas. Karamshibhai had resolved to undertake similar experiment in the state of Karnataka. He issued instructions to his officers to acquire lands on rental basis or by outright purchases in the Krishna-Ghatprabha Valley which were fallow or uncultivated.

It was decided in 1970 to set up a sugar factory on the boundary line between Mudhol (Vijapur district) and Gokak (Belgaum district). In the beginning it was decided to shift Laxmiwadi factory but as the Government of Maharashtra did not permit the transfer, Karamshibhai and his son, Shantilalji, planned to set up a new factory there. The foundation ceremony was performed in 1970. While speaking on that occasion Shantilalji had said, "The factory at Sameerwadi will not be a place merely of producing sugar but also a centre for improvement in the production and research for making the technological changes in the working of the factory. Our objective is to make this as the most modern centre for sugar production and research and put it on the map of the world in that form.

In view of this objective they established a sugarcane research institute also along with the setting up of the factory. The Institute was named as 'The Karnataka Institute of Applied Agricultural Research (KIAAR). The director of Luknow Sugarcane Research Institute, Mr. R. R. Panje, was appointed as the Director of the Institute. Mr. Panje was a brilliant scientist for fundamental research. This scientist played a major role in fulfilling the expectations expressed by Shantilalji Somaiya.

K.I.A.A.R. having surveyed the working field of the factory studied the prevailing varieties of sugarcane and set up centres for demonstration. The Institute maintained constant contacts with the farmers in order to train them in the new technique and methods. The Institute sponsored farmers' camps, group meetings provided them with handbooks and extended financial assistance. The Institute made great strides in the field of research under Mr. Panje to begin with and subsequently under Mr. Narasimhan, Mr. Menon, Mr. H. L. Kulkarni and others. The Institute carried on sustained research in the sugarcane fields and introduced COGT I, Co-6415 varieties and popularized them. As a result of this the factory which was initially giving an output of 10% only was raised to twelve and a half to thirteen percent. The full credit of this brilliant performance goes to the K.I.A.A.R. for its tireless work on experiments and the developments and the development by officers and workers in the agriculture department.

Sameerwadi factory establishment did not confine itself to the objective of production of sugar and sugarcane only. It functioned with a broad objective of all-sided development of the farmers also in the vicinity of Sameerwadi. It also organized rural development programmes for the benefit of farmers. It drew up group plans for the sugarcane supplying villages in proportion to their contribution to the supply. Karamshibhai's factory extended financial help to the extent of 50% of the funds raised by the local villagers for building schools, libraries, gymnasias and collective water supply projects. The works of this kind were carried out in many villages. The programmes of village level meetings guidance by experts in the field and educational tours of the farmers are also sponsored by the factory establishment.

The supply of sugarcane to the factory has to keep pace with the increasing capacity of the factory. Much help was extended to the farmers for lift irrigation in order to expand the tools for supply of water. These

measures were adopted to promote all round progress. In 1972, the produce of sugarcane in 10,000 acres of land jumped now to equal the produce in 60,000 acres of land. The main reason for this is the continuous exhortation by Dr. Shantilalji to implement sugarcane development programme. This progress was possible by the joint work and active co-operation between the K.I.A.A.R. and the extension department of agriculture. Besides this, plans were drawn up to provide tractors for facilitating transport and maintenance of lands. The petty land-holders were provided with loans for buying rubber ringed-wheel bullock carts. The plans were also prepared for that. All these measures successfully provided means of transportation and cultivation and maintenance of lands.

The National Level Sugarcane Research Institute at Koimtur while appreciating the research work done by K.I.A.A.R. granted permission to open a divisional sugarcane testing section of that Institute at Sameerwadi. Therefore many varieties of sugarcane were brought to Sameerwadi for testing and after a period of three years reports of the tests were sent to Koimtur. Many varieties of sugarcane are thus developed in the fields of K.I.A.A.R. An attempt has been made by the K.I.A.A.R. to obtain co-operation of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centres to treat the sugarcane seeds with X-rays for developing new varieties of sugarcane

K.I.A.A.R. won many state-level awards from Karnataka Government in recognition of the development projects successfully carried out by it. The Karnataka University at Dharwad awarded honourary degree of Doctor of Science to Dr. Shantilal Somaiya who as an industrialist promoted and guided the research work in every way.

The development and expansion of the factory at Sameerwadi was forging ahead with full strength. However the unfortunate events in 1973 that shook the establishment for some time is yet fresh in the minds of many people. The Union Government to promote development of languages of the people created linguistic states but the woes of the people living on the borders of two linguistic states have not ended yet. The district of Belgaum is a living example of that. The majority of the people living in Belgaum city and its surrounding areas are Marathi speaking and they wish to go with Maharashtra (the Marathi speaking linguistic state). Karnataka State Government is opposed to that. Therefore there is always tension among the people.

In the year 1973 in December the linguistic conflict took a violent turn. In the Sameerwadi fatory, there were Marathi, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar officers and workers working together. Sameerwadi became the center of tension due to the linguistic conflict and evil activities of some trouble makers. On 13th December the violent mob ransacked and damaged Sameerwadi factory along with their violent and provocative acts at Belgaum, Athani, Khabki and Mudhol. The destructive activities took place when the sugarcane crushing work was in full swing in the season. All were stunned by the evil developments. The factory was in no way concerned with the linguistic struggle but how it attracted violence is a moot point. All the officers and workers of the factory were in deep distress after the damages and closing down of the factory. The courage displayed by Karamshibhai at this hour of destruction and ruin is unique. Dr. Shantilalji took stock of the circumstances and skillfully handled the situation and put everything in its place and restarted the factory. By these acts of extraordinary valour and recovery they won the confidence of the workers and farmers. Thereafter Sameerwadi never looked back.

At present Sameerwadi factory does the crushing of twelve lakh tons of sugarcane. It has achieved the foremost place in the sugar production in Karnataka. The factory which started with a crushing capacity of only two thousand five hundred tons has now reached the capacity to crush six thousand five hundred tons. Attempts are being made to crush ten thousand tons of sugarcane everyday and plans are being made to produce electricity also. In addition to this, methyl gas is produced from waste-water of the molasses in the distilleries. This helps produce energy and could be used as an alternative to electricity. Excellent type of fertilizer is produced by the use of high technology to produce the bio-chemicals. They are provided to the farmers. Mr. Samir, the grandson of Karamshibhai and after whom the Sameerwadi is named, encourages farmers to start some side-business or complementary occupations for the farmers such as milk trade, gardens of sweet smelling plants and rural banks.

Karamshibhai displayed his creative ability by setting up a high capacity sugar factory at Sameerwadi in Karnataka when his factories at Sakarwadi and Laxmiwadi in Maharashtra were about to shut down. After sustaining a loss of about one and a half crores during the linguistic violence he steadfastly and bravely rebuilt his fortune and won the confidence of the farmers by

his development works. The Sameerwadi factory has scaled great heights. The plant that was planted on the bank of Godavari in 1940 and later transplanted in the valley of Krishna Ghataprabha has turned into a banyan tree in the form of Sameerwadi.



Labour Relations

अलोहःखलु संयमनपाशः सौजन्यमभिजातानाम्।

*Those born in noble families bind others
with the band of love not by iron chains.*

Labour Relations

The Godavari Sugar Mills started two factories at Sakarwadi and Laxmiwadi. A large class of workers began to work on the sugarcane fields of the factories and in the factories themselves. These workers set up their own organisation for fulfilling their aspirations and demands.

Mr. Kishore Pawar, one of the well-known labour leaders of Maharashtra, was its leader from the beginning. Mr. Pawar grew up with and was shaped by the Freedom Movement, Rashtra Seva Dal, Socialist Party and the Labour Unions. He established a labour union. In this chapter he has narrated the condition before the establishment of the Union, the course of its growth, the conflicts with the employers and subsequent cordial relations.

“My elder brother Ramsing Pawar accompanied the contractor who was constructing the building of the Sakarwadi factory. He was associated with that work from the beginning. I called him ‘dada’ (elder brother). Karamshibhai appreciated his skilled work and weaned him away from the contractor and absorbed him into his Company’s service. I was studying in school at that time at Aurangabad. I went to meet my elder brother at Sakarwadi once. I stayed there for some days. The factory started functioning at that time.

I was associated with the movement of liberation of the princely state of Hyderabad from my school days. The repressive measures were adopted by the Nizams’ Government and many agitators were arrested and imprisoned. Some of us students fled to Pandharpur in Maharashtra. We

sought asylum in the 'math' (monastery) of Gundamaharaj because of the previous acquaintance of Deglur. We stayed there for a year and from that place only I had gone to Sakarwadi to meet my elder brother.

Sugar factories had already started at Haregaon and Tilaknagar in Ahmednagar district. The Communist party started organizing labour unions there. Mr. Vinayakrao Bhuskute was working with Mr. Dhole and Mr. Dhumne who were working for the union. Mr. Raosaheb Patwardhan was then the President of the District Congress Committee. He was endeavouring to attract farmers and workers to the Congress Party. He used to visit Haregaon, Tilaknagar and Sakarwadi frequently. As I was in touch with the Freedom Movement I came in contact with Mr. Raosaheb Patwardhan, Mr. Atchuttrao Patwardhan and Dr. Jog from Ahmednagar city. The Rashtra Seva Dal had started at that time. I was feeling the urge to do something. On account of these circumstance they directed me to stay with my brother who was working in the Sakarwadi factory and carry on the work for Seva Dal. Mr. Raosaheb Patwardhan put in his word for me for a job in the factory. Mr. Raosaheb used to go to Belapur and visit Karamshibhai in connection with the Congress struggle for freedom. They knew each other very well. Karamshibhai employed me as a 'pen-boy' in his Sakarwadi factory. I was nineteen or twenty years old at that time.

On account of my employment in the Sakarwadi factory and voluntary work for Seva Dal I came to know many people there. We started branches of Seva Dal at several places. We also started workers' union. In the meantime 'Quit India' Movement began. Most of the officers in the Sakarwadi factory were Gujarati. The leaders of the Congress movement were Gandhiji and Sardar Patel who had implicit impact on all of them. They sympathized with the Freedom Movement. We could work in unison with them. In the 'Quit India' Movement Raosaheb was imprisoned and Atchuttrao went underground. Mr. Bhaskerrao Durve, the Socialist leader from Sangamner also went underground. Mr. Atchuttrao used to accompany Mr. Durve in these regions so I came to know him also. Mr. Sharangdhar Pawar from Haregaon, Mr. Mama Gaware from Koparegaon and myself from Sakarwadi were carrying on the work. We had skirmishes with the Communists. The Communists had done a lot of work in Ahmednagar district. It was their stronghold. Mr. Amarsheik also had stayed and worked with Dhole-Dhumne for the union work at Sakarwadi. Karamshibhai was a Congressman and

anti-Communist and therefore with the co-operation of my elder brother he acquiesced in the formation of our Workers' Union. As the owner of the factory extended his support to the union, the officers and workers followed suit.

Mr. Gangadhar Ogale, after being released from jail resumed his work at Haregaon and Tilaknagar. We came close to each other and I started to look after the work of the Union at Changdev Sakarwadi and Laxmiwadi. In the meantime the second sugar factory was started by Karamshibhai at Laxmiwadi and my elder brother was transferred to that factory. It was therefore easy to expand our activities to Laxmiwadi. We had a full scope for our Union activities during the period of one year and it enabled us to drive out the Communists from there.

The establishment of a Workers' Union entails the tackling of labour problems, the demands of the workers and allied questions. The daily wages paid to a female worker was two and a half annas (one seventh of a rupee) and for male worker it was five annas that is double of the female wages. We put forward our demands for more wages, a ration shop and other facilities to the factory authorities. We were amateurs and hardly knew how to conduct negotiations with the authorities. Shetji dismissed our demands and we had to approach Dr. Jog and Raosaheb Patwardhan. Mr. Patwardhan came in the afternoon at about 1.30 pm and carried on negotiations with Karamshibhai upto the evening. Shetji continued negotiations backed up with accounts – mathematics and other details. He could concede the demand for a ration shop and provision of drinking water but was ready to offer an increase only of one half of an anna ($1/32$ of a rupee). He adamantly stuck to half an anna hike and would not budge on it. Even a small hike in wages for so many farm-workers and factory workers would amount to a substantial expenditure. The statistics were placed on the table. We never knew such calculations. We knew to put forward our demands. The negotiations failed and Mr. Patwardhan had to go back disappointed.

“We were thinking on different lines. Even the slightest raise in wages should be accepted so that we could show the workers that we are able to benefit them, the amount at the moment is immaterial. We should keep their hopes alive and confidence in us unshaken. If we fail to act now there is a fear that the Communists will exploit the situation. We therefore once again met Mr. Patwardhan. He was reluctant to meet Karamshibhai. He

told me, "You tell me anything except meeting Karamshibhai and negotiating with him. Please don't call me for the negotiations. I think you can convince him in your own words."

After a lapse of fifteen days another meeting with Karamshibhai was arranged. We had managed to keep the labour relations hot. Shetji conceded our modest demand of a hike by one half anna in the wages. According to that the female workers were to receive three annas and male workers six annas as wages per day. Our union started with this meagre gain. Most of the workers were daily wage-earners at that time. A few in the office received monthly salaries. Most of them were paid between Rs. 35 to Rs. 40/- per month as their salaries. Later on in 1945 they also began to receive a salary up to Rs. 100/- depending on the position they held. With a better payment to the workers our Union also kept on growing. The Union at Laxmiwadi was also established. With the growth of the Union, the conflicts also began to grow. The Communists Unions in the factories at Haregoan and Tilaknagar managed to compel the factories to pay higher wages as the factories were older than factories under our Union. The Godavari Mills was a new one but the higher wages in the older factories were making an impact on our workers. We were therefore compelled to demand higher wages for our workers also.

"I used to visit Raosaheb Patwardhan very often for consultation. It was during this period that it was decided to felicitate Raosaheb in Ahmednagar city and was presented with a purse of Rs. 40,000/- He had handed over the purse to Mr. Kakasaheb Garud, a Congress worker from Ahmednagar. It was planned to pay an honorarium of Rs. 20/- to each full-time worker. The work of our Union had increased a lot. I was finding it difficult to pay full attention to the Union work after my factory work. Raosaheb told me, "You better leave the service and work full-time in the Tehsil."

"I then resigned my service in the factory. An incident took place during that time. A big cultural exhibition was held at Kopergaon. It was graced among others by the then flourishing Raobahadur, Diwanbahadur (titles of nobility) Girmé, Boravke. The Governor of Mumbai was also expected at the exhibition. Shetji had assigned me the responsibility of managing a confectionary stall at the exhibition. Shetji had a confectionary at Kanhegaon. Shetji said, "Look, you are a good speaker. You should go to manage the stall for the purpose of publicity of the confectionary." I set up the stall

there as instructed by him. The exhibition was over after three days. I had advertised it very well but the sales were negligible. A lot of items remained unsold. I distributed them for publicity. I paid the amount realized by sales to the Storekeeper, Mr. Jaju. Shetji held an inquiry of who visited the stall, how much confectionary was sold, what was the balance etc. I told him everything. On completing my replies to his questions he asked me, "Who asked you to distribute the remaining items?" I replied, 'I distributed it for publicity of our goods.' Shetji said, "The intention is good but it was not right to do that." I said, "If you do not approve of my act I am leaving the job."

"I then left the service. He called me and said, "I am not angry. I told you the procedure. In actual practice you cannot dispose of your goods like that. You have to look to your profit and loss. If you were to distribute the profit only it was not objectionable but to distribute the material for sale itself is not proper. You have to consider the practical aspect of business."

Shetji reasoned with me. Undoubtedly he was right but I told him that now I don't wish to serve any more. I left his service.

After leaving the service I pushed forward the work of the Union, Seva Dal and the Congress Party in full swing. The Union grew, the movements started, our demands rose higher and therefore the conflicts began to emerge. Shetji was strict, hard-hitting in bargain and stingy in granting demands but avoided going to the extremes of a breaking point. He used to formulate some compromise. Even with stormy discussions and mounting stress and strain, there were no strikes in our factories like in other factories. This was his speciality.

"With all our fights and conflicts we always cherished a feeling of respect and love for the Shetji. The reason for this was that he was nationalist and a patriot. He was connected with the Freedom Struggle. He had given asylum to the fugitive underground freedom fighters like Atchutrao Patwardhan, Aruna Asaf Ali, Usha Mehta. This act of giving shelter to those revolutionaries itself was an act of bravery and high risk. He ventured to encounter that danger. We had a great affinity towards him for this extraordinary courage.

The Union had to face conflicts and struggles and was subjected to stress and strain on some occasions but all that was taken in our stride. Once

Raosaheb Patwardhan had arrived here for some other work. Karamshibhai and Raosaheb knew each other over a long period. While discussing other matters when the subject of our Union cropped up Raosaheb asked Shetji in my presence, "How are you getting on with this Union leader?" Shetji explained, "Our style of functioning is like this. He will first demand ghee and on getting ghee he will say how can one consume ghee alone. We want rice mixed with pulses (khichadi) to eat with it. Then they would consume both rice with pulses and the ghee. This is the style of negotiating. Now I am familiar with it. So there is conciliation between us."

Mr. Mehta was an agricultural officer at Bharatwadi. He was a member of Seva Dal. Mr. Mehta organized an Association of Officers. Karamshibhai Shetji dismissed him. This was considered as a provocation and the Union kept up the heated mood of the workers as this was a clear instance of injustice. Shetji was keen to perceive the unity of the officers and the workers and wisely decided to reinstate the dismissed officer. He displayed his statesmanship in this way.

Later on the Socialists left the Congress fold and a new kind of struggle started which created a big problem. We were Socialists whereas Shetji was a staunch Congressman. He took a position that the Socialists should not be allowed to gain importance. During this period the village council (Gram Panchayat) elections were due to be held. Shetji's factory was within the boundaries of Wari Village and he was greatly concerned with the village council's elections at Wari.

We decided to fight the village council's election. Four Congress candidates were to contest Wari council election with full support of Karamshibhai Shetji. He instructed all his men not to elect the Socialist. He brought pressure on them. He favoured the candidature of Mr. P.P. Shah, the chief chemist, Mr. Rajadne, the deputy chemist, Babulal Sancheti and one fitter who had come from Tilaknagar. These four were to fight on Congress tickets. On our side, our old friend Mr. Rajabhau Taksale, Mr. Karnik, one more person and myself were in the fray. Our election ward was No. 4. This ward covered the entire area of the sugar factory. The election propaganda was in full swing. Shetji had taken personal interest in the elections. It was a keenly fought competition. But when the election results were declared Mr. Babulal Sancheti, who opposed us could enlist only four votes, Mr. P. P. Shah and Mr. Rajadne could secure thirty five

votes each and the fitter polled ten votes. They were all defeated as each one of us could poll a whopping two-fifty to three hundred votes. We won the election. We gained in strength.

The opposition to activities of our Union from the factory management became more severe as our Union grew in strength. The newly recruited officers from outside struck a stance of opposition to the Union. They started inquiries to find out who were working for the Union. The increasing workload at Mumbai office kept Shetji busy there and his visits to Sakarwadi factory were fewer than before. This resulted in the domination of affairs by the factory officers.

The officers of the factory adopted an anti-Union policy so they began to show opposition for holding Union meetings. They started hostile tactics to see that the meetings of the Union would not be held. We defied their active resistance to the meetings and continued holding our meetings in the 'Gandhi Maidan.' We had named the open space within the factory area as 'Gandhi Maidan'. So the factory authorities found it difficult to prohibit meetings which was a non-violent activity. They shut the entrance gates and contrived to stop members of the Union from different farms. Our Union members were large in numbers and they used to attend our meetings in strength, in spite of the opposition from the factory authorities. The actual workers from the factory used to attend in small numbers due to the pressure exerted by the authorities and even by the Shetji.

The officers from the farms including the Gujarati officers were with us. The farm officers were provided with horses as motor vehicles were not available. Shetji used to ride in a victoria. He used to travel up to Srirampur in a victoria. Our meetings were well attended despite this. The officers used to call police to help them. The policemen about fifty in number used to cordon off the 'Gandhi Maidan'. The officers used to tell the magistrate that the Union people are violent law breakers. They would force the shut down of the factory. This was the period when the British were ruling India. The Collector of the district was a European. The Collector, District Superintendent of Police and the Magistrate used to extend all sorts of help to the factory owners. All of them used to create a climate of fear so that workers would not go on strike. At that time workers struck work in Haregaon factory under the leadership of Raosaheb Patwardhan. It lasted for fifty-three days.

In spite of the pressure tactics of the authorities our meetings were being held as usual. The meetings were addressed by leaders for two hours on end. 'Why don't you arrest them? Your police are idling away their time!' were the remarks passed by the factory officers to the police-officers. They in turn used to ask them, "How to arrest them? They speak about good things. The manager of the factory angrily used to say, "Why have we called you? You should arrest them and put them in prison etc. Such exchange of words between them was usual. The scenes of tension were created by the officers themselves. They were our real antagonists. Shetji never went to that extreme. He never summoned the help of police.

Once we held our meeting in the 'Gandhi Maidan' at night. On that day Mrs. Sakarbai, and daughter Lilaben had accompanied Shetji. They arrived in the evening. The arrival of the Shetji's family members spurred us on to hold a big meeting. We sent our message to all the members living in different farm-yards and the residential areas. The meeting was very well attended. Our meeting started at about 10 o'clock at night. We used to hold night meetings somewhat late so that the workers could go back home from work and attend the meeting after meals.'

Shetji and the members of his family were seen seated in chairs in the first row, before the meeting could start. I spoke that night for about two hours touching upon all aspects and all points. I said, "How is our Karamshibhai? How are our managers? These managers are fit to run Saibaba saintly institution. Karamshibhai entrusts the management of the factory to such persons. Mr. N. C. Shah, Mr. P. C. Shah these retired persons are brought here as managers. There were at times two or three managers. Karamshibhai, I say, is not a real industrialist. He does not possess the qualities needed in an industrialist. His policy is like that of grain parcher who sells today soaked parched grams tomorrow parched rice from the money realized by sale of parched grams. He runs his business like this. In order to run such an industry what quality men are required for this work, what type of manager and how the owner should deal with them... I was making these blunt statements without any fear. At that time one incident had taken place. Mr. Chandrashekher Agashe of the Brahan Maharashtra Factory had run the factory into bankruptcy. People had invested their money in the shares of the factory. There was panic. In such circumstances Karamshibhai had rushed to buy maximum number of shares of the Brahan Maharashtra

Factory and take it over. Referring to this incident I commented, "This gentleman (Karamshibhai) cannot run his factory properly and he is on his way to buy a company which is bankrupt.

I spoke in that criticizing mood Karamshibhai had jotted down about some twenty to twenty-five points. On the second day of the meeting he kept mum. He called me on the third day and said, "Point number one, you spoke for one hour and fifty minutes. Not a single person left the meeting when you were speaking. You have made an impact on your people like Jawaharlal Nehru. Well done! You are right in saying that I have no faculty to judge people right. There are three managers in the factory but I do not receive reports of work from them in time. He continued to examine each point in my speech with composure. You said something about Mr. Chandrashekar Agashe. Tell me if I take over his factory, would I be able to run it properly? I replied, 'I feel you can run that factory better than Mr. Chandrashekhar.' He retorted, 'I am not convinced about that as I am merely a parcher of grams and rice.' I was flabbergasted. We talked a lot after that. In the end I admitted that to arouse the workers you have to make your speech a bit spicy. Shetji then said, 'I see', then continue with it.

We had encounters of this time very often. Compromises were there. We began to understand each other as the time passed by. It generated mutual attachment and love.

When the warrants against the agitating freedom fighters who had gone underground were revoked, many underground leaders came in the open. Among them was the famous revolutionary Nana Patil, they toured our region at that time. It was rainy season and river Godavari was in spate. The meeting to be addressed by Nana Patil was to be held at Changdev factory at Puntambe. He was accompanied by Raosaheb Patwardhen. Karamshibhai had arranged a dinner with great splendour at Sakarwadi. He entertained high regard for the lovers of the country and nationalists. On that day he had invited around two fifty to three hundred distinguished guests for that dinner. He had kept the sugar godown open for that occasion. Shetji Karamshibhai was himself serving at the dinner. There were very good items like sweets like 'shira' (fried fine wheat grains cooked with ghee and sugar). When the eating was about to start, Nana Patil after a glance at the dishes glumly said, "Oh! This will not go for me. I want plain bread (Bhakri) and piquant sauce (zunka). The organizers began to run helter skelter. Shetji

was deeply distressed. I immediately ran to a home of an activist and fetched hot bread and sauce. Nana Patil was very much pleased. Karamshibhai was greatly relieved. Karamshibhai had great affection towards the lovers of the nation. We had many conflicts but both of us never allowed the conflicts to snap our relations with each other.

Shetji was very calculating. The river Godavari flows along the road between Sakarwadi and Laxmiwadi nearer to Sakarwadi. Karamshibhai used to build a temporary bridge by placing planks on an iron frame to negotiate the river. This structure was useful for crossing the river for a period of seven to eight months. This was also used for light transport. It was removed in rainy season when the river swelled up. He used to spend every year at least thirty to forty thousand rupees. Once I opened this topic and said, "Instead of spending thirty to forty thousand every year on an improvised bridge why can't Shetji build a strong regular bridge across the river by spending three to four lakh rupees once for all. Shetji responded and said, "You are Socialist people, you have no knowledge about practical matters and creative investment. I build this improvised bridge for some period of time. The expenses I incur are about nineteen to twenty thousand. The iron frame, pillars and planks that go in to the building of this temporary bridge are removed during rainy season. This material is used to rebuild the bridge in the next year. I only spend for the earth, the soft stones etc. to keep the frame in position. The recurring expenses are negligible. Now consider the interest for three to four lakhs of rupees. I spend those three to four lakhs on some other project and my business runs smoothly. The money that I spend for the temporary bridge is met easily. It is profitable for me. You don't understand this practical aspect.

Shetji, in connection with the demands of the workers, remarked, "If I give you money as per your demands you are going to waste it on consumer goods. If I keep the money with myself, I shall invest it in some other business. I shall open another company in which employment for some people will be available." In this way he was explaining his calculations to me and in a provocative but humourous manner observed, "and then you are going to start your Union there!"

After dwelling on the main features of his business outlook based on profit-loss calculations he said, "I have described all these aspects so that once you understand the calculations you will not have any dispute with

me. I have explained all the relevant points to teach you business accounts or calculations.”

He was right in saying that. There was some substance in what he said. I learnt much relating to the business calculations and accounting. I was fully informed. I was ready to take any adversary. Whenever there was a dispute between the owner, management and the workers. I never accepted defeat in the negotiations on behalf of the workers. I think nobody can supersede me in handling the labour disputes successfully. The credit for this goes to Karamshibhai. If he were not to resist our approaches I would not have been groomed as an effective workers’ leader as at present.

Karamshibhai opposed me in different ways which forced me to think out different ways to disarm him. I received the best training in the field of labour disputes because of the different clashes with an astute industrialist like Karamshibhai. The labour struggles made me an effective labour leader. The very principle of progress through conflicts is evident here. Man’s progress in life in fact comes out of opposition of some kind rather than the easy ways of life; struggles lead to progress, comforts frustrate it. Raosaheb Patwardhan, Atchutrao Patwardhan, Nanasaheb Gore, S. M. Joshi, Gangadher Ogale shaped my political life but on the practical side of life it was Karamshibhai who shaped me without intending to do so.

Then the business career of Shantilalji began. Thereafter Shetji became our friend. The conflict was over. He used to say about bonus. “You better decide about it and convey it to me. This policy of Shetji compelled me to be more responsible. This sense of responsibility was because of Shetji’s attitude. He used to say, “If you made more money available to the workers they would go to shops and buy vessels and other goods. However in the next month when they feel financial crunch they would go to the shops to sell them. You should not allow them to form such habits. If the money remains with me, I shall build schools for them, provide medical care for them, build houses for them and so on. Are they going to do anything of this kind? You should think on these lines. You should undertake some new and constructive work with determination.

Shetji used to impart training to Shantilalji on the same lines. ‘Be not satisfied with what you have. Find out new enterprise and start it.’ He said this very often. All that he created out of nothing, was possible because of his creative outlook and determination to rise to the top.

As the time passed by, my relations with Shetji became more affectionate and loving. Sometimes he used to send for me. He used to open his mind to me. He used to seek my mediation in some cases. At such time he used to listen to my counsel. When the officers in the factory and members of his family noticed our intimate relationship they treated me with full confidence. Shetji treats me as one of the members of his family. His wife, Mrs. Sakarbai, showered love on me as her son. If I could not go to him for a long time he used to get angry.

Once I had to go to jail in connection with an agitation; my wife was operated in Dr. Purandhare's Hospital in Mumbai. Mrs. Sakarbai had taken full care of my wife. We have established such family relationship now. Mr. Madhukar Ponkshe who was the labour commissioner, after witnessing our cordial relations, jokingly said, "Karamshibhai has two sons; one is Shantilal, who is the managing agent, the other is Kishore Pawar who is a bargaining agent!"

The special features of the personality are expressed through the narrative of the Worker's Organization.



Later Period:
Colours of The Western Sky

Social Debt

शतहस्त क्षमाहस्त क्षमाहस्त हस्त क्षमाहस्त

*Wealth gathered by hundred hands may be distributed
for the welfare of thousands.*

Social Debt

This is the story of the Ancient times. The city of Dhara was famous as the metropolitan city of the kingdom ruled by King Munj. The king was brave and an ardent lover of learning and literature. Once a learned Brahman (pundit) arrived at the court of King Munj. Many such learned Brahmans used to frequent the King's court to demonstrate their talents and skills and receive felicitations and rewards. The learned Brahman who had now arrived was an accomplished astrologer. King Munj was very much pleased with profound knowledge of the Brahman in his field of study. The King praised him profusely, gave him large sums of money and showered praise on him. This tale exemplifies the munificence that hard work in acquiring proficiency in learning or in any field a man can dream of. A verse praising the glory of learning is quoted below:

“Learning protects like a mother.

Inspires towards welfare activities like a father.

Entertains like a wife and removes pain.

Spreads fame across number of countries.

Enhances fortune. This is its greatness.

Like a philosopher's stone, what bountifulness cannot be achieved by learning?”

An assimilation by hard work of any scientific technique or skill can cast its influence everywhere. Such a person secures all the benefits and splendour

attributed to learning The importance of learning is rightly explained in another such vense.

विद्वत्तं च नृपत्तं च नैव तुल्य कदाचन।

स्वदेशे पूज्यते राजा विद्वान्सर्वत्र पूज्यते॥

Learning and royal power can never be compared. A King is respected in his own kingdom only whereas the learned man is respected everywhere.

A ruler is respected because of the power he wields. He derives the authority by virtue of the seat of power he occupies. Once he steps down nobody knows him. The authority of a ruler is confined to the boundaries of his state, beyond those boundaries nobody cares for him.

The power of a scholar or a learned man is evident wherever he goes. He deserves respect of all and at all places.

Karamshibhai is well aware of the greatness of learning and scholarship.

In his childhood he encountered many impediments in his school-life. But he had acquitted himself creditably in the pursuit of his studies. He was known as a scholar during his school-days. He never missed his first place in the school examinations. He therefore received applause and rewards from the school. He was a favourite pupil of some teachers. Notwithstanding all this, he could not complete his school education beyond English sixth standard (pre-matric or pre S.S.C.) on account of his domestic problems. He had to leave his education incomplete in the prime youth of his life and seek some means of livelihood.

He was constantly pricked by the sense of shame for not completing his school education and prosecuting further studies in college.

Although he could not receive college education, Karamshibhai could receive much learning by hard experiences in the open and ever expanding university of real life. It was on the strength of that education that Karamshibhai could gain the enviable position of a successful merchant, a farmer and an industrialist. He made his personal life many sided, full and rich in all senses of the term. He successfully discharged all the duties and responsibilities as a householder and a family man. In one sense he led a successful family life and in the other sense, while doing so he achieved spirituality to the extent it was possible and was feasible. But Karamshibhai is not a man to be complacent with small bits of spirituality for the sake of

name. Indian culture lays down the commands, a chain of systematic veneration towards mother, father, teacher and guest. Every human being born in this world has to discharge his social debts by honourable treatment of these venerable personalities. Besides this, there is another social obligation which he is commanded by Indian culture to repay. Although man is free as an individual, he is bound by social duties and responsibilities. As fish cannot live without water so man cannot live without society. He cannot disregard society altogether. He owes many social debts. He lives, grows and prospers in society. It therefore becomes his duty to repay that debt. Karamshibhai is one among those who are conscious about this duty and strive to discharge it as best as they can. It is said:

‘Man can never adequately repay his debt to society. He must however in all humility, attempt to do all that he can to redeem himself.’

It is obvious man can never repay his social debt to the fullest extent. But he should always try to absolve himself from the social debts as far as possible. Karamshibhai’s approach to life is in tune with this thought process. Ishavasya Upanishad states:

‘Whatever wealth you have amassed in this world pervaded by God, do not forget your social responsibility while enjoying it. You really enjoy it by renouncing it. Do not crave for another’s wealth. Sant Tukaram clearly instructs whatever money you have gained by good means, distribute it among your people in a disinterested manner.’

Man should earn money by fair means and without passion for it. He should spend it for downtrodden, destitute and needy people.

Karamshibhai made sincere attempts to implement Sant Tukaram’s exhortation. He was also aware of Gandhiji’s directive that one should meet one’s minimum expenses from the money that one earns and use the remaining amount for the welfare of the society as a trustee.

Karamshibhai derived the right guidance from these quotations and after stabilizing himself in his trade and business he was ready to repay the social debt. While pondering over the ways in which he could discharge his moral and social indebtedness he was intensely conscious of his failure to complete his education, he therefore gave priority to the field of education to redeem himself from the social debt.

The spread of literacy and education is considered as the most essential social welfare activity in a developing country like India. The education loving Karamshibhai therefore founded a 'Somaiya Trust' in order to establish his own educational institutions in the places of his works. He set up the two educational institutions in the teahsil of Kopargaon.

1. Somaiya Vidyamandir, Sakarwadi,
2. Somaiya Vidyamandir, Laxmiwadi.

These two schools provided secondary education for those pupils who lived in the areas of Sakarwadi and Laxmiwadi where his sugar-factories were situated. The 'Somaiya Trust' offered scholarships to those who were studying in the secondary schools. The Trust also offers scholarships to those who pursue their higher education in the country or in foreign countries. Besides this, the Trust has sponsored following institutions and financial assistance was extended to them and is being extended even now. They are:

1. K. J. Somaiya Arts and Commerce College, Kopargaon
2. Jethabhai Thakersi High School, Srirampur
3. K. J. Somaiya High School, Belapur
4. Malunja Primary School, Malunja Tehsil, Srirampur
5. Sharda English Medium Schook, Kopergaon
6. Somaiya Vinay Mandir High School, Sameerwadi, Dist. Vijapur (Karnataka)
7. Somaiya Shishuniketan, Sameerwadi, District Vijapur (Karnataka)
8. Fifteen Primary Schools in the Tehsils of Bhuj, Khavda and Abadasa in Kutch, Gujarat State.

Karamshibhai firmly supported these institutions and provided educational facilities to the pupils in rural areas. This is all indeed a great achievement but the great leap forward that he took in the educational field is undoubtedly astonishing!



An Unexpected Consequence of An Event

अधोमुख्यस्याऽपि कृतस्य अहोः।
नाथः शिखा याति कदाचिदेव॥

*The flame of fire even if turned downwards never burns
down. It always burns upwards.*

An Unexpected Consequence of an event

Also. In the same way an event became the cause for Karamshibhai's big leap forward in the field of education.

It was the year 1958, Karamshibhai was making preparations for his journey to the holy place Mansarovar with some members of his family. A renowned scholar, writer, freedomfighter and a spirited constructive worker from Gujarat, Mr. K. M. Munshi, who was the chairman of the 'Bharatiya Vidyabhavan Institute', Mumbai happened to make inquiries with Karamshibhai. Mr. Munshi wanted to know whether he was ready to donate a sum of rupees ten lakhs to their educational institutions. In return Mr. Munshi said he would institute an engineering college named after him within the premises of their educational institutions.

Karamshibhai was overjoyed to receive such a proposal from a great scholar and one of the foremost leaders in the field of education. He communicated his consent to that proposal.

After communicating the consent, the details of the proposal were to be worked out and negotiations about the proposals were to be finalised. This would take some time. In view of the practical aspect of the proposal and the time factor Karamshibhai proceeded to Mansarovar as planned before. On his return from Mansarovar Karamshibhai and Mr. Munshi met and an agreement was prepared with reference to the engineering college after discussing all aspects of the proposal. An agreement which was made with

Karamshibhai was carried by Mr. Munshi to Delhi for the necessary sanction from the Central Government. Mr. Munshi met Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, at that time.

Pundit Nehru had returned from Kolkata after inaugurating an educational institution, the same day when Mr. Munshi had gone to meet him. Punditji had returned from Kolkata a little upset over an incident. He had gone there to inaugurate a government educational institution. The government had spent crores of rupees on it. Notwithstanding this a Marwari gentleman having donated one and a half lakh rupees, proposed that his name be given to that institution in return. Punditji did not favour such a thing and therefore he was very much perturbed.

When Mr. Munshi met Punditji when he was in such a state of mind and explained to him his proposal he was very much disturbed at such a proposal and he at once rejected that proposal.

This event was, in a sense, unduly fortuitous. It ignited a spark in Karamshibhai's mind. For one possessed of such unusual abilities, it appeared an easy matter to think of establishing a College of his own instead.

The spark lit up the flame! He was fully determined to start his own college. He consulted eminent persons in the field of education. Many discussions were held and his decision received massive support. A firm decision to start a college was taken.

The idea to start a college with Arts and Science streams to begin with was playing on his mind. The next question was of the plot for the college. But he had already solved that question of where it should be.

A terrible bomb explosion had taken place in the dock in Mumbai in 1944. The area near the dockyard was devastated. People had to suffer heavy losses. The area nearby the docks was inhabited by the Lohana Kutchi community. Most of them had become homeless as their houses were destroyed by the explosion. Karamshibhai had purchased vast stretches of land near Ghatkoper with a noble intention to rehabilitate the homeless people.

Karamshibhai received much help from Mr. K. R. Deshmukh, a retired Deputy Collector in acquiring land. The prices of lands were not high as they are today. Mr. Deshmukh approached several owners of lands in the

Ghatkopar area and acquired several plots. He prepared a vast stretch of land by putting together the pieces of land purchased from different owners.

Karamshibhai had decided to use that land for the college. His vision was to build a 'City of Learning' in future so an extensive stretch of land would be needed for this purpose. He therefore decided to build the college on that land as a part of the 'City of Learning.'

Karamshibhai had selected the large plot of land near Ghatkopar for his college. However most of his friends, well-wishers and the people who supported his educational activities and even some of his family members were not pleased with the idea to set up such an institution away from the business areas of Mumbai. They wished that the proposed college should be in the Fort area or in the Colaba area where educated, cultured and peace and harmony loving people lived. The association of the high brow people would enhance the reputation of the institution. The students graduated from such a college and from the elite society could soon gain popularity and prestige in the metropolitan city.

Karamshibhai did not countenance such a prospect. He set aside the plan of a college in the Fort area and concentrated his attention on the place near Ghatkopar.

The land near Ghatkopar was rough with irregular gradient, pot holes and ditches. This land had to be levelled. He got the thorny bushes and weeds and wild grass uprooted from those long neglected lands. The whole piece of land was cleared and made suitable for building a college structure for the 'City of Learning.'

Karamshibhai generously and with a large heart gave full credit for the infrastructure of the 'City of Learning' to Mr. K. R. Deshmukh.



Abode of Learning

ज्ञानादेव तु कैवल्यम्।

Knowledge only leads to Spiritual Release.

Abode of Learning

Karamshibhai had established two trusts to repay the debt to the society as a moral duty. He had adopted a secular attitude. He had established 'Somaiya Trust' to spread education in the society and to provide health service to society irrespective of caste, religion, race and colour. He had established another Trust namely 'K. J. Somaiya Trust' for the social and economic welfare of the Kutchi Lohana Society. He visualized the creation of a new educationally modern and advanced society, the Somaiya Vidyavihar (Somaiya abode of learning). In order to give it a concrete form expert guidance by scholars and experienced persons was very essential for that. It was necessary to receive the advantage of their profound experience in the educational field.

The creation of the 'Somaiya Vidyavihar' must have taken place at a most fortunate moment. Its first founding president was Mr. N. H. Bhagvati, the retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India and the former Vice-Chancellor of Bombay and Banaras Universities. Justice Mr. Bhagvati enjoys a special place in the fields of jurisprudence, learning and social work.

The second favourable circumstance was that it was able to associate highly respected stalwarts in the educational field to work on its council of founders as founder members.

The 'Somaiya Vidyavihar' was formally established by the meeting of the founders of the institution on 7th September 1959, held in the hall of

New Era School in Mumbai. In that meeting the founder president Mr. Justice N. H. Bhagavati (retired Chief justice of India) expressed his valuable thoughts with reference to the proposed project. Mr. Justice Bhagavati said:

“The Vidyavihar must strive for education that will not merely lead to the intellectual development of the individual but will also make his life and personality fuller and richer. It should aim not merely to develop his faculties and talents but also to satisfy and fulfil his more important urges, ethical, aesthetic and spiritual. It must, in short, strive for education that will develop an integrated personality.”

In its institutions, the Vidyavihar must never fail to emphasise the three important aspects of education which are as important to the individual as to the nation.

1. Firstly, the moral foundations of our society have been rudely shaken in recent years. Students hardly know what moral values are, because at home, in society and the world outside, they do not see them. The responsibility of schools and colleges therefore becomes all the greater to see that students never lose sight of the fundamental values of life. Else, the future of our nation would be in jeopardy.

2. Secondly, whereas English must continue to play an important role both at national and inter-state levels and regional languages must have full scope for unfettered development. Hindi, the common language that binds people from the North to the South must be developed. We must learn not merely to live and work together but also to speak, think and discourse together. Besides the national interests, interests of high scholarship also demand that Hindi must be given its due importance.

3. Thirdly, we must become a nation of able-bodied men and women. The jerks that we give in the name of physical training do no good to anyone. We must wholly revitalize the system of physical education and help build sound physique of our students.

I hope and trust that the Vidyavihar will never lose sight of these essentials. Vidyavihar while spreading education had diligently pursued the objective of instilling the fundamental values of individual, social and national life among the students with utmost care. It is because of the value raising

education that the life of students is enriched. That education should be treated as real education which awakens the curiosity and passion for knowledge among students. It also creates the feeling of high respect and unselfish service to the teachers.

Vidyavihar among its multifarious activities had attached great importance to the creation and maintenance of the right climate to achieve that high objective. Mass prayers, a variety of games and similar activities and programmes were started right from the beginning to create such a climate. Only through such highly charged atmosphere can the permanent values of life be securely implanted on the formative minds of the students. The ultimate purpose of education is to provide for all-sided development of the personalities of the students and creating and strengthening the self-confidence among them.

All the institutions in the Vidyavihar were set up with the background of such high objectives.

The laying of the foundation stone ceremony of 'Matoshri Laxmibai Somaiya Balika Sadan', 'Srimad Bhagavat Gita Pathashala' and 'Sanskriti Vistarak Bhavan' (House of Cultural Extension) was performed at the hands of venerable Vedic Pandit Pandurangshastri Athavley on behalf of Mrs. Sakarbai K. Somaiya on 29th February 1960. He exquisitely explained in detail how and to what extent there is a need of spiritual values in human life. While speaking on the auspicious occasion, Shastriji said:

"Man does not live by bread alone. There is a hunger for religious, spiritual and moral things beyond that of the bread. There is an urge of this kind in the heart of every man. When man is enchanted by the enjoyment of material comforts he would lose this urge, hunger and vision. That day would be considered as the saddest day in the life of an Indian person. Man derives intellectual and moral peace of mind through elevating desire for a higher and a highest life than the routine day to day life. This makes the religious and spiritual values the ever lasting wealth of man in this world.

Education should inculcate and keep alive the feeling of reverence in the minds of students towards their teachers. Unfortunately we have completely forgotten the sentiment of gratitude. We should cherish devoted gratitude towards the Creator.

We should be ready to pay any price for reversing the flow of physical

ingratitude and in all humility and with a sense of prayerful surrender express our gratitude towards our Creator.

And this is in fact real education. The ceremony of laying the foundation stone of the proposed Arts and Science College building of the Vidyavihar was performed at the hands of the then Chief Minister of Maharashtra Mr. Yashwantrao Chavan with great eclat and enthusiasm on 18th March 1960.

Thereafter the work of the construction of the building began. The heaps of building materials started piling up. The work of the architects, builders, workers, civil engineers, supervisors and all skilled workers picked up speed and the work was in full swing. The construction work was making rapid strides day by day and was being properly shaped. In a space of three months, day and night hard work, the three storeyed magnificent and graceful building of the Vidyavihar's Arts and Science College stood in all its splendour on a once desolate and deserted piece of land near Ghatkopar in June 1960.



Educational Streams in Vidyavihar

विद्या संस्कृति शास्त्र कलानामग्रिमं च स्थानम्।
विद्याविहार इत्याख्यं निर्मितमिदं मण्डिरम्॥

*A temple of learning named as Vidyavihar is erected
where education, culture, science and arts
enjoy the foremost place.*

Educational Streams in Vidyavihar

Prof. Amritlal Yadnik, a well-known scholar and an experienced teacher in the field of education assumed the charge as the first Principal of the Vidyavihar College.

The college-classes of the two streams, Arts and Science, commenced with only 620 students. Any river at the source is small. Thereafter as it flows many streams, springs, rivulets and streamlets meet to make it an expanded big river. In the same way the stream of learning inaugurated by Vidyavihar increased rapidly in the subsequent period with a variety of new academic activities and the small stream of the past became now a fully expanded river like the Ganges! Now thousands of students are receiving instruction in the two original Arts and Science streams. This college is affiliated to the University of Mumbai. All facilities are made available to the post-graduate students to register themselves for their M.A., M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees of the University of Mumbai from the college.

K.J. Somaiya College of Arts and Science is one of the few colleges which imparts instruction in many languages. This Vidyavihar's college imparts instruction in English, Sanskrit, Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati at special level and Persian, French, Kannada and Sindhi at general level. Also Geology is available for study at B.Sc. as an optional subject.

The college has N.S.S. and N.C.C. units about which it can be proud of. Both the units received recognition as best units of the college for several years in the University and the B.N. Some of the cadets from the N.C.C.

had put up performance of a high standard. The college unit has won first prize continuously for ten years. One of those prize winners was Mr. Vinod Neb who on becoming a pilot shot down a Pakistani air craft during Indo-Pak war. For this act of great valour the President of India had awarded him a medal and a citation.

A few useful schemes and programmes are undertaken by the college. Among them are: 'The Teacher-Student Guide Scheme', 'The book-loan scheme', 'Vocational Guidance Bureau', the most important programme is that of daily mass-prayer. Besides this classes for Bhagvat Gita and moral education are being regularly conducted. This may be said to be the distinguishing feature of the college.

By 1961 that is the following year of its functioning, the strength of the students rose to over a thousand mark. It indicated that the residents of the Kirol village and the outlying areas were in need of such an educational institution. It was their old demand which was met by the establishment of Vidyavihar College. Some years after the college had opened its portals, it was felt that the day-classes denied educational opportunities to working students; hence in 1964 evening classes were started; as these prevented some working students from joining the programme morning classes replaced them after a year. These operated from 6.45 a.m. to 9.45 a.m. on all days of the week in the faculties of Arts and later Commerce also.

The local residents were demanding a new railway station in between Kurla and Ghatkopar to facilitate travelling from such areas.

Vidyavihar upheld this demand for a new and convenient railway station and vigorously followed up the demand with the railway ministry. They were successful in achieving their goal. In a period of three months a new railway station by the name of Vidyavihar railway station between Kurla and Ghatkopar became a reality.

The then Defence Minister Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon inaugurated the Vidyavihar railway station in September 1961.

In June 1962, 'Adhyapan Mandir' (Temple of Teaching) was set up. This is known as Mrs. S. K. Somaiya Junior College of Education. 'Adhyapan Mandir' is an institution to provide training to the female teachers in the primary schools. There was a great demand for trained teachers in the primary schools. This Junior College of Education was started with an objective of

fulfilling that demand and enabling young women in seeking employment in primary schools. It was with a view to meet their financial needs and making them eligible by such training for employment in primary schools .

Adhyapan Mandir was the only junior college of this type in Maharashtra. The women teachers here receive instruction in four media – Marathi, Gujarati, Hindi and English.

The strength of women candidates for such a training is ever increasing. The college had started a correspondence course of one-year duration at the request of the State Government for such training.

In August 1963, the ‘Tantra Niketan Vidyalaya’ (College of Technical Education) was started by the name of ‘The K. J. Somaiya Polytechnic. Vidyavihar’ had submitted the proposal for starting a polytechnic to the Government actually in May 1963. Vidyavihar had not to wait for long. The Central and State governments with full confidence in the institution granted the necessary sanction for the proposal. The college started functioning in the Southern wing of the Arts and Science College building. The laying of the foundation stone ceremony of a new building was performed by the then Railway Minister, Mr. S. K. Patil, on 23rd May 1965. The function was presided over by Maharashtra State Home Minister, Mr. D. S. Desai. Only three faculties namely electrical, civil and mechanical were started to begin with. Immediately after that electronics, instrument engineering and automobile engineering, these branches were proposed to be started. These courses in engineering were of great significance from the social point of view. The proposal for these courses was sent to the Government for sanction.

The imposing building in which the polytechnic is housed stands in Vidyavihar’s magnificent ‘City of Learning’.

‘Mr. S. K. Somaiya Vinay Mandir’ affiliated to Junior College of Education was established in 1965. In 1975 a Junior College attached to it was started. The Vinay Mandir provides education facilities from the primary school to the secondary school certificate examination (S.S.C.) and then up to 12th standard (H.S.C.) examination. In Vinay Mandir all subjects are taught. Further to meet the pressing demand from parents K. G. Classes (Balavatika) with Gujarati medium were started for tiny tots. In the Balvatika Sanskrit and English languages are introduced from 1970 to get the children acquainted with the elements of the languages.

In 1972 Commerce College was started and the original K. J. Somaiya College of Arts and Science was now bifurcated and two colleges were created (1) K. J. Somaiya College of Arts and Commerce and (2) K. J. Somaiya College of Science.

The number of Vidyavihar colleges was increasing every year. Students came from other states and also from foreign countries. In view of the ever increasing number of such students a six storeyed big building for hostel was constructed. This building was to be the hostel for 270 students. In addition to that, arrangements were made to build quarters for teachers and professors. The laying of the foundation stone ceremony for the hostel was performed by the then Union Home Minister Mr. Yashwantrao Chavan. The Maharashtra State Home Minister Mr. Vasant Rao Naik presided over the function.

The success of industry and business depends on intelligent and skillful management combined with advanced and latest technology. Dr. Shantilalji Somaiya, the head of the Somaiya Group of Industries and the vice-president of the Vidyavihar was aware that the present Age was the Age of computers. He took quick notice of the signals and needs of the time and incorporated the new scientific studies in the project of education of the Vidyavihar.

In 1981, the K. J. Somaiya Institute of Management Studies and Research Institute was established. This Institute has earned the recognition and reputation as one of the institutes of high caliber in the management studies and research in Mumbai during the last fifteen years or so. A variety of useful courses of study is available in the Institute.

Somaiya Institute of Journalism and Mass Communication was established in 1981. Newspapers and various contacts with the masses of people has gained great importance now. This has emerged as a new profession and is gaining in importance day by day. This Institute has the privilege to secure the association and co-operation of the leading newspapers and experienced and reputed journalists from Mumbai.

The Institute has started one year post-graduate Diploma Course in Journalism. The Institute has achieved high reputation during the last fifteen years. Many young students who graduated from this Institute are working as sub-editors in leading newspapers and magazines and many are doing journalistic work in various newspapers and print media.

