

DHANYAWAD FRIENDS

a memoir by

Uday Mehta

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*Dr. Uday Mehta, his sister-in-law, elder brother and Dr. Mehta's wife
Com. Pushpa Mehta*

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Foreword

It is indeed a privilege and a difficult task to write the foreword for the autobiography of Dr. Uday Mehta, a renowned academician, great sociologist, known unconventional writer, exceptional thinker and admirable mentor for hundreds of students and activists.

Dr. Mehta was born in a traditional, middle class Brahmin family in Bhavnagar, Saurashtra in 1932. When he joined college in 1950s, he was drawn to radical politics and was influenced by Trotskyist ideology. Gradually he became somewhat skeptical about its ability and competence to lead any mass movement, and his love for practice drew him to the Communist Party. After his graduation in the Arts Faculty, he came to Mumbai to pursue a Master's Degree in Personnel Management from the prestigious Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Deonar. However, he was totally disappointed with the course, as the entire orientation was towards managerial requirement. He was frustrated and he felt that on assuming managerial role, how it would help understand, sympathize and safeguard workers' interests'. Hence he opted for Tribal Welfare Course.

On completion of this course he started his career as a Gazetted officer in the Tribal Development Department, Government of India, New Delhi and after this he worked with the Planning Commission. With his Marxist background and his commitment for the cause of the oppressed, he found this bureaucratic set up very disturbing. He strongly felt the need for much deeper study of the oppressed and to search for solution and to re-examine Marxist approach by further research. He thought of doing research for Ph.D. by focusing on such issues.

He came in contact with the great sociologist and respected scholar Dr. A.R. Desai, a professor at University of Mumbai who mentored him for Ph.D. This was the turning point in his life, this experience widened his perspective and enriched his knowledge about social problems and issues. After his research, he joined the Mithibai College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Vile Parle as a lecturer in the Sociology Department. He also continued to work with the Communist Party and was associated with several workers' movements. During this time he came in contact with Com. Pushpa Mehta and the Trade Union Movement. Com. Pushpa Mehta later became his life partner.

Uday Mehta

After working for 27 years at Mithibai, he retired as the Vice – Principal of the College in 1993. However, he just retired from his job; he continues to work with even greater fervour for the cause of the marginalized. This autobiography is not just a personal account, but traces the changing socio-political situation of the country, in the context of the working class for last more than sixty years. It is also a rich record of historical milestones of various movements and struggles, which he has also personally witnessed. He has worked and contributed immensely in the trade union movements, housing problems of the slum dwellers, communal harmony and youth movement.

I am really thankful to Dr. Uday Mehta for agreeing to pen down his rich experiences of over 60 years at the age of 91 years. He is an excellent academician firmly rooted in the grassroots struggles, committed for social change. It is indeed difficult to give justice to his gigantic work, in this brief foreword, however hard one may try. This entire volume is an outcome of his memories and hence there could be some repetitions and lapses.

I would also like to thank the staff of Eklavya Research and Training Centre, Dhule and the management of Samata Shikshan Sanstha, Pune, Vilas Wagh Memorial Foundation and all those who have contributed in bringing out this volume.

Prof. 

Coordinator

Eklavya Research and Training Centre, Dhule

Samata Shikshan Sanstha

Bhavnagar to Mumbai

It is slightly embarrassing for me for that matter, probably for anyone, to write a biography about one's self. For me, it is certainly quite embarrassing to reflect back on the past and also write about myself. In any case, as some close friends have suggested and they wish that I should document my reflection about my own growth, my young age, and how I was drawn towards the LEFT movement, I decided to write about my journey.

It may sound a little surprising that a young person of hardly seventeen or eighteen years of age had first exposure towards radical ideas and left political politics at a tender age of about sixteen or seventeen and that too coming from a relatively small town, Bhavnagar from Saurashtra. It is also equally surprising that I come from an upper-caste, Nagar Brahman family who consider themselves even superior to Brahmins. My father was quite conscious of his caste, and status and expected strict adherence to caste norms and practices. Not only that he was, even now at the age of ninety, I think it was a terror, very strict about our conduct and expected to be strictly obedient and follow his dictates, was least interested in knowing or understanding our likes or dislikes. He only expected that we would succumb to his strict discipline and follow the routine he prescribed for the family. In such circumstances, my first inclination and warm response to radical ideas was a bit of surprise, probably a sign of revolt against his norms and expectations.