'Somaiya Computer Centre' was opened in Vidyavihar in 1982 where all types of necessary instruction was provided and research was conducted during the last fifteen years.

The K. J. Somaiya College of Engineering was formally inaugurated in 1983. The establishment of this college is a significant mile-stone in the course of the march of Vidyavihar's academic progress. A four-year Degree Course in Electornics Engineering, Production Engineering and Machine Tool Engineering is available at this Engineering College.

K. J. Somaiya Institute of Technical Training and Research was inaugurated in 1987. the Institute provides training in different courses. This branch of training is intended to promote practical, technical skills in the students and build self-confidence among the trainees.

K. J. Somaiya Industrial Training Institute was started in 1988. Two-year training courses are available to the students in Domestic and Industrial Electronics, Mechanical Project, Civil Draftsman trades. A part-time Bridge Course in Electronics is also conducted in the evening.

The K. J. Somaiya College of Comprehensive Education, Training and Research, for Teachers was founded in 1990. It was affiliated to the University of Mumbai. The college provides education and training qualifying for the 'Bachelor of Education' degree. Teachers get education of high quality teaching-methods of school teaching and trends of teaching in this college. The noteworthy feature of this Institute is that facilities for research in teaching are also made available in the college.

A symposium was held on the topic of 'Modern trends and values in education'. This college has also developed organizations for 'Department of Education Vocational Guidance and Counselling'. An Educational Technology Cell is also provided. Also the college maintains an update video library.

Earlier in 1989 the 'Somaiya Bharatiya Sanskriti' (Indian Cultural Centre) Institute was organized. This center endeavors to assimilate the fund of knowledge available through the study of ancient texts and to see that it reaches out to the modern generation through teaching by their teachers.

The cultural center has prepared a course of study based on the ancient literature namely the Vedas, the Upanishadas, theology and other Indian texts of the ancient times relating to cultural activities. The need of the

hour is to disseminate the values of life, convictions and loyalties preserved and maintained by the Indian culture to reach out to all layers of the present society. Karamshibhai had realized the significance of implanting the seeds of cultural values of life in the minds of children in the formative stage in primary schools. The course of cultural study was therefore drawn up for teaching with this specific purpose as the teachers were going to shape their lives. The Somaiya trust shoulders the responsibility of food and board of all such students and teachers who enroll themselves for this cultural education. This scheme therefore attracts many candidates from outside Mumbai and from abroad. The speciality of this scheme is that no fees are charged for the cultural education.

The cultural center of the Vidyavihar had duly received the sanction from the Government of Maharashtra. Also courses at this center are conducted for B.Ed. teachers during vacation. The center also conducts classes to teach Sanskrit language for Indian Administrative Service (I.A.S.) and guide them about the study. The Government of Maharashtra has awarded recognition to the Cultural Centre as a cultural and research institution. The cultural center occasionally holds national and international seminars and symposia with the co-operation of the established and successful institutes in the academic field.

The K. J. Somaiya Indological Research Institute was founded in 1990. The Institute has undertaken the following projects:

1. Commentary on spiritual subject in the RigVeda based on the philosophical approach by Arobindo
2. Revision of commentary on theology that is foolproof social history and
3. The study of Botany with references to the Puranas (mythology of the Hindus) and especially to Agni-Puran.

The Institute proposes to undertake many other projects.

The institution of 'Kalabhavan' (Art-Home) was started on a small scale. The tailoring, embroidery and designing and fancy work classes were conducted. The 'Kalabhavan' conducts Diploma Courses for which Maharashtra Technical Training Board has extended its approval and recognition.

With a view to providing training for preparing excellent quality pickles

and eatables and offering employment to poor and needy women the 'Su-Ruchi' (Good Taste) Institution was started in 1969.

'Kala-Kendra' (Art-centre) is also a preliminary small section of 'Su-Ruchi'. Poor and skilled women get some type of handicraft work through this center and earn money.

The K. J. Somaiya Yoga Academy was inaugurated on 30th April 1993 by His Holiness Swami Tadrupanandji. This academy organizes programmes for teachers in respect of Yoga theory and practice.

On 6th December 1993, the K. J. Somaiya Centre of Buddhist Studies was inaugurated by His Holiness the high-priest of Tibet, the Dalai Lama. As Buddhism is a part of Indian Culture, this centre organizes the study of Buddhism also. An International Seminar was organized by this centre in co-operation with Shuchin University, Kyoto (Japan) and the Department of Philosophy of Mumbai University from 6th to 10th March 1995 at Vidyavihar. The discourses on Buddhist philosophy are organized every month at this centre.

The academic complex and extent of Vidyavihar have expanded considerably. The Vidyavihar complex has blossomed by the presence of a variety of educational imposing buildings and the functioning of different faculties within them that adds to their stature.

The Vidyavihar was formed and developed on the once neglected desolate piece of land nearly after three decades or in about thirty-five years. The vast stretch of this land is now replete with academic atmosphere – the students, teachers, professors, guests and workers of all kinds devoted to the educational activities. In this Vidyavihar complex a lively spirit of dynamic activities in the form of learning and teaching is incessantly reflected like a chain of festive events. Karamshibhai's grand educational dream has assumed a splendid form in actual reality. Saint Dnyaneshwar in this Pasayadan (prayer for benediction) has referred to Chetana Chintamaniche Gaon' (the habitation of wish-fulfilling divine spirit). If we call this Vidyavihar as a dream that has materialized it may not be an overstatement.

Saint Tukaram in one of his verses has called his Dehu township as 'Dhanya Dehu gaon' (Blessed place of Dehu). Karamshibhai today may definitely experience the same sentiment at the sight of the present Vidyavihar.

He might say 'Blessed is my Vidyavihar!' To this blessed banyan tree of Vidyavihar one branch of learning has sprung up from July 1995 that is the K. J. Somaiya Medical College and 'The K. J. Somaiya Hospital and Research Centre'. They are situated on a very spacious tract of land some six kilometers from Vidyavihar in the Sion area of Mumbai. This by the way is the 22nd institution sponsored and built by the 'Somaiya Trust' and Somaiya Vidyavihar.

The Medical college has acquired the recognition of the Medical Council of India by fulfilling all the requirements of the Council. The graduates from this Medical College will be eligible for taking examination for F.M.G. of the U.S.A. which is considered as a high category course.

The Somaiya Hospital is equipped with 700 beds for poor patients free of charge. A hundred medical students are receiving medical education and training here. This college is affiliated to the University of Mumbai and it was started without taking financial aid for one year from the Government. This may be the first private medical college started without government financial aid in the city of Mumbai. The progress made by the Somaiya Centre of Health Care in different medical systems during the last six years is commendable. The Health Organizations here are known by the name of Somaiya Ayurvihar (Abode of Health).

Rotary Club is a well-known world organization ready to serve humanity. Its branches and sub-branches are spread all over the world. Millions of men are members of the rotary clubs. It is known as 'Rotary International'.

The Rotary International and the various branches of the Rotary Club in Mumbai have decided to start an eye-bank project with the help of the 'Eye-Bank Association of India'. They have appealed to the K. J. Somaiya Medical Trust for co-operation. The 'Trust' was founded for selfless service for humanity so its founder Mr. K. J. Somaiya immediately responded favourably, with active co-operation. The Somaiya Rotary Eye-Bank project was duly established in the Hospital within the premises of the Somaiya Ayurvihar.

The inauguration ceremony of the 'Rotary Eye Bank' was performed in Centaur Hotel at Juhu-Santacruz, by the President of the Rotary International for the year 1993-94, Dr. Robert R. Barth on 16th December 1992. The Eye-Bank is functioning satisfactorily.

Many schemes and programmes are organized in order to enrich the cultural and academic life of the students in the atmosphere of the Vidyavihar. Seminars, Workshops, Orientation Programmes and Conferences are frequently held. Some of the noteworthy seminars and conferences are as follows:

1. University education in Prospect and Retrospect
2. Sociological Dimensions of Rural Development
3. Freedom struggle in Third World Countries
4. Contemporary Women novelists
5. Indo-English Literature
6. Management of change
7. and Silver Jubilee Conference of the Indian Association of American Studies

Another noteworthy feature of the Vidyavihar's Arts and Science college is its academic collaboration with American institution such as the University of South Carolina Spartanburgh, the Brevard Community College at Cocoa in Florida, and the Waukesha County Technical College in Wisconsin State.

Among the highly qualified faculty are Fulbright Scholars and teachers. They are invited for teaching in the colleges and universities in the developed countries like America, Britain, Germany and France and in the developing countries of Asia and Africa. Most of the professors of these colleges have secured Ph.D. degree and some of them are recognized guides for Ph.D. candidates.

The venerable guests who had graced and blessed Vidyanagari – the City of Learning – include among others His Holiness the Shankaracharya, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Swami Chinmayananda and Pandurangshastri Athavaley. The City of Learning was visited by eminent dignitaries like Messers Morarji Desai, Dr. Karansingh, S. M. Joshi, P. B. Gajendragadkar, P. L. Deshpande, Madhukarrao Choudhari, A. D. Shroff, Nijalingappa, Virendra Patel, S. K. Patil, G. D. Parikh, G. I. Mehta. Most of these dignitaries were from the political field, some from the social, academic and cultural fields. Their visits were organized on appropriate occasions suitable to their respective fields of activities.

There always goes on some cultural programme or the other in the

premises of the Vidyavihar. The great poet of Gujarat and educationist, Mr. Umashankar Joshi, was honoured in 1968 for having been awarded Dnyanpitha Award. Mr. P. L. Deshpande, one of the most popular writers in Marathi, spoke on the occasion of the centenary celebration of the great Marathi poet, Mr. Keshvasuta. Many such programmes were organised and are being organised by the college.

A programme which needs a special mention took place on 20th March 1975. It was the felicitation ceremony of great Kannada poet, Dr. D. R. Bendre, who was the recipient of 'Sahitya Academy and Dnyanpith' Awards (Literature, Learning) in Kannada literature. The two institutions namely the Literature Academy and the 'Learning Foundation' are the highest bodies on All-India level which award prizes for excellent literature and learning. On that occasion speakers highly applauded his contribution, to literature and his many splendoured personality. Besides this a bunch of salutary poems in Sanskrit, Hindi and Marathi along with Sanskrit and Hindi translation of his selected poems was also published on the occasion. The great poet was presented with an address on behalf of Somaiya Vidyavihar at the hands of the then Vice-President of India, Mr. B. D. Jatti.

Another Kannada young poet and novelist Mr. Anantamurti was also felicitated by Vidyavihar when 'Dnyanpitha' honoured him with an award in 1995.

The founder of the Vidyavihar, Sriman Karamshibhai Somaiya has given the following message to students in his institutions.

MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER
SHRI KARMASHI J. SOMAIYA
TO THE STUDENTS

My dear young students,
Welcome to the Institutions of the Vidyavihar.
Your finest hour is here
The future belongs to you.
Let us all zealously work together and
Dedicate ourselves to build India of our dreams.

Remember,

Nothing was ever achieved without hard work.

Be bold but be not be bowled over.

Let truth and duty be your watchwords.

Never despair in the face of setbacks.

Keep courage and continue to work with fortitude.

Have faith in yourselves and in the Almighty.

Strive for your goals and the future is yours!



Vidyavihar in Retrospect

ब॒आ ब॒म्या न॒गरी॑।

That Beautiful City

Vidyavihar in Retrospect

A Sanskrit adage says there is no higher creed than service to humanity. Having full faith in this creed Karamshibhai has nurtured wholeheartedly with body, soul and wealth 'Vidyavihar', the academic institution and Ayurvihar, the health care service. How and to what extent he had to struggle for these projects in the initial stages can be gleaned from the speeches and reminiscences of the related contemporary persons. With a view to collecting such information the present writer interviewed some such persons from which the endeavouring aspect of Karamshibhai's personality is manifested.

Professor Amritlal Yagnik recalling it said, "Once, Karamshibhai had attended a function in the Ruia College (Mumbai) where we had met. He proposed that I should take up the reins of the Arts and Science College to be shortly started by the Vidyavihar, as the first Principal of the College. I explained to him that for such a proposal he would have to seek the consent of the 'Shikshan Prasarak Mandal' (Association for Spread of Education). I made it clear that I was not merely Professor of the College but also the Chief of the Management and a Life Member of the Institution.

Karamshibhai said, "God has given me a lot of wealth and now I wish to do some good work for education. If you join our institution we shall pay you whatever salary you demand.' I told him, 'I do not expect a high salary. I shall join your institution with an objective.'

Thereafter Karamshibhai sent a letter to the 'Shikshan Prasarak Mandal'

in connection with that proposal. The 'Education Association' refused to relieve me from its service. However because of insistent requests from Karamshibhai I resigned my professor-ship and life membership of the 'Shikshan Prasarak Mandal' and joined this institution.

The Vidyavihar college started in June 1960 while the construction work of the college building was in progress. We were admitting students. Karamshibhai personally paid attention to all the developments. Generally the sponsors and donors do not bestow that much care on such work. In my introductory speech on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the college I had said that Karamshibhai wishes to promote cultural activities and nourish social values along with academic activities. It is for this reason that he has donated a huge amount for the college. Karamshibhai was not pleased when I called him a mere donor. He was not a mere donor but the founder of the institution.

Karamshibhai had some settled views about conducting educational process in the college. He was displeased with co-education where boys and girls move and mix freely. He did not relish the idea that boys and girls should mix freely in the culture programmes or that they stage dramas where both boys and girls play their respective roles. Smoking was strictly prohibited in the college premises. He did not approve of boys growing long hair and girls cutting it short or wearing short and tight skirts and upper wares in the name of the latest fashion.

He was strict about attendance of students at the mass-prayers and moral instruction class. The aims and objectives of Karamshibhai were indeed very praiseworthy but in the practical working some of his approaches and thoughts met with some opposition from the faculty and students. On a few occasions differences of opinion arose while enforcing discipline.

Once the Rector of the University of Mumbai, a great thinker and a reputed academician, Mr. Gowardhandas Parekh was inspecting the college records in my office. He was a habitual smoker, so he lit up a cigarette. I objected and told him he could not smoke in the office as per our rules. He said, "It's my habit, besides I do not smoke in front of the students. Your rules are troublesome to those who control your college. They are good for students."

Mr. Parekh smarted under the resistance to his smoking. The elderly and

senior officers tried to bring him round by explaining the purpose behind the rule but the Rector had taken it very seriously. There were some differences of opinion between Karamshibhai and myself on some such issues. A difference arose between us over management of the college and then I resigned but our personal relations continued to be cordial.

Gandhian worker, Ms. Usha Mehta, recollected. She said, "The Secretary of the Somaiya Vidyavihar, Mr. P. M. Kavadia, and myself were studying together in the Wilson college. I had the privilege to hear about Karamshibhai's pride in Hinduism and Indian culture and the efforts he was making to promote them before I could meet him. They created a sense of great respect for such a person. I met him in 1960 for the first time. I felt I should fall at his feet and salute him when I saw the pleasant and powerful personality. I was taken on the Committee of Founders of the Vidyavihar as a Member.

Mr. Mansukhlal Jhaveri was an eminent writer and orator from Gujarat. He was Principal of a College also. Karamshibhai wished to bring him to his college. Both of us therefore went to meet him. Mr. Mansukhbhai was a regular smoker whereas Karamshibhai hated smoking. In addition to that he stubbornly stuck to his principles. So the proposal did not materialize.

As I was taken on the Council as a Founder Member I had the opportunity to work with him for interviewing candidates. I easily noticed that Karamshibhai could judge a candidate correctly immediately at first sight. On account of that uncanny talent he has gathered excellent persons in his vast organization. He used to allow full scope for the development of a personality of an individual who was considered good by him. He always insisted on getting the best men to work in the college irrespective of the expenses. He said, 'Our college, our academic institutions should become one of the most ideal institutions.' Karamshibhai possesses an overwhelming love for learning which makes him disregard considerations of money either as an object of attraction or importance.

Karamshibhai treats an educational institution as a temple. He firmly believes that no smoking should be allowed at such sacred places. One can enjoy one's addictions and habits individually in one's private life at the most. One has full liberty to indulge in such practices when it is confined to the individual only. But in the educational institutions and at public places this discipline has to be observed. This rule applies to all without exception.

This gentle and courteous Karamshibhai becomes a stern task-master in the observance of his principles.

He has great regard for Hinduism and Indian culture. He is pained greatly that poor people become easy prey to conversion of religion for the sake of money. One should never confuse religion with social and political life. He intensely felt that no religious community should be given greater advantage for securing votes in elections. He was very much influenced by spiritualism because of his close contacts with venerable persons like Pandurang Shastri Athavaley, Dongre Maharaj, Muraribapu and other saintly persons.

Once he decides to take up any work Karamshibhai will not retrace his step for even an inch but will be in the forefront with all his strength and attention. He has such an intense love for humanity in his heart of hearts that this living force does not prevent him from helping even his enemy in difficulty. We find a number of such instances in his career of humanitarian activities.

No doubt after getting enriched by education, students should stand on their own. They should be self-supporting but at the same time they should participate in making their nation prosperous and great. They should become citizens of high moral character. This was his ardent yearning all the time.

The wife of Karamshibhai, Mrs. Sakarbai, like her husband led a simple life and was devoted to family life as well as to spiritual matters. She was an ideal wife and mother.

The head of the teacher's college, Mrs. Jasvantiben Desai furnished the following account of her experience. She said, "My friend, Usha Mehta, had asked me to apply for employment in Vidyavihar. So I applied there. They required teachers with basic training qualifications. I was interviewed by Karamshibhai himself. I was wonder struck on seeing him as he was wearing 'khadi' clothes! I had heard that Karamshibhai was a very rich man. I could not avoid being impressed by his simplicity and his love for education. After my interview I was appointed as a teacher on 20th June 1962. Thereafter we used to meet frequently for discussing matters relating to education.

Karamshibhai entertains love and respect for every language in his mind. He wishes that instruction should be provided in Gujarati, Hindi, English, Marathi and Sanskrit and other languages also. He felt that even if ten students wish to offer a subject for study, arrangements should be made for

such a class with that number. This was his sincere desire. He further wished that there should be separate buildings for teaching different languages and between them a library should be situated. He also wanted residential quarters equipped with all facilities for teachers, lecturers, professors and other employees. There should be a variety of cultural programmes besides the desired regular studies. He had purposefully visited many advanced and progressive academic institutions in foreign countries and had collected the necessary information also about their programmes and functioning.

He holds the view that mathematics should receive more attention and for forging national unity. Hindi and Sanskrit should get more importance. He cherishes great veneration for Hinduism and Indian culture. He is fully prepared to spend any amount of money for their propagation. The intense love for these made him insist on girl students wearing bangles on their wrists and a red mark (kumkum tilak) on their foreheads.

Karamshibhai judges people correctly. If he detects any good quality in a person he encourages him. If he found a poor student possessing good intellect and ability to learn he used to bear all the expenses for his education.

Karamshibhai used to visit Vidyavihar very often. He was looking out for cleanliness all over in the premises. He was very keen on everything being clean and in order. He would not tolerate a speck of dust. He used to examine minor things also very minutely. Once when he entered his room nobody was inside but the fan was on. He immediately called the attendant concerned and brought that to his notice.

In case a difficulty arose in connection with academic matters, Mrs. Pramilaben Parekh, and I used to go to Karamshibhai to solve it. He used to give us patient hearing and immediately but thoughtfully used to remove it. He has an amazing capacity to take quick decisions. Whatever contribution I could make to education or have learned from the academic field, is solely due to the guidance and direction from Karamshibhai from time to time.

Like Karamshibhai, all the members of his family accord courteous reception to guests and treat them in a kind manner. I was actually working in their institution but they never treated me as an inferior or an employee. Such kind of dignified treatment even to subordinates made my father to say, 'Look! If you receive salary for service for one month from the Shetji you should exert yourself to do one and a half times work for that monthly salary.'

Sometime back I was suffering from eye trouble for which I was advised to undergo eye-operation. Karamshibhai told me not to worry about work but to take care of my eyes. He contacted an eye-specialist for the eye-test and sent his wife, Sakarben, to accompany me to the ophthalmologist. Such is his deep consideration for other people.

Prof. Dr. Suresh Dalal, famous poet and man of letters from Gujarat, expressed great respect for Karamshibhai and said, I have a great feeling of reverence for him as he is truly a practitioner of ethical work scheme (Karmayogi) as his name denotes. He spends the money that he earns from industry and business for social work. The wealth that he acquires he treats as if it is goddess Laxmi. He is devoted to religion and culture and cherishes a deep love for Sanskrit language. He is working hard for the propagation of Sanskrit.

During my stint at the Somaiya College as a professor we used to organize a variety of cultural programmes with great enthusiasm and present them successfully. Once a programme of vocal music was arranged. It was to be presented by boys and girls. The Principal of the college cautioned us that such mixed presentation of the programme may not please Karamshibhai. But I directly met Karamshibhai and explained to him the outline of our musical programme. He liked it. We successfully performed the programme. I therefore sometimes feel that people without properly understanding Karamshibhai get biased and spread prejudiced reports about him, about his conservatism.

The son of Karamshibhai, Dr. Shantilalji, is in fact my best friend. I have accompanied him in his journey to Geneva. He has great interest in education, culture, music and literature. His wife, Mayaben, and daughter, Harinakshi, are good singers.

Once there was a programme of singing prayers in chorus (Bhajan). We also presented an item of amatory Urdu folk song (Ghazal) at the house of Karamshibhai. At that time Miss Harinakshi sang a Ghazal. Karamshibhai did not relish it. He left the programme and went out. He considers home and college like an asylum. Therefore the persons present there have to observe certain restrictions. Students in the colleges are nowadays not in a mood to bear such things. In this connection I also had some difference of opinion with him. But that does not detract me from holding a feeling of veneration for him in the least.

Principal Dr. M. N. Pandia said, "After the opening of the college in 1960, I often happened to meet Karamshibhai while in employment. He appeared to me as a loving and kind person considering his high position in the business and industrial fields.

His foresight is evident right from the time of selecting the site for the college to the attention to the atmosphere in the college, discipline and the various academic and cultural projects and functions.

He sincerely wishes that a student of this college should make all-round progress in the educational field. He should develop moral character and should lead life in an honourable manner. In view of this objective we used to teach them by forming groups of ten to twenty-five students which facilitated personal contacts. The students used to pay more attention to their studies and cordial relations were developed between us. This also created a feeling of fraternity among the students. The day when sisters tie special bands (Rakhi) on the wrists of brothers for Raksha bandhan was celebrated. Discourses on Srimad Bhagavat Gita were also arranged. A strict rule was enforced that every student had to attend the period of moral instruction. The biographies of great men like Einstein, Socrates, Sant Dnyaneshwar, Sant Tukaram, Mahatma Gandhi were selected for study. A general knowledge test was held at the end of the year. The meetings of the organisation of parents were annually held and the suggestions made by this body received due attention.

A meeting of the Management and the staff was held every fortnight. Karamshibhai used to be in the chair. All difficulties and suggestions were considered in those meetings.

A search for talented students was undertaken and such students were given incentives to develop their talents. The students who had scored 60% to 70% in the examinations were encouraged to take I.A.S. or I.P.S. examinations.

We had also established a 'Past-Students' union. Their difficulties were heard and suitable solutions were offered or were given serious thought. I have witnessed favourable effects of moral instruction and discourses and also the teachings of Srimad Bhagvat Gita on the minds of students. Some students indulge in smoking in spite of it being harmful to health. Such students must be taken into confidence and persuaded to desist from the evil habit. Now some of the past students who meet us frankly admit that

the moral lessons taught here and the high ideals placed before us positively help us in our present lives. Such is the value of moral instruction.”

The head of Vinay Mandir, Ms. Pramilaaben Parekh, informed me that the institution provides kindergarten and Primary School and education from First to Fourth classes and then from fifth standard to twelfth standard as secondary and higher secondary classes. The teachers’ college is also attached to Vinay Mandir. Thus a compact teaching scheme is at work.

I was associated with this Institution from 1973. I did not know Vidyavihar before that. I had applied here in response to an advertisement. I was interviewed by Karamshibhai himself. He has some independent views about education. He advocates certain opinions about co-education of boys and girls. He has no objection for co-education of children upto seventh standard. But children between the ages of twelve and fourteen are mentally in a confused state therefore they should not be taught together from eighth to the tenth standard. They may be allowed co-education after the age of sixteen as they come to know their individual responsibility. I have no idea whether Karamshibhai had made a special study of psychology but one thing must be said that his observation and thoughts about the human mind are superb. There is no doubt about that.

He had certain views about the dress of male and female students. He wanted female students to wear bangles and an auspicious red mark on the foreheads. I myself was not wearing bangles and there was no special reason for that. I did not like to wear ornaments. He did not tell me anything directly about it. But he used to say, ‘There is a rule for female students in our college that they should wear bangles and put red colour mark on their foreheads...’ Then I realized that what we preach must first be practiced by us.

He had great compassion for the poor. While travelling in Madhya Pradesh he saw a woman wearing torn clothes full of dust and dirt. Shetji told the woman to keep the clothes clean. The woman replied, ‘Sir! I have no other clothes with me. If I want to wash these clothes what can I wear?’ Karamshibhai was very much pained to hear her reply. His mind was filled with compassion. He was determined to do something for the poor and the destitute. He founded the organization for Tribal Welfare (Giri-Vanvasi Pragati Mandal).

Karamshibhai does not like uncleanness in any form. He wants to see everything spick and span. Once he had gone to attend a meeting where he found a lot of dust. He immediately ordered for a broom. The organisers of the meeting realised their mistake. They begged his pardon and the hall was swept properly and it was spotless and pleasant.

He is a great lover of Sanskrit. Therefore a discourses in Sanskrit are arranged at his residence once a month. In order to propagate Sanskrit he founded an institution called 'Sur-Bharati'. A complete information about that is furnished in a separate chapter.

Although he was favoured with all-sided prosperity he was frugal. He was keen on using things really needed and only to the extent necessary. While writing something, use paper economically so that the paper contains the passage adequately. Do not waste paper by writing a few lines on a big sheet of paper. A small sheet of paper left blank or unused may not cause great loss but the habit of wasting such minor things may lead to big losses. These bad habits result in national losses, he used to say.

Ms. Jayantiben Desai said that when she came to know that 'Teachers Training College' was to be started in the premises of the Vidyavihar, she applied for employment there. "I was interviewed by Karamshibhai and was appointed Principal of the 'Teacher Training College' in July 1962. She said, "The name of the college was Srimati Sakarben Somaiya Junior College of Education'. In 1974 it was changed to Shri S. K. Somaiya Junior College of Education'. There were already two training colleges between Ghatkopar and Mumbai. Ours was the third. Karamshibhai did not favour the barrier of a single medium of instruction. He wanted to make it a multi-media college. His policy was initially opposed by some people and even the press criticized it as unnecessary burden for the students. He was not deterred by such criticism. He went ahead with his policy according to which English was to be the medium of teaching Mathematics and Science and arrangements were made to teach other subjects in Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi or other medium of the choice of the students. The examination results of our Institution were good at that time and continue to be so also today.

While working in this institution we were intensely made aware of the necessity to make advance in our learning and teaching abilities. Karamshibhai wants progress, so he pays personal attention to all things related to education. This encouraged us to work with great enthusiasm.

What is important in a training college is experiments. Karamshibhai used to tell us not to worry about expenses. He was ready to spend any amount on experiments. His objective was to make the institution a brilliant one.

Karamshibhai and for that matter all the members of his family have this speciality that they do not make any adverse distinction as employers and employees. They treat the employees with dignity and on terms of equality. Mrs. Sakarben was like a mother to us. She used to treat us like her daughter.

Karamshibhai and his wife, Mrs. Sakarben, lead a simple life. There is no show of their riches. He does not say one thing here and another there. He acts as he says. He will not run into rage at any body in case of a mistake or a lapse in work on the part of his employees. He will explain it coolly. If any error has been committed by himself he will frankly admit it. He has no reservation in mind. He is simple, straightforward and without a sense of ego in his behaviour.

Somaiya Vidyavihar has gained reputation as a holy place of education not only in the academic field of Maharashtra but also of the whole of India. Karamshibhai's dream or objective of education has assumed concrete form as Vidyavihar. The progress of Vidyavihar is substantial. An ever expanding and new horizons of academic development are kept in view.

The Somaiya Trust has also undertaken some projects complementary to the academic field. One of them is the 'Somaiya Publications Book Centre Private Ltd.'. The inauguration of this Publishing Institution was performed by the then Union Education Minister, Dr. Triguna Sen, on 25th January 1967. At that time the book entitled 'Citizens of Tomorrow' was declared published. These books though small in size, have coloured illustrations relevant to the theme and made very attractive. The printing work is executed with skill and sense of beauty. In these booklets students are furnished with easy information on outstanding principles of science and technology. The book series is published not only in English but also in Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi and other five languages, that is in all nine National languages. Besides this a number of books containing stories and songs are published in attractive designs for the entertainment of students. These booklets are meant for children but for the grown ups books representing different forms

of literature such as stories, fiction, drama and other varieties are published from time to time.

The 'Book Centre Private Ltd.' in fact was established in 1954. This Publishing Institute undertakes the work of giving wide publicity to the books of fundamental significance released or about to be released in India and outside in bulk and retail forms.

This Publishing Institute is closely related to the famous Publishing Houses in India and the U.S.A. This Book Centre manages the supply of books to universities and educational institutions in India. The Book Centre has also provided the facility to pay annual subscription to a number of journals published outside India.

Karamshibhai had purposefully invited Dr. Koshe who was working as the incharge of a Hostel in Pune for the work of education and publication. In relation to that Dr. Koshe said, "I had met Karamshibhai in 1970. He had appointed me as a Chief Promoter of Somaiya Publications."

When Karamshibhai had gone to America to see his ailing son-in-law there, he collected a lot of information about the educational institutions and systems of education there. On his return to India he called Dr. Hulyalkar and me and discussed what and how changes may be brought about and what additional subjects may be incorporated in the curriculum to reform the present system. The discussions were held for two days and a list of the proposals was drawn up.

Karamshibhai had brought useful information not only about courses of study and systems of education but also about the structure of the buildings of the educational institutions. In short he takes great interest in education. His outlook on education and thoughts about it are independent. He desires that education should be a tool to make the life of a student prosperous and complete. He has therefore equipped Vidyavihar with several moral and cultural schemes and projects. He is not a bigot, obscurantist or even conservative in his attitude. He is more advanced and progressive than most people of his age. He takes a conscious notice of a piece of good work or a talented man. When he learnt about good examination results of Balmohan High School at Dadar, he asked the teachers from Vidyavihar High School to make a survey about the methods of their teaching and the way they prepare the students to take examinations.

His attitude to recognize good work is not confined to academic matters alone but applies to all other fields such as agriculture, horticulture etc. He takes notice of good work and visits the places to have a personal look at such individuals and areas.

He closely watches every bit of work and gets the necessary information about it and then sees whether the work is carried out properly or not. His attention is focused on minor details also. He inspects the work of printing and publishing and also examines the vouchers. At times there are difference of opinions relating to work but Karamshibhai does not oppose for the sake of opposing. If he is convinced about the desirability of something he will staunchly support it. He explains the work to the workers in clear terms. He receives many letters. He reads them all carefully and sends replies. Every letter that is typed and put up for his signature, is minutely examined by him before signing it. When asked why he does not appoint a P.A. for such work he said, "You form a habit and he may not be present all the time. How to manage then? We can carry out our work any time!"

He emphasizes the moral, religious and cultural education of students.

Intelligent and scholarly students go to foreign countries for further education and seek employment and settle there. The reason for this is that in our country such highly qualified students have no scope to develop their skills and talents. This is their argument. It is a great national loss. He always thinks and feels that something must be done to prevent this drain.

He holds certain views on behaviour, dress, hair-do, discipline and such other things. He is firm but not obstinate in such matters.

Karamshibhai in fact has constructed a model educational project in the form of Vidyavihar and made it a prestigious educational institution not only in the state of Maharashtra but also the whole of India. Students from all corners of India are attracted to Vidyavihar for education. Not only this but students from other countries also come here for learning at the institution. The creed of Vidyavihar is 'Knowledge is a great liberating force, the highest satisfaction to the soul'. It shines here with greatest brilliance!



Sur-Bharati

शतशतकोटिशतत्पर्यन्त प्रवहतात्
अंशकृतमन्दाकिनी।

*Let the celestial Ganges of Sanskrit perennially flow for a
thousand million years.*

Sur-Bharati

We have already referred to the multi-lingual skill of Karamshibhai who knew seven languages – Kutchi, Gujarati, Marwari, Sanskrit, Hindi, Marathi and English.

As Kutchi is his mother tongue and the regional language, Gujarati, his state-language, Marwari his language of the close neighbours, Hindi and English his business languages but Karamshibhai gives foremost place to Marathi as his mother tongue and to Sanskrit as the national language.

Since childhood Karamshibhai developed affinity for Sanskrit along with Marathi and Gujarati from his school days. He was immensely fond of Sanskrit language. The sweetness of the language and beauty of the sound of its words is very charming. Sanskrit aphorisms have the capacity to express thoughts and feelings in a few words correctly. It has become a favourite exercise for many people to intersperse Sanskrit pithy quotations in their talk because of the vivacity of the language. This virtue of the language makes it popular and commendable.

भाषासु मुख्या मधुरा दिव्या गीर्वाणभारती ।

तस्माद्धि काव्यं मधुरं तस्मादपि सुभाषितम् ॥

(Girvanbharati that is the Sanskrit language is a sweet sublime language of the gods. The lyrics and verses in that language are very sweet but the aphorisms are sweeter than the verses.)

Language is an indication of the social progress made by the people

speaking that language. All learned men have acknowledged Sanskrit as the first pure and developed language of the world from the times of the Vedas. 'Sanskriti Sanskrutáshritá' that is Indian Culture rests on support of Sanskrit language.

Indian Culture equipped and enriched by such organs as religion, literature, art, learning and the values nurtured by it and the highest peak of its development give glimpses of spiritualism evident in Vedic literature, philosophy, mythology, epics, drama and a host of other forms which are abundant in Sanskrit. Indian culture cannot be properly understood without the aid of Sanskrit. Hence the learning and teaching of Sanskrit should be fresh and lively.

It was by the good fortune of the Eastern Languages that India found a grammarian of an unequalled talent and ability. Whatever form he outlined in all details of the Sanskrit language in his books became an all-time accomplishment. The name of the greatest grammarian of the world is Panini. He was born in ancient 'Gandhar (modern Afghanistan) and the place at which he was born is Shalatur.

The name of the volume containing the subtly smooth stylish formulae that he composed is 'Ashtadhyayi' (book of eight-chapters or book oriented to all directions). The language which was fashioned by 'Ashtadhyayi', subsequently came to be known as 'Sanskrit'. Poet Dandin glorified it as 'Deva-Vani' Divine language. He says 'Sanskrit is a divine language which is followed by great sages'.

This language created a great tradition of light and entertainment as well as serious and scientific literature. This language, this literature and the wealth contained in both has left an ever-lasting impact not only on the people of India but also outside India, especially on the language, people and traditions of the Eastern countries.

In view of the greatness of the Sanskrit language, a few learned men had insisted on making Sanskrit the national language at the time of framing the new Constitution of Free-India. The architect of the Indian Constitution, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, also favoured this view.

This language is not a 'mother tongue' of any region. This language is highly regarded as very valuable because it has contributed much to the development and enrichment of Indian languages.

This importance of Sanskrit in the national life of India is reflected in the speeches and writings of many modern thinkers. The first Prime Minister of India, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, had said, "Which is the greatest treasure of India? Which is the greatest heritage? If anybody should ask that question Nehru said, 'I will emphatically say it is the Sanskrit language, Sanskrit literature and whatever is contained there in'. It is on account of this conviction that his government set up a Sanskrit Commission.

It was from his school days that Karamshibhai had developed pride and love and sense of its importance. He used to study Sanskrit with great love and diligence. He used to enjoy its beauty and used to speak it with some effort. Once he had scored 80% marks in Sanskrit and won a prize of Rs. 5/-

However, as he was very much engaged in his trade and business he could not devote time to Sanskrit which he loved. He did not find any opportunity to converse in Sanskrit. But after a few years when he secured prosperity and stability in his trade and business, his original love of education was revived. He had otherwise also when fully occupied with his business duties and responsibilities provided educational facilities for rural students by starting secondary schools at some places. He was not satisfied only with that contribution to education. He is not a person to be satisfied with little something. The scope and range of his vision and leap are big and wide. He therefore brought into existence the magnificent educational project of Vidyavihar near Ghatkopar in 1960. We have already referred to the project elsewhere in the book.

Karamshibhai fired by the love of Sanskrit planted a sapling 'Sur-Bharati' in the spacious premises of Vidyavihar in the year 1967.

The Somaiya Sanskrit Centre named as 'Sur-Bharati' intends to encourage and promote Sanskrit and propagate it with enthusiasm. The centres of 'Sur-Bharati' were not confined to Maharashtra but are spread over Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi, Gwalior, Devariya, Vijapur and other places and they are functioning well.

Competitions in Sanskrit conversation and writing are organised on behalf of the centre. Conferences and seminars are also held and participants are encouraged to discuss in Sanskrit. The administration of these centres is mainly carried out in Sanskrit only.

Sur-Bharati conducts free Sanskrit classes or learning centres in the suburbs of Mumbai. The centres hold examinations in the subject. About two thousand candidates take the examinations.

All Sur-Bharati centres in Maharashtra have libraries of Sanskrit literature and hold conferences at the Sanskrit learning centres. A conference of this kind was held in December 1974. A conference of teachers of Sanskrit in schools and that of professors of Sanskrit in colleges were also organized. Certain projects are undertaken such as planning courses of study to implement the curriculum of Sanskrit for the secondary schools.

A quarterly journal is issued to provide complete information about the various projects and the centres of 'Sur-Bharati' and their activities.

Sur-Bharati has published a book with the title 'Bal Sahitya Sarita' (stream of literature for children) containing seventeen stories in Sanskrit compiled and edited by Ms. Pramila Parekh. This book has used pictorial illustrations to attract the attention of child-readers.

This Sur-Bharati's creeper plant is growing fast and has spread over wide space. Mr. S. D. Kavishwar, a renowned Sanskrit loving Pundit in Maharashtra, has furnished complete information with all details about its expansion in an article written by him. Mr. Kavishwar is one of the dedicated leaders of 'Sur-Bharati'. His article entitled 'Sur-Bharati (Somaiya Trust), Sanskrit-Vishayak Aitihasik Yogadan (Sur-Bharati's historical contribution to the subject of Sanskrit) obviously supports it and provides the following information. This article was written with reference to the unanimous recommendations of the Inspecting Committee appointed by the Union Government. Also an effective recommendation of the Government of Maharashtra wanted to sanction the proposal to start a 'K. J. Somaiya Sanskrit University' in Mumbai from 1972.

Keeping in view the importance of Sanskrit in education, culture, history and the world-affairs especially its special significance in the cultural integration of the Indian nation, the 'Somaiya Trust-Mumbai' had devoted great attention to this language right from the beginning. Sanskrit language receives main consideration at the time of admission of students to the institutions of the Somaiya Trust.

The 'Somaiya Trust' guided by Shri K. J. Somaiya and his son, Dr. Shantilalji K. Somaiya, adopted a programme to propagate and spread

on a very wide scale the learning of Sanskrit from 1968. The real cause for adopting this attitude is that the history of Sanskrit scholarship in India is in fact the history of Sanskrit scholarship in Maharashtra! Such glowing tributes were paid to scholarship in Maharashtra at the 'Conference of Oriental Studies' held at Lahore and presided over by the Sanskrit Pundit 'Maha Mahopadhyaya' Harprasad Shastri. The great Pundit from outside Maharashtra made these comments supported by documentary evidence and meaningful statements, fortified the recommendations.

Maharashtra boasts of a glorious and brilliant role and tradition in relation to Sanskrit. However, the 'White Paper' issued by the Maharashtra State Government in 1968 and amended on 23rd February 1970 relating to education ignored the subject altogether. Such a disappointing situation has arisen that it is feared the Sanskrit subject would be consigned to the museum in Maharashtra as something of no value.

In such disastrous circumstances for the study of Sanskrit, 'Somaiya Trust' was the first to salvage it from the damage. Somaiya Trust played a leading role in creating awareness of the situation for the study of Sanskrit. A 'Sanskrit Education Conference' was convened on 21st April 1970 in Mumbai with the co-operation and participation of fifty educational and Sanskrit favouring institutions. Dr. K. M. Munshi inaugurated the conference. The conference was presided over by famous educationist, Prin. C. R. alias Babasaheb Tayde, The Honourable special guest was Prin. Manoharpant Joshi, the Mayor of Mumbai city, at that time. He was also the spokesman of the conference.

Central Sanskrit University in Maharashtra

In this way the commendable work of creating public awareness about Sanskrit on a country wide basis is being carried out at government and non-government levels by the Somaiya Trust through its branches of Sur-Bharati Centres within and outside Maharashtra for the last 27 years.

The efforts in this respect to propogate and popularize the Central Sanskrit University move in Maharashtra, by the incitement of the then Education Minister, Prof. Anant Namjoshi, for the last 30 years are those made by only the 'Somaiya Trust'. Therefore resolutions urging the government to sanction the demand of a Central Sanskrit University made

by the Somaiya Trust were passed in several meetings and Conferences of Sanskrit. Not only this but the Sanskrit Standing Committee of the State Government of Maharashtra unanimously passed a resolution of this kind in its meeting on 10th July 1986.

In the same way, no other institution than the Somaiya Trust has rendered service to the Sanskrit work of historic importance to protect and develop the Sanskrit language in Maharashtra. The work is commendable and worth mentioning. Really speaking it is no exaggeration to say that the knowledgeable and cultured citizens will have to acknowledge with gratitude the service rendered to the cause of Sanskrit by the Somaiya Trust. In the absence of the efforts and active co-operation for the last couple of dozens of years by the Somaiya Trust the subject of Sanskrit would have been relegated to the Museum as an antique! An unimaginable damage would have been done to the pride of place once enjoyed by Maharashtra in the field of Sanskrit scholarship.

It will be evident from the review of the work of Sur-Bharati (one of the constituents of the Somaiya Trust for the last 27 years) at government and non-government levels, that its work is a clear and an established fact not an exaggeration.

The Sanskrit Shikshan Parishad (Sanskrit Education Conference) representing the whole of Maharashtra was held in Mumbai on 21st April 1970. It was held in response to the adverse policy about Sanskrit contained in the 'White Paper'. The conference was presided over by a renowned veteran educationist, Pr. C.R. alias Babasaheb Tavde, which reviewed the work of Sur-Bharati in relation to the learning and popularizing Sanskrit. The special features of the conference are briefly stated below:

1. Sanskrit is said to be the language of a particular class of people. This unhistorical view is deeply rooted in Maharashtra among the majority of people. However for the first time a person from the majority class; a scholar and a veteran educationist, Prin. C. R. alias Babasaheb Tavde, presided over this Sanskrit Conference despite opposition from certain highly placed people. Prin. Tavde not only graced the meeting but also guided the conference in relation to the study of Sanskrit in his presidential address.
2. The orientation of Sanskrit which is the main foundation of the broad

policy towards cultural integration, is undoubtedly a great achievement. The whole credit for this must go to the Somaiya Trust!

Because of this successful attempt to reach the masses, the State Government had to drop its adverse policy towards Sanskrit and was forced to adopt a favourable approach to the subject.

A Noteworthy Cultural Transformation relating to Sanskrit in the Life of Maharashtra

In the last thirty years or so a variety of programmes relating to Sanskrit was organized by the impetus provided by Somaiya Trust's Sur-Bharati in Maharashtra. The variety of programmes had initiated some novelty in its working. The spring-time Sanskrit Camp; Sanskrit Propagation Training Class; Sanskrit Musical Assembly; Sanskrit Conversation Class; Sanskrit Musical dance-drama and such other entertaining and instructive items were presented. Some other programmes of wider significance were organized. For example:-

1. Sanskrit Shikshan Parishad (Conference of Sanskrit Education) on 21st April, 1970.
2. Sanskrit Pathashala Sanmela (Assembly of Sanskrit learning centres) in 1974.
3. Sanskrit Adhyapak-Pradhyapak Sammela (Sanskrit School Teachers and College professors conference) in 1974.
4. Biahana-Mumbai Sanskrit Sammela (Greater Mumbai Sanskrit Conference) in 1978, inaugurated by Nanasaheb Gore, High Commissioner of India, London.
5. Sanskrit (Abhijata Bhasha) Shikshan Parishad (Sanskrit-Classical language) educational conference in 1985, specially attended by Dadasaheb Rupavate who inaugurated it. Other distinguished guests were Babasaheb Gavade (Maratha Mandir); Vasantdada Patil and Comrade S. A. Dange graced the occasion.
6. Sanskrit Prachar-Prashikshan Shibir (Sanskrit Propagation Training Camp) was held in 1994 and blessed by His Holiness Shankaracharya of Shringeri.

7. Inclusion of Sanskrit subject in the course of study for Primary Schools conducted by Greater Mumbai Municipal Corporation. The generous co-operation of the then Municipal Commissioner, Mr. S. S. Tinaikar, facilitated the introduction of Sanskrit at the elementary level.

This is a brief account of the programmes to popularise Sanskrit organised by Somaiya Trust through Sur-Bharati. Besides this, the Somaiya Trust (Sur-Bharati) extends active encouragement and financial aid to a variety of programmes relating to the subject of Sanskrit throughout India.

The role of Somaiya Trust (Sur-Bharati) in the organisation of programmes relating to Sanskrit is thought-provoking and worth considering.

“The never-diminishing treasure of Sanskrit is the heritage inherited by right by all, irrespective of class, creed, party or a sectarian group of people. All have an equal share in this common treasure.”

“Sanskrit was regarded as a monopoly of a particular class which was a biased view held by some people. During such a period of social, educational and cultural prejudice, the Somaiya Trust (Sur-Bharati) with a foresight and broad outlook on Sanskrit became instrumental in bringing about a noteworthy and commendable educational and cultural transformation in the life of Maharashtra. It is because of this that a wider awareness and attraction towards Sanskrit has taken place. Now a city boy ‘Sripad’ and the village boy ‘Shirpya’ (corrupted form of Shripad) want Sanskrit and take interest in its study.

Secular Policy towards Sanskrit

Pundit Gulamdagir Abasali Birajdar from Mumbai is an all-India well-known figure in the field of the study of Sanskrit. Pt. Birajdar acknowledges that he could assimilate the art of excellent elocution in Sanskrit because of well-planned systems of Sur-Bharati. He is also a joint director of the Sur-Bharati Somaiya Centre.

A Sanskrit Seminar was organized at the Ganesh Festival celebration of a reputed society in co-operation with Sur-Bharati Somaiya Institution. It was printed like that on the invitation cards but the names of the speakers were not mentioned. The names were to be finalized later on. Accordingly

the Sur-Bharati Somaiya incorporated the name of Pt. Gulamdasgiri Birajdar, the Muslim Sanskrit Scholar in the list of names of the Sanskrit Pundits submitted to the society celebrating Ganesh festival before the programme of the seminar. Ganeshotsav or Ganesh festival is a Hindu festival. How can a Muslim speaker participate in it? So the celebrating society accepted the names of all other scholars and excluded the name of Pt. Birajdar. The society informed the Somaiyas that way. The celebrating society in reply was reminded that Lokmanya Tilak had given a wide perspective while introducing public celebration of the festival for social integration. In the public celebration of the Ganesh festival of his Gaikwad building, Christian Baptisma Kaka and Barrister Jinah a Muslim and men from other faiths addressed the congregation in the presence of Lokmanya Tilak himself. It therefore behoves you to raise no objection to a Muslim scholar Pt. Gulamdasgiri Birajdar to participate in the seminar.

In spite of the reasoning in support of Pt. Birajdar's participation the host society refused to budge from their stand therefore Sur-Bharati Somaiya in protest withdrew from the Sanskrit Seminar. As a result the Sanskrit Seminar could not be held despite the item being printed on the society's cards.

Subsequently the society realized its mistake when the Vice-President of the Society, Mr. S. N. Papre, and a life member of the society Pt. S. D. Kavishwar in a resolution passed in the General Body of the society disagreed with the policy and protested against the action. In a move to salvage the damage the same society invited Pt. Birajdar to address the rally on Independence Day on 15th August that year and felicitated him in a worthy manner. The programme received ovations from all. The newspapers on the following day gave wide publicity to it and in broad headlines and within frame wrote 'Miracle in Brahman Sabha'. There are other instances of the same type. The policy adapted by Somaiya Sur-Bharati is clearly secular regarding the subject of Sanskrit.

An Ideal Contribution of Somaiya Trust relating to Sanskrit in Marathi speaking Maharashtra

1. The Somaiya Trust has contributed a fixed amount for two years to the secondary and higher secondary school certificate. Boards of

Maharashtra State, at Mumbai, Pune, Aurangabad and Nagpur for awarding 'K. J. Somaiya Sanskrit Scholarship of Rs. 40/- and Rs. 30/- per month for Std. Xth Examinations. The new S.S.C. and H.S.C. Boards of the State of Maharashtra at Nasik, Amaravati and Kolhapur will also receive similar contribution from the ensuing academic year.

2. For the Mumbai Board Examination for the 12th standard a Gold Medal – K. J. Somaiya Sanskrit Gold Medal would be awarded and the K. J. Somaiya Sanskrit Prize is to be awarded for all subjects including Urdu for the highest scores at 10th standard Board Examination of the Mumbai Board.
3. The Department of Education of the Maharashtra Government offers 'Savitribai Phule Adoption Scheme' of adopting poor female students from standard I to standard VIIIth for education. The Somaiya Trust has decided to adopt one poor girl from each district and 40 girls from Greater Mumbai under this scheme. It will come into operation from the ensuing academic year.
4. Former Education Minister from this State, Prof. Ram Meghe, had delivered a remarkable speech at the 'Jagannath Central Sanskrit University' – Jagannath Puri, Orissa in Sanskrit on 16th February 1986. The speech was published by Somaiya Trust with pictorial illustration in the form of coloured wall papers of big size. About twenty-five thousand copies of the publications were distributed to educational institutions in Maharashtra and other states. Thus the Somaiya Trust has given wide publicity from time to time to the favourable decision of the State Government to popularise and spread Sanskrit Study in the State of Maharashtra.
5. The Somaiya Trust provides sufficient financial aid to Marathi and non-Marathi teachers and professors for travelling to foreign countries preparing for a Ph.D. degree, buying books etc. for carrying on work in connection with Sanskrit.
6. The president of the 'Maratha Mandir, Mumbai' is at present Mr. Madhav Maharaj Scindia, the former Human Research and Resources Development Minister and its Vice-President is the former Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Mr. Sharadchandra Pawar. Dr. Shantilalji Somaiya is one of the patrons of that Institution and is the Vice-

- Chancellor of the Maharashtra University sponsored by Maratha Mandir.
7. The propagation and spread of Sanskrit is continuously carried out for the last twenty-five years through the columns of a leading Marathi magazine under the caption 'Saral Madhur hi Sanskrit Bhashah' (Simple and sweet is this Sanskrit language).
 8. Mr. Shankarrao Chavan was the chancellor of the 'Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapitha (University) at Pune. He was the Union Home Minister. The Somaiya Trust at his suggestion made substantial financial contribution to the University. The Tilak University has received much financial and other assistance from the Somaiya Trust for its programmes like the spring time Sanskrit teaching class and so on. Somaiya Trust has also acquired life time membership of the Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapitha Institution.

Muslim Sanskrit Scholar Pt. Gulamdastagir's Invitation card in Sanskrit

Against the background of an unhistorical prejudiced view that Sanskrit is a language of a particular community – the Hindus – the fact that a Muslim (Pt. Birajdar) sends cards composed and printed in Sanskrit of his daughter's wedding is significant and revolutionary. This in a way help remove certain prejudices and facilitated the popularisation and spread of Sanskrit. The Somaiya Trust can claim the credit for such a phenomenon and a change of outlook among the common people.

The Somaiya Trust had purposefully offered the central stage of Sanskrit Education Conference at Mumbai in 1970 to a majority community scholar, Prin. C. R. (Babasaheb) Tawde. This move to declare the study and practice of Sanskrit for all, breached the monopoly of a certain caste of people who posed as its guardians. Sanskrit was now not confined to Sadashiv Peth in Pune or the property of the high-caste Hindus bearing surnames like Thatte, Damley, Gore, Apte, Marathe. The doubts and bias were swept away and now persons from majority castes with surnames such as Gavde, Tawde, Mane, Rupvate, are coming forward as guardians and promoters of the language. This cultural revolution of historic importance was brought about by the special efforts of the Somaiya Trust relating to the subject of Sanskrit.

Also the prejudice that Sanskrit is the language of Hindus was also shaken and is on the way to fade out. How a minor move like Sanskrit Invitation card by a Muslim can set people thinking on the right lines is a significant example in point.

The marriage of the eldest daughter of Pt. Gulamdstgir was a great event for him. He wanted to compose and print the invitation in Sanskrit. When Karamshibhai came to know about it he cautioned the Muslim Pundit that he should also have an Urdu version of it so that Muslims would not be offended. It was then decided to print the invitations in Sanskrit as well as in Urdu. The Somaiya Trust got the two language-invitation cards about five thousand in number and gave them a wide publicity by sending them to important newspapers, MPs, MLAs and leaders of all political parties.

This thought provoking effort on the part of Pt. Gulamdstgir received attention with a sense of admiration from all progressive people. The journalists in Maharashtra and in other states showered praise on him and wrote editorials discussing the significance of the event.

This event made a deep impact on the minds of thinking public. Mr. Madhav Gadkari, a journalist, who did not favour Sanskrit till that time was thrilled by the event. He wrote a column in the Marathi daily in 'Mumbai Sakal' in his favourite column 'Choufer' (Wider View). He put the Sanskrit invitation in a box form and asked a question 'If a follower of Islam expresses that much love for Sanskrit, do we Hindus not have any duty towards Sanskrit?' He emphatically supported the cause of Sanskrit. A former union minister, Mr. Arif Mohammad Khan, sent a letter in Sanskrit to give him good wishes and emphasize the importance of Sanskrit. Pt. Birajdar also received letters from honourable persons like Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, applauding his action in relation to the Sanskrit invitation cards. This type of praiseworthy activity of all-India significance for the subject of Sanskrit could be produced out of the active interest and love for Sanskrit shown by the Somaiya Trust.

Swearing-in Ceremony of MPs and MLAs

The swearing-in ceremony in Sanskrit in the Parliament and State-Assemblies is a commendable move of historic importance relating to popularizing Sanskrit sponsored by the Somaiya Trust.

The number of MPs who took the oath in Sanskrit at the swearing-in ceremony of the two Houses of the ninth parliament that was convened in 1990 could be counted on the finger-tips. But the special efforts made by the Somaiya Trust to popularize Sanskrit and encourage its use while taking oath prompted eighty members of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha to take oath in Sanskrit. The credit for this rise in number goes to Somaiya Trust.

According to the considered opinion of knowledgeable people, Sanskrit now commands a third position after Hindi and English followed by other national languages among the members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha who enjoy the highest power in law-making in India. Among those who took the oath of membership of the Houses or offices cut across party lines. Female members figure along with male members who used Sanskrit language. This is of great significance for national integration.

Attempts were made by the bureaucracy in Maharashtra to prevent elected members after 1990 election to take oath in Sanskrit, making much ado about some technical hitch. At that time the member of the State Legislative Council, Ms. Sanjivani Raikar, who wished to take oath in Sanskrit could not do so! The members of the Maharashtra Assembly were however allowed the privilege on the advice of the constitutional expert, Mr. T. K. Tope and supported by the special efforts made by the Somaiya Trust. In 1990 three members and in 1995 nine members exercised their option to take oath in Sanskrit. In this move, members from tribal areas also participated in taking oath in Sanskrit. This is a thing worth remembering.

In view of the magnificent and commendable work of the Somaiya Trust relating to promoting Sanskrit at all levels, the Government of Maharashtra have strongly recommended to the Union Government the establishment of Somaiya Central Sanskrit University as demanded by them over a period of many years.



The Tribal Reform Society

न मानुषात् परो धर्मः।

Humanity is the Highest Religion

The Tribal Reform Society

The attitude of spending hard-earned money as a Trustee is deep-rooted in the mind of Karasmsibhai. The Upanishads (branches of Vedas discussing Divine Knowledge) call this attitude 'Idam Na Muma' (This is not mine). As a consequence of this attitude Karasmsibhai could raise an educational project like Vidyavihar in Mumbai. He also set up such learning centres for the benefit of those desirous of education. He extends financial assistance to some institutions and offers opportunities of education to the rural area. An aphorism in Sanskrit (quotation from Gita) says 'There is nothing so sacred in this world as knowledge'. Karamshibhai had performed this sacred work on a large scale. Even with the profound service that he has rendered to the cause of education, he is not satisfied in the least. His thirst for such sacred work cannot be quenched. He has the great ambition to embrace the whole humanity with love and a sense of equality.

There is no creed higher than humanity was the noble approach adopted by Swami Vivekanand and Mahtma Gandhi. Karamshibhai follows it as his creed. Swami Vivekanand had called the destitute, neglected poor, downtrodden deprived people as 'Daridri Narayan' (penniless gods). Gandhiji deeply appreciated the magnitude of the word used by Swami Vivekanand and made use of it wisely. God exists in many forms, incarnations and visions. Everybody attempts to see God through these media according to his attitude and point of view. Vivekanand and Gandhiji discovered God in the abject poverty of the downtrodden. They met God in the horrible form

of destitution. Therefore they addressed him as 'Daridri Narayan' (penniless god).

Karamshibhai witnessed and is still witnessing spectacle of poverty in its ugliest form at several places in India during his business tours and visits to pilgrim places throughout India. He came across people devoid of food, clothes, shelter, medical treatment, education and other basic needs at all places. He experienced this absence of amenities particularly for those who are born and brought up in hilly forests and valleys in the most horrifying form. These men and women survive using mother earth as their bed and sky as their pullover or cover sheet. Their food consists of fruits and roots available in the forest, their clothes are torn and scanty just enough to cover their shame. They lead such type of degrading life for centuries together. India that is Bharat won freedom in 1947 but the light of that freedom did not reach them. It was locked in towns, cities and some villages. Not even a light breeze of freedom reached them to give them the slightest relief. Those in whose hands the levers of power and prosperity of freedom concentrated exploited these unfortunate people and their condition became worse. They were stripped off whatever little they possessed. The children of the soil are totally neglected in this land of free India.

In the post-Independence period Five Year Plans for economic development of the nation were drawn up. These plans began and ended but these unfortunate people remained in the same state for years together. The lands in these regions remained uncultivated. The water flowed away without being stored by way of dams and protecting walls to stop water being wasted like this.

These regions remained without amenities and developments to improve the condition of these people. In such situations the religious leaders of Islam and Christianity and their Missions tried to exploit the poverty of those people and offered financial temptations to convert them to their religious faiths. Some such downtrodden people from Meenakshipuram were converted to Islam. These events had saddened the heart of Karamshibhai. He was sleepless for three nights. He is a staunch protagonist of Hinduism. He makes great endeavours to uphold the dignity of Hinduism. He had also attended the Viswa Hindu Parishad along with Ms. Leelaben and Mrs. Sadajivanlal at Bangkok in 1966. In view of all these Karamshibhai was broken hearted and was visibly upset. All these adverse situations inspired

him to render some service to the neglected tribals in the inaccessible lands of the jungle.

Karamshibhai established a society called by him as 'Giri Vanavasi Pragati Mandal' (Society for the Progress of the Inhabitants of Hills and Forests).

The objectives of the Society clearly mentions the following points:

1. This Society is set up for the progress and welfare of those people who inhabit distant places in the hilly tracts and mountainous regions and are scattered over in other backward regions in improvised settlements and colonies. This society will work for the upliftment of all those neglected, deprived, and forgotten people and shall strive for their progress, amenities, reforms, advancement with the willing co-operation and help of those who cherish real sympathy and are ready to work with dedication along with us.
2. This Society shall stay unattached to any political party and shall have nothing to do with their activities.
3. This Society shall work towards achieving universal humanism based on the faith of God as Father and promoting brotherhood among tribals.

The constitution of this 'Tribal Reform Society' has made some specific provisions for the programmes of the centres working on behalf of the Society.

"A Centre of the Tribal Reform Society' will be opened in each of the states of the Indian Union. The Centre will conduct primary and secondary schools and hostels for a minimum number of two hundred boys and a hundred girls. The Centre will provide for kindergarten, 'medical aid centre', agricultural field, cowpens, art-centre, technical training centre, workshop and a small work-place. The centre will be a production centre for a new structure of life for the tribals.

The All-India 'Tribal Reform Society' started functioning, embracing high-ideals of secularism and impartiality irrespective of religion, race, colour and sex. All would get equal opportunity for progress.

A Trust was founded under the name of 'Tribal Reform Society' on 20th September 1974. The Society drew up two different plans: one for short-term duration and the other for long-term duration.

One of the important features of the short-term plans was holding of annual eye-camps and medical aid camps. These camps were set up in the inner-most parts of waste lands in certain hills and mountainous regions. The purpose was to extend benefit of this humanitarian aid to the inaccessible lands of poor and downtrodden people in different parts of India.

The Society had decided to undertake research in social, circumstantial agricultural condition, medical service, nutritive diet, public health and hygiene in the respective hilly and forest tribal areas.

The Society started as a long-term plan, social work in Nareshwadi, in Dahanu Tehsil of Thane District of Maharashtra. The Society provided facilities of agriculture, education, and medical treatment for the tribal people in and around Nareshwadi.

A pamphlet furnishing detailed information of the eye-camps and other medical treatment camps held in different parts of the tribal regions was issued by the Society. Some of the salient features are as under:

The patients who were registered in the camps were provided with all types of medical treatment – medicinal, surgical or clinical as the case might be. The society kept in view some measures of reform in the condition of the area where the camps were set up. The Society looked at the patients registered in the camps not merely as men suffering from ill-health but as representatives with whom cultural contacts could be established. These medical camps were regarded not as centres for diagnosis of diseases and the treatment for them but as experimental centres for the creation of a favourable climate for life, collective work and fraternity among various communities.

The camps organised by the Society were an attempt at large-scale organization of programmes. Such a medical camp usually occupied an area of around one and half lakh of sq.ft. (1,50,000 sq.ft.). A sectionwise provision for about one and a half thousand beds was made available. A special private arrangement for supply of water and electricity was made. Besides this, the outstanding feature was that about ten thousand people could be served daily with food in the spacious halls meant for that. The Society received generous financial assistance from private institutions, the state-government and the central government for providing all the amenities and services at the camps.

The entire area of the camps bristled with dynamic and inspiring activities and the place assumed the form of a compact township humming with lively sounds.

The patients admitted to the medical camps were provided with several amenities. Some of them were as follows:

1. The patients registered for admission to the eye-camps and those who accompanied them were provided with free transport service from their homes to the camps and back to their home from the camps.
2. The entire treatment after eye surgery was free.
3. The patients and their companions were given free board.
4. The patients were given new clothes free of charge.
5. The patients after the eye-operation were given goggles and pair of spectacles free of charge.
6. The patients after the surgical operation were provided with free medicines necessary for treatment for a month after the surgery.

The patient, his relative or companion, thus were given treatment by the Society as if they were completely adopted sons of the Society during the period of a camp.

The eye-camp organized by the Tribal Reform Society was not merely a centre for treatment of the eye. It was a fully equipped centre for the treatment of ailments of many kinds. Some of which are mentioned below:

1. Medical treatment and surgical operation of the eye
2. Gynaecological camp for diagnosis and treatment of the diseases of women
3. Gynaecological cancer detection centre
4. General surgery
5. Dental camp
6. Child disease section
7. Polio child care centre
8. Bone Setting
9. Ayurvedic medical treatment
10. Yoga section

11. Polio dose centre for the children in the area

The Tribal Reform Society organized seven camps as shown below up to 1980-81. The details are as under:

No.	Place	State	Year	No. of Patients
1.	Surgana	District Nasik – Maharashtra	1974-1975	7,878
2.	Shyamlaji	Dist. Sabarkanta – Gujarat	1975-1976	14,563
3.	Bagi dora	Dist. Banaswada – Rajasthan	1976-1977	18,392
4.	Amarkantak	Dist. Shahdol – Madhya Pradesh	1977-1978	16,299
5.	Jakaipur	Dist. Koraput – Orissa	1978-1979	34,096
6.	Mesha	Dist. Ranchi – Bihar	1979-1980	45,227
7.	Kukama	Dist. Kutch – Gujarat	1980-1981	49,162
Total				1,85,417

The news of the medical camps of the Tribal Reform Society spread in all directions and people from everywhere began to throng the areas of the camps. This was a novel experiment for the welfare of humanity. It was like an ancient form of 'sacrifice' (yajnya) which may be termed as 'Service-Sacrifice' (Seva-Yajnya). The crowd included men, women, children, rich and poor, natives and foreigners, social workers, government officers and even ministers of the government, sages, intellectuals and a host of national and international newspaper correspondents. The correspondents sent dispatches to the newspapers with factual and sympathetic reports.

The 'International Herald Tribune' had published the news of the camp held on 25th January 1978 at Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh under the following heading in capital letters:

"JUNGLE HILL TRIBES OF INDIA, GET HEALTH CARE FOR FIRST TIME"

'India abroad' newspaper had stated in brief **'MEDICAL TEAM FINDS DISEASE RAMPANT AMONG TRIBALS'**.

The 'Indian Express' daily stated **'DOCTORS IN MIDST OF TRIBALS'**.

The 'Hindustan Times' daily remarked **'TRIBALS SEE DOCTORS FOR THE FIRST TIME'**.

'The Statesman' stated **'THOUSANDS GET MEDICAL TREATMENT AT ORISSA MEDICAL CAMP'**.

The 'Times of Indian' highlighted **'HIGH INCIDENCE OF CANCER AMONG MP TRIBALS'**.

The 'Chronicle' stated **'UNION HOME MINISTER LAUDED MEDICARE TO THE DEPRIVED'**.

With such attractive headlines the national and foreign newspapers had given wide publicity to the camps.

The expenses incurred for each of these camps amounted nearly to Rs. 10/- to Rs. 15/- lakhs (a million or a million and a half of rupees).

The world famous humanitarian society 'The Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind' had commended the work of the camps and had extended its valuable co-operation for the work.

The British High Commissioner had paid a visit to the Kukama Camp on 3rd June 1981 and had praised the work of the camp.

A Marathi weekly 'Ganarajya' (Republic) had published a special issue 'Griivanavasi Ank' (Tribal issue) from Kopargaon on 15th March 1979. The weekly had furnished all the details of the camp at Jakaipur under the bold heading 'The first well equipped mobile hospital in the Asian Continent'. A portion from the issue is deliberately excerpted below to acquaint the

readers with the work and the management of the medical camp. The article detailing the work states:

“A medical camp was held at Jakaipur in Raigad tehsil of Koraput district in Orissa near J. K. Paper Mills between 28th January and 18th February 1979 by Mumbai’s Girivanavasi Pragati Mandal’ (Tribal Reform Society). Jakaipur is the most backward village situated in the interior parts between the hills of Kaling-ghati and Kailaspur radiating the natural beauty of Dandak forest but the place is not only isolated one but also the very image of poverty itself.

The camp was set up on the other bank of the Nagavali river flowing along the Jakaipur village. It was arranged into two parts. On one side of the river a spacious canopy equipped with all amenities was constructed. The canopy was named ‘Gopabandhudas Nagar’ after the great patriot and revolutionary, late Gopabandhudas. The latter was known as Gandhiji of Orissa as he had carried on non-violent struggle for the creation of a separate Orissa State. The canopy was in memory of the beloved leader of Orissa.

‘A large operation theatre’ equipped with all necessary surgical instruments and facilities for diagnosis and treatment of eye diseases was fully provided. It could vie with the most modern operation theatres of any modern hospital. In this ward an eye-operation was performed within five to ten minutes. In this surgery ward a maximum number of two hundred eye-operations per day were performed. These included cataract surgery. There were twelve large wards for patients to live in after their surgical operation. The ward was equipped with two hundred and thirty beds. The mattresses on the iron cots were stuffed with dry grass crumbs in sacks to fit in the cots as puffed up beds. Karamshibhai used to call these mattresses as ‘poor men’s foam mattresses’. The patients were provided with sufficient clothes to protect them from cold and gusty winds.

“In this very sector, Ms. Sarojben Shukla, the daughter of the famous dentist from Rajkot (Gujarat) Mr. Labhshankar Mulshankar Shukla, showed her skill in dentistry by the Ayurvedic System of removing the aching and shaking unwanted teeth without the use of anti-pain injection. She established a record of removing thirteen teeth in this way in only ten minutes without pain to the patient! Ms. Sarojben mastered this art under the training of her father. She never took any degree from any medical college. She has however deeply studied the ‘Jalandar Yoga’ in Ayurveda and mastered the art. The

Ayurvedic clinic of Vaidya Swami Parmananda Acharya from Nagwai in Mahi district of Himachala Pradesh state was also started. Swamiji had brought medicines worth rupees twelve thousand or so. He specially treated the diseases like arthritis, asthma and ulcer. Swamiji drew the conclusion from the sales of his medicines that the people in the area covered by a hundred kilometers around Jakaipur were suffering from arthritis and ulcers to the extent of 60% of the population.

A special eating house for the patients and the relatives accompanying them, was set up where they could take meals. The eating house was called 'Samashti-Bhojan'. About eight thousand people availed themselves of the benefit of the eating house every morning and evening.

A large store-house on a spacious place was built to keep all the things required for the camp. Along with the equipment the store-house had rooms for grain, spices, medicines, stationery articles, clothes etc.

In order to have a clear and direct view of a huge and pleasant idol of Laxmi-Narayan, it was placed in the middle of the canopy in front of the entrance.

The girl-students from colleges in Mumbai had set up a separate science camp for giving scientific information to the tribals on some useful subjects.

The E.S.I. dispensary under construction was divided into different cells for gynaecology, E.N.T., Skin and Yogic treatment on the other bank of the river Nagavati. The gynaecological surgery was performed by the son and daughter-in-law of Mumbai's world-famous gynaecologist Dr. B. N. Purandare. His son, Dr. C. B. Purandare, and daughter-in-law, Dr. Mrs. Nandini C. Purandare, performed the surgery themselves. Dr. B. N. Purandare told reporters as there are no facilities of safe child-birth in the tribal areas, surgical operations have become troublesome and complicated. They are ignorant of the medical service relating to safe delivery of a child. Moreover it has become very inconvenient due to the strong impact of superstition on their minds. It is a great problem to persuade the women to undergo surgical operation for safe delivery. Dr. B. N. Purandare further told the correspondents about the experiences of the medical camp. He said, "Organising such medical camps in the tribal areas would provide sufficient encouragement and incitement to the Primary Health Centres in the rural areas. If the doctors and the nurses from these rural health centres

participate and perform even five operations with their limited equipment they can in future become expert doctors and nurses.”

While expressing his views on this issue he made a meaningful reference to some renowned doctors from Mumbai and Pune. The government should strive to create voluntary institutions like the ‘Tribal Reform Society’. The government instead of giving small grants to the Health Care Camps like this should grant a substantial amount after the review of the work of the Society, its officers and the service performed by them. This would provide the necessary impetus for private bodies to undertake such social service. Dr. B. N. Purandare expressed the hope that if private voluntary organisations, the government and the tribals work together towards the reform it would definitely contribute to the welfare of the tribals.

The incidence of diseases of women has assumed grave proportions in Orissa. The chief diseases among the women are: sterility, large number of abortions, the inabilities and defects that are developed due to the want of facilities of safe delivery of the child; diseases due to infection and cancer are rampant among the tribal women. These views were expressed by Dr. B. N. Purandare to describe the tragic state.

Dr. Sudhir Joshi, Ear, Nose, Throat expert told reporters, “The tribal people neglect hygiene. They neglect cleanliness altogether. They do not realise the importance of keeping the body clean. It is because of their ignorance and carelessness about personal cleanliness that they fall victims to the diseases of ear, nose and throat. If these people are made aware of the importance of sanitation and personal hygiene the incidence of the ENT diseases may definitely scale down.”

The skin-specialist (Dermatologist) from Mumbai, Dr. N.S.V. Chari, and his wife, Dr. Mrs. Sudhatai Chari, and Dr. Srikant Shankar Pale examined the tribal patients suffering from skin diseases in and around the Jakaipur area. The patients examined by them were mostly in the age group of 35 to 40. Among them 9% were leprosy patients. Also a big percentage of those were suffering from eczema, ringworm, circular tetter and white leprosy.

The importance of ‘Yoga’ and Yoga camp was explained to the tribals by Swami Omanandaji and Mr. R. C. Gupta. Swami Omanandaji conducted a Yoga class in the assembly hall in the J. K. Paper Mills with the kind co-operation of the manager of the Paper Mills, Mr. Srivastav, during the period

of the Yoga-camp. He declared that by the practice of 'Pranayam' (breathing exercise) all diseases can be eliminated and the person can be healthy and strong.

The Tribal Reform Society (Mandal) had opened sixty primary health centres at several places in the area extending to about one hundred kilometres around Jakaipur. The preliminary medical tests were carried out and necessary treatment was given at these centres before admitting the tribal patients for eye surgery or other surgery and treatment at the camp.

After the eye-operation the patients were supplied with goggles, a pair of spectacles, clothes, sufficient stock of medicines and travelling expenses. The fare-well ceremony for the patients was held in the temple of Sri Laxmi-Narayan. They were each given a round breastplate bearing the monogram of Sri Laxmi-Narayan. They were asked to take the oath that they would never drink liquor, smoke tobacco and tell lies before the breastplate was given to them.

The Mandal was thus making attempts through the medium of the camps, to bring about social transformation among the inhabitants of hills, valleys and forests, the tribal people.

The favourite campaign of Gandhiji, that of sweeping clean the village areas was also undertaken on behalf of the camp. A novel exercise of imparting education to the tribal people through the organisation of entertainment programmes was also launched.

The medical camps of the Tribal Reform Society attracted many doctors, nurses, volunteers and organisers from different parts of the country.

The whole organisational machinery of the camp was managed by seven organisers through forty sections in an excellent manner. Among the organisers, Prof. Sureshbhai Shah from Ahmedabad, Messers Ravibhai Khanna, Premjibhai Ruparel, Kishnabhai Toprani were from Mumbai. So also Ms. Jaswantiben Desai, Ms. Pramilaben Parekh and Mr. Sureshbhai Matrawadiya figured prominently. They were guided by Karamshibhai, Dr. Shantilalji Somaiya, Ms. Leelaben Kotak, Mr. Kantabhai Thakkar, Mr. Manibhai Kakkad, Ms. Maniben Kothari, were giving useful directions to them.

The Jakaipur camp received whole hearted co-operation from all the Ministers of the State Government of Orissa, the Collector of Koraput

and Police Officers in the area.

The whole Somaiya family was working together to make the Jakaipur Camp a great success. Karamshibhai, his wife, Mrs. Sakarbai, son Dr. Shantilalji, daughter-in-law Mrs. Mayaben, daughter Mrs. Leelaben Kotak and other daughters along with many other relatives exerted themselves to contribute their services like other volunteers without any feeling of dignity or pride.

The high dignitaries like the chief Minister of Bihar, Mr. Karpuri Thakur, and the ministers from Orissa, Messers Samarendra Kundu, Harichandrao Bakshipatro, P. K. Das and Jagbirsingh visited the camp at the same time. Their visit attracted a big crowd and it assumed the form of a big ministerial fair.

Dr. Shantilalji Somaiya gave some information about a patient who had undergone eye-operation to the Chief Minister of Bihar as they were walking among the patients in the ward. Mr. Karpuri Thakur was so much impressed that he exclaimed, "You people have appeared here in the form of God!"

The Industries Minister of Orissa State Mr. Harishchandrao Bakshipatro while reviewing the activities in the camp could not help saying, "I have no words to praise your work adequately." He further said, "The Central Government should help the private voluntary institutions like this to hold medical camps every six months in the tribal regions." Such a move he believed would mitigate the fear harboured by the tribals about Medical Science and the incidence of the diseases would decrease gradually.

We have already referred to the seven camps of this type held by the Mandal at different places in the foregoing pages.

Karamshibhai was deeply engrossed with the planning of such camps several months before its actual functioning. He used to give serious thoughts to the necessary details. He never could rest from the time of selection of the site of the camp till the end of the camp in a successful manner. He knew no leisure. He used to work for eighteen to nineteen hours a day and used to see that his colleagues performed the duties assigned to them. He used to keep ready an outline plan of all the details of what to do, when to do, where to do and how to do. He used to select the right men for each work and entrust to him the responsibility to fulfill the assignments. He used to keep a close watch on the progress of their work. He used to pursue

the half-finished work. He was very keen to see that everything was in its proper place. He insisted that every work must be performed systematically and in an ideal manner.

During the period of the camp, Karamshibhai's day starts at 4 o'clock in the morning. He used to take cold water bath even during winter. He used to begin his work after a prayer. He used to make inquiries about the health of each and every patient in the camp. He made it a point to talk to every patient for this purpose and took personal interest to solve their problem and mete out the necessary remedies for that. The tribals could not keep themselves clean and tidy due to their pitiable poverty. One patient frankly admitted that he did not possess another underwaer after taking bath. Karamshibhai felt the pangs of their mute sufferings. Karamshibhai himself used to bathe some of the patients and wash them clean and then give them new clothes to wear. Like Karamshibhai his wife, Mrs. Sakarbai, daughter Leelaben, Son-in-law Mr. Madhavjibhai Kotak, daughter-in-law Mrs. Mayaben and sisters Jaswantiben, Premaben and others emulated his example and gave clean baths to the women folks in the wards in the camp. These women patients were given new clothes to wear after the bath.

Karamshibhai had resolved to carry the first patient himself after the surgical operation and take him to his bed on the cot in the ward from the operation theatre. He has carried many patients in this way. He used to move through the several wards and meet the patients there and make inquiries about their health. He used to listen to their problems and arrange for the remedial action. While engaged in these humanitarian activities the tribal patients for the first time had the opportunity in their life to see the vision of humanity. They regarded him as a god-man and whole-heartedly bowed down before him as they saluted him. These unfortunate tribal patients out of sincere gratitude used to pray for his welfare and asked God's grace for him. Those people were never till then treated with that much care, love and kindness. As this was the first pleasant experience in their lives of the touch of humanity, their eyes used to be filled with tears of gratitude.

Like the famous chariot of Jagannath (deity at Puri) in Orissa when ritually carried in procession helped by a thousand hands and the ritual completed, so the great organised medical camp used to attract hundreds of people to support the cause thus handled by the indefatigable Karamshibhai. There is

a saying 'God is the giver of benevolent projects'. The project handled by Karamshibhai was hundred per cent benevolent so God Almighty used to make it completely successful.

Many people came forward to extend their whole hearted voluntary services by keeping aside their daily work, trade, business and assignments and joining in the performance of the ethical work sacrifice (karma-yajnya) from the beginning of the camp to its happy finish.

Mr. Sadajivanlal was Karamshibhai's elderly colleague. He had accompanied Karamshibhai in his travels in the country and in foreign lands. While remembering the past he said, "In 1975, I had accompanied him on his tours. Once we were forced to halt at a place due to some reasons. We were a bit inconvenienced for food and refreshments. But Karamshibhai never grumbled about such things. He was contented with some fruits, milk and water and was comfortable with that meagre intake. He used to walk to the interesting places. I have accompanied him to Bangkok, Singapore, Indonesia, Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia and some other places. In Kuala Lumpur there is a temple some twenty to thirty miles (30 to 48 kms.) from the city. A group of temples numbering about sixty to seventy adorn the place. The main temple is perched on the top of a hill. One has to climb about seven hundred to eight hundred steps to reach the place. Mrs. Sakarbai Somaiya expressed her inability to climb so many steps. But Karamshibhai was very enthusiastic. He covered the distance quickly. I was slightly breathless but Karamshibhai could climb the steps with the energy of a young man in his twenties. We then visited the Hindu and Buddhist temples there.

During the travels while moving about site-seeing even though he used to get tired he never missed his practice of getting up at 4 o'clock in the morning and doing his work as usual. He never used to mind any inconvenience in the accommodation. If there was no mattress to sleep on he used to sleep on a carpet or a straw mat. He used to eat simple meals, but vegetarian whether tasty or not. He wanted simple clothes but of 'khadi' only.

While reviewing the work of 'The Tribal Reform Society' (Mandal) he used to examine in detail all the items. Nothing could escape from his eyes. His peculiarity is that he himself works diligently and makes those with him also work in the same way.

He works day and night in the camps of the Tribal Reform Society. His eyes used to water at the sight of the poverty of the tribals with compassion. A tribal man did not possess anything like his scanty underwear. He therefore did not take bath. Karamshibhai bathed him and offered clothes to him. The tribal inquired, "Why do you give me clothes and all that? Do you want my vote?" Karamshibhai was very much grieved to hear that, tears rushed to his eyes on hearing his questions. The man was pestering him with questions, "You perform free eye-operations, provide free board and lodging, goggles, clothes and all this. Why do you do all this?" His heart was visibly pierced by such unanswerable questions. He took that in his stride.

Now-a-days nobody does such unselfish service without any purpose or gain. If anybody appears to do that there is some concealed motive at least to win the votes at some elections. The poor and the dispossessed have come to recognise the motive behind such gestures of generosity. The selfless and un-egoistic service to others has become a rarity. The recipients of such favours suspect some hidden purpose to exploit their weakness or needs. Disbelief has become the striking feature of the present day social structure. This is disastrous for humanism.

Mr. Premjibhai Ruparel reminisced, "We know each other for a long time in Kutch. The distance between the village of Karamshibhai and my village is about 7 miles (12 kms). His village is Tera, my village is Kothara. My fraternal uncle, Karsandas was a friend of Karamshibhai. He also used to wear khadi clothes.

The Tribal Reform Society (Mandal) brought us closer together. I had attended the Surgana camp. When I witnessed the arrangement there and the amount of labour put forth by Karamshibhai I was really astonished. He harbours deep compassion for the tribals from the hills and the forests. He is aware of their essential needs of food, water, clothes and education and knows that merely providing them with medical treatment would not be enough. It is for these reasons that he has started a school and a hospital at Nareshwadi.

I had once gone with him to the camp organized by the Mafatlal Group. He used to take much care of me during the journey. He is an early riser. I cannot do that, but he never asked me to get up early any time. He used to get up and busy himself in singing prayer (Bhajan), songs etc. which made me wake up early. Once I had gone to the bathroom to take bath. I took a

very long time so he knocked at the door and said, "Carry on with ease! I knocked at the door as you took long time." He showed so much consideration for others.

Ms Pramilaben Parekh narrated her experience. She said, "I had gone to the eye-camp with a group of two hundred students. Barring a few shirkers most of the students worked as volunteers for twenty hours round the clock. The true feeling of compassion for the diseased sprang up in their hearts. A new batch of students was eager to extend the services for the work of the camp.

The temple of Laxmi-Narayan is erected in the camp at which prayers and worship are offered in the form of 'Bhajans', songs and other usual rites in the morning and evening. This arrangement is made so that the patient while going home can have an easy view (darshan) of God and Goddess – Laxmi-Narayan. Karamshibhai talks very softly and kindly to the sick. He asks them, "Do you smoke? See smoking is injurious to health." I have seen some patients, hearing his persuading words take out their 'bidi' (country cigarettes) and the matchbox and throw them in the dustbin. They kneel before him to touch his feet to express their reverence and gratitude to him. Karamshibhai does not like such gestures. When we address him with the feeling of respect using such words as 'sriman, shetji, pujya (respected sir, honourable or revered) he does not approve of it. He says, "Simply call me Karamshibhai." At times he adds a humorous touch to his talk.

'Sweeping a village is one of the programmes that the camp undertakes. Our volunteers visit villages and chalk out their sectors and sweep the villages to keep them clean. They also persuade the villagers to participate in that campaign. They try to convince the villagers about the importance of freedom from evil habits.

Karamshibhai has published a booklet 'Aradhana' Part I (Prayer Part I) on behalf of the Tribal Reform Society for prayers, worship and recitation for the use of the tribals. In the foreword to the collection Karamshibhai writes in Hindi the following submission.

DEDICATION

O Lord!

I do not own anything in this. This is the blessing given by saints. I have committed countless foolish acts, wickedness, offences and which cannot be pardoned. I have hurt the feelings of others. I have nurtured hypocrisy. All this O Lord is known to you and me only!

What else can be done in such circumstances beside remembering them, repenting for them and atoning for them?

I must face the consequences of my evil acts for which I do not seek pardon. But I do pray earnestly and seek your blessings for my resolve that here after I shall never commit any evil deed.

Grant me, your child, O Lord, your Gracious favour to have such strength and intellect which will enable me to check my impatience and temper and keep away my feeling of pride.

I have resolved to do all this and think about other resolves. I continue to endeavour to achieve them. If this is true and pure and with the feeling of selflessness then O Lord give me power to perform it fully.

What more can I ask for?

Be kind enough to favour me by accepting my submission.

Yours truly,
Karamshibhai Jethabhai Somaiya

In this compiled booklet of hymns, prayers, verses, prayer-songs in Sanskrit, Hindi and Gujarati with the explanation of meaning are presented. Hindi language and Devanagari script are persistently used. Karamshibhai had insisted on that always.

This booklet received wide circulation. The seventh edition of the booklet was published in 1992. Karamshibhai had written an introduction to the booklet. He says:

“We are heartily pleased to present the seventh edition of the booklet ‘Aradhana’ to you all. We trust and believe that the readers while reciting the lines in the ‘Aradhana’ will be able to come into intimate contact with God Almighty!”

Man in search of happiness through material means neither gets happiness nor peace. In such circumstances 'Aradhan' will doubtless be useful to ensure mental and spiritual peace. It contains verses and prayer-songs, compiled from the inspired writings of great men full of deep thoughts fathoming the depths of heart, for daily recitation.

Its study stimulates auto-dynamism, eradicates dejection from the mind and keeps it in a healthy mood. Its recitation with proper reference and meaning generates mental inspiration and satisfaction of the soul. This positively helps to realise the real self by the harmony of body and soul acquired through the faithful pursuit of the contents of the verses and prayers.

There are many aphorisms quoted in the booklet. They have the unlimited power to make life highly cultured. The aphorisms (subhashitas) are like the beckoning lights in the peaceful as well as troubled waters of life. It is well-known that :

Grapes may turn sour, sugar may turn into particles of stone but aphorisms never lose their taste.

This is the seventh edition of 'Aradhana'. There is some change made in its form. The inclusion of prayers saying along with daily morning and regular activity is the important addition. It is for this reason that this booklet will be useful all the time in life.

Karamshi Jethabhai Somaiya
President

Mr. Ravi Khanna, originally hailing from Punjab, had visited some of the camps. He talked about his experiences in this way.

"I had gone to the first camp at Suragana for social service there. I have watched the work of Karamshibhai at that time from close quarters. He himself is a great administrator. He is very careful even about minor things. In the same way he takes great care of the patients admitted there. He behaves in a kind and loving manner with each of them. He is very regular in attendance and work while at the medical camp at Shamlani a few surgical operations were scheduled to take place. We started towards the camp but in the way we were delayed as the railway gate at the level crossing was

closed. So to avoid delay in reaching the operation theatre he got down from his car and straightaway walked down the distance to the camp. He does not put up with the slightest delay in work. He is very punctual in all his activities.

It was raining heavily when the medical camp was held at Amarkantak. The weather was very cold. Some doctors had arrived to visit the medical camp. The driver of the bus declined to drive the bus along the slope of the hill. Karamshibhai in his persuasive style reasoned with him and the driver resumed his work. The team of doctors could reach the camp. They were comfortably accommodated there. He was keen on cleanliness in the camp and wanted to see everything in the camp and wanted to see everything in good condition and in its proper place.

Mrs. Bharati Maniklal Vakharia from the State of Gujarat said, "I am from Gujarat but live in Mumbai. Ravi Shankar Maharaj used to consider me as his daughter-in-law in religious relationship (Dharma-snusha). I came to know reverable Bapuji that is Karamshibhai through the favour of Ravi Shankarji Maharaj. I could meet and know a practioner in ethical code of work (Karmayogi). I regarded him as my father and he treated me as his daughter.

Bapuji (Karamshibhai) is very much interested in social work. In 1968 there were heavy floods in Surat resulting in a huge loss to the people. Some houses were washed out. Many houses were built for the displaced with the help of Sri Ravi Shankar Maharaj at several villages to rehabilitate the homeless. The work of rehabilitation was in progress. At that time I had adopted a village on behalf of Karamshibhai without obtaining his consent. I told him about it when I returned to Mumbai. He said, "My daughter, you have done well. You have adopted a village on my behalf. Now the expenses for maintaining that village might be ten thousand or hundred thousand I have to shoulder the responsibility for that."

On the occasion of 'Raksha bandhan' (tying ritual band on brothers' wrist by their sisters) Bapuji (Karamshibhai) used to invite me to his home and ask me to tie the Rakhi on the wrist of Shantilaji.

I had worked as a volunteer in the camps held at Surgana, Shamlaji, Bagidora, Amarkantak, Ranchi and other places.

'Bapuji' loves truth. If you tell him the truth, he will rely on you and will

do anything for you. It was necessary to hire additional trucks to clear a heavy load of work. All were afraid to approach him for this additional burden and hesitated to tell him. I accepted the responsibility of ordering additional trucks for getting the work done and later on obtained his permission for that.

Like 'Bapuji', 'Mataji' (mother) Sakarbai also works hard. She extends whole hearted co-operation to him. It would not have been possible to dispose of so much work had there been no co-operation from her.

During the conduct of a camp Karamshibhai invited the villagers to dinner on the occasion of Republic Day on 26th January. The camp was about to end and therefore we had shut down the 'Samashti' (peoples free kitchen) kitchen. Around two thousand villagers arrived for dinner. We started preparations for cooking but we urgently felt the need of water. Sakarbai became nervous. She rushed to the temple and prayed. As she came out of the temple she saw two tankers fully filled with water. Once 'mother' Sakarbai took ill while in the camp in Bihar. She had to be provided with Oxygen gas. Then she felt better.

At the first sight, Bapuji (Karamshibhai) appears to be stern but as you get in touch with him and associate with him in his work he is like a soft lump of butter. He used to enjoy if anyone read out to him an interesting passage while at Mahabaleshwar.

Gandhiji's favourite prayer-song (Bhajan) was 'Vaishnava Jana To Tene Kahiye' (He should be called a real follower or devotee of God Vishnu). Bapuji (Karamshibhai) said 'Gandhiji' had called (Vaishnavajana) to suit his times, now we should call 'Manavata-jan' (All human beings).

Once Karamshibhai was discussing some topic with a Swamiji (God-man). At that time the Swamiji said, "Death never follows me as I always go ahead of him." Bapuji (Karamshibhai) said, "Death will not approach me. In case he does I shall tell him "Look I have to do a lot of work yet. I am not disgusted with life and death does not come near me!"

"I had once met with an accident and I was admitted to a hospital in Mumbai. At that time Dongre Maharaj was delivering his religious discourses. Bapuji was tackling a heavy burden of ever-increasing work but he used to visit me in the hospital snatching some free time. His heart is delicate like a flower. Whenever I am in difficulty, I remember 'Pitaji' (Karamshibhai) and

the difficulty disappears and my sad feeling is mitigated.”

Mr. Hirubhai Patel used to go to the camps for serving there. He said, “I have worked in Surgana, Shamalji, Bagidasa and other eye-camps. I was entrusted with the work of bringing the patients from their homes and reaching them back home from the hospital. He used to explain to me, how the sick have to be handled carefully, they should not be exposed to any inconvenience while travelling and they should not feel humiliated when bringing them from their homes and reaching them back. The camp was at Amarkantak. It was very cold there but Karamshibhai without covering his head used to work in that condition. Once we requested him, “Bapuji, it is chilly cold. Why don’t you wear a woolly cap, a woollen muffler or some such thing to keep off the cold?” He replied, “You young men feel more cold. We never feel that!” Many poor patients used to come to the camps. They had hardly any clothes to cover their bodies. Bapuji used to wear minimum amount of this.

Mr. Jayantibhai Radheradhe is a social worker who lives at Andheri in Mumbai. He said, “Karamshibhai though a leading industrialist was working in the eye-camp as an ordinary amongst the ordinary to serve the ordinary men and women. He serves the tribals with the feeling that he was actually dedicating his service to God. In fact he does not like it when those men are called tribals or aboriginals. He therefore used to call them hill-dwellers (Giriyana).

In the eye-camp he works at night or early morning in the biting cold. The camp provides for two to three types of food service. A separate arrangement is made for volunteers, a similar arrangement is made for doctors and a common mess ‘Samashti-Bhojan’ for all the rest. The food service for all the rest includes the patients and the relatives of the patients. Karamshibhai used to eat at the common mess. There is that simplicity in his attitude that humility. The religious discourses of Pandurang Shastri are usually arranged in Madhavbaug in Mumbai. Karamshibhai used to attend and sit in the last row in the assembly. All other people including Pandurang Shastri used to entreat him to come and sit in the first row but he never yielded to their entreaties. He preferred to sit in the back row.

He used to keep a close watch on cleanliness and freedom from evil habits. Once he saw a man moving about the camp smoking a ‘bidi’ (roll of tobacco). He called him and told him, “Do we smoke before God in the

temple? It is not fair on your part to smoke where we utter the name of God, where we sing his prayers and worship him. Swear that you would never do that again." The man cast away his bidi and matchbox and never smoke later in his life.

He takes decision about the work by calling all concerned together and only after discussing the points about the work the decision is finalised. On such occasions his foresight level of reasoning and the capacity to take right decisions is clearly evident. With all these heavy demands on his time one does not know when he finds time to read and meditate. He will go everywhere, see everything, try to understand everything out of curiosity. His line of thinking is constructive.

On my return from America, Karamshibhai asked me to distribute clothes to the hill-forest-region dwellers. I gave up my habit of drinking tea as a consequence of being associated with him and his urging me to be free from bad habits.

Karamshibhai is generous at heart but he will give liberally only if he is convinced that the gifted amount would be used for good deeds only. Once a woman from Andheri (Mumbai) had asked him for money on a false pretext. Karamshibhai handed over a sum of rupees five hundred to me and gave me her name and address. He asked me to collect all information about that woman. I went searching the address given to me but could not find the woman at the address. I went to him and told him all about it. Karamshibhai will extend his help but only to those really in need of it.

A son of a tribal who was blind came to the eye-camp in Kutch. It was necessary to perform surgical operation on his eyes after some more tests. Karamshibhai arranged to take him to Mumbai for further tests. The eye-specialists after carrying on several tests told Karamshibhai that the nerve connecting the retina was damaged. He was pained to hear that his eyes watered. At the sight of that I experienced the vision of humanity.

Karamshibhai himself works without rest and expects everybody to do his work diligently. He hates shirking of work or duty. Once a watchman wrote to him 'Either give me one raise in the salary or treat this letter as my letter of resignation and relieve me'. Karamshibhai paid him his salary and relieved him of his work because the watchman seemed to have no attachment to duty.

The world famous gynaecologist from Mumbai, Dr. B. N. Purandare, along with his doctor friends have worked for the medical camp and rendered service without expecting any financial gain. Earlier Dr. B. N. Purandare on his own initiative performed many family planning operations on hundreds of women in the rural areas through many camps organised in the districts of Mumbai and Thane. Karamshibhai and Dr. Purandare knew each other for a long time. Karamshibhai had also seen his camps with a definite purpose. Once Dr. Purandare had organized a camp in a village near Bassein (Vasai). The 'Tribal Reform Society' camp was at Nareshwadi which was near Vasai. While on his way to Mumbai from Nareshwadi in the evening he visited the medical camp at Vasai. Dr. Purandare was ready to return to Mumbai in his car. Karamshibhai requested the doctor to accompany him in his car. On the way Karamshibhai informed him about his proposed eye-camp at Suragana in Nasik district and requested him to visit the medical camp and examine the tribal women patients and perform family planning surgery there.

The dedicated social worker that he is, Dr. Nanasaheb (B. N.) Purandare, at once responded favourably. Karamshibhai could secure the doctor's co-operation for the subsequent camps organised by him. Dr. Purandare was greatly satisfied to see the well-equipped section in the camp for women patients and expressed his opinion.

The letter addressed to the President of the 'Sri Giri-Vanavasi Pragati Mandal' dated 14th November 1977 was as follows:

To,

The President
Shri Giri Vanavasi Pragati Mandal,
Bombay

Sir,

I had the privilege to attend along with my team of doctors and take active part in the last two camps organised by your Mandal, one at Shamlaji, District Sabarkata, Gujarat in December 1975 and the other at Bagidora, District Banaswada, Rajasthan in December 1976.

Both the camps were organised in complete rural surroundings where thousands of women got the advantage of the camps. All the doctors in the team were highly impressed by the perfect arrangements made in creating

surgical facilities, operation theatres and temporary wards for the operated cases and an excellent arrangement for the examination of daily out-patient cases.

The arrangements made for the out-door examination and treatment were highly appreciated by thousands of poor patients coming from distant villages. The in-door operation theatre facilities including sterilization of surgical instruments made it possible for the team of doctors to undertake even major gynaecological operations by hundreds throughout the camp.

The post-operative nursing care of the patients was efficiently organized from the point of view of the patients' comforts. Even the relatives who accompanied the patients were offered facilities such as food etc. These camps gave unlimited opportunities for rendering medical and operative services to the poor rural women. We highly appreciate the untiring efforts made by your Mandal in making the camps very successful. This has also given an opportunity to carry our medical services to the very doorsteps of the patients as is expected by our Government.

We look forward to offer our services to the future camps.

Yours faithfully,
(B. N. Purandare)

There existed old friendship between Karamshibhai Somaiya and Dr. Purandare. Some of the members of the Somaiya family especially his daughters and daughter-in-laws were admitted to his hospital for child-birth and other gynaecological treatment. The medical camps provided opportunities for the team of doctors to handle many types of gynaecological cases. It was a new type of experience based training for the doctor community. Dr. Purandare has referred to this in his auto-biography entitled 'Shalyakoushalya' (Surgery Skill). He writes:

"The Somaiya family members received medical treatment at our clinic right from the time of 'Anna' (father). It was decided to hold health and medical camps on behalf of the Karamshi Somaiya Trust Fund under the name of Karamshi Somaiya camp. He requested me to lead the team. We started holding big medical camps in the rural tribal areas of one state every year on behalf of Karamshibhai Somaiya. The Somaiya Trust was called 'Giri-Vanavasi Pragati Mandal'. The camps were held at obscure far-off

places in various states such as Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra. The reason for this was that the inhabitants of such places urgently need the treatment from well-trained expert doctors.

He used to select an open uncultivated tract, a meadow of about eight to ten acres in area. The tract used to be cleared and electricity and water-supply were arranged. Big tents were set up. Each tent used to accommodate about one hundred patients. A wide-spread publicity was given to the medical camp in the neighbouring places. The camp used to receive the services of the employees and the transport system of the Somaiya Group of Industries. They also used to get the help of the teachers and students of both the sexes from their schools and colleges as volunteers on a social service campaign. These volunteers used to lead campaigns ensuring clean villages and health consciousness among villagers. The camp used to last for a period of 15 days. The bus facility for bringing the patients to the camp and reaching them back home was provided. The camp used to arrange for the meals of about ten to fifteen thousand people. The expenses for the camp would go up to fourteen to fifteen lakhs of rupees (about a million and a half rupees).

In such an improvised hospital-city many surgeon colleagues, our past students practicing surgery and other trained students gladly used to contribute their services at the camp. We were allotted an operation theatre of about eight to ten tables for our gynaecological and obstetrics. Our medical community was very much pleased with the camps as they could perform and observe rare operations which we cannot come across or hardly hear about them in Mumbai.

We came across such an interesting case in one of the Somaiya Camps in Bihar State near Ranchi. A tumor weighing 52 pounds (app. 25 kg.) was removed from a woman's stomach. Yes! It was fifty-two pounds in weight!

The college students of both the sexes were engaged in the voluntary work of sweeping a village near the camp when a lady professor found that woman. She was skinny but her abdomen was bulging out abnormally. The lady professor asked her 'What's wrong?' The woman innocently said, 'Nothing! I am pregnant!' the professor asked, "When do you expect delivery?" The woman replied, "God alone knows! Why? What's wrong?" She further said, "Two years have passed but yet no child-birth! Some say there are two kids!"

"The lady professor was stunned to hear that. She struck her forehead with her hand in disgust. She told the woman, "A big doctor has come nearby. Go there and show him this." This woman would not accept all that. She hesitated but the professor persuaded her with great difficulty to go to the medical camp.

"I saw the woman and said, "Put her on the table first. After necessary preparations I put her on the operation table, within two hours. A large tumour was inside her stomach. A sterilized trolley was kept ready to throw the tumor inside it. The heavy tumour was lifted and put into the trolley by three men with difficulty. It weighted 52 lbs. The woman weighted 108 lbs (app. 51 kg.) after the operation she was merely a skeleton. This case received wide publicity. The Union Minister of State for Health purposely visited the camp. He also got himself photographed with that woman patient.

"In a camp in Uttar Pradesh a similar case of tumour was found. The affected woman had actually carried the heavy tumour in her stomach for seven years. She had gone to the government health centres but nobody took any notice of her. The administration of health centres conducted by government is the same everywhere in the country. How can the medical management be an exception? How can this health service be saved from government disease? The chaotic conditions obtain there also. At last the woman reached our medical camp. When her surgical operation was in progress the then Prime Minister, Mr. Charansingh, arrived there. He said, "Doctor, What is going on?" He might have asked this as a common inquiry but I was greatly irritated. I shot out the words, "What are you asking what is going on? I am performing the duty which your people should have performed. This poor woman is sick and suffering for the last seven years and nobody takes any cognition of the sufferings of these people. We outsiders have to hold camps and undertake such surgery. The Director of Health immediately retorted, "Everybody is not fortunate to have a doctor Purandhare like Maharashtra. I told him for his information. Please don't say that. You have also a set of good doctors but you do not want to motivate them. You do not provide the necessary infrastructure for that."

The camp was visited by many honourable personalities in various walks of life. They had come personally, talked on telephone or wrote letters to express their satisfaction and delight at the work of the Mandal.

The Tribal Reform Society – the Mandal held its 7th camp at Kukama in

Kutch-Gujarat in January 1981. The British Commissioner in India, Mr. J. A. Thomson, came from Delhi to pay a visit to this camp. He was very much impressed by the methodical work carried out by the Mandal. He has expressed his sentiments and thoughts in the letter written to Karamshibhai on 3rd June 1981, which is reproduced below:

Dear Mr. Somaiya,

You may recall that last January I visited your medical camp while I was on a tour to Kutch. You very kindly received me and showed me around. In the course of our conversation. It was suggested, I think primarily by Mr. G. J. Mehta, that other Commonwealth countries might follow India's example in conducting Eye Camps or more generally Medical Camps. Some of the people present said they were sure that a number of Indians, including people in your organization, would be glad to share their experiences and perhaps even to donate their services in a neighbouring Commonwealth country. I undertook to be in touch with the Commonwealth Secretary General about this idea.

I have now had a helpful reply from Mr. Ramphal, the Commonwealth Secretary General. He fully agrees with me about the value of the activities in the medical field of such voluntary organizations as yours. He adds that you and your colleagues deserve every congratulation. He says that there are in fact many Eye Camps held in Commonwealth countries organized mainly by Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind. He enclosed a copy of their annual report which I pass on to you herewith. He suggests that you may possibly like to contact the Society, whose address is in the reports, although he suspects that you already know them.