Accidentally but fortunately my first exposure in left politics came from the Trotsky ideology. This in itself was a bit of a surprise in the sense that in the 1900s when I was hardly seventeen, I came in contact with a Trotskyist group, a central committee member and a leading figure in left politics. He belonged to the Bolshevik Leninist Party, an official section of the Fourth International. So at a young age I was exposed to the idea of Stalinist degeneration, Trotsky's exile from Russia, and ultimately his murder through a Stalinist agent in 1940.

In the late forties and early fifties, Trotskyist Party India, known as the Bolshevik Leninist section of the Fourth International, was formed in India, and thus the credit for this formation goes to comrades from Sri Lanka, where Trotskyist movement was quite strong and the party leader

N. M. Perera, as I remember, was the leader of the opposition party in Sri Lanka. They deputed some comrades, especially, as I remember the name Karla Singham and N. M. Perera, his wife Sheela Perera who ultimately settled in Calcutta. Thus, Trotskyist influence in a far corner of Gujarat, Bhavnagar was little surprising. But Ratan Trivedi, who was the leader of the party in Gujarat was intellectually quite sharp and had a sound background of Marxist literature, especially of currents opposed to Stalinism. Thus when I first joined college, our college known as Shamaldas College was known for radical politics. We had strong and staunch communist leaders in our college. Radical politics dominated the student movement in Bhavnagar for several years there in college also. I had just joined college in 1950s, I was drawn to radical politics.

The Communist party had developed roots in Bhavnagar although the Socialist party was fairly strong in Saurashtra and it had captured Municipal Corporation in Mahuana, a well-known town in Saurashtra. Although I was influenced by Trotskyist ideology, somehow I felt that such radical politics was quite sound in theory; in practice, it proved more adventurous and had a very little mass base. In any case, when the masses were still strongly under the influence of the Congress, which actually won independence, through its long struggle and with such luminary leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru had much wider influence and deeper roots among all sections of society. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru indeed was a leader with much richer experience, a much better understanding of Indian history, culture and rich experience of non-violent movement under Mahatma Gandhi's influence. Hence there could be no comparison between Socialist which at last was a part of the freedom struggle, with communist party and its leadership which hardly formed a part of the freedom struggle and the party kept on shifting its position as per the Stalinist dictate.

However, the advantage I had from exposure to Trotskyist leadership was a much deeper and better understanding of the Marxist literature and its principles. Concrete evidence, I could site is that even in such a remote corner of the country, I was familiar with the work of Christopher Caudwell. *Studies in Dying Culture* and further *Studies in Dying Culture*, second Volume, that certainly broadened my vision and understanding, the advantage without attending any lecture I could get good marks and I graduated with distinction, standing first class first in

Sociology in the whole Gujarat University and was awarded state scholarship for further studies for two years.

Although I came under the influence of the Trotskyist leadership and ideology, I had soon become somewhat skeptical about its ability, and competence to lead any mass movement. Any amount of theory would not enable you to take roots in mass movement, forgetting about leading any movement; so I was little disillusioned with their practice.

This love for practice drew me to the Communist Party and its veteran leadership in Bhavnagar. Actually, Bhavnagar's Communist Party leadership provided leadership for the entire state. I was lucky to develop not only political but very close personal relations with the Communist leaders, Subodh Mehta, his wife Neerabhen Patel and Batuk Vora. They were really stalwarts and highly committed to the cause of the movement. I can cite a striking example of this heroic leadership. In Bhavnagar, there were two Textile Mills, owned by well-known industrialists in Bhavnagar. In the fifties they introduced rationalization practice by adopting technology that would lead to the retrenchment of actually one third section of the workers, Subodh Mehta went on a hunger strike, when this event took place I had left Bhavnagar and came down to Bombay for further studies. I had gone to Bhavnagar during the vacation and when I reached Bhavnagar I came to know about this hunger strike.