Mr. Ramphal continues that workshops and seminars over a wide range of specialised medical and surgical fields are also held in a number of Commonwealth countries, sometimes on a regional basis. Some of them have received support from the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation. The Commonwealth Secretariat does what it can to encourage such activities, the extent of professional involvement depending on the subject of the individual workshop or seminar. Their Medical Adviser will bear in mind the kind offer of you and your colleagues to share your experiences and possibly make your services available should the opportunity arise.

I hope this reply may be of some interest to you. I am glad to learn that Eye Camps are indeed held in other Commonwealth countries since I think there is a great need for them and I was most impressed by what you showed me.

Yours sincerely,

(J. A. Thomson)



Nareshwadi

बहवत्रगुणमुत्तममादत्ते हि ब्रह्मं बलिः।

The Sun absorbs water to return it in thousand ways.

Nareshwadi

The age of sixty years is considered as the age of retirement. Men retire at that age and sit idle or busy their minds with many types of worries. A few of them attract non-existing diseases or become frustrated by entering into an unfamiliar trade or attempt to do business without previous experience. The period of retirement is the most opportune time to reorient one's activities to benefit society by offering it the experience gained through a long duration in the special field of one's activities. Therefore Vinoba Bhave said, "Do not retire but re-tyre yourself" that is start work again.

Karamshibhai has assimilated the essence of 'inclining to work and declining to work'. He is made of such a stuff or his innate tendencies are such that he has never come across an occasion to decline work. He has struck intimate relationship with the tendency to keep on working always. That is why he could easily and effortlessly move from a petty profitless trade to an affluent prosperous business. He himself could not be aware of it. It was so natural and bound to happen. And so he could busy himself with the ever expanding activities of 'The Tribal Reform Society' – Mandal even when he was past seventy.

The Tribal Reform Society was set up in 1974. The objective of the Society was to perform certain work of social responsibility which was accomplished through the seven 'medical camps'. This work was of a special kind. However, the routine work of the Mandal according to the well-defined

objectives was also thoughtfully performed by Karamshibhai while engaged in the special programmes.

The Tribal Reform Society had taken upon itself the work of upliftment of the inhabitants of the hills and forests who were away from the civilized cities and suffered neglect and deprivation of every kind on that account.

The 'Mandal' had drawn up a plan to achieve its objectives. It contained the following agenda:

1. To establish free training centres to impart instruction and training in traditional and industrial trades. These centres would be joined to agricultural, horticultural centres, dairies, technical schools and handicraft workshops. The social workers who could implement the objectives of the 'Mandal' would be trained in the training schools.
2. To inculcate intense love of the nation and with that the cultivation of the character to make the inhabitants of hills and forests highly cultured citizens.
3. To set up service-centres for social health would be the most important work. These service centres will have hospitals and nurses to look after the sick.
4. To set up a general hospital at Nareshwadi for eye-care and other health services and care-measures.

Karamshibhai had purchased land at Pardi Village near Dhundalwadi in Dahanu Tehsil of Thane District for the routine work of the 'Tribal Reform Society' – Mandal. This region was far away from the town and was backward on all counts. This region was inhabited by the neglected and the deprived people of hills and forests.

Karamshibhai decided to set up improved agriculture, orchards, dairy, school, hostel and hospital as outlined in the objectives of the Mandal, on this land.

In the beginning in 1974-75 he undertook the work of preparing the so far unused land favourably useful for cultivation. Karamshibhai began making trips from Mumbai to Dahanu and back as and when possible. He had many acquaintances made in Dahanu in connection with trade. Mr. Punamchandra G. Bafna was an old acquaintance. He was a businessman and a progressive farmer. His son, Naresh, was a smart young man of twenty

five or so. He was very energetic and enthusiastic. He had received higher education in a foreign land. He was specially interested in agricultural work. Therefore he began to take more interest in the proposed work of Karamshibhai on coming closer to Karamshibhai. He actually became an active member of 'The Tribal Reform Society'. He wrote to his friends in foreign countries that he had participated in the work of 'The Tribal Reform Society' and that he was very much satisfied with its commitment.

Mr. Naresh was well informed about the technique and the work of agriculture by his formal training and the guidance of his progressive father, yet he used to discuss many points relating to agriculture with Karamshibhai and then used to plan future operations. He had such an engrossing interest in agricultural work that he used to complete the work planned in consultation with Karamshibhai before his next visit.

Mr. Naresh worked on Sundays also, a day of rest. On such a 'working' Sunday Mr. Naresh had to attend a meeting of a Lions Club at Surat with his friends. He had to yield to the repeated requests of his friends against his wish. Before proceeding to Surat he went to his farm. He mounted a tractor on the farm and he started his demonstration of how to drive a tractor even in a marshy land for the benefit of the workers on that farm. Unfortunately the tractor turned turtle. The knobs of the tractor forcefully penetrated the chest of Mr. Naresh and he died on the spot.

On hearing this sad news Karamshibhai rushed to Dahanu. He tried to console Naresh's father. He himself was sorrowful at the sudden death of a dedicated person.

In the condolence meeting held to pay tributes to the late Mr. Naresh, Karamshibhai said, "I am greatly shocked at the death of Naresh. It is an irreparable loss. Had he lived and worked with me on this farm, many good things could have been executed here on the farm. Naresh was a very intelligent and energetic young man. In memory of the promising young man this farm will be known as 'Nareshwadi' hereafter."

'Nareshwadi' has thus a tragic story behind its name. The main objective of the Nareshwadi project was to start a primary school for the education of the children of the inhabitants of hills and forests. Karamshibhai was in search of a capable person for handling that responsibility. Karamshibhai seems to enjoy the good fortune to secure the services of competent person

in the field chosen by him for his undertaking or a proposed work at the needed time. He could secure the services of Principal V. R. Gokhale, an educationist and an experienced colleague.

Karamshibhai loves Sanskrit greatly. He had already established 'Sur-Bharati' institution for the spread of Sanskrit. We have already referred to that in the foregoing pages. In the 'Sur-Bharati' Institution Mr. Prabhakarpant Joshi was one of the persons who was deeply interested in Sanskrit. Mr. Joshi had become a very close friend of Karamshibhai. When Mr. Joshi learnt about the Nareshwadi school project he arranged a meeting between Karamshibhai and Mr. V. R. Gokhale.

Mr. V. R. Gokhale and Mr. Joshi were known to each other for a long time. At about that time in 1975 Mr. V. R. Gokhale had retired as principal of Gokhale Education Society's College. He was also planning to educate the children of the backward areas of the tribal people out of a sense of social indebtedness after retirement. He was very much interested in doing such challenging work. While working as Principal of G.E.S. college he had organised college students' social service camps at Koswad, Talasari and other places in Thane district. Since then he was maturing his plans to contribute to the work of educating the children in the backward areas in the region after retirement. The meeting between Karamshibhai and Mr. Gokhale was a meeting of two like-minded people on social reform for the backward people. Mr. V. R. Gokhale after that meeting said:

"My acquaintance with Karamshibhai dates from the year 1976. I therefore know nothing of the developments before that I had only heard about him that he was engaged in sugar trade and subsequently he set up a group of sugar factories. I used to have frequent discussions with him. I learnt from talks with him that he had to move in many regions to push his sugar trade. He had to be contented at times with dates, plantains and milk during his sojourns at several places. Sometimes he had to go without food on his trade tours to interior places.

Karamshibhai appears to be a robust, stern and a resolute man. Once he conceives of a plan or decides to perform a certain act he persists in doing it his own way and is not amenable to persuasion and arguments of other people. He is unbending and unyielding.

On hearing such type of accounts about him I was a little intrigued. So

far I had conducted my self as a man of independent mind-set, how could I work with a man of such dominating attitude? Therefore at the very outset I clearly told Karamshibhai, "Karamshibhai while accepting this work I do not expect any financial gain from you. I shall do the work without any payment. Further I shall stay at the farm at my own expenses. I get my pension. My wife also gets her pension. My son is in Canada and my son-in-law is an engineer. I need not therefore depend on anybody for financial need." A rich man when he extends financial assistance to a project naturally expects obedience to his commands relating to the working of the project. This means there is no freedom of action in such an enterprise. I therefore made all these points clear to him at the very beginning.

Karamshibhai was contemplating to set up a project of social service on behalf of the Tribal Reform Society but it could not assume concrete shape till then. However the eye-camps were being held on behalf of the 'Mandal'.

"Our work began with the opening of a primary school. At the outset we had decided not to seek the recognition from the government as it entailed certain restrictions such as the duration of 45 minute period, a fixed course of studies, a syllabus sanctioned by the government and a system of examinations. We never wanted such restrictions. We had no financial difficulties. But there was the problem for students of our school who wished to seek admission to any outside school as they would be denied admission on the ground that the school leaving certificate from our school would not be treated valid by them. The students of such unrecognized school may be stranded. In order to avoid that embarrassment we decided to impart instruction according to our own system. We wanted the student after graduating from the school to be self-supporting. He should be able to stand on his own legs and should be independent in the pursuit of his means of livelihood. He would not be a servant of other people. He would be a self-employed person.

After devoting two hours in the morning to agricultural and industrial work, the regular periods of the school, according to the syllabus drawn up by us, were to be engaged. The children from the hill-forest areas are good at drawing. The aptitude of such students is easily tested by their drawings. An attempt should be made to develop that talent. These inhabitants of hills and forests possess good physical strength. They are superb at running and shooting races. This had to be borne in mind while drawing up syllabus

for them. Our school is located in the region of hills and forests. So the students are inhabitants of this area. There are separate hostels for boys and girls in the surrounding areas. Karamshibhai has shouldered the financial burden himself. I have complete independence in the management of the school. He never interferes in the school affairs at all. This man is resolute and tenacious in the pursuit of his objectives. This man is of high integrity and is free from any addiction. He gets up at three o'clock in the morning and takes a cold water-bath. His meals consists of one type of boiled vegetable, rice with pulse-curry, and a baked cake of wheat flour (fulka). He is averse to eating any eatables fried in oil. If he is served with two types of vegetables he will ask one to be removed. He consumes very little food but works very hard. I address him as 'Baba' (Father).

Baba loves trees very much. He possesses good knowledge about trees. There is an orchard spread over thirty acres of land in Nareshwadi where drip irrigation was experimented. He says, "attempt new experiments. I do not mind spending for them."

He is attached to agriculture from his childhood. He wished to own a good farm at that time. That spurs him on to own fields irrespective of costs.

We had one Mr. Choudhari, an agricultural officer as a manager. Baba used to seek information about agriculture persistently, but Mr. Choudhari many a time responded with little information. It is very difficult to work with Baba or to fulfill his expectations. He does not tolerate people who work only for money or shirk their responsibility.

Once Karamshibhai had taken our tribal students to Mumbai to attend the religious programme of Morari-bapu. Our students sang songs very well. All the audience liked the programme very much. He had taken all the members of his family to attend the celebrations of one hundredth birthday of Ravi Shankar Maharaj. He is very much fond of travelling. He is good at striking friendship with strangers. Once we told him, "We are going to felicitate all those over the age of eighty years. We are also going to felicitate you." He laughed and said, "Well! I am not eighty yet. I have to do a lot of work yet."

Now his body cannot bear the strain and stress of travelling. When he visits this place he works whole day here and on his way home he says,

“Now I shall return after a month or so.” But he returns after only a week. While going to this place his wife, Mrs. Sakarbai, and his daughter, Mrs. Leelaben, repeatedly tell him not to venture the troublesome journey. Baba turns a deaf ear to their pleadings and travels.

Once he had bought a hundred cultivated mango plants from Delhi Research Institute. In order to receive the gentleman, Mr. Sharma, of the Institute, he had specially called Mr. J. N. Patel from Sakarwadi. But before Mr. Patel could come Baba had already accompanied the guest and reached Nareshwadi. A streak of impatience also is evident in him.

The ground purification ceremony (Bhumi-pujan) for a hospital providing forty beds for patients on the Nareshwadi farm was performed at the hands of the then Chief Justice of Maharashtra, Mr. B. N. Deshmukh, on 13th January 1980. Today this forty bed hospital has become a large general hospital in this region.

The cultivation of agriculture and maintenance of the fruit garden is undertaken here on a 110 acre land with improved techniques and methods. Besides this, dairy farming, cow rearing and nourishing are undertaken. There is also the provision for art, handicraft, Amber-charka (spinning wheel) mechanical skills and repair work.

The present writer (Raja Mangalwedhekar) once had the privilege to accompany Karamshibhai on his journey from Mumbai to Nareshwadi. There I narrated a story to the tribal children in that school. I had also walked round the Nareshwadi with Karamshibhai the whole day and surveyed the area. I came to know as we walked through the farm that Karamshibhai had complete information about even the minor things relating to the soil, water, fertilizers, crop and related matters. While going round the fruit-garden it was noticed that he observes every bit of leaf on the plant minutely. The trunk, leaf, flower, the top-nothing escaped his vigilant eye. He shoots many questions at the agricultural officers who go with him. Those officers were flabbergasted many a time. If any work was left incomplete, he used to call for an explanation. However he never used to raise his voice or use harsh words or abuses. The agricultural officers used to perceive the stern warning in his soft words. They used to be scared of his expertise and experience in agricultural matters.

He told the agricultural officers there on the farm, “When you come

through the fields here with me, you should carry an exercise book, a pencil, a footruler, a tape, a penknife, a pair of scissors and such other things. You should write down notes in the note-book, while measuring, you should be ready with the measuring tape or footruler. So also cutting off or shearing must be done on the spot.

Once some workers were engaged in the work of sinking a well. The boring work was in progress. On reaching that site Karamshibhai inquired, 'What is the length of the punching iron-bar in inches? How do you position it? After hearing what they said about the iron-bar, Karamshibhai enlightened them how the iron-bar had to be positioned in a standing way. He obtained the information of the depth of the ground excavated every day. He asked a worker to drop a stone on another from a certain height placed beneath it. The stone did not crack or break into pieces. Then he said, "The stone is quite solid. Now remove the small stones and pieces of stones and heap them on one side and the larger stones on the other side. The smaller stones and pieces would be useful as metal for roads and the larger ones for building work or dams. He possesses the sharp eye for inspecting and testing the utility of every object.

We were walking near the bed of the pineapple plants. Karamshibhai noticed the drying leaves. He said, "These plants need good water supply. Arrange for daily water supply for these plants. He noticed earth on the leaves of pineapple plants. He ordered the removal of the earth from the leaves lest crop should suffer!

Karamshibhai at the sight of a drying, drooping plant or a fading yellow leaf used to get very sensitive at heart. He used to direct the agricultural officers with him in the field, "All these my children are starving and thirsty. They do not get water. First arrange for the supply of water and then go to bed."

He has conceived a simple method to educate workers on agricultural fields. According to Karamshibhai the workers are sufficiently intelligent and wise. They also know the technique of what to do and how to do the work but they do not work well because of negligence, laziness and tendency to shirk responsibility. He actually demonstrated an example of it by making the workers say what and how the work is performed. The occasion was like this:

Wild grass had grown underneath the guava and chikoo trees. He called a worker working near the place and pointing to the grass asked him, "What is that?" The worker said, "Grass has grown there." Karamshibhai asked him, "What happens if wild grass grows underneath a tree?" The worker said, "The grass will swallow up food and water on the surface of the land." Karamshibhai further inquired, "If the grass devours everything, can the tree get enough to eat and drink?" The worker candidly replied, "No. It will not get." Karamshibhai asked, "Can we get good crops?" The worker said, "No. We won't." Karamshibhai continued, "Then what will happen?" The worker said, "There will be loss." Karamshibhai then asked him, "Should we suffer such a loss?" "No" said the worker. Karamshibhai then put the question, "What should be done to prevent such a loss?" The worker offered the solution, "The grass underneath the trees must be rooted out!" Karamshibhai said with pleasure, "Well done! You are really smart. Now remove all the grass under the tree." The worker said, "O.K."

Once Karamshibhai told us that previously the peasants used to go in to the fields for nature's call with a small bucket in hand in the morning. While going they used one way and while returning they used the other. That was incidentally an inspection round of the peasants. They could notice the condition of water-supply to the fields. Anything amiss was easily detected. They also could know the effect of stormy winds or rain on the crops. The cases of thefts or delinquency on the part of the watchman on duty could be easily reported. This sort of voluntary supervision was necessary as agriculture demands much labour and struggle.

On his way Karamshibhai noticed a new shoot at the foot of a banana tree. He paused for a while and called the agricultural officer and said, "If you want to grow this banana plant, first twist and crush this shoot. Do not slash it. If it is cut it will grow again. You know the mythological story of Ahiravana-Mahiravana, the two demons. Those demons used to grow fast when slashed by sword. Crush the shoot completely at once.

A person like me could learn so many things while moving with him. He has a keen eye for everything around. His searching eye could spot out everything; crop, water-supply, fertilizer, fence and things that mattered. After surveying all that he would instruct the agricultural officer, "The papaya tree needs water no more, the pineapple plant needs it daily, the bunches of plantains and the pineapples must be covered. The branches of 'chikoo'

tree should not touch the ground. They should be cut off five feet above the ground. They must be pruned. It may reduce the number of fruits but that which comes forth will be large in size and will be fully ripe. You have to put cover on the plants of coconut and leechies. Give support to the mango plant if it bends on one side. Clear away the grass. Keep the tract clean. Not one or two, Karamshibhai could pour out many kinds of useful tips and suggestions. The distance between trees or rows of plants were measured by him and instructions were given on the spot after discussion. He personally observes the spot and determines whether water was to be supplied by a channel, by drip irrigation or by shower. He prepares a plan for that. He surveys the fence round the farm and detects escape routes and breaches in the fence and immediately asks to take remedial action.

Dig a six foot deep trench round the field so that the sprawling roots from other fields would not enter our farm and the roots from our field would not transgress into the fields of other people. The thieves also would find it difficult to enter or exit.

At a place he found bushes of small 'umber' wild-plants amidst the crop. He immediately ordered them to be cut off! There should not be heterogeneous plants in the crop in any way.

He found two fruits of guava under the tree of guava orchard. He picked both the guavas and observed them minutely. He said, "This guava is fully ripe and dropped naturally but the other is deliberately felled. Keep on guard.

Karamshibhai has the inborn making of a farmer. Although he had not graduated from any College of Agriculture and did not hold a degree, he possesses superior knowledge to that of any graduate of agriculture and can teach him this subject as he is a born farmer. He has achieved this distinction by working hard in the agricultural fields and has gained profound knowledge through experience and experiments.

In fact the model farming that he had developed on a large scale was that of sugarcane farming. He is known as an authority on sugarcane cultivation. But the horticulture at Nareshwadi farm had made him an expert who can match his knowledge and skill with that of a professional gardener. The reason for this is that he gathered all sorts of information and knowledge about its technique from wherever it was available. He visited several

horticultural fields and held discussions with the experts. He collected the relevant literature on fruit gardens and its cultivation and ordered books on the subject and assimilated the substances in them.

One is wonder struck at his readiness and capacity for hard work. Karamshibhai develops model farming himself but if anyone industriously produces a model farm he is quick to visit that farm and congratulates him wholeheartedly.

Mr. Kaka Chamankar owns a mango orchard at Vengurla. He has developed it excellently. He has increased the production of mangoes after carrying on several new experiments. His mangoes are in great demand overseas. He has won an award for the best production of mangoes. On hearing all that Karamshibhai went to Vengurla. He walked through the mango orchard of Mr. Kaka Chamankar with him. He asked many questions in order to glean information about the interesting subject. Mr. Chamankar also provided him with complete information based on experiments and tested by experience over a long period of time. Karamshibhai expressed his complete satisfaction at the successful experiments performed by Mr. Chamankar in his mango orchard. Karamshibhai showered praise on Mr. Chamankar and wished him better prospects in future. Mr. Kaka Chamankar was very much gratified at the appreciation of his work by Karamshibhai, a veteran expert in the agricultural field and an ardent supporter of research work. An intellectual praise from an analytical mind was all that Mr. Kaka Chamankar must have wished for and received it in full measure.

Karamshibhai possesses the generosity of mind to offer full throated praise in appreciation of the achievement of any person. On many occasions he must have patted persons showing such extraordinary talent and determined to make progress in the chosen area of his work.

After going on an inquiring survey of the agricultural field at Nareshwadi for two and half to three hours there was luncheon break. Karamshibhai had already sent the chief cook with the necessary articles of food etc. ahead of us from Mumbai. The luncheon was ready. While washing hands Karamshibhai questioned, "How much fatigue are you experiencing?" I replied, "None at all!" He said, "You are strongly built!"

A humourous tinge adores his character. When we were about to take our luncheon we learnt that two of our company were observing fast on

Saturday. A special arrangement of serving them fruit, milk etc. had already been made. He said, "In school I had learnt that two minus make one plus. It means two fasting are two minus which makes one plus. So out of the two, one should join us at lunch."

Karamshibhai enjoys eating in the company of other people. In case somebody arrives at his home when he is about to dine, he will insist that the guest should join him at the meals. There is no go. He is a light eater but he will feed other people with repeated servings.

He has developed this habit of eating in company from his early days. As a young man he used to participate in the activities of the Congress Party and invite many active members at his home for dinner.

While partaking of food he used to chat freely and used to keep the atmosphere very pleasant by his humorous remark. Even if anybody did not accept an additional dish after his request he used to say jokingly, "Be not shy at dinner. The man who is shy at dinner commits sin." After the dinner service he assists in the work of putting the dishes and vessels together and he clears the place. After serving tea he readily picks up cutlery. He is never ashamed of doing this menial work. He does all this with ease and with no feeling of degradation. After lunch he washed his hands and mouth and straightaway put on his long shirt (jhabba) and his cap and without any rest proceeded to the farm. I also accompanied him.

Karamshibhai now walked towards the dairy. The milk dairy project is also being worked on the Nareshwadi farm. There are many milch cows in the dairy. When Karamshibhai arrived there, the cows had gone out for grazing. Nobody was there in the cattle-pen. The cow-dung and other dirty things were lying there. On seeing that Karamshibhai tucked up his dhoti, folded up the sleeves of his long shirt, picked up the broom, fixed the rubber tube to the water tap, threw jets of water and with the broom swept the cattle-pen clean and made it tidy as much as possible. Some patches of dirt splashed on his dress and soiled it but he did not mind it. He had cleansed the cattle-shed within minutes. No work is mean-work and there is no shame in any type of work of this type. This realisation has gone deep into his heart.

At that time those entrusted with the maintenance of the dairy arrived there. Karamshibhai had taught them a lesson by his own example.

Then he inquired about the wire-net to be fixed on the rack for fodder. "At what height are you going to fix the net from the racks?" Karamshibhai said, "Let it be higher than that, say at two or two and a half feet. Why?" The man had no answer to that question. Karamshibhai then explained in a rational manner, "When the cow bends down its head to eat the fodder, its horns would come forward and might get caught in the net. So the nets have to be fixed higher. Do you understand?"

The man nodded his head to affirm that he had understood what Karamshibhai had explained to him. I was really surprised at the practical wisdom possessed by Karamshibhai. It was a simple thing but his searching sight and thought proved his ability to perceive the unusual. Nothing escapes his penetrating eyes.

The discussion about distribution of milk was in progress in the cattle-shed. Mr. Radheradhe who came with us said, "Milk has to be distributed only by us. We should issue coupons and open milk centres." Karamshibhai on hearing that laughed and he told us a story. He narrated, "The wife of the village chief (Patil) died. The villagers came to condole her death. An elderly woman also came there. She said, "Chief (Patil) should perform second marriage." The chief said, "My lady, where should I seek another woman? You be my wife!" In the same way the work of distribution of milk should be done by you as you propose. I have no objection.

The whole day passed in finding the answers to the problems and arranging the solutions for them. As the evening approached, we readied ourselves for returning to Mumbai. We went near the gate of the farm. The sentry at the gate opened the gate and saluted but Karamshibhai asked the driver to halt it inside the gate. He inquired with the sentry, "Have you seen the gate-pass?" As per the regulations any vehicle passing from the farm outside has to be permitted after checking the gate-pass and the luggage or load contained in it. The regulation was overlooked as the vehicle belonged to the owner himself. If gate-pass was demanded, any other owner would have fired the man on duty at the gate but this owner, Karamshibhai belonged to a different category. He himself stopped the vehicle. There was a can containing ten litre milk placed in the dicky. The gate pass was not prepared. Karamshibhai asked him to get the gate pass prepared and then only he allowed the car to move out. Karamshibhai thus adheres to the rules and is very particular about discipline and therefore the work is performed well,

the workers are disciplined. They realize their responsibility and fear action for any fault.

Now-a-days Karamshibhai does not make frequent visits to Nareshwadi as before due to his advanced age and indifferent health. But his supervision of all the transactions goes on like before although he is seated at home. The milk-van from the dairy at Nareshwadi arrives daily at his bungalow. So also the fruits and vegetables arrive as usual. He gets the letter furnishing the complete record of the daily work done and the work to be done later on. The reply is sent by Karamshibhai with instructions, suggestions and guidelines for the work in detail to the office at Nareshwadi.

Karamshibhai checks the fruits that are sent from Nareshwadi, their colour, size, growth, taste and such things are inspected by him. Nothing escapes his trained eye. Any fault or deficiency noticed by him immediately gets suitable suggestions for improvement in his reply. Although Karamshibhai remains at home his mind is involved in Nareshwadi along with other areas of his business. Nareshwadi is his favourite social welfare laboratory.



Roaming About

(Railway Journey)

साधूनामाचरितं खलचेष्टा विविधलोकहेलाकान्।
नर्म विदग्धैर्विहितं युवतिजनवक्रकथितानि॥
गुक्कगूढशास्त्रतत्त्वं विटवृत्तं धूर्तवञ्चनोपायान्।
वार्तिधिपविस्त्रां पृथ्वीं जानाति पविभ्रमन्पुरुषः॥

The man who travels around the globe surrounded by the seas learns the behaviour of gentlemen and deeds of the wicked the ambitions of different men, the subtle humour of the learned, the clever talk of young women, the deep philosophy of several sciences, the conduct of the hypocrites and their ways in dealing with others.

Roaming About (Railway Journey)

Karamshibhai always engaged in agriculture, industries, trade and many such transactions also cherishes some hobbies. Man must be interested in some hobbies as man immersed in his occupations sometimes gets bored and uneasy. His body and mind need some diversion. The body and the mind get exhausted by the repetitive work of the same type should get relief from the monotony. He wishes to have something different from the routine, some other type of activity, other type of atmosphere. He feels the need for rest, some pastime. At such time clean and delightful hobbies can satisfy such a heartfelt need. The hobbies offer an opportunity to the mind and the body to get rid of the fatigue and dullness and provide the desired rest and relaxation. They can again energise and enthuse with great interest. In one sense the hobbies act as a restorative for the mind and body. It is therefore very necessary to cultivate and nourish such hobbies to maintain the health of the body and mind.

Karamshibhai had clearly understood the essence of hobbies. He had therefore cultivated and developed two hobbies; association with worthy men and pilgrimage with great care and enthusiasm. One familiar with the off quoted saying 'Kelyane deshatan sabhent sanchar' in Marathi (One becomes wise by moving out of one's country and by participation in the assembly of the scholars). Karamshibhai has assimilated the essence of the above saying and made it a point to see world as much as possible and mix with the enlightened people. Travels offer one the opportunity to see the beauty of nature and places with physical conditions different from your

own. One can observe many unfamiliar things, get a vista-vision of the social and public life of different types of people. The beauty of nature charms the mind and different specimen of human behaviour riddles the mind. One comes across various kinds of industries and business, methods of cultivation, weather, customs and traditions, religious sects and strange practices. It enhances the fund of knowledge, gives a new direction to thoughts and enriches the mind with new influences and impressions. Karamshibhai has enjoyed to the full all such opportunities and experiences in his eventful life by way of travel. This has given him a personality capable of spotting out talent, appreciating the excellence, for intelligent dealings with others and alertness and vigilance in everything. He vividly and eloquently narrates the instructive and interesting memories of his travels.

Karamshibhai still remembers the first journey as a child with his father. "I might have been six or seven years old at that time. We used to live at Belapur. My father took all the members of our family, namely, my mother, elder brother Dharshibhai, younger sister Basanti and myself to visit the holy places in South India. We visited Dhanushyapuri, Rameshwar, Tirupati and other holy places. There were no expensive lodging-houses as of now. The working priests like 'Pande', 'Badve', 'Gore' played hosts. The arrangement for lodging, board and showing round the shrines was managed by the priest by accepting a nominal fee (dakshana) which included the viewing temple and worship of the deity. This custom prevails even now. A similar old custom prevailed, that of recording the names and complete addresses of the visitors entertained by them, particularly the name of the place and the time of the visit. This recording was done while accepting the fees for the rituals, accommodation and the usual worship etc. This record served the purpose of claiming the right to treat the next generation of members as they played hosts to their predecessors. This compelled the visitors of the future generation to seek the assistance of the priests who entertained their ancestors.

'Once we were led by some such priest to a lake outside. We saw a snake swallowing a frog. The frog was virtually in the jaws of death. A fly sat on its nose. The frog was struggling to catch the fly with its tongue and swallow it when it was in the throes of death. It demonstrates the passion for life in the living creatures even when death is about to destroy them.

Sant Dnyaneshwar has cited an event similar to that witnessed by

Karamshibhai in one of his famous verses.

‘A snake holds a frog in its mouth. It is about to swallow it. A fly sits on the nose of the frog. The frog attempts to catch it. Like that all living beings, how they heighten their thirst by their desires.’

Karamshibhai further narrates, “My father did not know the Tamil language of that place. Fortunately he met a Muslim in the train who knew that language. He could understand Hinduism also. My father could prepare a list of the necessary articles with his help and managed our practical requirements without much difficulty.”

We had gone to the holy place of Tirupati for the ‘darshan’ (blessed view) of Giribalaji. We had to climb the hill of Tirumalaya. There were seven hills like that. I was small and could not ascend a high hill so I was carried by a man on his shoulders. While climbing, all the members could not climb together. Some went forward, some lingered behind. While negotiating the bends we used to lose sight of each other. At such a bend the labourer put me down from his shoulders and made me walk some distance. My father noticed it at the next bend. My father got furious and slapped the man hard across his face.

“In our south-India pilgrimage we saw big and spacious temples. We saw huge entrance-gates (Gopura) of the temples. We saw small tents open on two sides supported by a central pole where barbers were waiting for customers outside the temple. The practice observed there is to get the head clean shaven and offer the hair to the deity. My father and brother got their heads shaved. Then it was my turn but I hesitated as I had some boils on my head. While shaving the boils split and started bleeding. I started crying loudly but I could not get relief from the ordeal. After a clean shave sandal wood paste was applied on my head. I remember that much.

Dhanushyakodi was in existence at that time but subsequently winds, storms, rain and other forces of nature contributed to its demolition and destruction. Only its scattered ruins are extant now.

I remember having seen a temple standing in the sands, on the coast of the sea. The temple stands at the confluence of the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. The drinking water is available in a pond at a distance of a foot and a half in front of the temple. The stretch of the extensive desert ahead was full of conches and shells of different kinds, sizes and colours. My

brother, Dharshibai, and I collected plenty of conches and shells in our dhotis. A strong breeze was blowing, our dhotis under the weight of our collections became loose. We were faced with a difficult problem of making a choice between saving our treasure or our dhotis. After serious deliberation we chose to drop our precious treasure and save the dhotis! The treasure was left behind.

After the pilgrimage to the south, some one and a half years later our father took us all along with Genubhai Bairagi to the fair of Sri Guru Dutta. But the outbreak of cholera at the pilgrim place prevented him from the visit. So while returning home he took us all to Ahmednagar and stayed with Mr. Sadashivrao who was once a post-master at Belapur and now transferred to Ahmednagar.

Karamshibhai remembers some ascetics and astrologers seen in his childhood. He told us that while at Belapur his father learnt that a labour working on the agricultural field used to predict future events. At that time my father had taken my elder brother to him. The farm-worker had described the major events in the future life of my elder brother.

While living in Mumbai I had gone to an astrologer – whose name was Mr. Vyas. He was in his office in Bhatia-baug at Boribunder (now Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus – Fort). He was surprised when I entered his room. He attempted prediction in general matters of which 50% proved to be true.

Once I had set out to pursue the life of an ascetic with a typical waterpot (Lota) in hand. I was walking towards Rahuri. After covering a distance of some six or seven kilometers I repented taking such a decision. I returned home to Belapur.

The Shiv Mandir (temple) built by my grand mother still stands at Malunja.

Karamshibhai in his youth had to travel a lot as he had taken up the sugar trade selling sugar in retail by touring places far away from cities and towns. During his trade-tours he used to visit holy places, temples, monasteries, asylums, charitable homes or colonies of lepers. He used to visit such places and observe them well. As he used to travel for pushing his sugar-trade, some extra-ordinary things used to take place. Karamshibhai was talking about one such small event that mattered much to him. He said, “Once I was heading towards a village in Vidarbha (North-eastern part of Maharashtra). I changed the train at Wardha. The ticket-checker came. I

never travel without buying a ticket but the train was about to depart and I had no time to buy a ticket I had two alternatives, either to miss the train or to travel without a ticket. I boarded the train without a ticket. The ticket checker came at the next station. I went to the T.C. and paid for the ticket with the fine. But this time at Wardha I could not find the ticket which I had positively bought. I checked my luggage, all my pockets but failed to locate it. It was a shameful experience for me. I continued my search. Finally I could find it in my watch pocket. I was overwhelmed with joy. I immediately showed it to the T.C. and felt relaxed.

Once I was travelling from Belapur. The train was late. So I was conversing with the station-master in English. This was noticed by a fruit-gardener who knew me. He was astonished to hear me talking to the station-master in English! The reason for this was that hardly anybody in the rural areas knew English. Its spread was limited to towns and cities only.

While narrating an emotionally charged episode he said, "Miracles take place, where, when, how, nobody knows. The event takes place suddenly. That is a common characteristic but it has a flash of divine light, that is, miracle. Nobody can tell anything more about it. Once I was proceeding from Khandala to Lonavala by train, I saw a man at the Khandala station, shivering with cold. The weather was chilly and the man was going to travel in the train in that state. I was greatly moved with pity and gave my shawl similar to a Kashmiri shawl to that passenger in a split second. I knew nothing about my action. It just took place.

An ascetic lived in a temple at Rahuri. He had also built a temple at Belapur. Once as I was going with my brother, Dharshibhai, to Ahmednagar from Belapur we, got down at Rahuri to have a holy view of the great ascetic there. In the course of our discussion with him we inquired about his age. He said, "Don't ask me about my age. I had sprinkled the holy water on the head of Lord Ram. I was in Ayodhya when Lord Ram proceeded on his exile."

However after fifteen years after our meeting with him, we learnt about his death.

"When I was engaged in sugar trade I had an opportunity to visit Pandharpur, the great holy township of Maharashtra. In order to have a holy view (Darshan) of Sri Vitthal, I went to the shrine with a number of

believers who also wanted darshan of Sri Vitthal. However, there was a large crowd of the believers. The guards inside the temple found it hard to control the crowd. The guards were struggling to regulate the entry and exist of the unmanageable mass of people whose number was ever increasing. I decided to have a holy view of the deity from a distance. I prayed and went out of the temple. I purchased bananas and offered them to the cows outside the temple.

Once I had to travel to Latur when the Pandharpur fair of Sri Vitthal was going on. The compartments of the train were full to the brim so I had to travel in a wagon on a goods train.

The tribe of Vadaris (stone-cutters) had arrived for the fair of a female deity at some place. They eat pork. There I saw three pigs being roasted alive in a fire lighted by them. The poor pigs were helplessly crying loudly. I was so much shocked that my hair stood on its end. A big crowd had assembled at the deity's fair but none had the courage or compassion for the helpless creatures to save them from the horrible death. I still remember the sight and shiver.

Once I had gone to Wardha on sugar-selling tour. The asylum (Ashram) conducted by the great Gandhian leader, Vinobha Bhave, is nearby at Pavnar. I stayed there. I slept on the terrace of the building at night. It was a night of pleasant moonlight. When a strong breeze began to blow some strange sound was heard. I was a little frightened and pulled the sheet over my head and slept. I did not look outside. The sound continued to be heard for a long time. I took courage in my hands and peeped out from the covering sheet. I saw a big tree nearby. It was full of long capsules like drumsticks hanging from it (about one foot in length). The capsules were dry and of yellowish faded colour and slightly curved. The strong breeze made them swing and when they struck each other the sound was produced.

Once on pilgrimage to South India, I had the opportunity to visit the Satya-Saibaba Ashram at Pattapurthi. Nobody could meet him unless he was called. Some were permitted after six months, some got it after a couple of months and some were lucky to be called after a couple of weeks. We were waiting for his call in the crowd. A separate queue was arranged for women. My wife was called. If one among a particular group was called all members of that group would be allowed to meet him. So three of us could

go and meet Sri Satyasaibaba. He offered us 'Bhasma', a pinch of ashes as usual.

When I was in Kochin, I came to know about a holy place named 'Ayappa Sabrimalai'. Women are not allowed there. My wife, two daughters and I went to the hill. I asked the girls to accompany me despite the prohibition. I said we shall face whatever consequences arise. Slowly we reached the foot of the temple. We were stopped there. I appealed to them to consider that we had to travel to have a holy view of the deity from a far off place. We shall not enter the shrine but would be satisfied with a view from a distance. Our request was granted so my daughters could get the 'darshan'.

Once Mr. Himmatbhai Narendra Manohardas told me that the religious discourses of Sri Moraribapu at Mahua in Gujarat on the Epic Ramayana are worth listening to. I heard the discourse of Sri Moraribapu on the same day in the evening and wrote a letter home about it. I was very much influenced by his discourse but I could not approach him. Subsequently I could reach near him with the help of some friends. I requested him to go to Mumbai and bless the audience there with his worthy discourses on the Ramayana. He agreed to my request. We organised the discourses of Moraribapu on the Ramayana at Giragaun Chowpati in Mumbai. Thousands of people were benefited by his religious discourses.

Earlier we had organized discourses of Sri Dongremaharaj at Azad Maidan in South Mumbai. He has delivered his religious discourses at several places in the world. Millions of people were impressed and were benefited.

Such opportunities he felt must be extended to the people in rural areas also. Karamshibhai therefore organized such discourses at Sakarwadi and Srirampur and satisfied his aspiration for social service.



Under the Shade of the Himalayas (Amernath)

अवतुत्तरस्यां दिशि देवतात्मा हिमालयो नाम नगाधिराजः।
पूर्वापसौ तोयनिधी अगाह्य रिधतः पृथिव्या इव मानदण्डः॥

*The huge divine mountain, the king of mountains,
named Himalaya lies to the north which becomes
the glory of the earth as it penetrates the seas
to the east and the west*

Under the Shade of the Himalayas (Amernath)

Karamshibhai is a devout believer and a man of religious propensities. He intensely believes in God. He is reasonably proud of Hinduism. He shows intense fervour to defend Hinduism. In the same way he has a great fascination for the Hindu places of pilgrimage.

The Hindu mind is greatly attracted by two sacred places, the Himalayas and the river Ganga. It cherishes a special sentiment for both. It is for this reason that Hindus call Himalayas as the 'Soul of God' and the Ganga as 'Mother Ganga' with a great sense of dedication. The Hindu mind ardently wishes to have the holy view of the Himalayas on being born on earth and take a dip in the holy waters of the Ganga. The Hindu mind also craves for close contact with the Himalayas in the last years of his life and a few drops of the water of the Ganga in his mouth while dying.

Karamshibhai when he found some time from his trade and business took the first opportunity to go for the Himalayas and the great river Ganga which flows from its regions.

Karamshibhai according to his religious bend of mind and the Hindu traditions, has visited most of the holy places of Hindus which include:

The four abodes (Dhama) of Badrinath, Dwarkadhish, Jagannathpuri and Rameshwar, the twelve holy cities such as Mathura, Vrindavan, Kashi, Avanti, Ayodhya, Dwarka, Kanchi and other five cities, four lakes namely Kailas-Manasarovar, Bindusarovar, Pampa Sarovar and Narayan Sarovar; also holy places in Maharashtra the famous 'Ashta-Vinayak' (Eight

Ganapaties), the twelve Shivalingas (Jyotirlingas or token of Shiva) so also Amernath, Vaishnodevi, Giribalaji in the North and South India also, the rivers Ganga, Yamuna, Sindhu, Narmada, Godavari, Kaveri and other major and minor holy places throughout the country. He had visited some places twice or thrice. He visited Amernath, the most difficult snowbound place in Kashmir thrice.

He did not travel alone to most of those religious tours. He was accompanied by his wife, Mrs. Sakarbai, his eldest daughter, Mrs. Leelaben Kotak, and on some occasions, other daughters, relatives and friends also. Besides the members of the family, there were other persons like the cook, the domestic servant went with them. They also took the necessary food articles, clothes, three or four vehicles and their drivers. Karamshibhai moved along with family members and servants on his important travels. He used to collect information with full details of the places to be visited some two months before the commencement of the journey. His information related to the places to be visited the temples, the roads, the directions, the weather and places at which to halt with relevant maps. He used to seek information and guidance from those who had visited those places before. He possesses a sharp intellect and a quick eye to grasp the minute details. Karamshibhai did not write down the account of his pilgrimage to the holy places but his daughter, Mrs. Leelaben Kotak, had maintained a diary of all the important events during their journies to the holy places. She had written a comprehensive account of the travels in Gujarati based on the notes in the diary. It was periodically published in the Lohana Society's 'Lohana Sourabh' magazine.

The following account of the travels is based on the published matter in 'Lohana Sourabh' and the recollections of Karamshibhai about those events.

Karamshibhai went on pilgrimage to Amernath in Kashmir in the Himalayan region three times with the members of his family. It is obviously a difficult undertaking. The believers consider the pilgrimage to Amernath as a meritorious act in the life of a Hindu. This is the spiritual significance of the Amernath pilgrimage. The visit to this snowbound place through narrow paths braving the chilly weather and strong cold winds is a physical ordeal, a rare experience and an exciting wonder.

A huge lump of ice is formed in a cave at Amernath, at a particular place in a particular season which is regarded as Shiva-ling, the token of generative

power of the universe (by the Hinuds). The devotees make a bee-line to have the holy view of the formation disregarding the inclement weather and physical hazards. Thousands of devotees struggle to visit the holy place every year. Another remarkable phenomenon is that every time a flock of about 20 pigeons descends on that place at a particular time. Karamshibhai said, "We visited Amernath thrice. When we visited it for the first time we could have a view of the full size Shiva-ling formed by the ice. When we went there second time the 'ling' of ice was not formed. The place was flat Himalayan tract. At the third visit we could have a view of the 'ling' about two feet high. The mere visit to the holy place is not so important as the holy view of the full size ice-ling. Such a view is regarded as a spectacle denoting great fortune.

The eldest daughter of Karamshibhai, Mrs. Leela Madhavji Kotak, has written the description of the first journey to Amernath in which she says, "The mind is thrilled at the memory of the Himalayas. I had heard a little about the Himalayas and read something about it but so far I had no actual opportunity to see it."

One day venerable Adha (father) announced that we all shall go to the pilgrim place of Amernath. On hearing that the great figure of Shiva-Linga vividly stood before my eyes! Later, the day of departure to the great holy place dawned. Our company consisted of venerable Adha, Laji Sheth, Panju and Suryakant Kothari, Dr. Krishnan; a cook and male and female servants. We started from Mumbai by the Punjab Mail on 9th August 1956. Our train passed by Itarsi, Bhopal, Gwalior, Agra and other stations. We could see greenery everywhere. We passed by many rivers. We could sight the stupa (Buddhist tope) of Sanchi at a far off distance. Our relatives met us at the Bhopal and Gwalior stations. We reached Delhi behind time. So we could not catch the Pathankot train for onward journey. We had to make a halt at Delhi. We also had to obtain permits for two of us for Kashmir travel. If we were not to make a temporary halt at Delhi we would have to obtain the permits at Pathankot.

Venerable Adha went with his acquaintance, Mr. Ramanhhai, in the morning. We all went to Canaught Circle for shopping. From there we proceeded to Rajghat to have a view of Mahatmaji's Shrine (Samadhi). The river Yamuna flows nearby the place. The surroundings of the shrine are clean and calm. Next we visited Jamma Masjid, Kutubminar, Indraprastha

and other places. Our train was scheduled for 9 pm. We boarded that train and reached Pathankot on the next morning at 11 o'clock. We hired a station wagon there but as it was raining and the roads to Banihal high land (ghat) were closed. So we had to proceed by cycle-rickshaws for our onward journey. The roads to the high land were cleared by evening. We proceeded to Jammu. On our way we could sight the river Ravi. The Ravi water is shared by India and Pakistan. The Kashmir border begins at Sarwan village. We had to produce our permits before the officials. The rivers and the canals were full because of rains. The beautiful coloured stones looked very charming. We were moving ahead while enjoying the natural scenery but the big pot holes in the roads made the journey difficult. We had to move with great care and caution. On the way at one place we cooked our meals. The weather was very pleasant. We snapped many photographs. The mountain range capped by the clouds was very exhilarating.

Jammu is some 66 miles (appr. 105 km) from Pathankot. It is situated at a height of about a thousand feet from the sea-level.

We visited a big temple in Jammu in the morning. We saw many special black stones there regarded as token of Lord Vishnu.

Banihal is 166 miles (265 km) away from Jammu. The river Chinab flows there. There is a hanging bridge there on the river. Banihal is about 1200 ft. high from the sea-level. We reached Banihal at 5 o'clock in the evening. We used to ascend to the height of 6800 ft. at sometime and then descend 2200 ft. while journeying through the hill range. It is very tiresome to ascend the high terrain. There are very deep valleys. We can see rivers and canals in the mountains. As there was fog we could not have a clear view of the roads. The traffic and movement of people was brisk. We arrived at a tunnel at 6 pm. The tunnel was under repairs that time. The tunnel is about two furlongs long. When we emerged from the tunnel we began to feel cold. We put on woollen clothes. We reached Veranaga, from there we went to Khanbal on the Jhelum river. The river is full of fish and water. The fish jump up to catch the food which you toss to them. It is great fun to play with them by throwing bits of eatables to them. We came across pomegranate plants in the way.

The Mughal Emperor, Jahangir, was thrilled by the sight and said, "If Heaven exists, it is only here!" we could see fir, oak, chinara trees all along the way. We halted at a bungalow near that place. The famous Jahangir

gardens are near this bungalow. There is an aquarium. We saw that and proceeded to Anantanag. In the Kashmiri language 'baug' means lake, and 'chashma' means spring or stream. There is the temple of Martand ahead of Anantanag. The distance between Pahalgaum and Anantanag is 40 miles (65 kms). We traversed that distance and arrived at Pahelgaum. The pilgrimage of Amernath starts from Pahelgaum. We made all preparations to go high up to Amernath. It was raining heavily.

We started for Amernath from Pahalgaum in the morning. Great importance is attached to the arrival at Amernath on the full moon day of the Hindu month of Shravan (August). The Shiv-linga (Phallus) in full form is visible on the full moon day. This is a simple belief. The holy view in full form may or may not be seen always.

A group of men with holy symbols (sangh) was to start in the morning two days later. So the pilgrims were prevented from going up. This was necessary to avoid the confrontation between the 'sangh' going upwards and the pilgrims going downwards in the narrow lanes. In the beginning we also were refused permission to go up but 'Adha' our dear father managed to get the permission.

We roamed about the market place of the village Pahelgaum. We made some purchases. Here to strike a bargain one has to haggle a lot to determine the price of an article. The trader offers the article at half the price, initially quoted by him if bargaining is done. For instance a beautiful small stone was quoted at Rs. 1.25 by the merchant after haggling for the right price, the bargain was settled for half the price that is Re. 0.60/- only. The common folks use letter 'e' before pronouncing words like stone, school etc. So stone is pronounced as 'estone'.

We got up early in the morning according to the rule to be observed by all during the pilgrimage. Dear 'Adha' goes out in the morning after his bath disregarding the biting cold. The morning is delightful. The climate of the Himalayan region has some strange element in it, that even if you are weak and exhausted after a day's toil when you get up in the morning you feel fresh and energetic once again. The fatigue and exhaustion vanish in the sleep and one gains new vigour in the morning.

We had already made an arrangement on the previous day to hire horses and mules to carry us uphill to Amernath. The animals were not brought in

time. We had to wait for a long time. We had to search for the men who promised the deal. We had to send somebody to the market place to find them. They came at about 2 pm. We had also taken on hire a few tents to set up there. One more hour was wasted in packing our luggage, tents etc.

A special palanquin – a swinging bed with a parasol on top, was arranged for me. Dr. Krishnan and Mr. Lalji Sheth were to ride horses. A spare horse was kept in readiness for emergency. The rest of our company declined to ride horses. Slowly our pilgrimage to the Amernath temple began. It is a steep slope to climb. On way we came across Chrisland. The Chandanwadi is situated at the height of nine thousand five hundred ninety-five feet above Pahelgaum. It is eight miles from Pahelgaum. There is a snow house bridge near Chandanwadi which was to be crossed. Nowadays cars are available up to Chandanwadi. We reached Chandawadi at 9 o'clock at night. We made a halt at that place. Accommodation is available there. Some shops are also set up there. The Panchatarani river which rises in the Sheshanaga flows near here through high mountain ranges and tall trees. The springs which issue from the hard rocks flow with such force as if to race with each other to get on to the river first and keep it company. The beautiful spectacle made us forget our everyday worries and feel one with nature.

Everybody had put on heavy woollen clothes to ward off the severe cold but while walking we began to feel very warm. After walking a little distance dear Adha removed all the woollen clothes and was in his short sleeves from Chandanwadi. The emaciated horse stayed bridled up but the clever horse used to pause for a while at the turn of the path and after surveying the terrain used to negotiate the serpentine path and trot again. On the way we had to get down while ascending a high spot. The view of the full blown flowers down in the valleys used to charm the mind.

Next we came to the football high land. It is unlike Pisudhari. We arrived at Sheshnaga at one o'clock. We stayed at the quarters built for officers. Sheshnaga is a very beautiful place. It is also known by the name of 'Vavajana'. It is situated at the height of 12,000 ft. down below is the Sheshnaga lake. Its water is bluish deep and steady. The Sheshnaga lake is formed by melted ice from all the sides. There are three mountain peaks on the mountain in front. They are called Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha after the three Hindu deities.

We were asleep at night but were suddenly awakened by a loud sound. It

was the sound of a landslide. Big boulders slide from the top and fall down to send the Earth trembling. It was very cold. We covered every part of our body with wollen clothes, socks, gloves, and caps to cover the ears. Even then we shivered. The beauty of nature here is peculiar. When you set your sight at a long distance you can view the glittering snow-bound mountain range in the sun. When you look at the other side you see very tall trees on very high mountains. When you turn your eyes downwards you see a beautiful carpet of flowers. It presented a view of an embroidered design on a green cloth spread out before you!

We slept early to-night and rose early next morning to leave for Panchatarani. We took about five long hours to cover the distance of eight miles (13 km). Panchatarani is in the lower region. The place is called Panchatarani because it is a confluence of streams from five places. After halting there for some time we proceeded further. It was not raining. However after traversing a little distance the thundering of the clouds started. It rained also. The road was already in poor condition. It became worse after the rains. The narrow road and the steep ascent made it difficult for us to scramble up the place.

The ascent came to an end and we could see snow. We walked over the ice with great enthusiasm. Amernath was yet 8 miles away. We reached the caves there at 4 o'clock. The Shiva-lingis formed only in the cave. Sometimes it appears very large and sometimes very small. We could have a view of the Shiva-ling, smaller than we had imagined. We therefore felt a little nervous and upset but we were happy that our long awaited desire was fulfilled. As we held a special permit we could have an exclusive view of the Shive-linga. So we could have the 'darshan' in peace. Nobody lives there. The temple-employees are there. We could pray and make our offerings without any struggle and hurry. The temple employees – the priests uttered the sacred chants. Many Muslims live in this part of the mountain. It is they who had discovered this cave long ago. We saw some pigeons there in the cave. We met one hermit (sadhu) who had lived there for two years. He stores things needed for a year. We approached the holy personage with great reverence and took photographs with him. Then we started our return journey from there at 5.30 pm. We reached Panchatarani at 7 pm. or so. It was so cold that we could not speak. We all slept in one tent and used the other tent for our luggage and stores.

The next day we started our return journey from Panchatarani. It was raining more heavily than on the previous day. It was difficult to plod through the mud. We reached Sheshanaga at 12.30 am. We ate a little there. We had asked the men from whom we had hired horses and mules to wait for us there but they had already gone from there as they hoped to catch more customers there.

Dearest 'Adha' had asked Suryakant Uncle to ride a horse but he chose not to ride. 'Adha' therefore rode the horse himself and arrived ahead of other five persons who were trekking behind on foot. He was much worried about them. Mr. Lalji Sheth was warming himself at the fire lighted by some people nearby. He was feeling very cold. Dearest 'Adha' was in search of horses for bringing the pedestrians lagging behind. He reached the fireside. The men warming up themselves at the fire told him that he would not get any horse on hire in such a severe cold. But he sighted a group of ten to fifteen horses in good condition as he turned back after listening to the idle men at the fire side. When Adha told the horseman about his requirement they readily agreed to bring the men trailing behind. We could see the five men of our company trudging towards us.

An ascetic had accompanied us from Chandanwadi. He stayed with us a couple of days. But later he disappeared from that place. Nobody could find him.

At about 4.15 pm. we learnt at Sheshanaga that a serious riot had broken out at night. Heavy ice-boulders were dislodged from the mountain in front of us making heavy sounds as if huge ice blocks were falling down.

We all reached Chandanwadi at 5 in the evening. We found many tents pitched there. There was hardly any space to live. We were contemplating to stay there but we changed the plan and thought it right to go down. There was a crowd of about three to four thousand people. We rode the horses and so expected to reach the place soon.

When we started from Chandanwadi we saw the devotees coming from Pahalgam. The surface had become marshy and slippery. The pedestrians were soaked in mud upto the knees. The legs got stuck up in the mud and could be taken out with great difficulty. The number of pilgrims was large. They comprised children of four year old and old men of 70. They held each other's hands for support and walked with intense faith. Fortunately

our pilgrimage ended happily and was full of rich experience. We had gone to see the glaciers at Kolhai.

Karamshibhai while reminiscing about his second pilgrimage said, “We had learnt by experience that we should go to the place of pilgrimage much earlier than the commencement of the actual event. By that time all preparations are completed. The roads are clear and clean. In the second pilgrimage it was raining heavily at Pahelgaum. The roads were full of mud but our journey to Amernath and back was happy and delightful.



Under the Shade of the Himalayas
(Kailas Mansarovar)

शृङ्गोच्छ्रायैः कुमुदविशदैर्यो वितत्य विधतः खं।
वाशीभूतः प्रतिदिनमिष त्र्यम्बकक्याट्टहासः॥

*That Kailas Mountain which pervades the sky
by its white peaks like a full blown up lotus, appears
as if it is an accumulation of layers of a hearty laughter
of Lord Shiva.*

Under the Shade of the Himalayas (Kailas Mansarovar)

Our arduous Amernath pilgrimage of 1956 passed off safely by the grace of Lord Shiva. Now we were anxiously waiting for the pilgrimage to Kailas-Mansarovar. The eagerness of the whole family prompted Karamshibhai to undertake the 'yatra' visit to the holy place of lofty Kailas-Mansarovar towering over the Himalayan region. The journey to the pilgrim place was to commence on 25th July 1958. This was to be a memorable day in our lives. With the blessings of Lord Mahankal Sri Shiva-Shankar (Lord Shiva) we began our journey from Mumbai by the Frontier Mail shouting the slogan 'Jai Jai Shiva Shankar (Victory to Lord Shiva)'. All our relatives and friends had come to the railway station to see us off and offer good wishes for a safe and successful journey to the sacred places. In this journey dear 'Adha' was accompanied by my sister Divyaben, Dr. Krishanan, Pundit Devendra Vijayji, uncle Suryakant, Bhagirath Pratap Vaidyaraj, uncle Das, Subramanyam and me. We had also taken with us photographer Bhardwaj, Chandrakant Khala, a cook and a domestic servant. Our company consisted of fourteen persons in all.

We arrived at Mathura on 26th July in the evening. We were present at the lamp prayer (arti) for Maharadni Jumunaji (River Jumna) in the evening and had the holy view of the celebration function for the holy river Jumna. After the holy view of mother Jumna which has attained the spiritual purification by the sacred touch of the feet of Lord Krishna and the unswerving faith of myriads of people in the country and outside we left for Bareilly.

We shall never forget the reception accorded to us by Mr. Ramavatarbhai and his family at Bareilly. We headed for Tanakpur from Bareilly in a station wagon and other vehicles. On our way to Bareilly we saw the 'Sharda dam' constructed by the Government of India at the cost of Rs. 55/- crores. We could visualize the progress of modern India by the sight of the new modern places such as this dam. The real enjoyment was to watch the Indian cranes flying about the fields and amidst the natural surroundings. It rained when we reached Tanakpur. It was very difficult to negotiate the roads, which became shippery and marshy due to heavy rains. When our vehicle got stuck in the mud, we all had to get down and struggle to raise it and continue our journey. We reached Champavat after such a strenuous exercise.

It was nearly evening when we arrived at Champavat and as it was raining it was difficult to decide where to settle down. At that time the headmaster of a school perceived our problem and took us all to his home. We stayed with him for the night. We had packed one of his beddings in our luggage by mistake. We noticed that later, so the next day, his bedding was dispatched and we expressed our regrets for the oversight.

We went to Pithoragarh from there. On our way we had to encounter a landslide. The big boulders dislodged from the tops of the mountain had blocked the roads completely. It took a lot of time to clear the roads so we struggled to reach Pithoragarh which we reached on 29th July.

A sweet memory of Pithoragarh lingers in our memory permanently and that is of the harmless, innocent children. Their plump cheeks, pinkish-white complexion and clear inquiring eyes made us fix our eyes on them in admiration for a long time. It was a pleasure to watch them. When an atmosphere of confidence prevailed, the children gathered round us. When we gave them toffees, chocolates, balloons and such playthings they were delighted and thrilled to the extreme. Our real journey to Kailas-Mansarovar started from Pithoragarh. We hired in all 36 horses and 4 men with staffs to carry our luggage and conduct us towards our destination on 31st July. We were wading through a thick fog to ascend the high ground some three thousand feet above and reached Ascot.

We proceeded from Ascot to Jaljibhi, the confluence of Gouriganga and Kaliganga. As we trekked on, we saw the stream of Gouriganga descending from a commanding height. We all took our bath there. Dear 'Adha' used to take his bath in the streams and springs on the way.

Subsequently we reach Dharachula. There we met Sri Swamiji and Mr. Pravinbhai Nanavati who were returning from the visit to the sacred places. We reached Tavaghat after that. The asylum (ashram) established by His Holiness Sri Narayanswami is nine thousand feet above Tavaghat. We looked at that and were pleased to find it decorated with many coloured flowers and apples. It was clean and quiet.

It is virtually a huge temple with artistic facade as it is situated at such a height. There is also a large museum and a library. His Holiness Sri Narayanswami left this world in 1956 leaving behind in the mountainous territory a heritage of the Indian Culture. He intensively propagated the tradition of collective prayers set to tunes (Bhajan) and religious discourses to enlighten the people in the surrounding areas. The devotion to God was emphasized by every means to popularize his mission. He taught the people in the places there to chant Narayana, Narayana. He also established a college at Ascot and later on handed over its charge to the government.

We stayed in the pleasant and calm atmosphere of the 'Ashram' for two days. We devotedly prayed and read out religious chants.

Then we went to a place named Sirdha which appears like a beautiful carpet. One of the disciples of Sri Narayan Swami, Kikubhai by name, accompanied us. We continued our journey. We left Sirdha and travelled three miles over a high slope and reached a place named Garbag. It is situated at a height of about one thousand feet. This village is the last place on the side of the Indian border. On our way to Garbag we met Hukmsingh of that place. He was to act as a guide and lead us to Sri Kailas.

Garbag since some years is expanding towards the lower regions. We saw the 'yaak' animal of the mountain region. The yaaks are used as beasts of burden and also are used for riding. Our photographer, Mr. Bhardwaj, snapped the photograph of our guide Hukmsingh's daughter dressed in Bhutia style.

We took Hukmsingh and Kishkhambane as our guides for further journey from Garbag. As we went on we encountered the road to Kalapani which was in a very bad condition. The feet of the staff-men were slipping. There was also severe cold there. We sighted some army men as it was a check-post. There was none besides them to be seen there.

We crossed the lofty mountains and ice-rivers and reached Shangchung

at a height of 17,500 ft. from the sea level. We finally reached Lipulake, the further-most Indian border, an arid territory on the Shangchung – Takalkot road at a very high point. This road is slippery and mountainous and surrounded by forests. Incidentally if we were to come opposite the sheep or goats there was a possibility of slipping down and falling into the river down below.

The territory further than that is the territory of Tibet. It is flat and straight. There is hardly any high hill there. We could see the tall peaks of the mountains from here. While looking at the peak of the Kailas mountain at a very far distance, I instinctively remembered the verses composed by Umashankar Joshi which I had learnt in school.

We proceeded from Limpulake and made our first halt at Kalikot in Tibet on 15th August. This is a big trading town in Tibet. Here nobody is allowed to build a house. When Indian traders go there, they have to pitch their tents and stay there for doing business. The turnover in trade amounts to millions of rupees.

In the green forest here we savoured honey, beans and potatoes. In the afternoon, we went for shopping and had a novel experience.

The novel experience was in the form of a disaster. It was the period when China had invaded Tibet. China had undertaken to build roads in Tibet at a breathtaking pace. The equipment required for road-building was being transported briskly with heavy loads in trucks. The Chinese became suspicious of us. Mr. Khala and Mr. Bharadwaj had cameras and binoculars hanging from their necks. The Chinese officials therefore suspected that we were spies. Those officials searched all our belongings. They disconnected our radio sets. They made a thorough search of our tents. They seized our binoculars and movie cameras. They held talks with us the whole night and decided to meet us next morning.

During this time we were divided into two groups. Dear 'Adha' and Mr. Bhardwaj went to Kochannath which is ten miles (16 kms.) away from Takalkot. My sister Divyaben and I were alone in the tent. We were frightened as the region was unfamiliar and new. Besides, dear 'Adha' had not arrived yet. So we were worried about him also. The Tibetan guards who could not be distinguished as male or female, as they wore long hair, made frequent searches and inspection of the tents. We were praying hard. We had to pass

the night in fear and anxiety. We felt relieved when we sighted dear 'Adha' and our members from the other group the next morning.

The Chinese officials after deliberations in the morning laid down the following conditions for us to follow:-

1. We had to follow the same route for our return, as the one used for coming here from India,
2. We were not to carry movie cameras and binoculars,
3. If we go to Kailas for the 'holy view' (darshan) we had to return after the holy view and should not indulge in any other activity,

The outcome of the negotiations held on 20th August was to tone down the rigorous conditions and after some concession as follows:

1. We could follow any convenient route to return to India, not necessarily the same route,
2. The movie cameras may be dispatched to India and only three places may be photographed by still cameras,
3. No other activity is possible while having the holy view of the Kailas.

It was decided to pack all the four movie cameras and dispatch them to India through the Dharchula-Garbag based honourable merchant, Mr. Mohansingh. But uncle Das and Mr. Bharadwaj were haunted by the devil; they had some evil plan up their sleeves. Both of them were whispering in suppressed voices. Their plan was to dismantle the movie cameras and conceal their parts in the 126 components of our luggage. This would not be detected by any one. Then once we cross the Tarkot border and enter Indian territory we could reassemble them and operate them. Out of the four movie cameras, three are to be dispatched to our destination in India and the fourth one could be retained for further operations.

Dear 'Adha' went out of the tent for some work. He sensed that something was going on secretly. He approached both of them and inquired about what was on their minds. They gave evasive replies. Dear 'Adha' got suspicious. He raised his voice and said, "What's going on?" Both uncle Das and Mr. Bhartdwaj had to confess their plan which they were conspiring. 'Adha' after hearing their clandestine design to hoodwink the Chinese officials, firmly told both of them, 'Nothing of that sort will ever happen. We should abide by the negotiated agreement. Our conduct should be such

that these foreigners would feel that the Indian people are honest and trustworthy. We must honour our plighted word."

The clear and firm instruction from 'Adha' made the men concerned to pack all the four movie cameras under seal and send them to Mr. Mohansingh for onward dispatch.

As we were preparing to leave the place in the morning we saw furious Chinese officers, whips in hand, staring at us. The reason for this angry scene was that some outsider had spread the rumour that one of our company had escaped to India early morning and they were searching for him. We told them that our servant had gone ahead. The Chinese officials asked about the movie-cameras. We explained to them that the movie cameras were packed, sealed and sent to Mr. Mohansingh. They were not satisfied. Only when they broke the seal of the packet and saw all the four movie cameras they were satisfied and convinced of our truthfulness.

We thanked the Almighty God. If dear 'Adha' were not to get up at night and uncle Das and Mr. Bhardwaj were to carry out their deception plan, we would have evidently been trapped by the Chinese officers. We cannot tolerate the idea of what trauma would have awaited us and the humiliation for all.

We do not know the language of the people in strange lands and so we are subjected to strange experiences. There is a species of mountain goats in Tibet. They are nicknamed 'Chor' (thief). Their peculiarity is that, that they move in group and cover the whole road and go in a row. So all outsiders are instructed to be aware of 'chors'. Therefore our Marwari protecting guards were ready with guns to protect us from thieves. Later we came to know what 'chor' meant and we laughed merrily.

The Tibetan people are found to be always busy while moving about or conversing with each other. They appear to be busy weaving with the needles constantly or they are busy making baskets. They have a strange way of preparing tea. They put butter in it, to make it more nutritive. One boy from each family becomes a monk (sadhu) and he goes on chanting religious formulae throughout the day. Manuscripts of religious compositions are preserved in large monasteries. Hundreds of monks live there. They go on studying different scriptures (shastra) or they are busy reciting some sacred formulae. They recite the 'mantra' (formula) 'Om Bhani Padmani Hum'

(Glory to Lord Buddha). This chant is written on a piece of paper and inserted into a whirling box. They believe that the chant is performed by the multiplication of the revolutions of the whirling box. Many such whirling boxes are seen arranged in a row.

We saw a seven storeyed temple built some eight hundred years ago in Takalkot. It is known as 'Lama Guppa'. We had a holy view of the gigantic statue of Lord Buddha executed in golden sheets. The sixty-six year old Lama priest presented us with a yellow fabric as a token of blessings (Prasad) and divine favour.

Tibet is situated on a plateau with tall trees and pervaded by forests. The Nature has gifted thorny shrubs to the place. These shrubs though wet, burn like camphor. They are used as fuel by the Tibetans.

Another speciality of the place is the 'scorpion tree' which when touched sends a stinging pain and if touched with a wet hand the sting is several times severe.

The flat and extensive area of Sikong was crossed by us and we headed towards Gurla Gumpa (bower) some sixteen thousand feet above sea-level. We could catch glimpses of the peaks of Rakshastal and Kailas. The Rakshastal lake covers an area of over 74 miles (120 kms) and is very deep. Its water is so clean and transparent that one can see beautiful coloured stones clearly lying several feet deep in the water. It seems the lake suffers from some curse. Nobody drinks its water. According to the superstition prevailing there, those who would drink water from that lake would develop abdominal dropsy.

There are two lakes on either side of the mountain. On its left side is Rakshastal and on the right is Mansarovar. We went to the bank of Mansarovar from Rakshastal. We reached Mansarovar which has a circumference of 56 miles (90 kms.). The philosophers, devotees of all orders of Hinduism, ascetics, sages and seers all of them liberally praise this lake. We also expressed our gratitude to God when we reached this famous lake.

We all were wonder-struck by the uncommon beauty of the Mansarovar. We all bathed in the deep, calm, transparent lake, Dear 'Adha' and Bhagirathprasad performed 'puja' (ritual prayers) and offered oblations in the names of our ancestors.

The Brahmaputra and the Indus (Sindhu) these two great rivers rise in Manasarovar. Both the rivers flow in opposite directions. After faithfully saluting the holy lake Manasarovar we completed the first phase of our pilgrimage and proceeded to the next.

We started the first leg of our journey to the sacred Kailas exactly one month after our departure from Mumbai. The journey from Darchin to Kailas is a circumvention of twenty-four miles (40 kms). On our way we paid a visit to the King and Queen of Sikkim.

We had inaugurated our journey to this holy place on 26th August. On 27th August we reached 'Hirakugumpha', a place at the height of 19 thousand feet plodding through the stones and muttering the name of God and devoutly praying God throughout the difficult terrain. We could now have a closer view of the holy Kailas from here. We slowly began our ascent to the high mountain in the morning of 28th August. We all were anxious to have the holy view of Lord Sri Shankar by reaching the highest place. Dear 'Adha' advanced ahead of all by his will power.

An illusion was created in our minds while viewing the valleys on the left, that hundreds of followers of Lord Shiva had gathered on the uniform ice-camps on the holy land of Kailas. All of us were finding it difficult to walk at such a height as the rarified air affected breathing. Everyone of us was engrossed in the observation of the spectacle of white snow spread out before us according to his or her imagination and emotional response.

At one time we conceived the illusion of 'seeing' the figure like that of Mahatma Gandhi on the peak of Kailas Mountain!

We crossed Dolma at 9 o'clock in the morning and reached Gauri-Kund which is 18,400 ft. above the sea level. According to the mythological legend Goddess Mother Parvati Devi used to bathe in this 'kunda' or pool. We also had the good fortune to bathe in that sanctified pool. As the place is very high from the sea level the air is very thin and breathing becomes very difficult. Notwithstanding the physical hurdle we endeavoured to push forward. Here we could see very fat, black crows with red legs and beaks. We could not see any other bird there except the crows. We could not see any human being there besides our pilgrims' group.

We had the holy view (darshan) of the foot of the Kailas mountain on the full moon night of the Shravana month of the Hindu calender (August-

September). It was a day of great significance as it was 'Rakhi Purnima' (sister putting band on the wrist of brother signifying the bond between them). It is also a day when the old sacred thread (yajnyopavit) is discarded and a new one is worn by Hindus. This ritual could be performed in such emotional close contact with Kailas perceived by the believers.

We passed the last day of our holy visit to Kailas in Darchin on 31st August 1958. We took Manchu road to reach Darchin. This place is a trading centre for warm wool and down and other articles. We made some purchases there and moved ahead. We experienced a shortage of water till we reached Sumandhin. Water was very cold and frozen. So we faced the problem of taking our daily bath. The shortage of water taught us economy. Many a time we had to manage our appetite with the meagre breakfast items preserved by us.

In the same month (Aug-Sept) on the 8th day, that is on Gokul-Ashtami-day (that is the birth day of Lord Krishna) it appeared to be a disastrous day for us. We were saved from the jaws of death at Shivachilam. A youth flung a stone at a kerosene tin-barrel over the heads of porter-cum-guides (Jabbu). The 'Jabbus' were terribly frightened and started running wildly in all directions. They left out our luggage which was scattered everywhere. Our tiffin box containing thin crisp spicy cakes (papad) got opened by strong winds and they flew in all directions. We also started fleeing to save ourselves from the terror of the Jabbus. We ran for safety wherever we perceived it. Everything appeared to be in peril.

The danger slowly passed off and we felt relieved and laughed over the panic that gripped us.

It was a novel experience for us. The 'Jabbus' had left us alone in a barren land. The labourers were to help us upto the Thakur village. After that we were to hire new labourers. It was decided after negotiations for two days that all the wages were to be paid in advance and they would take us to Niti Village after three and a half days. We paid them the full amount in advance but they proved to be over-wise and cunning. After covering a little distance in the afternoon they declared that the day's work was over. They next told us that the period of three and a half days was completed even when Niti village was some twenty to twenty two (30 to 35 kms) miles away. They said, 'now we go' and left us stranded there. Now we had to hire

staffmen (Dandiwale) for assisting us. Dear 'Adha', Mr. Subrahmanyam, Divya and I, that is four of us started walking on the road to Niti village. We took pocketful of grams, and with a battery-torch in hand proceeded towards Niti Village without guides. Uncle Suryakant had already gone ahead with some labourers. As we were trudging the paths we heard the barking of dogs from a distance. In case we were to stray into that area the dogs, we feared, might tear us to pieces. The battery cells ran down, which aggravated our problems. We resorted to muttering the name of God Rama and putting all faith in Him.

The road chosen by uncle Suryakant for the journey led to the police outpost of our country. However it used to be abandoned during winter and the Chinese took the advantage of the situation and set up their police outpost at that place.

It was night time and our hearts were gripped with the fear and anxiety of passing the night in the freezing cold. At such a time we sighted a lamp at a distance. A ray of hope flashed before us which enthused us to hasten our strides.

The merchants from India go to Tibet for buying wool there. One of the merchants who arrived with his caravan had pitched a tent there half an hour before our arrival. We met them and requested them to spare one of their attendants to show us the road to Niti Village. The merchant told us that the road is treacherous and in bad shape. So some arrangement would be made the next day. The merchants gave us tasty sweet food and allowed us to stay with them. The tent was full of wool. So we got desired protection from the cold outside.

Next day we got up early in the morning and started for Niti. We met our hired labourers and also the horses arrived. Niti village is the last post on the Indian border. We reached the check-post.

We called on the Niti check-post officer in the morning. He was a thorough gentleman and showed us great hospitality. He served us tea and eatables with great exhortations. Then we continued our further journey. As we perceived indication of rain we halted at Jhelam. The workers from that place were well behaved. They arranged for our mattresses, vessels, grain etc. and made us comfortable.

We got up early the next day and ate 'parathas' (flat bread) and 'beson'

soup (gram-flour soup) prepared in a hotchpotch manner. A stick was treated as a rolling pin and a plank of wood for a rolling board. This meal was like a precious delicacy. Dear 'Adha' remembers its taste even today.

We reached one village after leaving Jhelam. Tapovan from there was 3 miles (5 kms.) by the short cut and 8 miles (12 kms) from the new route. Joshimath from there was 12 kms.

About 25 more members from our family were expected to reach there from Mumbai at about 11 a.m. They included dear mother that is, Mrs. Sakarben, brother, sister-in-law, sister Savitriben's mother-in-law and others. We had received a message of that already. In fact we should have reached there before their arrival. The staff-men (dandiwalas) labourers refused to go ahead to that destination due to severe cold. It was evening and they were completely exhausted. So four of us that is Adha, Subrahmanyam, Divya and I left for 'Tapovana' by the nearest route. We had taken two battery torches with us but in a hurry we forgot to replace the battery cells. We proceeded on the new longer route by mistake, missed the short cut. It was a dark night. The batteries were out of use. We were afraid about the possible consequences if we missed a step or slipped our feet. The danger was lurking throughout. But by the Grace of God we reached Tapovana at 10 o'clock at night. When we reached there we found the houses locked. We saw a lamp burning in a shop. It was locked from outside but we saw a man sleeping on a cot inside. When we peeped through the wire-mesh to the door. We woke him up and requested him to allow us to stay with him for the remaining part of the night. He was also a visitor who had come from outside. He said, "At this place men do their trade and business during the day and lock their houses and leave the place at night and go to another village. Now they will come in the morning and unlock their houses."

We were anxious about how to pass the night. We consulted the man inside the locked house. He said, "Go to another sector from the road in front. There is a bungalow owned by the local board at the foot of the hill. There you might get accommodation." He could not show us the road as he was locked inside the house.

When we turned our eyes downwards we spotted two or three persons moving about with a torch-light. We apprised them of our position and descended to their place in the torch-light. They told us two things, "Firstly

it was the harvest season of maize. This place is full of bears. The bears come out at night to feed on the maize and if they see a human being they assault him. They stand up to him and tear off man's left part of the face just below the eyes." Secondly the men whom Adha and others met were government officers who visited that place once every month for inspection work. The unbearable cold weather and no residents there to talk so they usually spend their night in chit-chating. They sleep during the day and move out at night. We met those people by the Grace of God. They provided us with shelter. We had some 'chivda' (spicy flakes) to bite on. We shared the snacks with them. They offered us water to drink which we accepted. They could make out that we were starving without we telling them that. They knew one gold-smith. They asked him to open his house and fetch rice and pulses. They prepared 'khichdi' (rice and pulses cooked together with ghee etc.). At 12 at night they told us the meals were ready. We were very much impressed by the show of humanity to us by the government officers.

We bathed in the 'Nalkunda' in the morning on 18th September and were ready to go to Joshimath. We reached Joshimath at 12.30 pm. The members of our family had already arrived there from Mumbai before we could reach there. We all members of our family were meeting each other after a lapse of one and a three quarters months (over 50 days). It was the time for rejoicing and pure delight!

In the beginning because of his unshaven cheeks and head to neck woollen cap the new comers could not recognize dear 'Adha'. Even dear mother failed to recognize him. All of them asked the same question, "Where is Adha?" All eyes were set to search for him and when they made out his identity, there was outburst of laughter for a long time. Divya and I had also put on weight and were wearing slacks which produced another peal of laughter.

With the addition of twenty-five new members from Mumbai we were now forty members in all. The full company of forty now headed towards the four sacred 'dhamas' (resorts) of Badrinath, Gangotri, Jumnotri and Kedarnath. Some people had cautioned us that it is not possible to visit the four resorts (of deities) after the visit to holy Kailas. However 'Adha' had remarked, "It will happen as Almighty God wishes!" His unshaken faith in God and adventurous fearless character made it possible for us to overcome

all those hurdles and difficulties and to complete pilgrimage to all four sacred resorts (Dhammas).

We all arrived in Mumbai safely on 28th October 1958.

The highly placed politician like Mr. Yashwantrao Chavan had taken sufficient cognizance of the surveillance of the Himalayan territory carried out by 'Adha' closely in touch with the nature by true faith and loyalty in all respects. The preparations that China was making for an invasion on Indian Territory did not escape the vigilant eye of Karamshibhai while travelling the Tibetan Plateau. He had first hand experience of their wicked designs. His nationalism had perturbed his mind at the possibility of such a national disaster. He had therefore expressed his fears to the newspapers on his return to India. In an interview given to the Gujarati daily 'Janmabhumi', he had hinted at the possible invasion by China and had cautioned the Union Government of such an imminent danger. It is on account of this intelligence that Mr. Yashwantrao Chavan on assuming the charge of the portfolio of a Defence Minister, made it a point to go and meet Karamshibhai personally. The latter had said, "Karamshibhai had, trekked across the Himalayan region. He possesses much information about the Himalayan region. I have therefore come to meet him!"

The 'Soul of God' (Devatatma) the Himalayas exercise an extraordinary charm on the mind of Karamshibhai!



The Splendid New World

यस्तु सञ्चरते देशान् यस्तु श्रेष्ठे पण्डितान्।
तस्य विस्तारिता शुद्धिस्तैलविन्दुविषाम्भक्षि॥

*The person who travels widely from country to country
and renders service to the learned; such a person's
intellectual ability spreads like a drop of oil in water.*

The Splendid New World

We have deliberately reproduced the account of the pilgrimage by Karamshibhai with the members of his family and his friends which his daughter, Mrs. Leelaben Kotak, had written when they visited Amarnath, Kailas-Mansarovar, Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, Jumnotri and other holy places. The account vividly describes the hardships Karamshibhai and his associates had to go through, how they were able to overcome them, how they were saved by the Grace of God, how they had a glimpse of humanity in adversity, these items are a part of this account which makes instructive reading. Also the lucid description of the landscape, especially the awe-inspiring beauty of the Himalayas and the different specimen of human nature and the passing view of the life of the people in altogether different surroundings are facts which are interesting and enlightening. The description reveals how the life of those who actively participated in the uncommon experience was enriched and elevated.

Karamshibhai is naturally prone to and fond of travelling. We have therefore avoided a passing view of the journeys he undertook for the purpose of trade and the wanderings he had to go through in previous chapter.

Besides these journeys Karamshibhai had undertaken excursions in India and abroad. He had travelled widely.

After completing his pilgrimage in the North he made a pilgrimage to the South. On the favourable and fortunate pilgrimage to the South, he was

accompanied by his wife, Mrs. Sakarbai, daughter Mrs. Leelaben, son-in-law Mr. Madhavji Kotak, two sisters and their children. In the minds of the Hindu pilgrims, Southern part of India is equated with large 'Gopuras' (Temple-gates), large temples, the spacious extensive 'Pushkarnis' (Lakes or ponds) and sea-coast stretched over a long distance. It is a land of great men as Shrimat Adya Shankaracharya, Sri Ramanujacharya, Sri Madhavacharya who contributed profoundly to the Indian Philosophy. It is a land of enchanting greenery, exquisite sculpture in rocks and stones. It is a land where Kannada, Tamil, Telgu and Malyalam, these Dravidian languages are spoken, also the rich literature and the representation of a variety of cultural expression, associated with the land and the languages.

During his pilgrimage to the South, Karamshibhai visited Belur, Mahabalipuram, Kanchi, Madurai, Kanya-kumari (Cape Comorin), Trivandram, Periyar, Kochin, Rameshwar, Dindigul, Smirangam, Pondicherry, Tirupati, Bangalore and other places. The members of his family who accompanied him showed great interest in visiting the holy places like temples, monasteries, monuments and famous places like parks, sanctuaries, museums and such other places.

Karamshibhai has travelled throughout the country except the state of Assam. He has thus visited the most outstanding regions of India.

He had travelled to Nepal, a state near India where he had a holy view (darshan) of Pashupati (Shankar) and other Hindu deities. During his travels in Nepal he had some pleasant experiences and had to go through some bitter experiences.

He remembers an event on his way to Nepal. As he was proceeding to visit holy places in Nepal the bus in which he was travelling was held up by dacoits near Gorakhpur. The plundering raid of the dacoits was about to begin. All were deadly frightened. But as good fortune would have it, they sighted a few military vehicles following the bus. The dacoits were frightened and left the bus and fled for their lives. All were saved from disaster.

Karamshibhai had besides Nepal, toured Europe, America in the West and also countries of the East like Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia.

Europe – America represent ancient history, culture, religion, philosophy, political trends of thought and modern scientific knowledge, industriousness and highly advanced culture and an all-sided view of modern technology

and civilization. A man like Karamshibhai who was always engaged in search of new and better things of life was eagerly waiting for an actual view of the advancement, to be familiar with modernity and determined to reform and promote the welfare of humanity. It was but natural that Karamshibhai was focusing his attention on visits to the West.

After completing their European tour Karamshibhai, Mrs. Sakarbai, daughter Mrs. Leelaben and Mrs. Savitriben Daiya left London and reached Detroit by air on 16th September 1971.

They stayed in America for a period of three months. In that short period they visited besides Detroit, Chicago, Omaha, Las Vegas, Toronto, California, Disneyland, Rochester, Washington, Montgomery, Philadelphia and other important cities. They also visited beautiful parks, sea-beaches, monuments, workshops and factories, museums and other outstanding places. Karamshibhai and his family toured almost all the states of America (U.S.) except Texas.

Indo-Pakistan war broke out when Karamshibhai and his family were in America. They used to receive all the information about the bomb blasts, blackouts and wartime activities. This had created a sort of uneasiness in their minds. They had also developed a sort of home-sickness. Karamshibhai and his family members therefore after a hectic tour of Europe and America for a period of six months returned to India after completing the tour. The tour to the West was colourful, eventful and one that provided him with a meaningful and very broad view of the brave new world. they reached Mumbai on 3rd December 1971.

After a lapse of three years Karamshibhai undertook the journey to the East. He was prompted to visit the East for attending the World Hindu Conference. Karamshibhai, Mrs. Sakarbai and Mrs. Leelaben Kotak and one friend, Mr. Sadajeevanlalji, left for Bangkok on 23rd March 1974. The Hindu temples and symbols of Indian Culture in the Eastern countries like Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and other places remind one of the close contacts that India had established with these countries in the past. It was the period of having completed four centuries of the introduction of Tulsi-Ramayana in Indonesia was being celebrated. The world Hindu Conference was held in Bangkok in Thailand. It is a prominent city in Thailand and displays the impact of Hinduism and Buddhism which originated in India; even today the cultural impact is visibly strong. One can see temples of

Lord Rama along with Buddhist 'Viharas' (Buddhist monasteries). One can see gigantic 'pagodas' (temples having many stories). All the participants of the conference toured through Kaula-Lampur, Bargumpha, Singapore, Borobudur, Jakarta. They visited all the important places and visited temples. They also saw the market places. They closely watched the social, political and cultural life of the people.

After about three weeks' journey Karamshibhai returned to India on 13th April 1974. On the way home he visited Kolkata and Darjeeling.

In this way Karamshibhai travelled widely in the East and the West and acquainted himself with the old and the new world. This has enriched his cultural life. Karamshibhai has actually lived the experience of the aphorism (subhashit) in Marathi which says 'That man lives a full and a highly developed life by travelling widely and participating in the conferences of the learned (people).' Karamshibhai fulfilled the requirements in both respects.



Adha

बसो पै बः।

He is the Fountain of Joy and Enthusiasm.

The present house named 'Padmanabha' in which Karamshibhai lives suits the temperament of Karamshibhai and his wife Mrs. Sakarbai. It is spacious, extensive in area and expansive like their great hearts. The architecture of the building was designed by their son, Dr. Shantilalji, keeping in view the perennial generosity of the heart and extensive humanitarian attitude of his parents. It represents the spirit of generosity.

The home acquires such qualities and it becomes a symbol of moderation and nobility. Dr. Shantilalji has embellished this with his artistic taste and invested it with his aesthetic values.

Karamshibhai lives in this house since 1968. Before that he had lived at three or four other places in Mumbai. As a matter of fact Karamshibhai had spent relatively little time in small houses or big houses. He was outside the house most of the time. So it could be better described as the house of his wife, Mrs. Sakarbai! Karamshibhai concedes this fact very gladly. He frequently remarks 'My wife Sakarbai has kept the house, she also nurtured and educated the children, she attended the guests at home, she also rendered help to the people in need.

This couple, Karamshibhai and Sakarbai is like the divine couple 'Laxmi-Narayan'. The couple is the fountain of joy and like a canopy which provides shade of love for the big and the small and fosters' attachment. The children of this ideal couple respect and love them and are proud of them. Their relatives, friends, associates and personal servants also entertain the same

kind of love, affection, respect and attachment towards them. They regard this couple as their pillar of strength in the time of need or in adversity. They cherish high regard and pure sentiments for this parent-like couple.

The members of the Somaiya family address Karamshibhai as 'Adha' (father) and Mrs. Sakarbai as 'Bai' (lady). His son, Dr. Shantilalji, cherishes high regard and love for his father and his delicate feelings for his father are also tempered by intellectual inquiry and critical rationality. When the present author asked Dr. Shantilalji to express his views about his father and say how his personality was shaped by his father's personality, Dr. Shantilalji at the outset said, "It is very difficult to give one's impression about a closely related person. You can get a total impression about a person when looked at from a distance. This distance enables you to view the personality from an impersonal or a detached point of view. You cannot get such a view when you are in close contact. Furthermore when you talk or think about your parents or close relatives there are so many delicate emotions involved to perceive them in a detached and dispassionate manner as others can do.

As a matter of fact 'Adha' has a many faceted personality. His personality can be described by commonly known term 'eight-faceted' (Ashtapailu) personality which is fully developed. I do not remember much about things in childhood but it could be easily perceived that he had to put up a stiff fight against many odds. He had to work hard for about 18 hours every day. This much I clearly remember. The diligence with which he constantly worked left a lasting impression on my young mind. This became more firm and strong with the passage of time.

'Adha' was completely absorbed in his work and the nature of his trade demanded staying away from home for long durations. Moreover he chose to be owner, clerk, servant all rolled into one, self-service. It was a very troublesome period. So he could hardly meet the members of his family especially the children. Sometimes he used to return home at twelve or twelve-thirty at night and used to go out on his trade duty at five or five thirty in the early morning. During that time we children were fast asleep. In a lighter vein I used to say about such parents and children 'In such homes children do not know their father'. On the whole the father's stay at home and close contacts with children was nominal. Nevertheless he used to give thought to our well being snatching a few hours from his heavy schedule for us. He used to show loving care for us. He used to take keen interest in

our play, exercise, school, health and also our progress in music, drawing, dressing, reading etc. He used to inquire about things essential for the development of the physical and mental faculties to be sure that we were following the right course and track.

He used to provide us with the necessary means and material and arrange for our training. He wished for all-round progress and development of personalities of his children and he actively worked for it. His approach and attitude towards his family was very liberal and progressive considering the times in which he lived. He had four or five intimate friends. They used to visit him usually on Sunday evening. Adha used to play a game on chequered board with them. Sometimes I also participated in the game. I was also good at the game of chess. Adha took every care to see that we cultivated healthy habits of the body and mind.

Our mother, 'Bai', also exerted herself much for our well being. As our father was always on his trade tours, she alone had to look after our nourishment, health care, education and our general bringing up and development of character. Our mother did not keep good health. Adha used to spare some time from his busy schedule of trading work and looked after her health. She was kept at several health resorts such as Devlali, Admednagar, Pune, Miraj, Panchgani, Mahabaleshwar. He used to make frequent visits to those places. He used to see that she was receiving the best medical treatment and conscientiously striving for her recovery.

Mother 'Bai' had performed many deeds of social service and nursing. She gave help to the poor and the needy. She was intensely religious minded. She had implicit faith in God and was dedicated to the service of God. Our native village in Kutch is Tera. We have an ancestral house at that place. In that house our clan deity (Kuldaivat) exists, represented by Nagraj in stone. Whenever there was an occasion to perform any auspicious function she believed and insisted that we should first go there to Nagraj temple, take a holy view of the deity and offer ritual prayers there, before starting the function wherever we were living.

My uncle, Dharshibhai, died leaving two daughters in their early youth. These little girls were treated by 'Adha' and 'Bai' as their own children and nobody ever noticed any distinction made between us. When I grew up sometimes I was vexed by the question 'How many sisters do I have? Five or Seven?' 'Adha' and 'Bai' used to mete out the same treatment to their two

nieces, Janaki and Bharati, as their own daughters, Leela, Savitri, Divya, Nirupama and Pratima.

In fact Karamshibhais' elder brother, Dharsibhai, had given him lot of trouble but Adha did his duty towards the two nieces disregarding his bitter experiences. Adha and Bai were large-hearted persons. There was no room for petty considerations in their mind.

Adha's devotion to God is immense. He puts his faith in God whenever he does something or did something or when something that happens to him. So whatever happens he says, 'It's God's wish!'

Adha's faith in God is not a lip-service; it goes deep into his heart. It is not for this reason that whatever good things take place through His agency he always dedicates it to the Almighty God. He does not claim the doership of those good acts. He is averse to self-praise or flattery by other people. When he attends any function he does not occupy the front seat but prefers distant back seat among common people. He usually declines the offers of the organisers of meetings or functions to grace the dais or even the first row reserved for eminent persons. However if anybody persists in their requests or showers praise on him or his exclusive photograph is snapped, he used to be very angry.

Adha's truthfulness is as intense as his devotion to God. He cannot tolerate deception and falsehood in any form. He distances himself from any wrong but anybody doing some wrong to him or attempts to deceive him he loses his calm. But the way of expressing his anger may be termed as gentle and polite for he never abuses or uses an offensive word even when he is angry with any person.

Adha has scrupulously followed this truthfulness even in his trade and business. Therefore he had gained great trust of the people. Adha's word had special moral weight. He kept his plighted word even when he was suffering losses. His sincerity was never in doubt. He is true to his word whatever the consequences.

Adha always kept in view social welfare and the thought of national interest above all. He never adopted an attitude of compromise in these matters. He adopts a demanding attitude in his choices. He persists in doing or getting a thing done in a particular way if he has decided upon his choice after due thought. He will stubbornly pursue it irrespective of the

consequences. Nobody could make him change his mind. This rigidity appears to be inconsistent with the changing times. However as his outlook and intellectual approach is the outcome of mature thought about the moral values he adheres to them and refuses to deviate from them in any condition. This has on some occasions produced misunderstanding about him.

Nowadays corruption has become 'decorum' in the elite society. Nobody feels anything objectionable about it but Adha is sensitive about it. He feels it painful to bear with such manners.

Adha had laid down some code of conduct for boys and girls studying at the Vidyavihar according to his doctrine of good conduct. Some of his norms had created commotion in the student community. But 'Adha' ignored it outright. He may be described as a 'man of principles'. He has always insisted on moral principles in respect of all aspects of human life. Gandhiji's philosophy had made a deep impact on Karamshibhai. The tradition of the ancient sages is like that only. The conduct according to the thoughts professed is as prominently evident in Adha's personality.

"The manner of thinking of Adha is different from that of mine according to the difference in our personalities. Adha has put more trust on his inner power than on logic and rational process. He sticks to his faith in God. He would consult experts and specialists in the particular fields before taking up any project or work in hand. He would discuss all concerned matters with them and would adopt those things about which he was convinced. Once he took a decision he would not hesitate, he would take it up; he would tenaciously pursue it to the end. His interest in experimentation as well as his capacity to undertake experiments is abundant. His readiness to hard work and capacity for that is unlimited. He never lets anybody know his physical pains while engaged in his arduous work. He would silently suffer the pains. The reason for this is that others are pained and feel sorry and come forward to help or serve him which he does not countenance. His way of thinking is such that one should suffer his own pains, but never share them but offer pure joy to others.

'Adha' has greatly communicated to me, instructed me, convinced me by his actions in his life. I have greatly benefited by all that. New technology has arrived. As Adha's attitude is to welcome the new, he gets himself acquainted with the new techniques and technology and also discusses them with knowledgeable people in the fields. Sometimes he consults them. At

times it seems there is a bit of confusion in the new way of thinking and the traditional one in relation to the new technology in his mind. However there is ample flexibility in his approach and so he consults many specialists. He thinks deeply on the matter and views it from all possible angles before taking a decision. Once he takes a decision on some issue, he is firm like a rock. Sometimes his decision though against my perception, I had to accept it. I implement that decision not as my own but as Adha's decision. I have always maintained my freedom of thought and decisions making. On a few occasions he used to ask me afterwards why I did not express my views. I used to say, 'I obey your decisions.'

Adha has his own views about our modern democracy. They are at variance with our accepted system. As a result of his deep meditation on the subject he says, "The representatives of the people should be chosen on the basis of their quality and not election by majority votes. There should not be an election but there should be a selection. For there are also many difficulties in that process. Who should select them? Who are those who should be entrusted with this work? His cycle of thoughts on this issue goes on endlessly. This is also one of the excellent features of his personality.

Karamshibhai is very much fond of his eldest daughter, Mrs. Leelaben Kotak. He is greatly attached to her. He cherishes deep affection and love for all his children and the two nieces. But he has a special niche for Mrs. Leelaben, his eldest daughter, and she on her part has served and nursed her parents with untiring labour continuously with unflinching devotion and even now she continues to do the same. Mrs. Leelaben also takes great interest in education and social service. She conducts an institution 'Suruchi' and she is on Working Committee of Vidyavihar. She also discharges her responsibility as one of the Trustees of most of his committees and members of organisational panels.

Karamshibhai had developed a special attachment for Leelaben before she was born. In this connection while narrating what he remembered, he said, "While we were living in a rental house at Rs. 50/- a month in a dingy tenement at Belapur, my wife, Sakarbai, had a dream at night. She saw in her dream that some old woman emerged out of a black rock and entered into her body. During this period she was in the state of pregnancy. Subsequently Leelaben was born. The old woman seen by my wife in her dream was, I feel, my mother. I have full trust in that. So I think my 'mother'

appeared in the form of my daughter. Whatever it might be our Leelaben has a smiling face since her childhood. Whatever predicaments may come up she never loses her cheer; the 'sun' on her face never sets. She smiles and cheers up others, she makes them laugh.

Karamshibhai had once said, "At that time grown up men never used to play with children, they merely admired them from a distance. Once baby Leelaben in the cradle raised her 'tiny' hands inviting me to pick her up but because of the time honoured custom I resisted the temptation to pick her up.

Some six months after that Leelaben took ill. It was a serious illness. I repented for not lifting her up and playing with her on the day she had raised her hands from the cradle. By Grace of God, Leelaben recovered from her illness and became completely well again.

Leelaben also remembers such events in her childhood. While recollecting some of the incidences she said, "I do not clearly remember about early childhood but a little later Adha used to play with us from time to time. He hardly had a free time. His favourite game was playing the square board (Chouras). Whenever he could spare some time for play, he used to gather all the children from the building and play with them. He used to ask us to stage a drama. His guiding principle is 'play but never stay idle.' Activity is rooted in his nature. Adha is very much attached to his children. Howsoever busy he might be in his work he used to pay attention to the children first. He used to teach us Sanskrit. He used to teach us singing, he used to make us recite Sanskrit verses, hymns and chants.

"I was taken ill in 1948. I was betrothed. Once we had gone to Lonavala where suddenly I suffered from unbearable headache. Adha was very much upset. He is very strict in his work but sickness of any member of his family makes him very tender and soft. He was very much disturbed by my headache. We returned to Mumbai. Adha had already taken appointment of two doctors in Mumbai. The treatment for my severe headache started but I could not get any relief. Adha had employed two nurses for day and night for my care. They used to give the necessary treatment under the direction of the doctors. They used to give twelve injections into my body every day. Adha used to stand over me when the nurses used to give injections. He used to go personally to the laboratories to bring the necessary reports lest anything untoward may happen. He used to remind the nurse, lest she might miss

something. My mother and Adha used to press my head to relieve pain. They used to keep an ice bag on my head. I could not bear direct rays so Adha had turned the room into a dark-room. It was a 'black-out' for me. I could not sleep due to the severe headache. I could not digest food, I used to vomit, I had gone very feeble and weak. I could not rise from bed without support. I was lying in my bed for about twelve to thirteen months. Adha did not travel anywhere for about six months. He was by my side. He was constantly worried about my health. Doctor used to perform lumbar puncture with a big needle, which was very painful. Adha's eyes used to water at the sight of my pitiable condition. He is a man of very tender heart. Whenever he learns about illness of any of his people he rushes to see him or her. He makes necessary arrangement for medical treatment. Adha took my mother to several places for her treatment during her long illness. He was never irked by it.

After my recovery from the long illness I got married. Now I became Mrs. Leela Madhavji Kotak in 1950.

'Adha' and 'Bai' gave me implicit affection and love. His friends also treated me as their own daughter, one of them used to inquire about my health at midnight also.

My mother was very affectionate, always interested in dedicated service and very generous. At that time we were a big family with we five sisters, one brother, father, uncle, two cousins and four or five others but 'Bai' without grudging served such a large family. She brought up the two nieces as her own daughters. She managed the home on a meagre income at that time. Even after prosperity she continued to be a loving figure and a self-denying and a modest housewife. She was never contaminated by the winds of affluence. In fact she used the great fortune with a large heart and generosity for good causes. She arranged and financed the marriage ceremonies of about twenty-five to thirty near relatives. She arranged the marriages of two maidservants with suitable husbands, the men drawing a monthly salary of Rs. 150/- (a pretty good salary at that time). now those men are earning a hefty sum of Rs. 10,000/- per month and living happily.

As 'Bai' has helped families of many, she has rejoined broken families. She had nursed many sick persons. She had provided assistance to build up their homes and health and keep them in good order.

'Bai' was highly religious. She was a great devotee. So there used to be some religious function always at home. She used to observe fasts and perform the religious rites. She used to spend lavishly on such occasions. Adha did not show much interest in such rituals etc. However he never discouraged her or criticized her for that or opposed her religious activities.

Karamshibhai's daughter, Mrs. Savitriben, while narrating her memories said, "Earlier we were living at Walkeshwar (Mumbai), then we shifted to Marinedrive. I studied upto S.S.C. (Secondary School Certificate Examination). I got married at the age of 19. Before that the guests from the bride-groom's family came to judge whether I would make a suitable match for the boy from their family. They came after 10 o'clock at night. I was feeling drowsy as it was my bedtime. So I did not know who came but our family was awake. Then I was betrothed. Adha said that it was a good match. We have considered all the useful matters in this regard. The marriage took place. I was delivered of a baby girl in 1954. She was named Jyoti. The second child, a son was born in 1956. His name is Chetan. Adha and Bai came to our succour after the most unfortunate episode. This episode was the accidental death of Mrs. Savitriben's husband, Mr. Harirambhai, on 14th December 1967.

This was a stunning shock to the family of Karamshibhai which had enjoyed happy and prosperous life all this time. One of the things remembered about the shocking death of Mrs. Savitriben's husband is like this! "Once, the children of our family had gone to Mahabaleshwar for a pleasure trip. Mrs. Savitriben's daughter was also among them. The children tried their hand at moving a planchet and called a spirit. When a question relating to Savitriben's husband, Mr. Harirambhai, was asked, the spirit said, "This man will join our group after six months." The children got frightened on hearing that. They stopped the play. The children did not talk to the elders about their play with the planchet. They did not disclose what they heard from the spirit. But after six months, Mr. Harirambhai died accidentally, then the children revealed what they had heard. All were taken aback. The children knew about Mr. Hariram's death six months before his actual death!

Mrs. Leelaben Kotak has many times accompanied her father in his wide travels. After that she had written and published accounts of her travels. We have already referred to them in a previous chapter. She narrated her memories about eye-camps. When she accompanied Karamshibhai, she said,

“Adha has the habit of doing himself all his work. He used to wash his clothes. He never leaves any work incomplete in his office. He used to return home after completing all the work. Adha from the beginning is very much interested in singing prayers in chorus (Bhajan). He is also greatly interested in trees. He used to collect a variety of plants and plant them in Nareshwadi. Adha needs continuous work. He came to know about the berries (Boras) of Mehruni which are very famous. He bought the plants and cultivated them in his Nareshwadi gardens. He is fond of work and always keeps himself busy with work. If we tell him to rest he retorts, ‘If you persuade me to rest I shall be indisposed.’

They say old age is another childhood. It is difficult to assuage the obstinacy of such grown up ‘children’. Mrs. Leelaben takes care of her father with a motherly love and affection. She performs such duties as administering medicines, helping him to eat and on some occasions compels him to do what is good for his health and welfare. She does all this skillfully and acts as a mother and a daughter at the same time.

Adha’s niece – Jankiben also has something to say about him when she was a child. She said, “Adha used to treat us all children with love and understanding. If we did not do well in the school examinations he used to get angry. He did not favour co-education, therefore he never used to send us for camps etc. We used to feel so sad over it. He is against eating things from outside. We get pure and good eatables prepared at home, so he used to say there is no need eating things from outside.

Bharati and I – Janaki, are two daughters of our late father Dharshibhai. My mother died when I was only four years old. We both sisters then went to our aunt – mother’s sister who also was our aunt on the father’s side. Our aunt, Sakarbai, was our mother’s own sister. She gave us mother’s love.

“My cousin, Divyaben, and I were both in the same class in the school. So also my sister, Bharati, and cousin, Niruben, studied in the same class of the school. Adha and Bai gave us parental love.

The second niece – Bharati, recollected in a sentimental way. She said, “We always considered ‘Bai’ and ‘Adha’ as our real parents. Later on when we went to school my name was shown as Bharati D. Somaiya. Leelaben’s name was shown as Leela K. Somaiya. I was intrigued as to why Janaki and I were not shown as Bharati K. Somaiya and Janaki K. Somaiya. Why this

distinction? Then only we came to know the real fact. We never knew that we were daughters of Adha's brother!

Divyaben while remembering the past said, "While going for a walk, if Adha meets any old friend of his, he goes to his home first, he talks to him, makes inquiries about his health and other matters. Adha speaks Marathi and Marwari very fluently. His most favourite dessert is Besan Ladu (sweet ball made of gram flour, sugar and ghee).