When I reached Bhavnagar, that was the 27th day of the hunger strike of Subodh Mehta and his condition had very much deteriorated and the question was of his survival. As I was a close family friend, his wife Neerabhen Patel, was very much disturbed about the situation, naturally, this was not the cause for which the life of such a valuable leader could be placed at stake. Hence she requested me that I should persuade Subodh to give up the hunger strike, as his life was at stake. I was also quite disturbed, we were very close friends. Hence I told her that I would try to persuade him to give up his hunger strike, and could devise some other strategy to carry on the struggle. When I approached Subodh and persuaded him to give up the hunger strike, his condition was really bad, but even at this stage, he became so wild at me, told me, I know Neera his wife has sent a messenger, but he straightaway told me, "If I do die, what happens? None of you should worry about my health; I will not give up the hunger strike". Ultimately with the intervention of the senior state leadership, he had to discontinue his hunger strike. But, the

relationship intimacy we had developed during the fifties continued till he died a few years back at the age of eighty-nine. But whenever I visited Bhavnagar, invariably I would spend one day with him, even though my visit would be short. We developed such a close relationship that Pushpa went for his election campaign twice during I think seventies, when the Communist Party had contested assembly election. He was very much impressed by Pushpa's oratory. Actually, he admired her, because, Pushpa had gone to Gujarat at the invitation of Late Indulal Yagnik, veteran leader of Maha Gujarat Movement.

Thus my spirit for the movement, dedication was nurtured by such leadership and subsequently in Mumbai when I settled down; I was also equally moved by Pushpa's eloquence and strong emotional appeal of her speeches in Shivaji Park, when there was powerful working class movement in Mumbai. George Fernandes had a powerful magical appeal in the working class of Bombay, when Bandh became a powerful weapon of the working class movement in the city.

In any case, as I am attempting to reflect back on my shift from Bhavnagar to Bombay, I must also mention that I left Bhavnagar for further studies. That too was motivated by my Trotskyist friend, philosopher and guide, Rajan Trivedi. He suggested that for my post graduation, I should shift to Bombay and join the Tata Institute of Social Sciences and specialize in Labour Welfare course, which would give me rich background for further career.

It was quite difficult to get admission to Tata Institute of Social Sciences, that too for specializing in Labour Welfare Course. Tata Institute was particular while selecting a student for this course, about his aptitude and experience in this field. Fortunately, I had this background as I was involved in labour activities in Bhavnagar and also had a brilliant academic background. Hence, somehow I managed to get admission to this Labour Welfare Course.

However, after joining the Institute I was quite disillusioned with the style of teaching and aspirations of the students selected for this course. While studying in the Institute quite a few of them almost assumed to play their future role. I was disappointed as the whole orientation was towards managerial requirements. I was frustrated, I felt that from now on if they assume a managerial role, how would they understand,

sympathize and safeguard workers' interests', especially their salary, promotion and future career depending on the managerial approval and appreciation of their working. I felt that with this kind of assumption they could not remain loyal to the working class interest. Hence I decided that this course would not serve the basic purpose of my life to serve toiling, working peoples' interest. If I seriously attempted to guard their interest as my priority; I would miserably fail in managerial expectations. Hence I decided that though I got admission with great difficulty I cannot pursue this course. Hence I opted for the Tribal Welfare Course, whose departmental head was Dr. B. H. Mehta, who at least was keen to train students for tribal welfare and upliftment and use our academics towards this cause. To the great disappointment of the authorities, as a matter of fact, the Registrar persuaded me that there would be no future career in this course and that I should not be tempted by Dr. B. H. Mehta's tall talks. Anyway, to their surprise and shock, I opted for the Tribal welfare Course as my second-year specialization. There were hardly any students for the course, out of this two were tribal girls, one was a student from Gujarat Vidyapith doing social welfare work, with strict Gandhian principles and one was a very bright person with a long experience of working with the Ramkrishna Mission in Bengal, and who also wanted to go back to his work in the same institute.