Sometimes he used to take us to view Marathi dramas. He is fond of dramas, 'Ekach Pyala' (a cup of wine) and 'Batatyachi Chawl' (tenement by name Potato) were the two popular plays we saw with him. We had also viewed some Gujarati dramas. But their number was negligible. Adha does not like to view any films.

We pray in the morning at 7 o'clock and in the evening at home. Adha had very little time to pay attention to this due to his business responsibilities. We never used to drink tea. In fact we began drinking tea after our marriage. Adha never smokes a 'bidi' or a cigarette. He is not much fond of sweet food. When at leisure Adha mixes with children, he used to play with them. He used to urge them to play, draw pictures, go for swimming, learn singing and Sanskrit. He used to equip them with all necessary facilities for education.

He used to ask all children to recite multiplication tables. He showed great interest in it. He used to lead the recitation of complete numbers (cardinals) as well as fractions such as quarter, half, three quarters, one and a half etc. One child has to recite a Sanskrit verse and others had to repeat it after him. This helped us to learn by heart the tables and the verses.

The third generation of Karamshibhai is represented by grandson Samirbhai and granddaughter Harinakshi. Both of them are married and leading a life of comfort and happiness. Ms. Harinakshi has a son also which makes Karamshibhai great grand-father. Karamshibhai plays with the tiny great-grandson with great affection. Harinakshi remembers how her Adha – grandfather, used to give her mangoes in the mango season.

Samirbhai has said what he remembers about Adha – grandfather. He said, "Once Adha – grandfather, asked what I wanted on my birthday. I told him I want a dog. From that time onwards a dog is kept at our home. In fact Adha never wanted a dog at home before that. But his opposition to keep a dog disappeared when I expressed my wish. The dog which I brought became

his favourite. Whenever he comes home, the pet moves about near his feet. Adha also pats it fondly.

Once I had telephoned Mr. Salim Ali, the World Famous bird-watcher, as I wished to enroll myself as a member of the Natural Society. He was the Chief of the Society. Mr. Salim Ali asked me my name while he spoke on the phone. I told him my name and when he heard that I was a Somaiya, he said, "Karamshibhai is an old member of our society. Adha was Salim Ali's old friend and also a lover of birds.

Adha is a staunch champion of his views. He is very firm at times bordering on stubbornness. However he is also sensitive. When he sees good things, hears good things or they appeal to his heart, his eyes water and tears run down his cheeks.

This is the event which took place when the news of the serial bomb blasts in Mumbai was still raging. The religious discourses of one Swamiji were arranged at that time. I opposed the holding of discourses when the situation in Mumbai city was tense and explosive. Most of the organizers called me a coward. Shantilaji also remarked that now-a-days bomb blasts have become very common. The discourses by learned Swamiji is a rare occasion. But Adha firmly announced, "The discourses stand cancelled!" His decision to cancel the religious discourses implies his clear understanding of the situation as well as his resilient attitude about intelligent suggestions of young people.

Mr. Babubhai and Mr. Mangalbhai Chandan from Srirampur are Karamshibhai's nephews, the sons of his sister, Basantiben. They grew up at their grand-parents home. Even today they devotedly serve Adha whenever necessary. When planning to go out of town, Adha needs their company.

His daughter-in-law, Mrs Mayadevi, and his grand-daughter-in-law, Mrs. Amitaben, are eager to serve him. They all are proud of their Adha and harbour a feeling of intense love and high respect towards him. All feel that Adha is their mountain of strength.

After the death of Mrs. Sakarbai or 'Bai' as they fondly called her, Adha remained the only centre of devotion for them.

Mrs. Sakarbai who had contributed the homeliness to the residence of Karamshibhai Somaiya, was a house-wife in the true sense of the term.

The Sanskrit verse explains the importance of a true house-wife thus:

“A building is not a home, it becomes a home with a house-wife. Without a house-wife the residential place is more frightening than a forest. The four walls do not constitute a home but house-wife represents home. A house without wife is more terrible than a jungle.” The composers of Sanskrit adages have praised the place of a house-wife in this manner. The woman who could maintain a clean and tidy house, who brings up children well, who entertains guests, serves the elderly members of the family and can keep her husband in a pleasant mood is known as a true house-wife. You realise the absence of a house-wife once you step into any house where she is not seen, you are convinced about the truth of adage that a home without a house-wife is more fearful than a forest. The composer of the Sanskrit verse where he regards a home without a house-wife as a ‘forest’ (Kantar) is patently very sagacious. The housewife (grahini) sketched in the verse was verily an image of Mrs. Sakarbai only. The author of the Epic Mahabharata, great poet, Vyas, called a house-wife the better half of the man and acknowledged her prominent place in the affairs of man and his home. The same great poet, Vyas, has extolled the place of a faithful wife while discussing moral conduct of a house-holder in the following words.

“In the performance of religious acts ‘wife’ becomes one half of man’s body. So man should not behave in such a way which may cause her any suffering.”

According to the Hindu Philosophy, the wife is the better half of a man in the fulfillment of the four duties – Dharma, Artha, Karma and Moksha (religious faith and norms of life, worldly gains fulfillment of desires and individual wellbeing and the spiritual peace). Wife is the equal partner in all matters. So he has used the term ‘better half’, ‘life partner’ in religious matters to emphasise her place in the married life of man.

The celebrated ancient theorist and the author of code of conduct, Manu, while discussing a list of persons to be treated with utmost respect like the teacher, has singled out the mother as deserving the highest place in the list. He says:

“A teacher is greater than ten priests, a father is equal in importance to a hundred priests but the mother surpasses a thousand fathers in importance.” The eminent writers and scholars of the ancient times have with one voice

praised the mother in the hierarchy of teachers and mentors in human society. All philosophers and theologists have accorded pride of place by saluting mother by saying 'Matrudevo bhava' (we bow down to goddess mother). The thinkers and the scientists of the modern times also have acknowledged the highest place of the mother. The child's education and cultivation of physical and mental powers begin during the period of pregnancy. A child learns new things upto the age of three which it cannot learn in later life. This is the most significant period in the life of a child. It is always in intimate contact with its mother.

Lord Sri Krishna acquired knowledge by learning at the feet of his mentor, Sandipani, but while bidding farewell to his mentor, he asked for a boon, 'Let me have my meals at the hands of my mother' (Matruhasten bhojanum). Mentor Sandipani said, 'Tathastu' (let it be as you wish). This implies that the real education and shaping of the personality of the child is only done through the mother. The mother adds a quality to the food of the child by her unique love and care which help his nourishment and growth. Woman is whole-heartedly praised as daughter, wife, mother, house-wife in view of the ideal qualities in those capacities in the literature of the memorable past.

Mrs. Sakarbai represented the ideal womanhood while performing the duties of a 'house wife'. The fragrance of the ideal qualities filled the home. Her life had become the source of ever pervading fragrance whichever direction she turned. She was a source of joy for all. She however did not confine herself within the four walls of her house. She was very much interested in the social service also. She was serving the society with the same dedication and readiness as she showed while serving the members of her large family.

Mrs. Sakarbai was a highly religious person devoted to the worship of God. She had tied herself with the invisible bonds of rituals and prayers to get the blessings of God. She had realized the essence of real faith which lies beyond the liturgical norms and mechanism of the custom and that was 'the real faith and religious doctrine is, 'offer love to all'. She rendered service to the family and society with love which sprang naturally from her heart. Her love-rooted philanthropy did not flow in narrow stream. She cared for the upbringing of the children to see they become good citizens. She had financially helped many and provided protection to the needy. She gave

liberally but without any publicity. She worked silently and without attracting anybody's attention. She believed in mitigating the sufferings of others which we commonly call by the name of saintly attitude. In her death many felt that a perennial source of love was lost.

It is now two years since her death. Time is merciless. She might have disappeared bodily from this world but her expansive spirit of love still rules supreme in the house of Somaiyas and the outside world.



Chain of Memories

यत्क्षम्यान्धिक्कथाभिरेण क्षततं दीर्घाभिवाचयित।

*The long loving stories of affection
relating to them never end.*

Chain of Memories

Karamshibhai remembers the events in the domestic life as vividly as he remembers the events in his business career. His memory must be called vibrant even when he is nearing a century of his age. He has noted down the important events in his life. He has also narrated some of them to the present writer. These memories are important relating to his biography and the character building. They are also instructive for readers.

The year 1928 acquired a special importance in the life of Karamshibhai. This year represents the happy event of his partnership with Mr. Khatod in sugar-trading. This event transformed the future life of Karamshibhai radically.

Another happy event before that was the birth of his son in 1927. The birth of a son gains special significance in the Hindu way of life. The son is the scion of the family who continues the progeny of the family and the race. He is the main support of the parents in the old age and a collaborator in the spiritual peace. However in 1929 a very sad event took place and that was the death of his father. His death took place in their ancestral house in Kutch. While narrating this somewhat disturbing and unhappy experience Karamshibhai said, "On hearing the news of the death of my father I withdrew some amount standing in my name as a partner for meeting the expenses for the funeral and other rites of my father. My partner wrote to me, 'the amount you withdrew exceeds the amount credited to your account.' It was unfair on the part of my partner to bring this fact to my notice on such a sad occasion. In response to the communication of the partner in

bad taste, I wrote back to remind him that I was his working partner and that I had withdrawn the money for the necessary rites of my father whose death was a shock to me.' The partner kept quiet, besides, our accounts at that time were not maintained properly.

When my father died my son, Shantilal, was one year old. I had made a copper bracelet coated with gold and one small ornament for him out of my meagre earnings at that time. I sold those small ornaments which fetched me Rs. 100/- (Rupees hundred only). I had no other alternative but to sell my son's ornaments. The problem was how to remit the money to Kutch. My elder brother in Mumbai, Dharshibhai, was unreliable as he was a confirmed speculator. I did not wish to run the risk of entrusting the amount to Dharshibhai as he might stake it on a speculating spree. I therefore remitted the money to my maternal uncle in Kutch. I wrote to him that the money may be handed over to my elder brother, Dharshibhai, when he would reach the place in Kutch for the necessary post-funeral religious rites of my father. In case the amount was insufficient he may spend the additional amount needed for the rites, etc.

We have already spoken about Dharshibhai, who was four years older than Karamshibhai. Dharshibhai on account of his evil habit of wasting money in speculation had already lost all his earnings and the hereditary wealth and had the audacity to demand equal share in the hard-earned money of Karamshibhai. He did not stop at that, he proceeded to Bombay High Court to stake his claim for the share. The document he had produced to support his claim was totally a faked one and false. When the fictitious claim was exposed he withdrew the case from the court.

This was a very painful and tormenting experience for Karamshibhai. Notwithstanding all the ill-conceived moves to unsettle his younger brother, Karamshibhai, the latter displayed a magnanimity of heart by sending a message to his elder brother, 'You may return home, and stay with me as usual.'

However Dharshibhai refused to agree to that request.

Karamshibhai in the course of his discussion about his relation with his elder brother said, "Dharshibhai had married twice but did not have any issue. Unfortunately both his wives died early. His third marriage was arranged with the younger sister of my wife. He had set up a separate home with her.

Once I purchased some diamond ornaments for my wife but did not purchase any ornaments for the wife of Dharshibhai. He got very angry with me over that and wrote a strong letter to me. My wife and her sister, that is Dharshibhai's wife, both were in Kutch at that time. I wrote a letter to my wife and informed her that I am sustaining losses in business since I bought diamond ornaments for you. Those ornaments have brought ill luck to me due to the adverse aspects of stars. (This was a total lie to persuade my wife to part with the ornaments). You better give those diamond ornaments to your sister. After receiving my letter with these contents, my wife gave those ornaments to her sister.

Dharshibhai had ruined himself by his speculation. He lost all contacts with business activities. He was completely broke. In that state he returned to my home. His fateful death occurred in 1956.

Although Karamshibhai had started his retail sugar selling business in partnership with Mr. Khatod, he had continued his spices selling trade as usual. While narrating an incident relating to tea during that period he said, once a relative of my first sister-in-law's family had come to my home at Belapur in connection with collection of dues in business from traders there. On the same day Dharshibhai's mother-in-law's brother, Mr. Laxmidasbhai, had also arrived at my place for some business.

Mr. Laxmidasbhai was very much fond of drinking tea. He was liberal in that habit. He had a shop at Chalisgaon. Tea was always ready on a burning stove at the back of his shop. If any known person passed by his shop he used to call him and offer a cup of tea. He used to distribute about forty cups of tea to his friends and acquaintances every day in that manner. While offering tea to others he used to give them company by sipping at least half a cup which would amount to about twenty cups of tea which he drank every day. He used to get up early in the morning and continued his habit of drinking tea throughout the day.

At our home at Belapur nobody drank tea at that time and we never offered it to any guest who visited us. Mr. Laxmidasbhai therefore was caught in a great discomfort.

During that time men of dignity and honour used to be cautious that nobody watched them entering a restaurant for drinking tea even in a city like Mumbai. This custom prevailed even in Belapur and other small towns.

Mr. Laxmidasbhai was therefore frustrated. He had taken ill. He caught fever which began to rise but he did not reveal the cause of his illness to me. I used to go to my office at 7 o'clock in the morning. His relative, Mr. Shivajibhai, once happened to come to my office at 9 o'clock in the morning and he disclosed the cause of Mr. Laxmidasbhai's illness. From that day I allowed making tea at home and offering it to others.

Considering the high prices of goods and services today, we can make out the low prices prevailing during the early-life of Karamshibhai as evident from his recollections. He says, "The sister of my grandmother, Mrs. Mithabai, the wife of Mr. Odhavajibhai, used to visit a place near our house to meet our mother. She used to give us one anna (1/16 rupee) for our breakfast. We could easily buy sufficient eatables for breakfast, in fact that amount was more than sufficient, most of the time.

"When in school, we used to get Re. 1/- (one rupee) as pocket money for the whole month for petty expenses. This meant I was getting one half of an 'anna'. I was getting one half of an 'anna' for daily expenses. My friends against my wish used to lavishly spend the amount. Then I used to steal a two-anna square coin from the small change tied by my grand-mother to the frill of her shawl. She used to keep the change for petty expenses necessary for visiting temples and giving alms to the poor. I knew that my act was wicked but I never dared to confess it to my grandmother. I continued in that habit for about two to three years."

Karamshibhai has the knack of spotting out talent and gathering such talented persons around him, to a great degree. He had thus gathered talented men for his agro-industries and trade on a very large scale. This helped him to maintain his ever expanding business activities.

Once Karamshibhai had gone to Nadiad in Gujarat to attend a meeting of the 'Vishwa Hindu Parishad' (Conference of World Hindus). The conference was presided over by His Holiness Swami Satyanandji. Karamshibhai admitted, "I was very much influenced by his discourse. The second religious discourse was delivered by Professor Sureshbhai Shah. I was greatly influenced by his speech. I made it a point to get myself acquainted with him. Later on we became good friends.

Mr. Sureshbhai Shah was a Professor in an Ahmedabad College. He has recently retired. He entertains great fervour for education but at the same

time he also energetically participates in social and cultural activities for enlightening others as a social duty. Mr. Sureshbhai was not only a popular teacher in the college but also had earned greater popularity and public esteem by his spirited role in social activities. Mr. Sureshbhai is well read, an original thinker and a powerful eloquent speaker. He is a man of cultivated tastes.

After coming in a contact with Karamshibhai, Mr. Sureshbhai indefatigably worked in the eye-camps held by Karamshibhai at several places with exemplary devotion.

Mr. Sureshbhai now has established intimate relations like a son with Karamshibhai and is treated as a virtual member of the Somaiya family. Therefore there are frequent meetings and visits on either side. Karamshibhai urges Mr. Sureshbhai to join him on his journies also and enjoys his talks and is delighted in reading in his company.

Karamshibhai while narrating his variety of interesting memories also referred to the memories about the residential places that he had selected. He said, "We lived in the interior part of the bungalow owned by Mulji Haridas at Walkeshwar in Mumbai. This place was far away from my office. So we decided to shift to another place. We began to look out for a suitable place. We saw a number of places and finally approved the place on the 4th floor of Mr. Govindrao Seksariya's building at Marine Drive. But the owner himself was staying there and the construction work of the fifth floor was underway. On seeing that we preferred fourth floor, Mr. Seksariya with a rare display of large-heartedness himself shifted to the fifth floor and offered us the place on the fourth floor.

In World War II around the year 1942 a heavy fleet of aircrafts flew in the sky above Marine Drive. You could see them hovering around the area. People became nervous thinking that those aircrafts were Japanese who were ready to strike at the place as Japan was active in the East against the Allies. So most of the residents of that area left the place and shifted elsewhere. Mr. Khimji Nagji Kothari left the Marine Drive residence and shifted to Opera House. We also left the place and went to Panchgani. We had chosen Panchgani in view of the salubrious weather and facilities of education for the children.

We had rented a bungalow at Panchagani. We paid rent for three years

but stayed there hardly for a year or so. The name of the bungalow was 'Maidstone'. At that time explosives were clandestinely stored in many places. It was during that period that 'Quit India Movement' was in full swing.

"As usual I was on my sugar business tours. The members of my family were in Mumbai. Some tourists were seeking a bungalow at that time. We had retained a Gurkha watchman at our bungalow. A lady tourist asked the watchman the name of the bungalow. The watchman could not tell her the name of the bungalow. The European lady tourist became suspicious and she contacted the Collector and the Tehsildar of the District. The police came to carry out search of the place and take possession of the bungalow. It was during this period that police had raided some places around Miraj. The collector of the district organised two squads. He led one to the areas raided by the police and sent the other squad to Panchgani.

The police wanted to take possession of the bungalow but the Gurkha watchman resisted. He firmly told them, 'I shall not allow you to enter the premises in the absence of the owner of the bungalow.'

The wife of my partner, Mrs. Sitabai, was living in a bungalow near that place. She was called. She and other persons known to the watchman prevailed upon the watchman to allow the police to do their duty. He allowed the police to enter the premises. The police searched the bungalow. They found two rooms locked so they opened the rooms. They found bags containing grain and spices.

Karamshibhai then told me how the land at Sion (Mumbai) was acquired where now K. J. Somaiya Hospital and the Medical College stand. He said, 'One evening I had gone to meet my friend, Mr. Jadhavjibhai Premji Chanda. I found him in a hurry to go out. I asked him what was going on. He told me that he was finalizing a deed about purchasing land at Sion. The owner insists on a certain amount, so negotiations were going on. When I came to know the figure I told my friend, I am ready to buy the land at that price. 'Please drop the first customer', for whom he was bargaining and I asked my friend to see that I get the land at the price demanded by the owner. He finalised the deal, in my favour. Today the 'Ayurvihar' project containing the Hospital and the Medical College stands there.

The details of the health resorts where Karamshibhai had kept his wife Mrs. Sakarbai, during her illness are already related in the foregoing pages.

Karamshibhai had taken his wife, Mrs. Sakarbai, from Devalali to Mahabaleshwar at that time. Before going to Mahabaleshwar, he had purchased a 'Chevrolet' motor-car for Rs. 4,000/- in Pune to facilitate moving about in Mahabaleshwar. He had also hired a bungalow there for Rs. 600/- for the whole season.

Mrs. Sakarbai found the weather favourable for her health. She made rapid progress. She could walk a distance of two miles (3.5 km) in a period of three months or so. She could freely move about in the duration of six months. The weather in Mahabaleshwar cured Mrs. Sakarbai. She therefore visited the place frequently.

Once in October season Karamshibhai had taken his wife, Mrs. Sakarbai, to Mahabaleshwar. Incidentally he spoke about the bungalow which he had purchased at Mahabaleshwar. He said, "In that October season Mahabaleshwar was unusually hot making everybody perspire even in the morning. At one time while strolling, my wife and I went to a further point of Mahabaleshwar. There we noticed a bungalow named 'Ray Villa' on a fairly high place. That was a hotel owned by a Sindhi gentleman. We climbed up the steps. We felt pleasant with a cool breeze. We felt so energetic! We felt that the place was very ideal for a bungalow!

"In a year or so after our visit I happened to read in the newspaper, a notice that the self-same bungalow was on sale in auction. I was fully occupied with my business activities at that time. Even then I managed to get some free time in May and went there to buy the bungalow in Mahabaleshwar.

The auction process started under the supervision of a government official. The initial price quoted was twenty-five thousand and it gradually reached the mark of forty-eight thousand. I reckoned that if I were to bid for forty-nine somebody would make the bidding for fifty thousand. The government officer gave a hint that if I bid for fifty one thousand nobody would go beyond that amount and the bungalow would be transferred to my name. In this way I purchased the bungalow for rupees fifty one thousand at auction sale.

The owner of the bungalow, the Sindhi gentleman, was deeply anguished that his bungalow was sold in auction in this manner. He struggled hard to cancel the deed but I did not baulk. I firmly told him that the auction sale was legal and now the bungalow was mine. He therefore approached the

Collector to prohibit the auction but the auction already had taken place. That gentleman could not rescind the transaction. He had to give possession of the bungalow to me as per the law.

The bungalow contained a lot of hotel furniture and a lot of utensils and other articles. He sold the crockery, furniture, vessels and other articles for rupees ten thousand to me. I was very much delighted to secure such a well-furnished bungalow at Mahabaleshwar.

Once Karamshibhai had gone to Ellora (Verul) to see the sculptures there with some of his friends. In his narration of the event he said, "We had reached Daulatabad at night. In the early morning one carter was driving his cart in full speed. The guard on duty asked him to stop but the carter ignored his order. The Nizam of Hyderabad (princely state) ruled the region at that time. The defiance of the carter made the Nizam guard furious. He snatched the whip from the hands of the carter and started whipping the carter mercilessly. We silently and passively watched the agonising spectacle. We could do nothing.

A big famine had occurred in that region that year. There was hardly knee-deep mossy greenish water in the pond. People were taking a dip in that water but I restrained myself from doing that. I never wished to add any such merit to my credit by bathing thus.

We had sought accommodation at a place of a Brahman (priest) host. There were no lodges and hotels then in that area.

The 'Brahman' host took us round and got the religious rites duly performed. We paid him handsomely according to our pleasure. He accepted the money with great satisfaction. He noted down our names and address in his note-book. This record was to serve them in future to cater to the needs of the future generations.

"We were thirteen in all. Among us was one Mr. Premsukhdas, a merchant from Belapur. He expressed the wish to feed twenty-five priests. Some of our group wished to feed ten or five according to their financial position.

The host (gurumaharaj) was a sharp-witted man. He had promised to supply food for in all forty to fifty priests. But had quietly arranged for the meals for only twenty-five persons. He adroitly managed to show to the sponsors forty to fifty priests by counting the same persons twice as the feasting priests from each group. The figures tallied by that ingenious trick.

“Once I had gone to the Paithan fair. It was the month of ‘Phalgun’ of the Hindu calender (February-March). At Paithan there was a huge water-jar. It was said that there was a mystery about the jar. Although several devotees would pour water into it from big pots and vessels, the jar would remain empty. However if a particular spiritual person pours water from a small pot the huge water-jar would be full immediately. I heard this legend but could not verify the truth about it.



Empathetic Friendliness

तदेवास्वयं पदं मित्रं यत्र संक्रामति द्वयम्।
दृष्टे सुखं च दुःखं च प्रतिच्छायेत दर्पणे॥

*He only is our true friend in whom our happiness or
sorrow is reflected like that in a mirror.*

Empathetic Friendliness

Karamshibhai had established friendly relations and gathered many talented persons from different levels of society around him by his pleasant handsome personality, his persuasive, suave, gentle manners and also by his honest unending industriousness. Karamshibhai had mastered the art and technique of discerning excellent fertile land, perennial flow of water, the vagaries of nature, the onslaught and existence of hot and cold seasons and the changes of weather by his experience based knowledge. He had also developed the rare talent of judging right men for the right job. Karamshibhai was thus an excellent judge of men and matters.

It is not only that he raised big crops in sugarcane fields, produced abundant sugar in factories but also gathered wealth by honest transactions and talented persons around him for his multifarious activities.

“What is of the heart is in the heart” was the guiding principle in the mutual relationship of Karamshibhai and his friends. They exchanged many things in expressed and unexpressed forms and both Karamshibhai and his friends made their lives successful and rich by that.

The reminiscences of some of his selected friends which appeal to the heart also reveal the salient features of the personality of Karamshibhai in a forceful manner.

One of such intimate friends of Karamshibhai was Mr. Navalbhau Firodia. Mr. Navalbhau and his father, Bhausahab, both practised law successfully at Ahmednagar. Both, father and son were inspired by Gandhiji's

personality to participate in the national movement. Karamshibhai could establish contact with them and developed friendship with them. While remembering the past, Mr. Navalbhau said, "My first acquaintance with Karamshibhai took place at Belapur Road in 1934. I was a worker of the Congress Party and was collecting funds for the Party. I met Karamshibhai in that connection. He was doing a prosperous sugar trade in partnership with Mr. Khatod at that time. He had entrusted the legal transaction in that connection to me. Karamshibhai had expanded his trade to such an extent that he was paying yearly income tax to the tune of Rupees One Lakh! This would indicate the annual turnover of his business.

Later in 1939, he set up a sugar factory at Sakarwadi. In 1942, he began another factory at Laxmiwadi. He made great strides in that business. Karamshibhai was known as 'Sugar King' in the sugar market.

Karamshibhai had achieved this pride of place and dignity by hard work, tenacity, skill and untiring efforts. My brother-in-law was working as a contractor in the Phaltan Sugar Factory at Phaltan. He told me that once Karamshibhai covered the distance between Phaltan and Lonand on foot as no vehicle was available. He carried his bedding on the back.

When in prison as political prisoners in the 1942, 'Quit India Movement', we friends from Ahmednagar had contemplated to start an independent industrial project after our release from the prison. Accordingly on our release five of us started a company under the name of 'Jai-Hind Industries Ltd.' in partnership and got it registered. We wanted an office for our company in Mumbai. I therefore went to Karamshibhai in the Fazalbhoy building near Flora-Fountain in the Fort area. Karamshibhai had his office in that building. I told him about our problem. Karamshibhai at once said, "Mr. Navalbhau! Why don't you set up your chairs and table in my office here. You start your office here!" I liked his suggestion very much. We set up our small office there within the office of Karamshibhai. In order to fulfill the legal requirements the signboard of our company 'Jai Hind Industries Ltd.' was hung outside.

We always used to meet in the office and we used to discuss many different topics. Once Karamshibhai came and keeping his Gandhi-cap on the table said, "From today onwards I do not deserve to wear this cap." Those were the days of food and essential goods control – that is the rationing regime. There was restriction on the storage of sugar. Somebody may have purposely

reported to the police about the stock of sugar. The police acting on the information raided the house of Karamshibhai. There was one bagful of sugar candy which the police seized. The police on the basis of the stock of sugar-candy proceeded against Karamshibhai. The actual fact about the occasion was that his son's, Shantilalji's, marriage was settled. The tradition among the Kutch-Lohana Community is to distribute sugar-candy on such occasions. The sugar-candy bag was therefore kept in the house. There was no intention to store sugar illegally or to conduct sale of sugar in black market. Karamshibhai frankly presented this explanation before the Court of Law. The court did not accept his pleading and detained him till the court rose. He was deeply hurt that he was punished by the court in that way. He had therefore removed the Gandhi-cap and placed it on the table. The Gandhi cap at that time was a symbol of untainted character. We tried to console him, reason with him and persuaded him to wear the cap again. Karamshibhai is keen on maintaining high morals and pure character. He did not carry on his trade and business in a doubtful manner or like a speculator. He used to take unerring decisions and implement them with courage and a spirit of adventure. He used to take calculated risk with great responsibility.

The spirit of business adventure and skill characterised his nature. Karamshibhai was God fearing and a great devotee.

Once Karamshibhai happened to go to Ahmednagar in connection with some work. He stayed at my home only. At 12 o'clock at night a man came to our house from Sakarwadi in search of Karamshibhai. When asked by my father, Bhausahab, the man said that fire broke out in the factory at Sakarwadi. Bhausahab woke up Karamshibhai from his sleep. The messenger told Karamshibhai about the fire. On hearing the message Karamshibhai told the man without panicking, "You go back to the factory and do whatever is possible to extinguish the fire." The messenger went back to the factory and Karamshibhai quietly went to take sleep.

Subsequently the manager of the Sugar factory arrived at 4 o'clock early morning in a jeep, so Bhausahab woke up Karamshibhai from his sleep. The manager said, "A big fire broke out and has destroyed property worth lakhs of rupees."

Karamshibhai told him, "Good that you have come to report it. What could I do by going there? Please go back and do whatever is possible for

you to extinguish that fire. I shall go to Sakarwadi in the morning if possible or shall proceed to Mumbai. Write to me in detail about the matter to my Mumbai office.”

I asked Karamshibhai about the fire issue. He said, “Was it possible for me to put out the fire? Could I have done anything great? I trust God Almighty. If he wishes that I should suffer loss who can stop it? God’s wish prevails!”

I presume that the knowledge about the key points in industries and managerial abilities are inborn in Karamshibhai. It can be developed by learning in the school of experience. This statement of mine gains support when we turn our eyes to his industries and his business acumen and observe the success he has achieved so far. Karamshibhai has the rare capacity to follow the method of the swan who drinks milk and throws out water from the mixture of those two liquids. Success or failure depends on God’s Grace. Karamshibhai has the knack of sorting out good and useful from the various experiences he is subjected to during his business activities. He possesses the skill to judge talent in others. He maintains, “I shall definitely accept any point of view provided the man stating that can convince me, otherwise he should accept my view if he is convinced. He takes this position. His approach to all the sugar factories and business underlined honesty.

Karamshibhai’s style of life is simple. I have watched him travelling in lower classes of the railway even when he had become a man of substance. In fact there is no reason for him to undergo such discomfort. But simplicity has become his another nature and the old habits die hard. He also realizes that such minor things do not make a man big or small. He never harbours the feeling that he should receive extraordinary attention from others or that he should be treated with dignity and respect at public functions. He avoids this and distances himself from display of eminence. He has therefore avoided delivering speeches at meetings just as a showpiece. However when he chooses to speak at meetings he can express his views with clarity and conviction.

Karamshibhai feels great compassion for the tribals and the poor. He attends the marriages of the poorest among the poor and renders help to them in their need.

Karamshibhai has built up his fortune from scratch. His life is like a beckoning light for others.

Mr. Vagjibhai Thakkar is one of his intimate friends. They are friends for the last more than thirty years. He recollected his past experiences and said, "Karamshibhai is lovable and modest, he never boasts. He is always busy doing something. This is one of his peculiarities. He never feels that work is a big burden. He enjoys ease in being engaged in work. I have stayed for a month at the eye-camp organised by him at Kukama in Kutch. Karamshibhai had assigned the work of management of the camp to me. My duty was to receive the guests and arrange for their accommodation and other amenities. He had also entrusted to me other responsibilities. Karamshibhai and all the members of his family single-heartedly were serving the patients from early morning. The dedicated service of that family in the cause of the poor made a great impact on my mind. All were being treated alike there. All were to have a uniform pattern of life there. No distinction of whatever kind was made. I have learnt from him how to honour other people. Once he had held a religious 'Hari-nam Saptah' (a week of repetition of Lord's name). I had accompanied him at that time. A hundred thousand people were being served food there everyday. Karamshibhai had maintained all the arrangement there in an exemplary manner. Mr. Babubhai Chandan from Srirampur is Karamshibhai's nephew. His daughter is my daughter-in-law. Karamshibhai Shetji had arranged that matrimonial relationship.

Karamshibhai Shetji appears always calm and pleasant. Once fire broke out in Shantilalji's room in the bungalow there which resulted in heavy losses. I along with many others went to Karamshibhai to talk about the matter. He only reacted by saying 'God's wish!' he was unmoved like an unperturbed sage in equanimity.

Once I had gone with Karamshibhai to Jaipur for buying a marble idol. Karamshibhai desires to build a spacious marble temple in Vidyavihar near Ghatkopar in Mumbai. He wanted it to contain idols of all Hindu gods and goddesses. It would provide for the preaching of all faiths. It would give expression to the sentiment of equality among all human beings. He cherishes such grand idea in his mind. We had returned after visiting Jaipur, Makrana, Rainagar, Kankroli, Nathdwara and Udaipur. Karamshibhai Shetji interacted with some sculptors at Jaipur. Those sculptors were very much impressed by his personality. Shetji placed some orders for making idols with them. There are marble mines at Makrana. He had also inspected some of them and made some purchases from there. He had obtained layouts for his

proposed temples from the architects. He possesses extraordinary buoyancy of heart and willpower even at such an advanced age.

Among those who came into closer contact with Karamshibhai were the following persons from Malunja, Belapur, Srirampur regions. Messrs Ramusheth Khatod, Maganbhai Chandan, Babubhai Cahndan, Premsukh Zamvar, Dudhedia, Sumanbhai Shah, Parmlalji Khatod, Nageshrao Pendse, Jeevarajbhai, Haji Hasan Kutchi, Ramnayaji Dhoot, Sumatibhai Shah, Navalakhbahi, Tayabji, Farid Badruddin, Ramvilas Somani, Ramchandra Varma, Dr. Pundit, Premsukhdasji Khatod, Mohanlalji Khatod, Somachandji Paklia, Patangabhai Runaval, Devjibhai Solanki, Keshachanda Gadia, Vasantrao Dukhdare, Ringe Patil, Outi, Joshi, Nivriti Bankar, Appasaheb Mokashi and Mrs. Juvekar. The Gentleman from Ahmednagar were Dr. Nisal, Mr. Nanasaheb Deshmukh, Mr. Nemukaka and Mr. Munot and Mr. Bhimrao Kharde from Kolar. The elderly persons from different walks of life also have preserved the memories relating to Karamshibhai.

Mr. Nageshrao Pendse from Srirampur who later became a correspondent and journalist narrated, "Karamshibhai Shetji had at first opened a sugar-candy factory at Srirampur and he was making preparations to start a sugar factory at Sakarwadi. At that time he used to pay frequent visits from Mumbai to the place by rail journey in the morning. I used to sell newspapers at that time. Karamshibhai Shetji used to buy Gujarati dailies. I used to deliver the Gujarati daily 'Janamabhumi' on the platform of the station only. He used to pay the price – one or two annas at once. Once he took the newspaper and without paying me went with his acquaintance discussing something. I did not ask for money. But when he came next, he paid me one rupee and said, "Last time I went away without paying you for the paper. I am paying you this amount as a payment of penalty." His attitude was cautious like this. He is keen to see that other man does not suffer because of his mistakes.

Mr. Sumanbhai Fakirchand Shah, an eminent merchant from Srirampur, said, "Mr. G. D. Patel, a friend of my father, worked for Karamshibhai as his Estate Manager. We came to know each other through that connection. Our business was inaugurated at his hands and it prospered to gain important position by his favour also.

He is a devout Hindu but also shows great faith in Jainism. He had given land to build a Jain temple at Belapur at a very low price. He is greatly interested in education. We brothers and sisters were very young even then

he treated us with great affection. He does not differentiate in his treatment to big and small. He loves Sanskrit language very much. Whenever I used to meet him he used to urge me to learn Sanskrit. He participated in religious activities with great zeal. I had once gone to Mumbai to meet Karamshibhai. He had come to have a holy view of our (Jain) spiritual leader, Chandrashekar Maharaj.

Mr. Premsukh Hastichand Zanvar from Belapur is an agriculturist. He is one of the close friends of Karamshibhai. He said, "I am a resident of Belapur. I was working for the Congress Party since the death of Pundit Motilal Nehru. Karamshibhai was our local leader. We were carrying the party work under his directions. He used to write speeches for us which we learned by heart and delivered at the meetings. I was about 7 or 8 years old at that time. We were carrying on the activities like picketing the liquor shops and persuading people to use spinning wheels (charka) to make cloth under his supervision.

Another friend, Chandrakant Dudhedia, said, "My father Mr. Madanlal was a friend of Karamshibhai. A big famine took place in Saurashtra (Gujarat State) around the year 1975. As people could not provide grass for the cattle they used to leave them stranded which the butchers to be used for meat. Karamshibhai managed to gather about seven to eight hundred forsaken cows and provided them with grass and fodder. He restored the cows to the original owners after the end of the drought. During the philanthropic service we used to get tired although we were young but Karamshibhai never got tired and exhausted. He has the capacity to do physical labour round the clock."

Mr. Ramnarayan alias Ramusheth Khatod is the nephew of Mr. Shobhachand Khatod of Belapur. Karamshibhai had developed family contacts of great affinity because of his longstanding partnership with the Khatod family in sugar business. Mr. Ramusheth after referring to the activities of Karamshibhai in his early life said, "Karamshibhai Shetji started a Sugar Mill in 1939, but my uncle did not participate in the venture. Some people have created misunderstanding between the two. Karamshibhai Shetji at that time had taken lot of pains to clear the misunderstanding and persuaded him to see the real situation, but in vain. Shetji sincerely wanted uncle Shobhachand to continue partnership but my uncle firmly withdrew it.

Karamshibhai Shetji used to tour many places to promote his retail sale of sugar. He used to collect full information of the places he had planned to visit.

While offering donations to any institutions he used to collect all sorts of information relating to the institution in view. When some of us from Belapur approached him for a donation for a school in Belapur, he plainly asked us, "How much donations have you collected? I shall offer you the same amount when you answer my question. You collect fifty thousand and I shall donate an equal matching amount." Karamshibhai Shetji donated an amount of rupees fifty thousand. Karamshibhai Shetji used to set an example for others by his own conduct. He does not want to offer donation blindly. He maintains that donation should be given with eyes wide open.

Karamshibhai Shetji established an institution by name 'Arpit' (dedicated) at Srirampur. His intention at the root of it was to utilize the profit that he gained in sugar trading for social welfare. He for ever entertains the wish that good things in the world should be seriously studied and all relevant information about them must be compiled. He used to say, "Ramlal (narrater of the account) is my first son." I also feel he is a parent to me. Shantilalsheth was ahead of others, to serve food to the guests sitting in a row after the Indian style during the wedding dinner party of my son. Shetji always keeps contacts with all his old acquaintances, all associates, all relatives and friends. He used to travel extensively in the past. Whenever he used to revisit the old places he always made it a point to meet the persons he knew and inquired after their well being.

Mr. Ramvilas Somani, an old friend of Karamshibhai, from Belapur furnished the following account of his experience. He said, "Among the merchant community there is a saying, 'He in fact is a real merchant or businessman, who constantly moves from place to place, talks continuously and takes insults in his stride.'"

Karamshibhai works day and night. He goes from village to village. He has made conspicuous progress in his sugar business. There is a proverb which praises intelligence and wealth. Without these two one leads a pedestrian life. Karamshibhai by the dint of his hard work and sharp intellect achieved wealth and high reputation.

Mr. P. M. Kavadia is presently the secretary of the Vidyavihar. He is also

a member of Karamshibhai's company's managing committee. He is one of the trusted well-wishers of the Somaiya family. While talking about his memories, he said, "Dr. Shantilalji, son of Karamshibhai Somaiya, in 1943-44 was in the Matriculation class (S.S.C. of the present) when I first came into contact with him. I was studying for my M.A. degree examination. Karamshibhai had come to meet Principal Wagh. He was discussing the courses of study his son should take up. Prin. Wagh said, "Please meet a young man who is studying in the M.A. class. This young man can guide you in the matter." The Principal introduced me to Karamshibhai.

Shantilalji at that time was a young student who had completed his studies for the Matriculation. He was wearing the school uniform at that time. I was very much impressed at first sight by the personality of Karamshibhai. I had heard that Karamshibhai was an industrialist of a good kind. I also hail from Kutch. I am greatly interested in education. I had received my education in the Wilson College and H.P.T. College.

After our introduction, a few days passed and Karamshibhai and Mr. Muljibhai called on me at my residence at Gowalia Tank (Mumbai). In the discussions I had with Karamshibhai about the course of study for Shantilalji. I had suggested that Shantilalji should select courses of study for qualifying as a sugar technologist. Karamshibhai remarked, "Sugar technology is one portion of the study but the basic science for that must be studied first. Then I told him first let him opt for science stream. It provides basic knowledge. It also provides an opportunity to exchange views with those who work under him or with him.

Shantilalji therefore joined the Science stream instead of Arts or Commerce and took up a law degree also. Now he is B.Sc. L.L.B.

One year after Shantilalji joined college, Karamshibhai called me and asked me why I could not join service in the Godavari Mills. After completing my education I joined his service in the Godavari Mills office in the Fazalbhoj building in Mumbai. I was treated with great respect and dignity. I was considered next to Mr. Ranchhodbhai Kotak in order of rank and position. I could learn much from Karamshibhai Shetji, the big boss. I served there in the Godavari for only two years and joined a big import export company under the pressure and advice of my family members and well wishers.

I served outside the Godavari Mills for about 17 to 18 years after 1947.

Although I had left the service in the Godavari Mills, my basic and primary training in the industrial and business sectors was accomplished under the direction and guidance of Karamshibhai only. Our mutual relations were very cordial. It is for this reason that I could contribute a bit in the preparation of the layout of the Somaiya Vidyavihar. Both Karamshibhai and Dr. Shantilalji were keen on getting eminent learned men in the institution. They had taken me on their Board of Directors although I was not in their service.

I again joined the Godavari Mills in November 1964. I was taken ill after five or six months after that. Doctor had advised me complete rest due to deficiency of blood (anemia) in the body. Karamshibhai Shetji even when he was not well visited me accompanied by his daughter, Mrs. Leelaben Kotak. The members of my family were very much excited by his visit. The building in which we lived was dilapidated and several pillars were placed for support to prevent it from collapsing. Karamshibhai on seeing the condition of the building observed, "You are a pillar of our industrial group. It is not proper that you should live in such a building."

Later on he discussed the matter with Shantilalji and secured a flat for me of a very good type within three months. He assisted me financially to buy the flat also. It is an outstanding feature of the treatment the Somaiya family metes out to their employees.

Karamshibhai has contributed much to social, cultural and educational areas with earnest interest besides his industrial and business spheres. He has enthusiastically helped the public welfare with great ardour and with all his physical and mental powers. He has made his life successful and fruitful on account of his dedication to them.

Dr. Juwekar had set up his dispensary in Belapur since 1925. The doctor had participated in the Freedom Movement. It was because of the Congress campaign to propogate and popularise indigenous production, spinning wheel of Gandhiji and Khadi that the doctor and Karamshibhai came into close and purposeful contact with each other. Mrs. Juwekar recollected, "I was married to the doctor in 1927 and we began living in Belapur since that time. Karamshibhai Shetji became my husband's close friend because of the Freedom Movement. Both used to address public meetings. They used to sing 'Vande Mataram' (Salute to motherland), a nationalist song, and display the flag token on the chest. My doctor husband was served with

notice by the British Government in India not to make public speeches in 1931. Karamshibhai Shetji although was not detained in jail for the Freedom Movement but had abundantly helped the freedom-fighters and their families. When my doctor husband was imprisoned for his nationalist activities, I have also received financial assistance from him.

Dr. N. V. Pundit from Srirampur refreshed his memory and said, "I came to stay in Srirampur in 1946. I was in search of a residential place and a place for my dispensary. I was a house-surgeon in an Ayurvedic Hospital in Ahmednagar. Once my friends asked me to accompany them to Belapur in connection with accommodation. We went to Mr. Shobhakaka Khatod. He made inquiries about me and proposed to me that I should provide health service to the agricultural wage-earners on his agricultural farms. He spoke about me to Karamshibhai also. The salary offered was small but I consented to make a beginning in that area. I was living in Malunja at that time.

While working with Karamshibhai, I perceived the volume of work he could perform. He makes out the calibre of the man working or being associated with him. One of his farm-overseers had contracted severe typhoid. I was medically treating him. He asked me, "Can you handle this case successfully? He is one of my best officials and I love him very much." I said, "There is no special effective medicine for his illness of typhoid. (There were no efficacious medicines to cure typhoid at that time). The only treatment is nursing the patient. I believe I can cure him. I told him that I had successfully handled such cases when I was working in the Ahmednagar Ayurvedic Hospital. When I explained to him that way he was very much relieved."

We had no vehicle with us. We both went by riding on the tractor. The roads were in bad condition. Many potholes had made them worse. He told the driver to drive the tractor with caution and at minimum speed. I cured the patient.

Mr. Ghanashyam was a cousin of Mr. Khatod. He was suffering from T. B. Meningitis, that is what I guessed. He was kept in Dr. Shah's polyclinic near Roxy Talkies in Mumbai. Dr. Sukhtankar was treating him and Dr. N.D. Palel was called as a consultant. Karamshibhai had gone there to visit some patient. I had told him at that time that the symptom of headache and stiffness in the neck point to T.B. Meningitis. I had advised Karamshibhai to consult some eminent physician for the proper diagnosis. Karamshibhai

asked me, "Have you given anti-tuberculosis treatment to the patient." I replied in the negative. Karamshibhai is keen to know everything in a thorough manner. He is not a medical doctor but he reads avidly about health, medicines, and clinical treatment. He is well informed.

I cannot say how he developed the studious outlook but I reckon that 'men's intelligence is whetted on account of the rigours of poverty' but he should direct it in a proper way. Karamshibhai succeeded in doing that and he made great strides in life.

Mr. K. B. Rohamane from Kopargaon was a member of the State Assembly (MLA) round about 1962. He had contacts with co-operative sugar factories. He was also busy to start a college at Kopargaon. In the beginning he was intimately associated with Karamshibhai and later on with Shantilalji. Mr. Rohamane was saying, "Once I called at Karamshibhai's office in Mumbai. There I found a land-levelling contractor sitting near him. The bargaining was going on; the contractor demanded Rs. 7.5/- and Karamshibhai was ready for Rs. 7.25/- as the minimum rate. After a lot of haggling they decided at Rs. 7.25/- only. When the contractor left Karamshibhai said, "I was haggling for a rate, a quarter of a rupee less than the contractor's demand but that has saved Rs. 40/- lacs for the Trust." His practical wisdom, firmness, courage, tenacity and perspective deserve great appreciation.

In small and simple matters also his teaching is valuable. His command is not to leave anything behind in the dish. Once the whole Somaiya family had come to my home at Kopargaon for dinner. We had prepared food in the Gujarati style. Karamshibhai Shetji said, "Such type of food we eat everyday at home. We thought you would give us food prepared in Maharastrian style. As the members were eating, the girls from the Somaiya family also came up to help serve the members. Karamshibhai asked his grandson, Samir, to sing a verse (Sanskrit Shlok) which he sang. A homely atmosphere was created in this way at the dinner.

Karamshibhai Shetji is ahead of others to see something new, to hear or read something new with a view to learn new things if possible. He would visit such places. I had accompanied him to witness the reforms made by Mr. Anna Hazare in Ralegaon Siddhi village near Parner town. In that village previously there were thirty-six native distilleries of liquor. Mr. Hazare organized the youth of the place and made the village free from alcoholic

drinks. He sunk wells and seep water tanks. He made arrangements to organise dairies by collecting milk. There were no schools in the village. He organised education there upto High School Level. After seeing the reforms he remarked, "You leave politics and undertake such social work. We shall help you." Shetji is very much fond of social work that is why he has made great reforms in social and educational spheres.



Truly 'twas the Original Spring Only

नाभिषेको न संस्कारः सिंहस्य क्रियते यने।
लिङ्गमार्जितसत्त्वस्य स्ययमेव मृगेन्द्रता॥

No cultivation is needed nor coronation ceremony need be performed for a lion to be king. He wins his kingship by his prowess to secure submission of all animals.

Truly 'twas the Original Spring Only

Karamshibhai Jethabhai Somaiya possesses the personality like a century-old banyan tree that has innumerable branches, leaves and rooting branches, which witnessed the lives of three to four generations of human beings, a compact tree reminding supermen of the ancient times, casting its cool, calm shadow on the ground below; a gigantic stature, awe-inspiring maturity, vast expansiveness and striking gravity.

A man nearing a century of his age, had witnessed the growth of four generations; calm-tolerant, religious-minded, refined, modest a dignified performer.

When viewed through the binoculars of action and deeds his personality appears greatly spell-binding presenting a variety of parts, colours and figures like that seen in a kaleidoscope.

Karamshibhai is one person in body but in that one many Karamshibhais are incorporated.

'Ekam Satwipra bahudha vadanti' (Truth is one wise men call it differently). This is the basic tenet of non-dual philosophy. The universe originally had one truth or reality. The learned and the wise men according to their own experience and understanding named it in many ways. It's originally one and eternal. It is called variously. This basic tenet represents the concept of one God in a practical or worldly life; unity in diversity is the salient feature of the Indian Culture. The lotus is the symbol of this many sweet smelling beautiful coloured petals, that delightfully bloom with easy,

simple joyful mood on a single stem of the lotus. Such a many-sided splendid personality is called 'multi-dimensional' personality.

In his single personality he represents a homely house-holder, skilled trader, capable industrial producer, creative agriculturist, religious devotee, striver for spirituality, staunch nationalist, an aesthete, a lover of art and music, a social worker constantly endeavouring to achieve the welfare of the society by promoting education, culture and refinement. Karamshibhai thus lives many lives in a single form of his personality.

This single Karamshibhai living in many forms of Karamshibhai has attained stupendous success in the respective spheres of his activities which stuns the on-looker and the listener. We have attempted to acquaint the readers and evaluate the work while reviewing it in different chapters so far. But such attempts are of a macro or general type as some efforts cannot be suitably described and some cannot be measured and judged properly. They are beyond words and evaluations.

Persons like Karamshibhai knowing the basic essence of life keep themselves away from the danger of popular acclamation and honour and are mentally steady and composed. They never allow themselves to be carried away by these transient moods. Such persons are always awake and cautious. He therefore maintains, "I am a small man. I am big in age but not in talent and work. I am very small. Whatever big things have happened at my hands, the credit for that is not mine. The whole credit goes to Him, the God Almighty. I therefore dedicate all my success and achievements to Him who owns it all. It is good to offer Him whatever is His. Else I would be tricked into the illusion of greatness and would be caught into the web of egoism. I was born and brought up in a village. I was little educated that is upto sixth standard. There was none to guide me. I had no mentor, I lacked information about things that matter. You will be surprised to know that in the initial stages of my business career, I did not know anything about bank and banking. I was ignorant in many such matters. The reason for this was lack of contacts with others, no social communication and disinterestedness in the affairs of other people. I was such a type of lone ranger. I abstained from contacts with others. I was self-satisfied and confined myself to my own activities, a lonely person."

"However one thing I have pursued throughout my life upto the present and that is determination and tenacity. I have never allowed these qualities

to forsake me. Let the occupation be big or small or the social work of any kind, I have acted with determination and tenacity. While pursuing the objective many difficulties, obstacles and experiences of disappointment confronted me but I did not abandon the objective. I never gave up hope and the work in hand. I continued my efforts courageously and steadfastly. I had put all my trust in God.

I place all my faith in God but that does not mean I am a fatalist. I believe in trying hard, 'know effort as God.' I believe effort is God. I have discovered God in my efforts in industries and business. Try, try and in the end you will succeed. The end of efforts is realisation of God. He has given me abundant success in my efforts. He removed the stumbling blocks in my way. He made me successful. I have experienced this many a time. Not once or twice, but many many times!

Along with determination and steadfastness, whether in industry, agriculture, education or social service, the qualities much needed are, steady, calm attitude, persuasive talk, tolerance, empathy, readiness to help others. With these kind gestures we can keep others attached to us. You can judge others. It is very essential to keep talented persons attached to you. One cannot earn emotional attachment, love, trust and other things of the heart by money. One cannot buy them. One has to earn them by one's integrity and honesty.

In the modern world all things except human beings have value. Man and his humanity is lost. The humanity among the human beings has disappeared, the humanism is lost. This is a horrible situation. This is what I feel. All sciences, knowledge technology are making great advances in all directions. All doors and roads for achieving comforts are thrown open for human development but the man is lost among all the efforts for human developments.

It is therefore necessary and desirable that efforts should be undertaken to preserve human dignity among the plethora of developments for human welfare. Only then there would be creativity in developments.

In all activities, trade, business, there are moments of test in the course of progress towards the defined objectives. There are obstacles and trying situations one has to encounter in the work in hand. There are legends in mythology of the testing situations, the great sages and seers had to go

through. A trying situation thus tests the essence or calibre of the individual under such conditions one has to preserve one's principle, the virtue, the creed, the integrity without falling a prey to temptations of gain, importance, honour and other attractions. The tests involve one's moral character, the high standards of industrial production and professional calibre.

All these qualities for scope and realisation requires integrity. In my whole life barring two or three occasions, I have never told a lie. I have kept myself away from falsehood from my childhood. The impact of Gandhiji's personality and his principles have left a deep impact on my mind. I began to wear 'khadi' since I came to Belapur. I opened a khadi stores. I struggled hard for cow-protection. I participated in the Freedom Movement in a small way. I conducted my business affairs with integrity and honesty. There is wrong impression that trade and business cannot be conducted with honest dealings. Those who profess such axioms have in fact maligned the trade and business. This is all false. Trade and business can be carried out with honesty is my firm belief based on my long-term experience.

It is on the basis of honesty that I could achieve success in my business. I am relaxed and happy as I am nearing a century of my age because of the solid base of honesty. The Tribal Welfare Society, eye-camps or projects like Vidyavihar, medical service are the sweet fruits that the tree of this thought-process proudly bore. I am only a nominal cause for it. I availed myself of the opportunity to become a tool in the hands of God for all these achievements. It is an unending Grace of God that all this happened. When I look back on the past at my age of 96, I am astonished as to how all this took place. How it happened? I am a creature with poor power, poor intellect and poor ability and initiative, but I wonder how all this came about? Then I realised that the forever support to me and the kind hand that leads me all my way to success is no other than the Gracious God Almighty Himself! He is perceived in invisible form. That only is my glory. My achievement if at all I could claim it, is limited to His Grace only.

While carrying on my personal and business activities in a period of long duration I might have done injustice to some persons knowingly or otherwise or by oversight. I confess that and repent for it and beg pardon for it."

Karamshibhai has made a similar confession by opening his heart. He said, "Today on 12th July 1994 is the wedding day of my grandson Samir

being celebrated at Ahmedabad. The reception for the newly married couple will be held on 16th July in Mumbai. Many distinguished guests will attend it and participate in the happy event.

I am very much delighted. I am rejoicing. God does not have an account book of what is more or less as deposit and expenditure. But he has two offices independently maintaining record of good and wicked acts of human beings. According to the first record of good deeds, prize is given, according to the other relating to wicked deeds, punishment is given.

“My days of winning prizes are over, now I am paying for the wicked acts committed by me unknowingly or by oversight.

I remembered my past in its entirety and remembered the moments of God’s Grace. My eyes are filled with tears of gratitude to Him. The tears flow down my cheeks.

“I have become physically disabled in recent years. Two years ago on 18th July 1995 my wife, Mrs. Sakarbai, left me alone here and journeyed to her Eternal Home. This loss torments me very much. She was kind and generous. She was highly religious. She managed my home and ever increasing affairs relating to it with great ability but also stabilised the homes of other people who sought her help. She gathered a lot of people around her by her loving demeanor and gentle talk. She showered motherly affection on many.

“In my physically disabled state my daughter, Leelaben, virtually my mother born as my daughter, has become my main support these days. The pains she is taking for me and the way she is attending on me and serving me cannot be adequately admired and praised!”

As it is I am receiving attention and care from all members of my family and relatives and friends outside my home. I am grateful for all that and consider myself very fortunate. I conclude my narration by recollecting the lyrical prayer (Bhajan) singing the magnificence of God because of whom all these happy things were possible.

The first line of the lyrical prayer is :

‘Hey karunana Karnara

Tari Karunano kanyi par Nathi (Gujarathi)

Oh! Dispenser of Compassion and Kindness

There is no limit to your kindness and compassion!

My favourite prayer is :

‘Na twaham kamaye rajyam
na swarga napunarbhavam.
Kamaye Duhkh taptanam praninam
Artinashanam (Sanskrit)

I do not crave for kingdom nor heaven nor rebirth. But I crave for the annihilation of pain and affliction of the creatures burned by these.

This narrative is composed from the talks and discussions held with Karamshibhai from time to time.

Karamshibhai while carrying on his trade and business-industrial work had not lost sight of national and social activities. He also devotedly endeavoured for spiritual progress. He had pursued his desire for the right course of life and association with saintly persons (Satsang). The visit to the Four Abodes (Char Dham) and the visit to the holy places, were organised in an economical manner in terms of money and time. In the same way he organised religious discourses and group prayers with music to sing the praise of God.

Karamshibhai secured the sacred association of such eminent spiritual personalities like Dongre Maharaj, Muraribapu, Pandurang Shastri Athavaley, Chinmayanand Swami. He organised the religious discourses of these holy persons on a large scale. He offered the benefit of listening to the invaluable teachings of these great spiritualists to thousands of men and women devotees. It was not only in Mumbai but also in Srirampur people got the rare opportunity to hear the teachings from the mouth of Muraribapu the story of Lord Ram (Ram-katha). All these functions were organized by Karamshibhai. Not only this but he had also made an introductory speech by full preparation to welcome the great spiritualist. He assiduously maintained that the rural audience must be provided with the opportunity to hear the great religious preceptors as the audience in cities and foreign countries. The act of hearing the nectar like words from the saintly men will make their lives sublime. Karamshibhai endeavoured for the spiritual welfare of the common people.

The veteran holy men, Pandurang Shastri Athavaley and Chinmayananda Swami, were specially invited by Karamshibhai to deliver religious discourses

at Sakarwadi specially for the employees and the residents of Sakarwadi. He had the good fortune to approach reverable preceptor, Prabhupad Swami. He was also blessed by the interaction with His Holiness Ravishankar Maharaj. Karamshibhai was in touch with many ascetics, monks, and spiritual aspirants. He had provided them with asylum. The keen observer in him was always awake while having contacts with them.

He was alert. His penetrating eye could make out the hypocrite from the real sage. But his conviction never received a blow. It never cracked. His conviction remained unmoved, stable, unflinched, pure, chaste, selfless, unaffected by any contaminations.

His insistence on truth and intensity of work is so profound that the word 'Later' is an anathema to him. Not later but now. Now, at once! Say this and do it! He used to maintain this and act upon that principle. We therefore find the spring of pure humour flowing through his personality. His speciality is to crack jokes in the form of puns that is word-based humour and the other form is situation based or humorously commenting on the happening at that time. When we look at his many splendoured personality, we realize the reality and would like to say with Sant Tukaram.

'Tuka Mhane zara,

Ahey Muliyaichi Khara (Marathi)

Tukaram says the spring of his imposing personality is in fact completely original!



The Last Journey

तत्र का परिदेयना

Why Grieve Over It?

The Last Journey

Karamshibhai travelled widely during the long life that he enjoyed by his good fortune. He reached practically all corners of the country on account of visiting holy places in the land. He also ventured to undertake his pilgrimage to an inaccessible place like Amernath in the shade of the Himalayas. Even beyond that he travelled deep into Tibetan territory to ascend to Kailas-Mansarovar to gain spiritual merit.

The process of his course of journeys in his life was not confined to his travels only but the process of action (Karma) that he had integrated in his personality was an uncommon action-journey (karma-yatra) indeed. We have reviewed the progress of his activities in the foregoing pages so far.

It is a great fortune that Karamshibhai could lead a long-life. He was in reality seeking self in action as others sought it in thought as spiritual exercise (Dnyanayoga).

He was fully absorbed in his exercise of action until his age of ninety or a couple of years beyond that. His body at that age had lost its vigour and vitality and become feeble. The hands were trembling – the hands, those always engaged in fruitful activity were infirm and weak. The springing motion in the legs had disappeared or declined. The voice had sunk deep. Even with all these disadvantages and debilities his routine daily programme went on without a break. He was always busy with work. If he was at home he would work at home, if he went to office after dinner he would work till he returned home in the evening. He used to pick up the relevant documents

from the files by opening them with his trembling hands. The accuracy in that was commendable. He used to replace the document in the file with great accuracy. There were several departments of his work, so there were several files and innumerable papers in them. Heaps of files were found near his pillows and at his feet in the bed.

He used to be busy writing letters, contacting people on telephones and engaged in discussion with the concerned people regularly. His body had lost some of the original vitality, but not his mind. It was always fresh and active. He used to travel to Nareshwadi even at that ripe age. He used to talk to the plants and crops there. He used to stroke the backs of cows with great affection. He was anxiously thinking about how cool and comfortable wind of reforms would blow in the lives of the tribals along with literacy and health.

Karamshibhai loved education immensely. He firmly believed that man acquires humanity only by education and cultivation of good habits and social virtues. In consonance with this belief he built up a city of learning in its captivating brilliance with a variety of disciplines to meet the needs of a rising generation, near Ghatkopar, Mumbai. He has equipped this 'City of Learning' from pre-primary school to the highest echelons of sophisticated computer-education and software learning, with most modern technology.

Karamshibhai used to attend all important cultural programmes and religious and philosophical discourses conducted in the Vidyanagari complex, seated in a wheel chair. However, in the last three or four years he had to remain in bed against his wish and lead a sedate life. Notwithstanding this condition of his health, he continued to do all possible work. In such a state when he was 97 he expressed his anguish to the present writer, "This body which should have served others is now forced to be served by others. This disability, dependence on other people, torments my mind."

It is but natural that a man who all through his life was cautious not to depend on others or to be inconvenient to them in the least and always focused his attention on self-help, to such a man helplessly depending on other people at that stage was very painful.

Karamshibhai basically was a religious man and a spiritual aspirant. It was obvious that Karamshibhai who was on the doorstep of a century of his age, should withdraw his mind from worldly affairs and think about

spiritual matters. A profound mental satisfaction was visible on his face. Karamshibhai used to sip some juices along with the medicine doses administered by his greatly loved daughter (as he saw her as his mother re-born) at her repeated earnest pleadings. But later on he gave up solid and liquid food altogether. It was as if he was fasting to death.

Sant Kabir in one of his verses (doha) says, "While coming out of God's abode the covering sheet of body received, was clean and untainted, now while going back into His abode it must be made clean and pure." May be these words of Sant Kabir were ringing in the ears of Karamshibhai in abstaining from consumption of food and drink.

In this way on 9th May 1999 Karamshibhai bade farewell to his people and launched on his last journey to eternity. This was evidently a painful parting for his family, relatives, friends and other people who came into his contact during a long period. One should not lament the loss as a great soul like Karamshibhai had proceeded on his long journey to Eternity. One should bid adieu and say, "Come! Karamshibhai Come! Adha Come!"



Padma Bhushan Award

दिगन्तशक्तिः।

World-wide Fame

Padma Bhushan Award

Eight months elapsed after the death of Karamshibhai but those intimately connected with him never thought that he was dead and gone. He lived in their big and small memories all the time.

The Government of India was a little late in the assessment of the life work of Karamshibhai. The Government made amends for the lapses and fully realised the worth of his contribution to the Nation. On 26th January 2000, on the Republic Day, President K. R. Narayanan awarded 'Padma-Bhushan' Honour to Karamshibhai post-humously with the citation.



An Ant Flew into the Sky

कर्मणा एव संशिद्धिः।

Action only leads to perfection

An Ant Flew into the Sky

When I review the life of Karamshibhai from his childhood and the way he shaped his life continuously it reminds me vividly of a verse composed by a woman, Sant Muktabai. This affable girl was the youngest sister of Sant Dnyaneshwar. The Maharashtrian devotees sing the praise and acclaim Nivrutti, Dnyandev, Sopan and Muktabai as the saintly persons and members of one family. The Warkaris (believers who journey on foot singing prayers while going to Pandharpur temple of Vithoba, Lord Krishna) sing the praise of this family as the devotional song in accompaniment of musical instruments.

Muktai was childlike but was brilliant and learned in scriptures. She was a prodigy like her brothers. When enraged at the humiliating treatment by the social leader, Dnyaneshwar in his teens was sulking and he shut himself in his cottage. The door of the cottage would not be opened. At that time this little sister addressed words of advice to her omniscient brother. Those verses are known as the 'Cottage-door Verses' (Tatiche Abhang) in the Saint-poets' literature in Marathi language. The words used are simple and ordinary but convey the mystic philosophy of which Nivrutti, Dnyandeva, Sopan and Muktabai were past-masters. Muktabai had composed many poems and verses some of which are extant even after the lapse of eight centuries. In one of the verses she had displayed her philosophical leap forward indicating the spiritual elevation to which the four saintly children were aspiring for. One of the lines of her mystic verse is :

Mungi Udali Akashi

Tiney gililey suryashi (Marathi)

(An ant flew into the sky. It swallowed up the sun!)

The composition sounds strange and ridiculous. The words are raw and rough. The allegorical reference to the power of assiduous efforts by an insignificant creature like an ant conveys more than the drab words could say. The spiritual significance of the line is that the microscopic insect like creature, an ant, after thousand of years could build phenomenal power and leap into the sky like a giant.

The making of the life of Karamshibhai also resembles the small beginning and phenomenal efforts to scale great heights in social, cultural and economic spheres. Like a busy ant he struggled hard against all odds to go on working without rest. The busy ant never sleeps nor rests. It works all the time. Work, work and work is the formula for sure success which an ant symbolizes.

Karamshibhai faithfully pursued the same conception as a creed. He was born in a small village, in a small family. He began his partnership in sugar trading on a small scale in his early youth. This bamboo, like a pole-plant grew rapidly in stature and reached the high sky.

He attained the position of a 'Sugar King' in the nation. He set up three big sugar factories. He not only produced finished commodity like sugar but also the raw material needed for the production, such as the farming of sugarcane, was undertaken by Karamshibhai diligently and with an eye on research in agriculture to secure production on the largest possible scale with the latest technology.

Karamshibhai worked hard on the 15,000 acres of land used for sugarcane cultivation with ever-new experiments to secure maximum turnover. He also used new pure seeds to grow sugarcane on an unprecedented scale.

Karamshibhai like a good farmer had swung himself into the agricultural activities. He experimented with furrow cultivation, foolproof methods of water supply, use of proper manures and fertilizers and other related methods to increase yield. These were utilized as a result of experience and systematic study. His whole-hearted dedication to the sugar-cane cultivation enabled him to establish world-record in the sugarcane production.

The orchards at Nareshwadi and the establishment of Vidyavihar near Ghatkopar, the educational institution should be considered as magnificent memorials of his implicit love for plant life and great zeal for spread of education and learning.

Karamshibhai from his childhood was highly religious, a devoted worshipper of God and a spiritual aspirant. However his religiousness or spirituality was of a special kind. He did not wish to go away from the society and seek solitude for God's worship and spiritual elevation. He showed his religiousness and spirituality by living among the people and serving them.

The health camps held by him for the tribals and the building of hospitals and schools in the tribal areas stand as monuments for Karamshibhai's achievements. Words are not adequate to describe his achievements in this respect.

A common man with intense love for the nation and eagerness for social welfare struggling hard for those objectives could achieve uncommon success. This is symbolized by Karamshibhai himself by his example to point a moral how a small and a simple man could achieve spectacular greatness by efforts in the right direction. This makes me recall to mind the famous verses of Muktai, "An ant flew into the sky and swallowed up the Sun!"

This ant in the form of Karamshibhai acquired such vastness that the President of India had to take cognizance of his sterling performance. The President honoured him by the second highest civilian award of Padma-Bhushan posthumously.



Appendix

The Deccan Sugar Technologists' Association (India)
Presidential Address of Shri Karamshi Jethabhai Somaiya
on the occasion of
The Fourteenth Annual Convention of the Association
held at
The Law College, Poona
at 10 a.m. on Friday, November 8th, 1957.

Hon'ble Shri Yeshwantravji, Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all, this fine morning at the 14th Annual Convention of the Association. We are meeting in Poona for the fourth time as this year we have not been fortunate in getting invitation from any of the Sugar Factories. Being centrally situated, Poona has got natural preference over other places. Moreover, it is a place of historical past where cultural, social and political activities are in full swing.

We have always felt at home at the Law College premises. With the Vetal Hills at the back, beautiful stretch of the Mutha valley in the front, streams rippling away on the sides and mother nature full of abundant vegetation smiling to greet us all, this place provides a picturesque and quiet atmosphere and offers us the best of the urban amenities in rural surroundings.

As a personification of the "Sangam" of the best of rural and urban life we have amongst us as our Chief Guest, our ever popular Chief Minister who has sprung from the rural areas and who is today responsible for the very able Government we are having in our State. The Chief Ministership

of the new bilingual Bombay State was a challenge to the calibre of any person and it is a matter of great pride and pleasure to say that our Chief Minister has proved his ability and ranks amongst the ablest in the country. To my mind, however, his crowning quality is his courteousness, simplicity, unassuming nature and generosity of heart. It is most befitting that when the progress of the country depends on development of our villages we should have as the head of the State a man from a rural area.

I welcome you, Sir, as our Chief Guest of honour and sincerely thank you for having so kindly accepted this invitation in spite of your innumerable responsibilities. I am aware that you have specially come down from Bombay to grace this occasion and have to go back to Bombay tomorrow morning. This is an eloquent testimony of your generosity and a keen interest in the progress of our Industry. I am sure you will give a patient hearing and sympathetic consideration to some of the problems I would like to mention in this address.

Sugar Export :

Last season's production touched 20.25 lakh tons which is an all time record. Next season's production is expected to be around 22.5 lakh tons. As against this, the consumption figure, though higher than last year has shown a decline from the estimates on account of very heavy excise duty imposed during the year and is expected to be around 19.50 lakh tons. The consumption figure will not materially change in the next season with the result that a surplus production of about 3 lakh tons may be expected.

With these encouraging features we have last year emerged as an exporting country. A quota of 2 lakh tons for export was announced against which a little over 1.50 lakh tons is expected to be exported. Chances of further exports at this moment are slim, because the temporary spurt in the international sugar prices which went as high as £70/- c.i.f., due amongst other reasons on account of the beet crop failure in Europe and Suez crisis, is over and the prices are playing around £45 c.i.f. This would mean an approximate realisation of Rs. 20/- per maund F.O.B. as against the minimum realisation of Rs. 27/- per maund that must be paid to the manufacturer taking into consideration the present cost structure of sugar manufacture, freights and after allowing for the rebate of excise duty and cane cess. Thus

there is a net loss of Rs. 7/- per maund, i.e. as much as 25% which would work as a great disincentive for the promotion of export. In face of the grave foreign exchange crisis and heavy production expected year after year the aspect of the cost of sugar manufacture assumes major importance and is a challenge to all of us, whether manufacturers, technicians or Government. In view of the very rigid and inflexible cost structure I do not think much reduction of the cost is possible.

The challenge for export has to be faced equally by the State Governments, Central Government and the Industry. In this connection I regret to note that State Governments do not want to part with their local taxes, viz., Cane Cess and the Sales Tax. It is an accepted principle that all the internal taxes on the goods for export should be refundable. Application by the associations for exemption from the above taxes has been in vain. The incidence of taxation on these two items in Bombay State is Rs. 50/- per ton for Cane Cess and Rs. 25/- per ton for first-point Sales Tax, totalling to Rs. 75/- per ton. Similar taxations exist in varying degrees in other States. It must be realised that sugar meant for export is from the excess production in the country. In other words, what the State Governments want to retain is the additional revenue which normally they would not receive, especially when our sugar cannot face the international competition. The State Governments should feel it equally their duty to help promotion of export. If we are unable to export sizable quantity there would be crisis in the Industry and a great slump in the internal market. The result would be either the factories will restrict their operations or there would be demand for reduction in cane prices. Either of the cases would mean a grave loss to the Agriculturists and loss of taxation revenue to the Governments. I would, therefore, appeal to the State Governments to consider the problem in the above light and permit exemptions from the local taxes on the sugar meant for export. There are difficulties about the allocations between different States, but given proper approach, a suitable formula can be easily evolved. This step of State Governments will help a lot in earning foreign exchange which is very badly needed presently.

Besides the exemptions from the State Taxes, a bold and imaginative policy for export is called for wherein all the interests concerned are taken into full confidence and each one is allowed to do his bit. I personally oppose any Central Agency taking over the sugar produced by the factories as it is

bound to act as a damper in the long run. It will be disastrous to the industry in general and particularly the infant co-operative movement would be seriously handicapped. According to me, the scheme envisaged should be such as would leave the incentive in the hands of the manufacturer for production of better sugar. I am aware that Government is fully alive to this situation and a scheme is on the anvil.

Economic Unit :

While on the subject I would like to repeat my last year's plea that treating a 1,000 tons unit as an economic unit is a thing of the past if compared to the world figures. Against our average production of 12,000 tons of sugar per factory the average in Queensland is 47,000 tons, in Cuba 49,000 tons and in Phillipines as high as 57,000 tons. The cost of production is bound to come down if the units are made larger and according to me, 2,500 tons capacity should be considered the minimum economic unit. Whatever be the accepted figure for the minimum economic unit I feel it is the duty of both the Central and State Governments to see that, whether it is a private enterprise or a Cooperative enterprise, the minimum demands of the units are met with and that none of the units is starved, I would also like to suggest that proper and equitable zonal distribution of resources should be taken into consideration and unnecessary strain either on the roads or on transport should be avoided.

New Factories :

One remarkable feature of this year is the starting of at least 4 new cooperative factories besides the 3 that have already come into function. I would like to wish all the factories bright future. I am confident that the Co-operative Movement in sugar factories in Bombay State is bound to be a great success. All that is needed is a broader outlook and the need to forget petty rivalries and class or political considerations.

Ethics :

Last year there was a heavy strain on the technical cadre in the industry especially in Deccan. As against 14 existing factories, 17 new are coming

up. Both the technicians and skilled hands have been found to leave their factories in the middle of the season. I am greatly pained to have to remark that the unwritten code of ethics that permeated through the industry all these years of not leaving any factory during the season was broken. Better jobs are always awaiting a good technician and they would certainly be available even after the season. As such, for any immediate gain it is not fit and proper for a technician to spoil his career by breaking the code that has been working to the mutual advantage of both the factories and the technicians for so long.

Technical Institute :

This, however, cannot do away with the basic need of having more technicians than are being trained today at Kanpur, the only Institute in the Country. And that is why this year also I repeat my last year's pleas for the need of a fullfledged institute in the State of Bombay.

I do not wish to elaborate my last year's remark about the need of a Central Sugar Institute in the country with branches in at least two parts of the country, one of which must be in the Bombay State in view of its expanding industry and its special and fundamentally different climatic conditions. I may suggest that such an Institute in the State should also cover the activities of the Padegaon Farm. I am fully aware of the present set up and the fact that Padegaon Institute is working under the Central Sugar Cane Committee and that the State does not take much direct interest. I feel that a re-orientation of this approach is called for.

I had last year tried to prove with figures that the results of the Deccan Industry rank amongst the best in the world. With Farms attached to the Industry, Factories take very keen interest on the technical aspects of both the Factory and the field. It boasts of some of the best workers in the country. The results achieved by them are mostly on account of the initiative of the individual managements rather than that of any strong co-ordinated collaboration between the Research Institutes at Kanpur or at Padegaon of the type that one would desire.

We feel that our problems arising out of the special features existing in this part of the country are not properly understood by the single Institute that lies far away. It is very rarely that we take much advantage of this Institute

and sometimes our problems are lost on them in view of the wide variety of problems from other parts of the country. It is, therefore, very essential that we should have an Institute that would cater to our specialised needs and requirements; an institute that will also give us technicians who are trained in these requirements and who can man our factories.

I am sure the whole of the Industry as well as the Technicians in Deccan will very much welcome such an Institute and I on my part would assure all co-operation from this Association to make such an institution rank amongst the premier institutions in the world. All that we ask is a proper appreciation of our problems, a full-fledged Institute to take care of them and sufficient voice in its working to formulate its activities to suit our specific needs and requirements.

There is much that we are trying to do in our factories in a very crude experimental way, what is already an established fact in other advanced countries. I might refer to the Foliar Analysis or the Use of Minor Elements or Manuring by Spraying or Irrigation by determining the moisture contents of the soil and various other features. Today the use of radio active isotopes for the determination of intake of the fertilisers is a very advanced science in some other parts of the world whereas we have not even started on it. Manure is a major item of cost of cane cultivation in Deccan, going as high as Rs. 600 / 700 per acre. If we are to properly determine the actual intake and requirements of the plant by this specialised study, I am sure we can make at least 50% saving, if not more. These and other aspects, which call for close collaboration with research and practice can materially reduce the cost of production of cane and incidentally the cost of sugar which is the challenge we are facing in our country. I have particularly thought it necessary to elaborate on this aspect because I think my plea was lost last year. Our Chief Minister has a progressive outlook and therefore cannot fail to be impressed by the basic soundness of our requirements. I look upon him to induce the Centre to establish such an Institute which was once under consideration.

Sugarcane Research Station, Padegaon :

The Silver Jubilee of the Sugarcane Station, Padegaon, will be celebrated very shortly. On behalf of you all I congratulate the workers at Padegaon

and wish them great success. Their contribution to cane development in Deccan is very valuable and the Industry owes them a great debt. This is all the more noteworthy as they are working under a series of handicaps.

Success of the Deccan Industry rests entirely on its better quality of sugarcane and better cultural practices in agriculture. It is, therefore, essential that sugarcane research should be attached a paramount importance and the workers given full scope.

Approach of the State Government to Padegaon station needs a fundamental change. The station is treated just like any other administrative unit and the Research Heads are changed in the same way as Civil Service personnel are transferred from time to time. The field of work in research is entirely different and such periodical transfer of the Head of research will only serve to disturb the practical work that may have been appointed from time to time I would say that each person has had his own approach and the extensive programme of research laid by one specialist is not and cannot be taken up with same interest when a new Specialist comes in his place. He lays out his own experiments when he takes up office but has insufficient time to arrive at sufficient results. Research in a particular field is the work of a life time and cannot just be taken up for a limited period for which he is to be in charge. In Agriculture generally or for that matter in any field results come after years of patient observation. I would, therefore, strongly urge that Sugarcane Specialist, whoever he might be, should not be changed periodically. Full opportunity and enough time should be given to each one of them to complete the work planned by him.

I understand that before any research work is taken up the scheme is drawn up which may be for a period of 3-5 years and is formally sanctioned by the Central Sugarcane Committee. The persons employed to work in the scheme are required till the completion of the scheme. No doubt they are absorbed in future schemes that may be evolved from time to time.

Some of the basic amenities are also lacking for these workers. There is no colony life for them, the quarters allotted to them are in a poor condition and scattered all over. Transport facility also is denied to the Specialist in absence of which it is difficult to visit various farms and places to have an on-the-spot study. This is bound to affect efficiency.

Coming to the research programme I have already referred passinglly to

some of the most advanced fields of research taken abroad. They are no longer in the field of research but have found practical applications and the cultural practices are based on them. For example, foliar diagnosis and radio active isotope determine the total quantity of manure required for a crop. The moisture content in the soil determines the need of irrigation, etc. Sciences are trying to be exact and the empirical aspect is fast changing. At Padegaon we have not yet started research on any of these sciences. Fortunately, we have a complete data of work done already abroad and we will not have to cover any new ground. The equipment and the resultant programme thereon are required. Today in absence of this, Padegaon has still to do same analysis with NPK and compost or no-compost series, or continue its research programme on 450 lbs. Nitrogen in the proportion of 2 organic and one inorganic, etc.

What is, therefore, wanted is a permanent band of research workers devoted to the advancement of cane cultivation, provided with proper living facilities and who are given full scope both by way of finance and equipment to carry out their allotted task. Industry is directly affected by the achievement and results, and it is therefore in the fitness of things that it should be given active voice and participation in all its activities.

I am pained to learn that even funds for the proper celebration of the Jubilee and ushering in a new programme of research to mark the occasion are also lacking. When Deccan Industry pays annually as much as over Eleven million rupees (Rs. 1,10,00,000/-) as Cane Cess and would be paying twice that sum in a few years, a Cess meant for cane developments and grants. I would, therefore, urge that Government of Bombay should earmark a definite percentage of its Cess income for the purpose of Padegaon Station. As far as the Jubilee is concerned, I would submit that Government should mark the occasion by giving some grants to start new research programme with upto date equipment on most advanced lines. Capital grants, if not more, of at least 1% of one year's cane cess realisation should be given. The money spent will not have been wasted as it is bound to benefit the State many more times by way of additional revenue.

With this new approach and more grants, Padegaon should become a full fledged permanent Research Institution. In view of the concentration of Industry in Ahmednagar District one more Research Farm under Padegaon can be established with advantage in Kopergaon Taluka.

It is a welcome feature of recent years that Padegaon lays out same experiments at different factories and assesses the results under different climatic and soil conditions. Factories co-operate to the maximum and I hope that this co-ordination would be carried to its ultimate extent so that each factory can be a living research branch of the main Research Station at Padegaon.

PRACTICAL HANDICAPS

There are some important practical handicaps which need to be removed for better working of the Industry and I would briefly like to mention them here.

Molasses : The problem of major magnitude that comes foremost in my mind is that of molasses disposal. I would only like to repeat my last year's remarks which still hold good in a greater measure this year. "The molasses problem as a whole has been grossly mishandled for the last many years. This year it has reached breaking point and hardly any molasses has been lifted from any of the sugar factories. It would be a problem to store the molasses of the next season. Even permission to throw it away or destroy it has been refused." This story is repeated again this year. Some factories have stocks of last 3 seasons and are at their wit's end what to do with them. Permission for destruction by burning has been lately received but it has no practical importance. It is hoped that for the next year permission to throw molasses in flood water will be received well in advance.

Fertilisers : The increase in the price of Ammonium Sulphate and the very recent removal of total duty on export of oil cake are the disturbing features. The Industry and the Agriculturists have been consuming Ammonium Sulphate for over two decades, long before Government of India thought it necessary to start a campaign for utilisation of manures. Today we are faced with great shortage which will have very serious effect on the crop and the country would loose more by way of indirect disadvantage than by spending foreign exchange on import of sufficient quantity of manure. Further the State monopoly in Inorganic Manure is causing great handicap especially because there are imparte increases in its price from time to time, a feature that would never have been permitted to any private enterprise. As

if to aggravate the situation the Central Government recently has thought it fit to remove totally the export duty of Rs. 230/- per ton on expeller cake and Rs. 50/- per ton on deoiled cake. The result has been that the price of oil cake, which is the most important manure used for cane cultivation, has shot up by about 25%. I can speak with authority that the extra foreign exchange earned by export of oil cake will not compensate for the indirect loss of the crops and the exportable sugar, especially in view of the huge shortage of ammonium sulphate expected during the next few years. This removal of export duty is most untimely.

Roads: The condition of roads in the factory areas is very bad. The strain of 1,000 carts coming and going, i.e. 2,000 carts a day loaded to overflowing capacity on the roads can be appreciated only by seeing them at site. It is an awful state to see a bullock break down on any road and the efforts made by half a dozen cart men to lift it up. Something needs to be urgently done for this. Sugar factories have come forward to contribute their share on the roads as envisaged by the Central Government in the Second Five-Year Plan. I hope a speedy decision will be taken and substantial amounts will be earmarked from Cane Cess for this purpose. I would suggest calling for a high level meeting of senior representatives of all Sugar Factories to suggest and find ways and means for speedily tackling this issue.

Gram Panchayat : The imposition of Gram Panchayat on the rural Industries and its attendant taxes on factory colonies where they do not give any services but generally provide nuisance value has been opposed. Such industries have pleaded for exemption of their areas by payment of a nominal fee so that the Panchayats may not interfere either in the colony constructions or in the factory changes, which is beyond their capacity. Such payment of fees should exempt industry from payment of any other fees or duties on any other account whatever. Further, these Panchayats are working as a damper to the colony progress in as much as better houses attract heavier taxation of a recurrent nature, in view of the taxation based on cost of the structure. It is only when factories are assured that giving better amenities to their workers will not be annually taxed in the shape of Panchayat taxes, that the colony conditions can improve. Present conditions act as a positive disincentive for improving the quality of housing.

Progress in Care Culture : In spite of the fact that record yields are produced in the Deccan, still there is great scope for improvement in the general standard of cultivation. Personnel factors are an important aspect in the success or otherwise of high production. 80 tons average and 95 tons of Adsali crop is a normal feature in Malinagar factory. Similar results have not been achieved elsewhere. Efforts in Shrirampur and Kopergaon Taluka have been made and the yields have improved considerably. Still they are a long way from the Malinagar yield. This region has its own handicaps. Pre-monsoon cyclones seem to be the limiting factor, their occurrence and intensity or otherwise determine the fate of the crop. So the problem is to meet such vagaries of nature. Lodging has assumed a dangerous form and it is a serious problem as to how it can be prevented.

Efforts are being made for complete mechanisation of farm practices. Even the preparation of seed beds and inter-culturing operations have been mechanised but there are many practical difficulties in view of the special features of the agricultural practices.

Lay Out : It appears that the old serpentine method of irrigation with different compartments would soon be out of date and graded furrow layout will take its place. There are definite indications of saving of water and efficiency in irrigation by this method. Pit falls, however, are there, if one is not careful, viz., the overhead irrigation of the end portion and subsequent waste of water. For this careful contouring is very essential.

Variety : The wonder cane of Deccan CO. 419 is still not surpassed by any other variety. CO. 419 is a unique cane and useful under a very divergent set of conditions. It is neither preceded nor succeeded by an equally competent cane variety. Plea is being raised from time to time in the Conventions that the variety is under-going deterioration. Whatever be the case, there is need for better varieties. It is also essential that we should have early and late maturing varieties to even out the heavy fluctuations in recovery. Reports from Padegaon indicate the possibility that CO. 775 and CO. 740 may be the other alternative varieties and they may prove to be the early and late maturing varieties respectively.

In some of the factories CO. 678 has been multiplied to a large extent and offers a substitute for CO. 419 to them, especially where CO. 419 suffers badly from grassy growth. Similarly CO. 798 also seems to show some

promise. We will have to wait for a few more years before we can come to definite conclusions.

Technical Sub-committee :

I am glad to announce that this year we have made some headway towards making the Technical Sub-committees more active. This year the Manufacturing Sub-Committee was asked to collect complete and exhaustive data on the equipment and the practices prevalent in Deccan area on different systems of pan boiling and with a special emphasis on the production of bolder grams and its effect on steam consumption, for which exhaustive questionnaire was drawn up. The response received was very encouraging. This data with a general interpretation of the same has been printed separately and will be discussed at the Symposium tomorrow for which about an hour is allotted. I am confident that it will give rise to a very interesting and authoritative discussion. Similarly the Engineering Sub-committee was asked to prepare a symposium on "Steam balancing in the sugar factory" as it was thought that this could be properly co-related to the subject tackled by the Manufacturing sub-committee. I hope the Sub-committee will make more progress in the future. Task was given to the Agricultural Sub-committee to decide upon the experiments that are to be conducted simultaneously at all the sugar factories, so as to get representative results under different soil and climatic conditions all over the State. As, however, the decision taken was rather late no work has been done but I hope that recommendations would be made by the Sub-Committee well in advance for the experiments to be made in the next Adsali plantation in June-July 1958.

Papers :

This year 30 papers are presented for discussion. It is gratifying to note that in response to my request last year there are more papers on non-agricultural subjects this year. Two important subjects like "Steam Economy" and "Losses from Cane to Crystal" from the subject matter of two papers. Observations on the working of Cell-less Vacuum Filter are important. Different aspects of sugarcane cultivation are studied and definite solutions to some problems are presented in Papers on Agriculture. In Cane Soil

Study "Assessing the fertility of soil by colours" is noteworthy. The cane culture technicians have tried to find solution for the problem of loading, due importance is given to the subject of manuring and 7 papers are given on this single subject. A positive way to avoid wastage of water by night irrigation is shown by storing water at night in storage tanks. Under Cane Pathology very detailed study of grassy growth is an important article. It is for the first time that studies about spraying for recovery are presented and this will give very interesting discussion. Amongst the articles on general subject synthetic cane preparation and idea of replacing our usual manures by manure prepared from waste are thought provoking. In general the papers are well studied and very interesting.

Prizes :

I regret to note that no competitor has succeeded in getting the Prize for Prize plots this year. A Prize of Rs. 1,000/- was on offer for an average yield of 12 tons sugar per acre on a 10 acre plot. As against this the maximum any competition has been able to give is 9.30, practically 75%.

My last year's remark that only a few factories have lately taken part in the competition holds good even this year. I wish more encouragement is given to the Technical Staff of the factories to participate in this competition. This year the terms of the prize have been liberalised to give the incentive to the competitors. In the third Council meeting we have taken a decision that in case nobody becomes eligible to get the prize in a particular year a consolation prize shall be given to the person producing the maximum, subject to a minimum of 11 tons sugar per acre.

This year Dr. Shirgaonkar's prize goes to Shri H. P. Mutha for his paper entitled "Optimum Indices". I offer him my hearty congratulations.

Thanks :

On behalf of myself, the Members of the Council as well as the Members of the Association I give my heartiest thanks to our Chief Guest who in spite of his various pressing commitments has specially come over here to inaugurate this Convention. Let me thank you one and all for having kindly accepted our invitation and graced this occasion. Our thanks are due to the

Law College authorities for having so kindly placed the premises at our disposal for the purpose of this Convention. I also express our thanks to the Judges for Dr. Sirgaonkar Memorial Prize for having so kindly taken pains to scrutinise the papers of the last Convention and submit their opinion.

I also thank the Members of the Council of the Association for the co-operation and help they gave me last year in the discharge of my duties as the President. I would also thank Shri M. Y. Karve for ably conducting the affairs of the Association as its Secretary and also Shri Athawale, the Treasurer for maintaining the accounts of the Association and preparing and presenting the Association's Budget papers. On behalf of the members of the Association I wish to place on record our thanks to the various authors who have contributed their papers to this Convention. Last but not least I must thank Shri K. P. Deshmukh who, as in the past, has very willingly accepted to be the Joint Secretary of the Association and to him we are indebted for the necessary preparations and arrangements made for this Convention over here.

JAI HIND

Welcome Speech

By

Mr. K. J. Somaiya

Karamshibhai always entertained the wish to organize talks by learned men and eminent scholars and religious leaders to enlighten the rural people by exposing them to the thoughts and wisdom of the great thinkers and seers. He had therefore arranged the religious discourses by Pundit Pandurang Shastri Athavaley and others at Sakarwadi. He had provided on 11-4-1985, an opportunity to the people of Srirampur to hear the renowned religious commentator, His Holiness Moraribapu. The welcome speech by Karamshibhai at that time is reproduced below (The speech was in HINDI).

His Holiness, Sri Moraribapu, and the assembled ladies and gentlemen who aspire for the welfare of humanity, you all will be surprised at my accepting the position of presiding over today's function.

Usually I do not act as reception chief, trustee or inaugurator of functions but I was prompted by two or three considerations to accept this position.

You all know that this place is not only my birth-place but it is also my place of activities and work. Nearly 103 years ago in 1881 my grandfather came from Kutch to this place from Mumbai. The Manmad Daund railway line had come into operation at that time. He had set up his home at the Malunja village which is about 15 kilometers away from here, near the Lakh railway station on the banks of Pravara river. He cultivated the land there, built up gardens and also undertook the cultivation of sugarcane. To begin with he replaced the traditional sugarcane crushing mill by an iron mill for crushing the sugarcane. The population of Malunja was around 500 to 700

persons. I was born at that place in the year 1902. My grandfather had grown sugarcane. He died in 1898. After his death, my father started his trade at Belapur some 6 km away from there and the agriculture of sugarcane and other kind came to an end. I resumed the agriculture of sugarcane some forty years after that in 1940. It is for this reason that this place is my birth-place as well as workplace in the real sense of the term.

The second reason for accepting this is that I was going to get the joy of witnessing the stepping of the sacred feet on this land by venerable Sri Moraribapu who is a great devotee of Sri Ram and Sri Hanuman, like the great Saint Goswami Sri Tulsidas.

The third reason for giving my consent was your love for me although I am away from here for the last fifty years and also the sincere request of your representatives who insisted that I should accept to preside over the function.

Today is the day which is most valuable and joyful for all of us.

In this historical Ahmednagar district today a new chapter of history is being written. This district has been coloured by the changing colours in the history of our country. The famous ruling queen Chandbibī had valiantly resisted the invasion of Ahmednagar by the powerful Mughal army. It was during the Mughal period that a group of young men at the Mughal court had made forays into the South to expand the Mughal Empire from this headquarters. This district had witnessed valour, feudal regimes and many occasions of playing of political games. The prison of Ahmednagar had become the symbol of Indian Nationalism during the Satyagraha Movement led by Gandhiji.

In 1857, when Rani of Jhansi had led the 'First War of Independence', her army commander was Shri Tatya Tope. This great warrior hailed from Yeola, near this place.

On the other side of Belapur on the bank of Pravara river the temple of Sri Keshav Govindji Maharaj is located. Here many wounded fighters who participated in the 1857 War of Independence had sought shelter.

After the historic call of 1942 for the British rulers to 'Quit India' many leaders of the 'Quit India' Movement were secretly lodged in the Ahmednagar prison. Among the big leaders like Vallabhbhai Patel, Pt.

Jawaharlal Nehru, who numbered around 12, there was Shri Shankarrao Dev also. This place was visited by Mahatma Gandhi, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and other famous leaders.

Ahmednagar district is a holy land. The township of Newasa is situated about 32 km from here, situated on the bank of river Pravara. Shri Dnyaneshwar had composed his Dnyaneshwari (Bhavartha-Deepika) at that place. The place by that name still stands there. A famous Saint Dasganu by name flourished in this district, the monasteries of 'Mahanubhava' are situated in this district. Also the famous monastery of the Nath-Panth is near Ahmednagar.

Some distance away from here the village of Puntamba is situated on the bank of river Godavari. It is a great holy place. Many temples exist there. Here at Puntamba, Changdev, the contemporary of Sant Dnyandev lived. The asylum of Sri Swami Sahajanand, the most outspoken spiritual leader and a staunch nationalist who participated in the Freedom Movement lived at Nahur village on the Godavari river. Venerable seer, Swami Muktanand Maharaj from Ganeshpuri was strolling the areas of Kokanathan and its environs of the Godavari river for about one and a half years, since the year 1940.

The famous temple of Sri Saibaba is at Shirdi some 32 km from here. This holy place is visited by thousands of believers from all over India. Sri Saibaba lived there and died in 1928.

Near that place at Sakuri Village is the temple of the saintly person Upasani Maharaj where only female devotees live. They receive instruction of religious scriptures in Sanskrit. One gets pure joy to hear them say the Vedic chants. Sri Upasani Maharaj died in 1941.

The visit to our place here by His Holiness, Sri Moraribapu, has made this sacred place more sacred.

Mr. Kundanmalji Firodia of Ahmednagar after Independence became the speaker of the Maharashtra Assembly. This district has produced many nationalists. Among them late Raosaheb Patwardhan and late Atchutrao Patwardhan were prominent leaders.

All these things rushed to the mind as today I stand before you to speak. Before I say anything further I would respectfully mention two names. One

of them is Sri Joseph, the Managing Director of Belapur Sugar Mills, and the other is the Khatod family, the prevailing fifth generation hailing from this place.

I was roaming about from village to village as a volunteer of the Congress from 1928 to 1938 as instructed by Gandhiji. I had shaven my head, wore a long sleeved shirt (Jhabba), a pair of chappals on the feet and carried an empty bag hanging from the shoulder. My senior partner in the trade Mr. Ramadhanbhau in a criticizing mood told me 'Look here Karamshibhai, we do business with Belapur Company, which is conducted by the British. We will be doing business with them in future also. If you are going to work for the Congress Party like this, we will suffer heavy losses as the Director would be displeased with us and stop dealing with us.'

I told him not to worry about it. I said, "As long as we are dealing with them with honesty and integrity, there is no cause for any displeasure. Sir Joseph is a true Englishman. He knows that whatever we are doing is out of the love for our nation. It is our duty. He is aware of it. In fact in his heart of hearts he must be appreciating and admiring our work."

I declare with great pleasure here that there would be no problem in our dealings with them because of our nationalist attitude. Our dealings with them continued with perfect harmony till the year 1942 when sugar control came into operation.

When I remember Khatod honourable Bavaji, Mr. Laxmandasji, Mr. Ramdhanbhau and Mr. Shobhachandraji Khatod my eyes fill with tears. I cannot forget the love and affection they bestowed on me. I have grown under the expanding shade of these trees and as a result of that I stand before you today. Perhaps you may feel that this reference is irrelevant but it is my duty to offer my respects to those saints and individuals who favoured and blessed me in this land.

The district of Ahmednagar has created a new history in the sugar industry. There are twenty sugar factories in this single district. Out of these twenty, fifteen are run on co-operative basis and five on joint-stock basis. Possibly the three out of the five may go the co-operative way. This district has made great strides in trade and agriculture. In such a situation, 'Ramakatha' (sacred story of Ram) is being celebrated in Srirampur town. What better function can be held than this?

Once a horribly famine stricken district of Ahmednagar is now a completely transformed district.

The green sugarcane fields stretching over several miles of land provide cool comfort to the eyes. It is evidently the fruit of the skill and the labour of the cultivators here. At present there are several co-operative institutions which run factories. The whole credit for that goes to the cultivators symbolised by Mr. Vikhe Patil who was a man of principles and honoured by the Union Government with a Padmashri Award. He is popularly known as 'Sahakar Maharshi' – the great promoter and stalwart of co-operative movement, he passed away three years ago and thus we are deprived of his able leadership. Mr. Vikhe Patil staunchly advocated that the grower of the sugarcane should be a sugar producer. The growers should own the sugar factories. The Maharashtra State Minister for co-operation at that time was Mr. Vaikunthbhai Mehta. Mr. Patil used to go to the minister, even stay with him in his bungalow but used to carry his tiffin box with baked chapattis from here. Salutes to the great man of principles and a man of high sense of duty.

In such a holy land of Srirampur, His Holiness Shri Moraribapu has arrived who is the most eminent man of the young generation of the twentieth century and a distinguished sage commemorating the age of devotion sanctified by Sant Tulsidas. We are going to have the privilege to hear him deliver the saintly message to humanity. What greater fortune can we hope for?

Shri Moraribapu is a resident of a tiny village, Targajarda near Mahua town in Bhavnagar district of Gujarat-Saurashtra State.

While leading a wordly life upto the age of 32 he resolved to remain a life-time celibate for spiritual elevation. He is now 39 years of age. He receives respectful request for religious discourses from all over the country. He is also invited for discourse-tours to America, Africa and the Middle East countries. He goes on these tours twice or thrice every year. The schedule of programmes overseas is fixed for 2 years. The duration of the programs in the foreign countries is for two to three years. Sri Moraribapu eats his meal only once a day. He sleeps on a simple carpet spread over the floor. He has kept sleep under control.

The audience in the cities to hear his discourses number four to five lakh

(400-500 thousand) of people. The power of his speech is very captivating. He visits hard-hearted convicts in prisons who had committed crimes like killing somebody. The influence of his talk on them is tremendous.

I am very much overwhelmed to see that you all have assembled in such large numbers to listen to the sublime message from such an eminent spiritual leader like Sri Moraribapu. I know you have somehow or other slipped out of your daily routine to avail yourself of this rare opportunity. It symbolises your cultural leanings and great devotion to God. I congratulate you on this and thank you for attendance.

This is a small village and your assembling here in large numbers must have put you to some inconvenience. We are trying our best to provide you some facilities but even then many things would be inadequate and unsatisfactory. You will magnanimously forgive us for discomfort experienced by you.

A big meeting is being held here and it is but natural that everybody would wish and struggle for a seat in the front row. You know this is not possible. The enthusiasm that you might be showing for a front seat is inferior to your receiving higher thoughts in your cultural behaviour.

We all are grateful to Sri Moraribapu for coming here braving all the physical inconveniences. We are highly indebted to him. His arrival and preaching would be fruitful only when we reform our lives according to his valuable guidance.

It is a well known fact that love and devotion are not the things for exhibition; vapour or steam is not seen but accumulated steam when connected to an engine acquires power to pull a train of wagons over the tracks. In the same way devotion acquires power. The pure devotion is disinterested. Whatever difficulties we have to pass through should be accepted gladly which marks true devotion.

Once a disciple of Sri Ramkrishna Paramhansa asked him about sorrow, mercy and pain. He replied, "Realisation of God was on account of my devotion. But the sorrow and pain are the results of my previous birth. I should suffer for that. Further, mind is whimsical, it must be restrained; a proper balance is necessary for that. It needs proper guidance. We have gathered here for the same.

The true devotion is always active. Once Gandhiji saw one boy sleeping in the cowshed. He was crouching on the floor. Gandhiji asked him, "Do you sleep here only? How do you cover your body at night?" The boy showed Gandhiji his tattered sheet which he used for cover. Gandhiji said, "Don't you feel cold?" The boy replied, "Yes Sir, I feel cold." Gandhiji went to his own cottage. He collected an old sari of his wife Kasturba, some papers and a small quantity of cotton and returned to where the boy was sleeping even when it was night. He started stitching a thick covering sheet for the boy. Kasturba also helped him in the work. After sometime the quilt was ready. Gandhiji put it on the boy as a protection.

Next day, Gandhiji asked the boy how he enjoyed his sleep. "I had never enjoyed a sleep like that of last night." How much was the boy delighted and Gandhiji rejoiced one can hardly visualise.

We crave for such true devotion and therefore we should be associated with the right type of people which makes our lives worth living.

We all are grateful to Sri Morasibapu who has accepted the invitation of the Organisers of this function. We all thank him for the kind gesture.

You all gave me an opportunity to express our high regard and feelings on your behalf for which I am grateful to you. I cannot express the feeling in exact words. I salute him a thousand times on behalf of you. I conclude by wishing the blessings of this young spiritual leader and take my seat.

Thank you.



Worthy of Worship Venerable Adha

By

Shantilal K. Somaiya

Venerable Adha (father) always cherished the sacred and mystical 'OM' (representing God Almighty) in his heart. The unwavering faith in social service as the highest form of worship, perseverance in the manly virtues, the creed of humanism and unflinching faith in God Almighty figured prominently in his life. According to many people he was a 'Karmayogi' – God realized soul through work – of the Modern Age. Adha bid us farewell on Sunday 9th May 1999 and entered into Eternity.

My elder sister, Mrs. Leelaben, and many learned men and well-wishers of Adha had written about his work. I also take this opportunity to acquaint the readers in a small way about the special qualities displayed by him while achieving his objectives in life. I think his own experiences the driving force of his style of work and the difficulties he encountered, need elaboration.

Adha was born in 1902 and passed away in 1999. This means his life and work cover the entire 20th century. He represents the symbols of the special events in the country – the Freedom Movement, the great strides made by India after Independence in the fields of Industry, Social Reforms and advances in Education. The many coloured waves and streams of progress and also the whirlpools are represented by his multi-faceted activities.

The men of action commemorate a century or an age by their extraordinary performances. There is a lack of gentle and sympathetic behaviour of people in these days. During such times some one of sterling character

and kind minded great man awakens the spirit of right conduct and eternal truth. I feel that my father may be counted among the few of this type.

The place of an individual is significant in the progress and shaping of society. The work of such people sets the tone and direction to the society. The reform of the society is possible only through individuals. Such individuals of humanitarian mould, idealists and geniuses claim a lion's share in the progress of the society. As the Sanskrit adage says 'There is scarcity of planners who can put their plans through successfully.' Adha has acquitted himself with great credit in the implementation of his plans in various fields.