One year experience of working with Dr. B. H. Mehta and under his guidance doing field work in the tribal pockets of Madhya Pradesh, was indeed a unique opportunity. He had made my placement in some remote tribal area and we were expected to study the context and relevance of the school teaching in that particular tribal corner which I recollect was located in Chhindwara District of the state. It was a hilly area and we were supposed to study the content of the school education in the area. I was asked to visit this area and stay on the school premises for a week and examine the type of education and its relevance and content. I travelled by bus to reach this destination. When I reached my village destination through a bus journey in this particular hilly tribal area, I had no idea about the nature of the topography, location and the type of school and its educational content. I travelled by bus for several hours, then I was told that you have reached your destination village which was located in a hilly area. I got down from the bus, carrying my bedding, in area surrounded by hill. Reaching our destination through this hilly tract, with the bedding on the back, was indeed a very difficult task. In the hilly

area one would hardly come across any human being who could guide you to reach your destination. Anyway, with great difficulty I reached my destination village and the school. To my utter surprise and shock, the school was located in a small hut whose roof was full of leakage. The school was closed. I could approach some village people. I was informed that this small hut, with the roof full of holes, was supposed to be my destination. I had carried some biscuits with me. The villagers were kind, they brought food for me. The food to my surprise, someone cooked rice with some local pulses which they called Bharbati. There was one cot in very bad shape; I was supposed to sleep on that cot. Anyway, I was quite shocked to see the conditions of the people and the school. The school was closed. At night there was heavy pour of rain with wind and snowballs. This poverty and the plight of people and the school, I was so disturbed that I forgot about my difficulties. I started worrying about the plight of who stayed there and how children could study in such small huts. Very often the progress reports one gets could be imaginary, hiding the harsh reality. Anyway spending few months for field work, some days in the school and rest of the days in Vanvasi Seva Ashram launched under Thakkar Bappa Educational and Training Project was a unique experience. Few days we were asked to do road construction. But it was a unique experience.

Initial Work Experience

After completing my training and the classroom theory education about the plight of the tribals and their welfare, we were awarded a diploma which was equivalent to a postgraduate degree with specialization in Tribal Welfare. Normally jobs are extremely difficult to find after finishing such courses. But I was lucky to get a Gazetted Officer's post in the office of Tribal Commissioner N. M. Shrikant, a close associate of Thakkar Bappa, the Commissioner of the Tribal Welfare Department. I was posted as a Research Officer in-charge of one section in the office subject to the confirmation by UPSC test.

In any case, with my theoretical and Marxist background, the commitment for the cause of the oppressed, this bureaucratic set up was found to be quite disturbing. The job also was monotonous, as the main function was to compile reports of the Commissioner's Office about the working of the welfare schemes in Tribal areas. Most of the time was spent on queries raised in Parliament with regards to the implementation of the welfare schemes in Tribal areas. Our reports were based on the Assistant Commissioner's Report on their visit to tribal areas. In any case to my relief, my posting was not confirmed. So I left the job as I got an opportunity to work in the Planning Commission, with the Department working on submitting reports of working of the welfare schemes in backward areas. I got the job of a senior investigator working with the team headed by well-known social worker, Renuka.

The project was to examine the impact of the special schemes meant for sections like landless labourers, poor farmers, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in different parts of the country. I was given the responsibility to study the impact of these schemes in some backward districts of Gujarat at Punch Mahal, which is not only backward, but consists largely of the Scheduled Tribes, and backward castes. We were given a questionnaire to fill by seeking information on the impact of such schemes on them. As a matter of fact, locating landless backward labourers or marginal farmers in any area, was not so easy. Even after locating your sample, making them sit for an hour or two inquiring about various schemes of the welfare of Scheduled castes and Tribes was not at all easy. First of all, most of them were not even aware of such schemes and the question of impact was still more difficult. It would consume a

lot of time for each respondent. They were not much interested in replying to our exhaustive questionnaire, as most of them were not even aware of such schemes. But, that would amount to returning to the office with blank questionnaire, which would be risky for the job. So, the most convenient way was to gather some general information about the schemes and fill in the questionnaire oneself which amounts to an imaginary survey, which certainly would not be acceptable to higher authorities. Hence somehow, partly by using our imagination, partly by gathering some general information, we filled in the questionnaires, as per the official requirement. This was quite disgusting for me. Hence somehow after completing this survey I thought of quitting the job. As such there was no need for that as once we submitted our reports; our duty would also get over. In other words, there would be no need to continue there. It was a job for a short period of about a year and half. I was also sick of it and as such there was no need to continue in the set up. Hence working for about two years in such projects I was quite disillusioned with this set up. Hence my riddle of how to involve myself in any genuine work for the oppressed remained unresolved. With my Marxist and Trotskyist background I strongly felt the need for much deeper study of the oppressed and the search for solution and to re-examine Marxist approach by further research or deeper appraisal. With this riddle in mind, I thought of doing research for my Ph.D. by focusing on such issues. It was not easy to find Ph.D. admission even during those years. Finding a suitable guide for research was still more difficult.