Venerable Adha was born in the ordinary family of his grandfather, Mr. Thakerseybhai Somaiya. His home was situated on the banks of river Pravara at Malunja village in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra. He then shifted to Mumbai where he studied at Bharda High School upto Matriculation class. In Malunja at Belapur he started his independent trade of old empty jute bags and matchboxes in his early youth. In fact he made astonishing progress in petty trade around the year 1927. Messrs Shobachand Ramnarayan Khatod was the sole sugar-stockist in Belapur. He took Adha as a working partner. 'I shall not serve anywhere. I shall engage in trade and business only.' This was his firm resolve. With the inborn talent for business activities and command over English, Marathi and Marwari languages, he could easily win the confidence of the customers. An imposing personality and sharp intellect enabled him to take Messrs Shobachand Ramnarayan Khatod establishment to a higher stage of progress and development. It could become a leading sugar establishment. It obtained the exclusive rights to sell sugar produced in all sugar factories in Maharashtra upto 1939. His business acumen and mastery of the English language facilitated him to acquire business from Messrs W. H. Broad & Company – the English Belapur Sugar Company at Belapur. This gave wide publicity to Messrs S. R. Khatod's establishment throughout the country.

The period 1927 to 1937 is essentially a period of Freedom Movement in India. The agitation of Satyagraha, the movement for uprooting untouchability, bonfire of foreign cloth, propagation of 'Khadi', the publicity gained by Arya Samaj promoted by Dayananda Saraswati were the outstanding features of the period. Adha had taken part in most of these political and social reforms in a thoughtful manner. He used to participate in some of these movements in a matter of fact way. Adha propagated

Khadi throughout his life. Similarly he extended protection to cows whenever needed. Many agitators and nationalists visited him at home. They used to enjoy the meals prepared by my mother, Mrs. Sakarben. The special traits of the family like truthfulness, simplicity and tolerance were imbibed by all members of the family.

The reputation and success in the sphere of trade and business that Adha won was not by chance or accident. He had literally observed Mahatma Gandhi's doctrine that 'Customer is your King, your God'. As customer is your God, you should behave in the right way with all. He based all his transactions on the dictum of 'Fair-play'. He used to fix the rate of sugar for the day in the morning. He used to carry out his dealings according to that rate. If by any reason there was a drop in the rate in the evening or deals were made at lower rates, Adha used to meet the parties concerned and make necessary adjustments.

Adha in his business transactions skillfully co-ordinated honesty, adventure as well as foresight to win the pride of place. He secured a leading position in the business sphere in India by his moral stature, business aptitude, integrity and fair-play. He was counted among the business magnates in India. He was known as 'Sugar-King' and his fame spread throughout the country. The sugar markets elsewhere in the country e.g. Kolkata and Kanpur also waited for the sugar-rates fixed by him in the morning.

He walked over from sugar-trade to sugar-industry. In 1938 he set up sugar-factory at Sakarwadi and in 1941 at Laxmiwadi. The unused water from the Deccan Canals, Godavari site bank as well as the left bank canals was going waste. He gradually purchased lands and with that water sugarcane was cultivated in twelve thousand farms. He adopted the method of mechanised plantations and increased the yield. He also invented new varieties of sugarcane which he utilized in the Godavari fields and also distributed the new reformed seeds to the orchard owners and cultivators in the area.

Because of such Herculean efforts' the 'Godavari Farms' got international reputation. The average rate of production of sugarcane in India was 18 to 20 tons per acre. Godavari farms surpassed the sugarcane production in Cuba, Hawaii, Indonesia and other foreign countries and won the leading position in the world.

Adha's three qualities brought about this spectacular progress. The unshakable trust in the capacity of the self, excellent knowledge about agriculture along with sharp intellect and indefatigable efforts. The success that he has acquired in agriculture is the outstanding example of his style of work. He had great attraction for agriculture. Among all professions, agriculture is the best was his guiding principle. In order to make great strides in agriculture he used to invite well known agriculturists of the country. He used to stimulate their activities. At that time maximum number of agricultural graduates and those who had done researches in agriculture to promote cultivation and yield were working on the Godavari farms. Adha possesses the wonderful power of judging the ability of ambitious young men and he gave full scope to their talent when employed on the farms.

He considered land as 'mother-earth' and he was prepared to propitiate it for the maximum yield. He was not only interested in sugarcane yield but was interested in the whole horticulture also as such.

His guiding principle was the command in the Srimat Bhagvat Gita 'Karmanye vadhikarste ma faleshu Kadachana' (you have a right to do the work, not the fruit of the work). He was energetically pursuing manly duties. It was characteristic of him to focus all his attention on the work or project taken up by him and accomplish it to the best of his abilities by a single-minded devotion. He was never disappointed if he could not complete any work satisfactorily. He was stoic enough to take it in his stride and say, 'That is God's wish, why bother about it!'

He worked tirelessly to give concrete form and shape to his dreams like an imaginative sculptor. He drew up gigantic plans relying on sterling manly virtues and his idealism in the working schemes. He achieved success in them. He believed that nobody could avoid fate. In the event of some mishap he never blamed anyone for that. He believed God wished that way. He took up his work with fresh enthusiasm and made determined efforts to achieve success.

A couple of unpleasant events cross the mind and make a deep impact. The first was in 1950 when we lived with Mr. Navalbhai Firodia at his home in Ahmednagar. News was broken at night that the godown in Sakarwadi had caught fire. Adha listened to the news and gave instructions to the executives for necessary action. He was fast asleep after half an hour. He

said, 'It is God's wish.' He respectfully bowed down before God and resumed his routine work.

The second incident was more violent and destructive. This incident arose in connection with Maharashtra and Karnataka border dispute on 13th December 1973. It was the time when the slogan 'Maharashtra should be formed inclusive of Belgaum and Nipani' reverberated throughout Maharashtra. This incident took place in our Sameerwadi sugar factory in newly formed Mudhol Tehsil in Karnataka (96 km away from Belgaum and Miraj). An angry mob of about three hundred persons shouting slogans 'Drive out the Marathi people from here' set fire to Sameerwadi factory, entire stores, vehicles, tractors and other things. The whole factory was shut down. The loss estimated was to the tune of several crores of rupees (10 million = 1 crore) and people believed that it would take at least a couple of years to resume working of the factory. All were dismayed. Mr. Kavadia, the executive officer of the Mumbai office was then at Sakarwadi. He went back to Mumbai; met Adha and cried loudly in an uncontrolled manner. Adha calmed him down and said, "You should not lose hope. Presume that there was an earthquake. Can you stop it?" He then told him to take rest for a day and start working for restoring the factory to its former state. Those 'doubting Thomases' who had predicted in a gloomy mood that the factory could not be put in operation for at least two or three years were proved wrong. It started functioning from 16th January 1974, that is, after 33 days only! This is an enlightening illustration of the victory of the man who accepted all happenings. He marched ahead with grit and confidence to annihilate disappointment and failure and clear the hurdles.

It was Adha's peculiarity to be always engaged in work. He also used to keep those in his contact also busy with work. His motto was 'Move on and on'. He believed and told others that the fortune of those who are asleep, also sleeps but it shines brilliantly on those who are moving. This is an age of happiness and virtue for those who are on their feet and move on; it is the age of darkness and vice for those who are lazy and sleep at the time of work. Movement is life and that is the way to progress. The powerful manly virtues make the fate favourable to man. Fate is everything but those who helplessly rely on fate lose everything. Fate does not favour without the application of manly virtues and efforts. Progress cannot be achieved by dreaming. Adha was a living example of industry, adventure, courage,

strength, power and sense of gratitude in action. The culmination point of all these qualities was his firm trust in God.

Another feature of his highly successful life was humanism – the service to humanity. Gandhiji's doctrine that the service to the poor and the downtrodden is the real service to God, was assimilated by Adha in his personality. There is no higher religion than the service to humanity. His whole life symbolized the doctrine. He used to follow this creed repeatedly. During his roaming about the country he had witnessed the condition of his countrymen. He saw how the tender lives of the people in the hilly forest areas were devastated due to absence of sympathy and humanitarian approach. 'The Tribal Welfare Society' was created as a result of that. Adha extended his helping hand to those backward people struggling to and eager to go with the people of other parts of the country more fortunate than they. He graciously lent support to the cloth-less children and penniless men and women. He accepted the good practices and virtues from other faiths and employed them for the upliftment of the downtrodden. Inspired by the medical camps organized by the Mafatlal Group under the guidance of Venerable Sri Ranchhodlal Maharaj, Adha set up similar medical camps. All will permanently remember his humanitarian activities in this particular area performed by him during the last two decades.

The Tribal Upliftment Centre, Hospital, Training School, Cow-shelter symbolize his intense humanism. These are situated at Nareshwadi in Dahanu Tehsil in Maharashtra for the socially backward and downtrodden residents of forest and hilly regions. The patients admitted to the hospital there can avail themselves of the benefit of diagnosis by specialist and expert doctors from Mumbai in the medical camps organised there. The most memorable contribution of Adha is his development work in Kutch, the cow-shelters started for the famine-stricken cows in Kutch; the water-project in Kutch with the help of the Government of Gujarat, the bore-well projects, medical camp in Kukama, the guest-house at Kutch; Narayan Tirth lake, Charitable works at Mata Madha and many other philanthropic works. The medical camp at Kukama was considered as the most ideal. The Government of Gujarat had certified the cattle-compound built up by the Somaiya Trust during the devastating drought as one of the best cattle-compounds. He followed the doctrine, "Service to humanity is service to God" faithfully and made it a part of his daily life.

A Vedic chant had made a deep impact on his mind. 'Ma gradhh ha Kasyachit dharam?' (Do not appropriate the wealth you acquire in society). Give to the society the property you get from the society. The sound of these words was echoing through all the activities he undertook. He asked himself the question, 'Whose wealth is it after all?' He used to say if the wealth of the rich, the knowledge of the learned and the strength of the strong if not utilized for the upliftment of the society is a meaningless wast. He founded the 'K. J. Somaiya Trust' in 1951 and 'Somaiya Trust' in 1955. He was contemplating on how to attract and associate others in fields of education and health service. He was fully supported by his pious wife, Mrs. Sakarben, who identified herself whole-heartedly with his interests.

The foundation of the 'Somaiya Trust' brought into existence the unique Somaiya Vidyavihar project. Today the Vidyavihar of Ghatkopar which extends over 60 acres of vast land complex provides space for thirty institutions and twenty-two thousand students. There are institutions which provide instruction from Kinder Garten schools to higher education in colleges. The higher education is not limited to university degrees only as academic pursuits but also it lays down the foundation of health and culture. The making and shaping of the future citizens are undertaken here. The foundation of such institution is evidently the success achieved by Herculean efforts, in concrete form. A verse from the Epic Mahabharata was imbibed by him for guiding his life. The verse says, "I do not crave for kingdom, nor heaven nor rebirth. I however crave for the rooting out misery and sufferings of those poor, miserable and neglected people.' He drew up plans to relieve the people from their sufferings. The glowing example for redressing the sufferings of the downtrodden is the Hospital now existing in Vidyavihar with 700 beds which provides free treatment to the poor. Also he built the Medical College Research Centre, Nursing School and other bodies without taking any financial assistance from others. This is an outstanding feature of his personality.

Venerable Adha was a self-made man. He made great strides and gave a the highest place to service to other people. He showed utmost sympathy and affection towards his people in every field of his activity. Everybody might be remembering the explosion in the Mumbai docks in 1944. His community living in Vadagadi was hit hard by the explosion. At that time he came out to help his people along with other people. He maintained

passionless and selfless attitude even after wealth and prosperity were at his doors. He put his wealth for the social welfare and public good rationally and with modesty. His life was directed by some special ideals 'Look high! The objective should be towards high and perfect things. Always gaze at a star!' He used to plan in a big way. At times he used to draw up plans beyond his scope. Those who worked with him were many a time completely baffled. They used to say, 'How is this possible?' He used to express his faith in God and moved on. So the late Mr. M. Menezis, former Chairman of the Railway board and a high ranking civil servant who participated in the work of the Somaiya Trust would always say, 'I would often wonder how the project Shri K. J. Somaiya suggested could be done. But the old man was always proved right!' We were also riddled about the feasibility of the projects. Adha had complete trust in God. He was an affectionate family man. He used to get joy in the company of children with his childlike innocence and mixing with them on equal terms.

What he had written in December 1961, that is 38 years before now, to be read out as statement after his death, fully expresses his thoughts, sentiments and gratitude to God. The statement reads:

"I neither wish nor aspire for anything now. God has showered his blessings and boons on me. He had given me happiness without asking for them. How can I then feel unhappy? Why should I feel sad about anything?"

In another page of the diary dated December 1961, he writes, "I used to struggle in a dark room, imagining things, making calculations and drawing up plans. I had no means nor opportunities for any venture. However God took timely notice of all my needs. I went on accepting bills of exchange. My dreams began to take concrete form. I had absolutely nothing with me, only His Gracious favour was with me. All this new structure arose out of His favour. Why should I not feel joyous when Gracious Lord has created this favourable condition?"

Adha used to talk about God's limitless kindness and compassion. He used to pray for His mercy and thank Him. His favourite prayer – song was 'Oh kind Lord (Hey Karunakara)'. He used to make all the family members sing the prayer and used to sing it himself also.

The right union of wealth (shree) and learning (sarasvati) was evident in his life. He was strict in discipline, eager to observe the right conduct, ready

to defend basic principles and values. These were the bright aspects of his life. The confluence of the highly desirable virtues like honesty, adventure and duty-consciousness mark the splendid career of Adha. It was a confluence and success of those virtues in operation. He lived his long life in a brilliant manner. In Mr. Haribhai Kothari's words, "He was a wonderful man of the wonderful soil!" I salute my venerable father a thousand times!



**Father the Vast Banyan Tree of Love and Affection
– Our Adha**

by
Mrs. Leelaben Kotak

I could never imagine that I had to give vent to my anguish at the loss of my parents in the form of 'a daughter's letter', a lament like this. This is a heart rending awareness:

"I cannot make out anything
Nobody can console me or explain to me.
This pierces the heart!
Today you are not among us,
You had given that to the heart
You were comfort to the mind
You were also support to the inner soul
I feel the world empty without my parents!

Venerable Adha (Shri Karamshibhai Jethabhai Somaiya)

"You lived your life actionful as your name (Karamshi) connotes. You prayed to God:

"I do not crave for kingdom nor heaven nor rebirth, I pray that I could mitigate the sufferings of the distressed and the downtrodden."

You had always followed in your life the teachings contained in the aforesaid verse of Bhagavat Gita by Lord Krishna.

Hardly four years elapsed when mother left us and now father also went to meet her in heaven. When mother passed away father had said at that time, 'I only know what she was to me.' His mind was tormented by the memory of my mother till the last moment of his life. He used to say, "It is rare to get a wife possessing the six qualities as a secretary at work, slave like at service, mother like at meals, enchanting beauty in bed, highly religious and forgiving like mother earth."

Really our mother personified all the six qualities laid down for an ideal wife in the ancient literature. They were complementary to each other. They led a harmonious life by sympathetically understanding each other. Mother always extended her help to my father with a sense of joy. There was mutual co-operation. Our mother was also liberal in her views. She could never bear the sight of the sufferings of other people. She had personally served some of the affected and the unfortunate. She had quietly given monetary help to so many people. She had many deemed daughters besides her seven daughters. She had endeavoured to find suitable matches for them and later on arranged their marriages and bore the expenses for their marriages also. She did not make much of her altruism and never allowed publicity to the charities she made in secrecy.

A recent incident illustrates her silent-kindness more loudly. A lady came to me one day crying as her second daughter was getting married. She said, "I had called on your mother when my first daughter was getting married. She asked me to meet her after two days. When I met her after two days, she handed over a bag to me. It contained a saree, sacred chain containing beads (Mangalsutra), a nose ring and bangles – all the wedding wares for the bride. I was not required to buy anything." My mother kept such articles in her cupboard. Nobody who sought any assistance from her went empty handed.

Adha travelled within the country and also overseas along with my mother and all the other members of our family. Only in the year 1958 he could not go with us to Kailas lake as he was down with joint pain and the medical help could not be available there. He had to stay back. He however promised my mother that he would meet her at the Joshi-monastery (Joshi-math). In order to allay the fears and anxieties of my mother and with an intention to proceed to sacred four-abodes (Char Dham) after about a month and a half he came with the help of travelling porters through inaccessible mountain ranges and reached in time. He made the subsequent journey along with

fifty members of our family. He bravely faced the obstacles that came in the way even in that physical condition. His mental attitude during difficulties and emergencies was stable. He used to get up and go out at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning. My mother used to get him the flat-bread (Paratha) and a jaggery cake (Gulpapdi) prepared. She took great pleasure in preparing and serving eatables to others as a hobby. She used to serve eatables with repeated requests to taste what she prepared. People used to call her catering deity (Annapurna). If she came to know a delivery of a child was due in some neighbouring house she used to dispatch sweet balls with dry fruit pieces stuck to them (Pista-Ladoo) as a tonic for the lady who was delivered of a baby. She was expert in making sweet dishes.

Adha never used to consume outside food so she used to take care of what he relished and what was good for his health. When Adha used to go out for work she used to see him off by going out of the house unmindful of her poor health. Adha also used to pay attention to her well being in every respect. Adha used to get upset and nervous when mother was not well. He used to cancel his programmes if necessary. He remembered her till his last breath. We children – sisters and brother – grew up together. Shantilal was eldest among us. We were seven sisters, our uncle, father's sister (aunt) and her daughters and Adha's partner's son and Kasturiben grew up together. The family attachment sprang up from mutual trust, confidence and satisfaction which were the ideals. We had never in our lifetime heard our parents talking to each other in raised voices. They talked to each other with a sense of understanding and a cultured discipline in their conversation. They possessed qualities symbolised by their names. Sakar (sugar) Karam (action – work) when these combine the good work was the obvious outcome.

Venerable Adha established 32 institutions in 32 years in Mumbai. He has also started other educational institutions outside Mumbai. They represent his untiring efforts, readiness and complete absorption and discipline in every work. He was very keen on both. He never compromised on those two requirements. He insisted that every work must be performed excellently. He was a good judge of people. He was determined to implement his decisions immediately and that the day's work must be completed during the day only. This was his approach to work. Even after keeping late hours at night he always got up at 6 o'clock in the morning. Sometimes he used to go to bed very late but used to get up before daybreak.

When in 1960 the Mumbai University granted permission to start Arts & Commerce College, there was not a single house standing on the land of Vidyavihar. The then Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Shri Yashvantrao Chavan, laid the foundation stone of the college building. The college building was ready after only one and a half months. The college started functioning from June 1960. The land was marshy and had to be reclaimed by developing it by adding several feet of soil, stones and other material. After working for day and night and with determination the college could start well in time. Adha used to visit the place twice a day when eager spectators and friends used to ask when the college would start. Adha during his visit to the site never drank a drop of water there. As the land belonged to the Trust, it was dedicated to the Trust. He had not accepted any financial assistance from outside. It was a unique creation out of scratch – a world was created out of nothing. The buildings with solid and strong foundation could be constructed because Adha personally used to decide the prices, place the necessary orders and handle other related transactions. In the same way the building of the Hospital was also ready in lesser time. Some praised the work and remarked, 'It must find a place in the Guinness Book of records. Adha always treated it as a God's wish.

After accomplishing such extra-ordinary feats of success Adha did not boast about it or claimed doership with any show of pride. He disliked any honour. He used to work in an easy manner and make others also work in the same way. There was no fuss or show or an air of doing something high and important. It was like routine work.

He had implicit trust in God and His Grace. A gentleman closely in contact with Adha used to say, "I wonder how this man with hardly any balance in the bank could talk about projects involving several crores of rupees? None of his work remained incomplete for lack of funds. He received money in times of difficulties. He used to say that no work should suffer for lack of funds. God had helped him many times. Adha used to narrate those instances. He fully believed the saying 'God helps those who help themselves'. He had made this saying operational in his life.

Just as he had ample faith in duty, he also entertained love and affection for children. At the commencement of rainy season he used to go out to be drenched by the first showers. He used to walk upto Ghodbunder for enjoying the love and beauty of nature. We all used to go about together

during the Ganesh and Navaratri festivals for the holy view of deities. In case guests were expected at home, Adha used to get the entrances decorated with colourful designs put on the floors (Rangoli) and also arranged earthen containers of flowering plants and many other kinds of attractive displays. He never allowed children to idle about. He used to keep us busy in swimming, music, drawing, painting, learning Sanskrit, tailoring work, embroidery and such other works. He used to urge us to play, dance, frisk and frolic about move here and there but not to idle away time. He made us stage dramas and enjoyed witnessing our acting skills. His love towards us would last throughout our lives. He was distressed by our unsatisfactory progress in academic matters. By God's Grace we all children showed satisfactory progress in education.

Adha was a staunch family-man. He had travelled many places in the company of the family. He loved his brother and sisters. Our aunt, his sister in her advanced age also played colours on festive occasions like Holi. Adha looked at all with love and affection. He emphasized self-help although we had many servants and attendants. He used to carry out his own personal work and insisted that others also do the same.

The public at large is highly benefited and enlightened by the series of religious and other kind of discourses started by Adha some ten years ago. He organised senior citizens' programmes for elderly people on every 26th January that is India's Republic Day. In the programmes organised on that day senior citizens express their views and feelings freely. We used to accompany our parents from our early age to visit slum areas and understand the sufferings of the poor people in the community and helped the needy. Many of the slum dwellers of the community have been given free houses by Adha but without any publicity.

In 1961, in the Will to be read after his death he had mentioned thus:

"Never miss an opportunity to help the living. He further writes 'I was carrying on work without any means and in unfavourable condition in a room full of darkness. But God noticed this in time. I was accepting bills of exchange. My day-dreams acquired concrete form. I had nothing at all but I had Grace of God Almighty. All that came into my possession was by the kind favour of God. In such happy circumstances why should I have not the experience of joy of the soul, the bliss?'"

What a gratitude towards the Creator, God Almighty, when nowadays the tendency to blame Fate is growing among people. He was not a man of letters but his writing is not a whit less in calibre than that of an accomplished writer. He could not unfortunately take his matriculation examination. However he was a topper in the school. He used to score 100 marks out of 100 in Mathematics. He had mastery over Kutchi, Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi, English and Marwari languages. He spoke these languages fluently so the listener would think he was speaking his own language. He was proficient in Sanskrit also.

We had looked at that dark room about which he noted in his diary. It was a small room measuring 6' x 8'. My mother used to say the room could be shut only when father in a sleeping position at night drew up his legs upto his stomach. How magnificent ideas could spring up in such a narrow space!

God gave him what he had asked for – we all have a fair idea of what work he did. After experiencing some strain and tension he firmly decided that he would not serve anywhere. God listened to his resolve and the sugar factory started. God helped him to make progress gradually. There was faith in God and conception of viable projects from the beginning. He spread new knowledge about agriculture to the farmers after undertaking new experiments. Only recently some gardeners and orchard owners called on him. They admitted, “We were completely frustrated. In our sugarcane fields we could hardly grow around twenty tons of sugarcane per acre. But Adha’s guidance proved to be revolutionary. Now we grow more than 110 tons of sugarcane in the same area!”

The Godavari Sugar Mills Company farm had already established world record in sugarcane production. This was possible because of him only. This was put up on the record of all sugarcane producing countries. Adha also helped the top producers of sugarcane nations like, Hawaii, Indonesia and Cuba to increase the yield of sugarcane per acre. I remember our former Union Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Annasaheb Shinde had once said, “The contribution of Mr. Karamshi Somaiya is very outstanding in the revolutionary production of sugarcane in Maharashtra and the whole of India.”

Mr. Vasantdada Patil, the former Chief Minister of Maharashtra had eulogized Karamshibhai Somaiya as a high profile educationist (Shikshan-

Maharshi) in one of his addresses. While being interviewed at the Vidyavihar Complex, he observed Somaiya Vidyavihar should get the status of a University!

There are 22 thousand students studying in the Somaiya Vidyavihar Campus at present. Adha underlined the principle that our students should be shaped by Indian Culture and should be high in moral character. He was an ardent lover of Sanskrit language. He was struggling hard to see that the new generation is not deprived of the study of the mother of Indian languages. He was an avowed Gandhian nationalist. He accepted Khadi and wore Khadi throughout his life. He continued holding national programmes in the Vidyavihar complex to generate national spirit among the students.

There is Sanskriti-Vihar (Cultural courses) area near the Vidyavihar complex. Several plans are underway there for the development of Indian Culture. The foundation of the proposed temple has been laid out. However it would take some more time for giving proper shape to the project.

A free Hospital with 700 beds has been opened for health care in the Somaiya Ayurvihar Complex. While appointing Dean of the Hospital and its Chief medical officer it was stipulated that the patients should be treated with kindness and efforts should be made to understand the difficulties and the sufferings of the sick. Adha had expressed a wish in his Will that the visitors to the patient should not be denied permission to meet the patient especially to the relatives of the patient. The relatives may be allowed in the I.C.U. (Intensive Care Unit) if the patient desires to meet them. A friend of Adha was on his death-bed. He had expressed the wish to meet Adha but the doctors there denied him the permission. The friend died and his memory rankled in the heart of Adha for good. He wondered why doctors do not show humanity to the man on the death-bed? Adha used to visit the Harkisandas Hospital, the Bhatia Hospital and Bombay Hospital before the establishment of Somaiya Ayurvihar Hospital. He used to visit those Hospitals to meet the patients and talk to them.

The medical camps organized by the Tribal Reform Society are well known. Adha insisted on holding medical camps in such places which are away from a railway station at a distance of 20 to 25 kilometers at least. The person living near the villages with a population of two to three thousand could also avail themselves of the benefit of those medical camps. Medical

doctors from Mumbai, numbering about a hundred, volunteered their services at the camps for four weeks. Such medical camps brought a new enthusiasm among the villagers. Prayers and precepts in the early morning, singing praise of God, community dinner, medical treatment during the day, the inspection of the patients, the accommodation of the relatives coming with the patients and the transport facilities stirred up the place of the camp with ever new programmes and filled it with refreshing new experiences.

The first medical camp was held in the District of Nasik in Maharashtra in January 1975. The last camp was held in Kukama village in Kutch District of Gujarat in January 1981. During those years the places covered in India were Surgana in Maharashtra, Shamlaji in Gujarat, Bagidora in Rajasthan, Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh, J.K.Pur in Orissa, Mesha in Bihar and Kukama in Adha's native land Kutch. Venerable Adha was busy making preparations for the camps for months on end. He personally supervised the arrangements being made by standing at the sites and then directing the activities in the camp. He carried the patients on the stretchers himself. He used to say, "Service to humanity is service to God."

The world-famous surgeons not available to the patients in the cities were actually performing surgeries at these medical camps. This itself was a thing of great pride. Many complicated cases of surgeries were being examined and handled in the camps. I cite only one example:

Some of the doctors who were attending the medical camp happened to see a very lean woman with a big bulging stomach. When inquired by the doctors she simply said that she was pregnant for the past two and a half years. She could not be delivered of the child. All the doctors were simply astonished. She was called to the medical camp. Dr. Purandhare diagnosed the disease and she was operated. The doctors removed a solid ball of tissues weighing 25 kilos from the woman's body who weighted 50 kilos with it. The woman was kept under medical treatment even after the end of the camp for one more month.

The patients at the camps may not have the least idea that they were receiving medical treatment at the hands of world-famous surgeons. Some of the doctors were: Dr. B. N. Purandare, Dr. S. M. Merchant, Dr. J. S. Mahashabde, Dr. Mukund Parikh, Dr. Sudhir Joshi etc. The camps were inaugurated by the former Prime Minister, Mr. Charansingh, and attended

by the former Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Mr. Haridev Joshi, and other dignitaries. The camps were graced by venerable Ravishankar Dada, Dr. Doshikaka, Yogacharya the venerable Omanandaji and other holy personalities. The Government of India issued a strong circular that those admitted to the camps must necessarily belong to the backward communities (not Brahmins, Patels, merchants etc.). This was unworkable and the camp had to be shut down as the government was not granting land and water facilities.

The Tribal Reform Society conducts the local programmes of the tribal people in Nareshwadi in Dahanu tribal areas of Maharashtra. At Dahanu there is a hospital, a school, a training centre, an agricultural training school for 300 tribal students. Also cow-shelters are provided. How differently than this can humanism be experienced and illustrated?

Adha rendered yeoman service during the drought in Kutch especially to the cattle dying of hunger and thirst. The government of Gujarat declared Kutch animal-shelter as the best animal-shelter and awarded a certificate of excellence for that. The Medical camp held at Kukama in Kutch was attended by His Excellency the High Commissioner of the United Kingdom. He was very much pleased with the camp and commended that similar camps must be held in foreign countries. Adha organized so many medical camps. He built guest houses and did so much for social welfare. He travelled to all the holy places of the country. He worked out policies and programmes for the upliftment of the backward people in the country.

When he wrote his Will when he was 58, he was aware that his father and cousins were ageing. He was also conscious that he was also getting old. He writes, "Whatever good things were performed were with my own initiative. I have to go a long distance to experience the direct or indirect known and unknown effects of my work by mind, speech and action. Just as you had taken all care to facilitate my journey to Man-sarovar (Man-Lake) in the same way make all preparations for my other journey (to the other world). That will give peace to all and to me positively."

In the pursuit of the great doctrine of Jainism asking to be forgiven, he writes, "I beg forgiveness from all those whom I treated unjustly, hurt their feelings or spoken wickedly or committed offences of this nature. I once again seek forgiveness and bid you all farewell!"

I think now I do not long for anything or expect anything. The Gracious God has given me every thing liberally. He also gave me happiness which I asked for. Then if he summons me now why should I be sad to leave this body? Why should I grieve? What remains for me to ask for?

His writings contain the essence of his life. He concludes the Will with these words: "If you meet any person or communicate with any person, ask him to forgive me for my mistakes, for rude behaviour, bad manners, ill-treatment or damage caused, misbehaviour, misunderstanding or any direct or indirect offences caused to him or any suffering he had to undergo because of my actions. Tell all those people that I seek forgiveness from them with a pure heart.

He has mentioned with satisfaction that he was fortunate to have highly cultured relatives, son-in-law, friends and near and distant relatives.

Really Adha lived a perfect life. Before his death he had said, "I am very happy and full of joy!"

The spiritual power of venerable Adha was shaped and developed through his contacts with the holy men like Dongreji Maharaj, Pandurangshastri, Pundit Tadrupanandaji, Bandhu Triputi, Moraribapu, Gangeshwaranandaji, Pramukh Swami and prayers precepts and religious discourses. He also observed self-discipline and observed non-speaking day fully fasting on that day.

He had implicit faith in the holy men like Swami Anand Moraribapu, Shankaracharya, Kedarnath, RaviShankar Dada, Dalai Lama and other saintly persons. He fully believed in the power of his family or clan deity. Whenever he used to visit Kutch he without fail worshipped 'Achukata' goddess by going to that temple.

Prayer was an integral part of Adha's life. Prayers were held at home and also at places away from home, group prayers, songs in praise of Lord Ram and reading aloud the selected portions of sacred books and such sacred programmes of self-elevation were arranged. This had become a regular evening feature. A prayer book was printed for use at the weekly prayer-day. The medical camps were held throughout the country. There the patients were first taken to the temple and prayers were offered. Then the patient received treatment. When the patient after treatment was being sent home he was asked to take the oath that he will never be an alcoholic addict or

contract any evil habits in life. These two things were considered as his outward dress and inner food. As a result of such strict discipline the members of the Somaiya family did not know how tea tastes.

We were born to such saintly, pure, faithful, courageous, brave, God-fearing, generous, highly cultured parents. We were truly fortunate. Now we are without their kind protection. You can never get the protecting cover the cool, comforting shed of their existence as you get from your parents. Adha's face used to light up at the sight of children. A playful man, with a penetrating eye, sharp-witted and tender at heart was always happy in the company of children. The kitchen was always open to all. The care was taken that nobody should go without food. Only a few days ago a few members of the 'Su-ruchi' arrived at about 10.30 at night. They were dozing and wished to sleep. They were served with light refreshments. They got up at about 12 o'clock at night. I went to Adha's room to meet him. He asked me, 'Have they all eaten their supper?' I replied, "We served them refreshments." Adha immediately asked me, "What do you see in front of you?" I said, 'a clock'. He said, "What is the time by that clock?" I said, "It is 12 o'clock!" He firmly said, "Is this the time for refreshments? Go downstairs and arrange for their supper!"

Not even a small thing escaped his inquiring eye. He never liked any member of the family coming home late after 7 p.m. He used to keep awake if anybody was late and went to sleep after the member came home. He was displeased if there was any delay in the routine work at home. He did not comment but there was something sublime in his personality. His silence and inquiring eyes performed the work of angry words more effectively. Such was his discipline.

Adha hated lies and falsehood from his heart. He never could tolerate misbehaviour and dishonesty. Such persons lost his esteem. He did not like criticism of others or any slander. When such things were being discussed he used to change the topic. A few days ago such a thing took place. Adha was silent and I had the feeling that I missed something. I asked Adha, "Why are you keeping mum? Why don't you talk? Are you out of mood?" He immediately said, "Well! How come that I would not talk to you? Even if God were to come, I would speak to you first and then I would talk to Him." This statement overwhelmed me. I see his face in front of me while I am writing this and my eyes get filled with tears. Somebody wrote to me,

“A verily orphaned Leelaben without Adha. One can imagine fish without water but Leelaben without Adha is nothing. One has to accept the signals and decisions of the Divine Power with a heart crushed by the heavy weight of sorrow. Adha used to ‘see’ me in the form of his mother. I also used to move my hand on his head and cheeks. Only recently Moraribapu had published a book with a title ‘Daughter an Ocean of Love’. I asked Moraribapu ‘Is daughter the ocean of love or the parents are an ocean of love?’

If Adha were to find my face slightly drawn he used to ask me ‘Haven’t you taken your meals? Are you not well?’ Sometime back I had a headache. When he learnt about it he came to see me disregarding his discomforts of old age. Who can show me such a care and love hereafter?

Venerable Adha had told me what he felt about my mother. I only knew it. I would also say in the same way, “We only know what Adha was for us. God favoured us with such parents. We pray to God that we wish to become like him. God should make us able to deserve such parents. May God remove the deficiencies in us and grant us power and intelligence to follow in his footsteps to reach the high ideals.

Many have referred to the unique personality of Adha. I have placed a few words and my thoughts about an epoch-making outsize personality. He reached the pinnacle of prosperity by the dint of his efforts but the foundation of his life was on simplicity. Disinterestedness in wordly affairs, an intense interest in social welfare and the higher precepts of humanity as a doctrine, its practice and observance would inspire you all. My only prayer to God is that He should make us worthy of his kindness and affection.

We are grateful to the messages of condolence sent to us by relatives, friends, the Holy personalities and others in the great loss and misfortune that has befallen us.

Lastly with tearful eyes we pay homage to Adha a million times.

Dear mother-father we utter the few words echoing in our hearts and with tearful eyes we offer the flowers of homage to both of you.



Venerable Karamshi Somaiya
Industrialist, Humanist and a Visionary

By
P. M. Kavadia

Venerable Karamshi Jethabhai Somaiya is no more among us. The man who completed nearly a century of his age by his brilliant, selfless, philanthropical and inspiring style of life left us and went to his Eternal Home on 9th May 1999.

Six Decades of Association

It was a great fortune to have lived during the period when Somaiya Sheth flourished. It was a rare opportunity to have been associated with this great man in the capacity of an active worker and an associate for nearly six decades. I received his constant blessings in the course of my life. The reality is that he became the architect of my life. It was because of him that I was inspired in life and achieved brilliant success.

No religion is greater than man and humanism was his firm belief and the statement from the scripture that you should not appropriate to yourself what belongs to the society. These were the guiding principles he always kept in view like the Pole-star. He acted accordingly. He had accepted Swami Vivekanand, Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Dayanand Saraswati and other saintly people as his ideal men for guiding the course of his life right from his childhood. He had assimilated their teachings and laid his trust in the philosophy that no religion is greater than man and humanism. He followed it assiduously.

A Liberal Industrialist

Venerable Karamshi Somaiya was a representative of a liberal, cultured class of businessmen and industrialists of his time. This class of businessmen and liberal industrialists served their Motherland and gave it dignity and prestige. They made the nation great and made heavy investments in the social welfare projects to redeem their social debt.

Venerable Somaiya followed in the footsteps of the industrialists like Tata, Birla, Walchand, Bajaj and others and made spectacular progress. These liberal and cultured public spirited families of industrialists have benefited the common people immensely by their contribution with a foresight. Venerable Somaiya Shetji nurtured the same with a forward looking attitude.

A network of Social Institutions and Different Aspects

Venerable Karamshi Somaiya created a network of social institutions in the fields of education and health. He set up medical centres in far-flung states for the residents of hilly and forest regions. The two great institutions established by him are Vidyavihar and Ayurvihar. In 1987-88 a disastrous drought occurred in Kutch. He came forward to help the victims of the drought in their relief and rehabilitation work. He gave a concrete form to several projects to preserve ancient Indian traditions and cultural heritage through the agency of 'Sanskriti Vihar' (Cultural activities). These Trusts and Social Institutions are the permanent and everlasting memorials of venerable Karamshi Somaiya. Somaiya Sheth is not bodily present with us but the social institutions that he has left behind would inspire us all and the future generations to work for the social welfare of the country.

A Fortunate Self-made man

Karamshi Somaiya was born on 16th May 1902 at Malunja in Ahmednagar district which was in the past known as a famine stricken region. In his early career when there was hardly any means to earn daily bread, Karamshi undeterred by the formidable conditions by dint of his hard work, rose to prosperity. Entrenched on the solid foundations of the qualities like patience, toleration, trust in God and readiness for hard work Karamshi Somaiya built up an industrial empire for all to see, within a space of forty to fifty years.

His actual field of work lay in sugar factories, industrial alcohol, chemicals but he regularly spent for social welfare while accumulating wealth from the above sources without any compromise with the moral values in life. This itself was a great feat of austerity.

This is not the time to furnish a detailed account of how venerable Karamshi made great strides in business and industry also. This not the place for such information. We can only say this much that he carried out his business with full business integrity. He gained reputation. His consultation and direction in sugar trade was regarded as of great value. He used to receive communications from all corners of the country seeking his guidance confidentially on matters relating to industries. He carried out the noble work of giving proper advice and direction to those who sought his advice till the end of his life.

Transformation of the District of Ahmednagar

Somaiya set up his sugar factories in Ahmednagar District of Maharashtra and initiated a complete transformation of the District. Within a period of 25 years in the decade 1950-60, the mechanized sugarcane agriculture of the Godavari Sugar Mills and the quality of sugar production of the Godavari sugar Mills won international reputation. Sugar of an international class was being produced in Ahmednagar district. The Godavari Mills, agriculture was being selected to make agricultural demonstrations for pilot projects to be undertaken in the whole district. An arid, desert land was transformed into a beautiful green agricultural land.

In the All-India Sugarcane Producers Conference held at Delhi on 26/4/1966, the then minister of State for Agriculture of the Union Government, Mr. Annasaheb Shinde, while addressing the conference said, "The leadership for forward movement in the production of sugarcane by Mr. K. J. Somaiya and the agricultural technicians at the Godavari Sugar Mills shall always remain fresh in our memory.

This is to point out a small aspect of the contribution that Somaiya had made in the vast astonishing and important work of industrial development.

Do Not Get Discouraged. Be Loyal to Your Creed

The dynamic life of Karamshi Somaiya is in itself a direct measure of resolving to act according to the principles and doctrines and implementing them is more important than merely preaching them and propagating them through speeches. The principles that he adopted, he displayed them in his actual conduct. The foundation of his success is based on the principled conduct of his affairs. Those main principles were:

1. Never get discouraged. Do not worry about what will happen in future.
2. Do not waste time. The work that you have taken in hand, do it with enthusiasm.
3. Always stick to your principles.

Two Personal Experiences

I shall mention two of my personal experiences that highlight his pleasant and stimulating personality and his staunch adherence to principles.

1. **Do not get discouraged. Take a day's rest and work in full swing from tomorrow.**

One day in the morning rather early, I stood before him dejected in mind, exhausted and on the point of crying. It was 14th December 1973. A day before that I had returned from Sameerwadi. I had already apprised him of what had taken place at Sameerwadi on telephone. I wanted to tell him that by personally meeting him.

There was agitation in the Belgaum-Miraj region on account of border disputes. Exploiting the situation, the antisocial elements from Mudhol-Jamkhandi area attacked our Sameerwadi Factory. They set fire to the surroundings, ravaged colonies, ransacked godowns and destroyed vehicles. The whole Sameerwadi area was laid waste by pillage. Not a single nut or bolt remained in the stores and not a sack in the godown. The precincts of the industrial factory once pulsating with industrial activities was turned into a wartime scorched land within hours. Fortunately the hooligans could not enter the factory. So, the main crushing, straining, machinery remained in tact. As the rioting was going on outside the factory, the police were informed and a police squad arrived at the site. The hooligans ran away.

This event had shocked me. An investment to the tune of 70 million

(7 crore) rupees was gone waste. I was completely flabbergasted and was afraid to face venerable Karamshi Somaiya. No human being, not even a creature was visible in the compound of the factory. The visitors to the ravaged site, grimly estimated that it would take at least three years for the factory to resume its functioning as before.

Venerable Somaiya eyed me with an elderly and sympathetic attitude. It seemed he wanted to comfort me before I gave an explanation of the episode. In a moment, a beam of hope lighted up his face. He said, "Kavadia do not despair of the happenings. Think for a moment there was an earthquake and all was laid waste" and he said, "Now go home, rest for a day and from tomorrow onwards start with full enthusiasm to restart the factory."

The fearful event of the riot, plunder and burning of property took place on the fateful day of 13th December 1973. After a lapse of 33 days on 16th January 1974, after mobilizing all resources the factory resumed its functioning afresh. Dr. S. K. Somaiya accomplished the rehabilitation and resumption of the factory under the able and inspiring guidance of Venerable K. J. Somaiya. This was a sort of miracle in this field.

The resumption of the factory was inaugurated by Shri Mohanlalji Sukhadia, the Non-acting Governor of Karnataka. He could not believe that a rapid progress was made so as to resume the work of the factory in a space of 33 days. The Deputy Commissioner of the concerned department was sent to verify whether the factory at Sameerwadi was really capable of production after the recent disaster. Only after verification by the officer, the Honourable acting Governor of Karnataka attended the inauguration ceremony.

There were three principles which powered the functioning of all the industrial groups of the Somaiya :

1. Whatever has taken place is by the wish of God and the force of Destiny.
2. Do not get discouraged. Be optimistic.
3. Take up the rehabilitation work with full enthusiasm.

2. Be Loyal to Your Creed

The then Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Mr. Vasantrao Naik, had ordered

the Excise Commissioner to call a meeting of all Directors of the Distillery Companies at the secretariat in 1969. I returned to my office after attending the meeting. I received an urgent message from venerable Somaiya that I should see him immediately for some important work.

The Chief Minister, Mr. Vasant Rao Naik, with a view to stopping the expanding illicit liquor trade had taken a decision to relax the policy of prohibition. He reckoned that if the distilleries were asked to produce country liquor it may be possible to stop illicit liquor and the revenue of the Government would not be affected. Somaiya Organo Chemicals Distillery was a producer of industrial alcohol company. It was not interested in distilling country liquor. The Somaiya Organo Chemical Distillery Company had received invitation along with other distillery companies. I attended that meeting in response to the invitation as Dr. S. K. Somaiya was abroad.

I met venerable Karamshi Somaiya in the evening. He asked me about my whereabouts. I gave him all the details of what happened at the meeting.

He glanced at me once with a stern look and said, "It means you want to distil country liquor in the factory?" I replied at once, "No Sir! I simply attended the meeting."

He said after that, "There was no reason for you to attend that meeting. Your attendance at that meeting may be interpreted as you favour lifting of prohibition in the state. Let other people do what they please to do. We produce only industrial alcohol. Why should we participate in that conference?" After a pause he said, "Always stick to your principles!"

I was defenceless and said, "Yes Sir! I fully agree with you!"

Do Not Crawl. Fly High

Such was Mr. K. J. Somaiya. A highly principled man, clear like a crystal in approach and prepared for hard work to achieve the goal. He used to say that some are impatient to achieve success. Then he used to remark, "Never crawl along. Everyone must have the ambition to soar high in the sky. You need determination."

He used to tell us "Time is money". Just as we say, do not waste money in the same way, do not waste time!

His personality can be described as noble, the excellent symbol of culture, quite an extra ordinary one. He used to behave gently with the young, with the grown ups with understanding, he used to treat with sympathy those who wanted to make progress by genuine efforts and showed compassion to the weak. He was kind at heart. He evinced large-heartedness in every action and at every step of his activity. He was a true symbol of the noble sentiments in the Indian culture as some people say. An ever remembered legend in history.

Gratitude Towards The Almighty

He was always grateful to the Gracious God. Many a time he used to refer to the Chinese saying, "Whenever we drink water from the well, remember the man who sank the well and offer your great silent respects to him." He had unlimited compassion and kindness towards human beings. Every citizen individually is indebted to the society in which he lives. It is the duty of every citizen to redeem that debt. He thought that everyone should discharge his duty as far as possible.

He has noted down in his diary what he thought about life and had instructed that the diary be read after his death. Excerpts from his diary – two paragraphs are reproduced below:

"At one time I had nothing. I had no means. The circumstances were not favourable. Even then God responded to my wishes. I was building castles in the air. God gave them a concrete form. I had nothing; only I had the support of the blessings of God and with that only, all this work has arisen."

Later he says, "None of my wishes remain unfulfilled. I have no expectations lingering in my mind. God has showered kindness on me. He has given me abundantly without my asking Him for that. I got happiness beyond my expectations. When I shall depart (from this world) what is there left for which they should mourn my death?"

Before I end this article I pray to God on behalf of all, that may venerable Karamshi Somaiya's soul rest in peace and may God lead him to the right path. May all of us receive guidance and direction to do good as an inspiration from the life of this great man.



Impressions and Reflections

By

G. T. Sawant

On translating 'Padmabhushan Karamshi Jethabhai Somaiya Jeevangatha' (by Raja Mangalwedhekar) into English it is natural that a certain kind of mental image is formed. In the absence of a direct contact with the main figure of the biography, my impressions and thoughts about him may not be foolproof. However, the main outline about his life and work is firmly fixed. He is a farmer - industrialist. He had concentrated on sugar selling business in retail, in the beginning and later on set his sights on sugar-cane farming and production of sugar. It was agro-based industry that became the parameter of his business activities. He stuck to his sugar-cane farm and sugar production even when his property in the Sameerwadi factory was laid waste by the hooligans on the pretext of Maharashtra-Karnataka boundary dispute. He did not think of plant and machinery to produce tractors, motor-cars, aircrafts as industrialist like Walchand Hirachand. He could have undertaken co-operative banking business, construction works etc. He remained a farmer-industrialist.

His 15000 acre land and three sugar factories may not appear stupendous but the Vidyavihar, the Ayurvihar and evolution of new techniques and experiments to establish records is simply amazing. His welfare activities for the uplift of the tribals is unique. The real Karamshibhai Somaiya is revealed through the eye-camps and the medical camps organised at several places from time to time. He shines and shines almost as a star among the groups of industrialists and the crowd of co-operative societies.

He was nationalist to the core. The then Defence Minister Mr. Yashwantrao Chavan personally went to Karamshibhai to get some key information on Tibet border matters as Karamshibhai possessed first hand information gathered by him by traversing the whole area on foot.

I focussed my attention on seemingly minor matters but which show the man in true light. His factory watchman prevented his entry into the factory. Karamshibhai did not dismiss him but rewarded him for his strict discipline.

When the executive of the Sameerwadi factory, Mr. P. M. Kavadia, approached him to convey him the tragic news about pillage and destruction, Karamshibhai consoled Mr. Kavadia and said, "Take a day's rest and resume work tomorrow!"

Karamshibhai did not entertain any political ambition but when an Adivasi patient straight away asked him, "Why do you serve us like this? Do you want my vote?" This pierced his heart but he kept quiet.

He was a hard task-master but very kind employer. The labour union leader, Mr. Kishore Pawar, acknowledges his indirect training that he received while negotiating with him. Union leaders know to put forward demands but do not do their home work with comprehension of the accounting side of their proposals.

Karamshibhai had the gift of grasping the essentials of a complicated problem and could take quick and correct decisions. He was a little obstinate in imposing his decisions on others but he had the liberal attitude to admit his errors frankly.

Karamshibhai was a highly religious man. He visited many holy places not alone but with practically all the members of his family. He visited inaccessible places like Amarnath and the Mansarovar in the Himalayas.

Karamshibhai organized religious discourses by saintly persons not only for the city dwellers but also for the rural people in Ahmednagar district; his birth-place and place of work.

He was a highly sensitive man in the matters of national and social service. He was bent upon redeeming the social debt that a man owes to the society.

The motto that he always followed was:-

Karamanye wadhikaraste ma faleshu Kadachan

Ma karmafalaheturbhurma te sangostvakarmani (Gita Chapter II, 47)

Your right is to work only, but never to its fruit. Do not keep the object to enjoy the fruit, let not your attachment be to inaction.

He therefore worked like an ant and possessed wealth as if he were a trustee on behalf of Gracious God!

The name of Shri Karamshibhai Somaiya was reverberating within the precincts of Ghatkopar from the time K. J. Somaiya College of Arts and Science came into existence. It became louder after the construction of Vidyavihar station.

I had an opportunity to see Shri K. J. Somaiya and Dr. Shantilal Somaiya at the seminar organized by Prof. B. P. Dalal, Head of the History Department, K. J. Somaiya College of Arts and Commerce, in Somaiya College Hall. Shri Karamshibhai was past ninety years at that time but his striking resemblance to Late Shri Parasram Parumal, the founder of the present R. K. T. College at Ulhasnagar; aroused my curiosity. I wished to interact with him, know him, hear his success-story. That was not to be. It was only when Dr. Mrs. Sudha Vyas, the Vice-Principal of K. J. Somaiya College and head of the Gujarati Department approached me with Mr. M. H. Upadhyay that matters began to take shape and my wish fructified to some extent.

Mr. M. H. Upadhyay, a former Principal of V. C. Gurukul Gujarati High School, Ghatkopar, happened to be my student at M. A. (History) sometime back. He along with Dr. Mrs. Sudha Vyas proposed that I should take up the work of translating the Marathi biography of Padmabhushan Karamshi Jethabhai Somaiya, written by Raja Mangalwedhekar, into English. They placed the book before me. It is a thick volume containing over 330 pages. The size was a disincentive but the opportunity to know the great man indirectly but correctly was more invigorating. I was confident that I would perform the work successfully.

During World War II two American teachers were teaching us English at the American Presbyterian Mission High School at Vengurla, Dist. Ratnagiri at that time, now a part of Sindhudurg. They had equipped us with the basic training for expressing our thoughts in English. It was developed by further studies in colleges. I had written books in Marathi and English,

mostly text-books for undergraduates, so there was no problem for translating this volume.

The work of translating is really difficult when the writer of the original matter is a literary artist like Raja Mangalwedhekar. It is all right to translate from Marathi into other Indian languages as the social and cultural background more or less is the same. When we have to convey the sense to an English reader of "Warkari" and "Jevanachi Pangat", "Aamchi Bhavande" or "Padasparshani Pawan Zhale", the acrobatics become breathless. You can render the substance nearly so, in English with some painstaking effort but not to your heart's satisfaction.

I have struggled with certain concepts like 'Karmayog' to translate it as 'ethical discipline of work-scheme'; I know it is abstract and may appear far-fetched. This concept of a 'Karmayogi' is easily understood in our country as it is commonly used in all national languages. 'Parampujya', 'Amrit wani' are other concepts.

The Sanskrit aphorisms shown at the beginning of each chapter will enable the readers to grasp the essential features of the topics delineated under different headings.

I have taken every care to make the translation easy for reading, may not be as fascinating as the original Marathi, but nevertheless, satisfactory as is possible within the limits of true translation, not to exaggerate and not to understate or misrepresent.

I thank the K. J. Somaiya trust and Dr. Mrs. Sudha Vyas and all the men from the Book Centre and Publishing House for their co-operation. I wish greater academic achievements would enhance the reputation of the institution and in a way strive towards the goals that Padmabhushan Karamshi Jethabhai Somaiya had cherished as a legacy.