Encounter with Dr. A.R. Desai: Life- Changing Experience

In this context, my close friend Rajgopalan, whom I knew very intimately when I was staying in Ramkrishna Mission Hostel in Khar in Mumbai, was extremely brilliant student and a research scholar. He was a gold medalist of Bombay University and was doing his Ph.D. research under the eminent scholar, Prof. G. S. Ghurye. He suggested Dr. A. R. Desai who was equally brilliant and was still working as a lecturer in the Sociology Department of Bombay University. He had offers of Professor's post in Baroda University and even in other states, but he preferred to continue as a lecturer in the Sociology Department of Bombay University. Bombay University had unique reputation in the whole country. It was not true of only Sociology; Economics, Politics, and other Departments also had such high reputation. As Economics was headed by Prof. M. L. Dantwala and similarly Political Science was headed by Prof. Aloo Dastur; so to get admission for research was also quite difficult. But Rajgopalan persuaded Dr. A. R. Desai who was still a lecturer even at the age of, I think, 45 and was in every likelihood to be promoted as a Reader next year. As he recommended, Dr. Desai could not abruptly refuse. In any case, he suggested, I should work, without registration, informally for one year and next, when he becomes Reader he would enrol me as his regular Ph.D. student. I readily agreed as I had heard about his reputation and the Bombay University reputation for high academic standard. Thus he agreed to accept me as his student working informally for one year.

This again proved to be a turning point of my career, to work under a giant guru, though highly learned, versatile, humble, quite radical in his approach, with strong, deep-rooted in Marxism and also Trotskyism. Apart from Sociology, he was well – versed in many other disciplines, including classical music. He would play tabla very well. Yet so humble, humane, a man instead of imposing his greatness, genuinely interested in your uplifting, in making you versatile, helping in developing much deeper roots in your research, could make you work very hard, but still with polite gesture and seeking to bring best out of you. In short, he was so great that he could transform your being and certainly raise your level of scholarship with deeper understanding and always learning the virtue

of modesty, and humility all the time. So ten years that I spent with Dr. A. R. Desai, first as a research student after completing my Ph.D. as his research Assistant was the golden period of life. Ultimately I could find a genuine pursuit for my life. My commitment for Marxist philosophy became much firmer but, with much greater humanitarian touch.

In this context, I would like to mention, how a Guru like Akshaybhai could not only enrich your understanding but would bring out your hidden potential, which could make you realize your worth, potential for much richer and greater research contribution, that could have an inkling or potential of genuine contribution in your area of research. With Akshaybhai, the void that was there, a confusion that I was passing through about genuine Marxist understanding, deeper, richer appraisal of the area of your research was such an experience that could really transform one's life.

Incidentally, about my own research for Ph.D., I wanted to involve myself in a deeper appraisal of the problems faced by the country, especially from the perspective of the down-trodden masses, exploited, oppressed overwhelming majority in this country, especially when one keeps mind over the country, concerning plight and problems of overwhelming masses, poor, oppressed and ruthlessly exploited, that may constitute of agricultural labour, casual workers, small and middle farmers, which constitute overwhelming majority of rural population. To my mind this percentage could be as large and overwhelming as almost 80 to 90 percent of rural population, consisting of middle farmers, farmers with fragmented and uneconomic holdings, deprived of any source of credit facilities, and also forced to borrow at an exorbitant rate from traders or moneylenders. As a matter of fact, during my pursuit of research in 1970s I realized the gravity of the problem and probably for them, gaining freedom, and independence from the British never acquired any meaningful experience. The overwhelming majority of the oppressed strata, which may from almost 80 percent of rural population, with little possibility of finding any alternate employment in urban areas, in the absence of the required rate and the type of industrialization taking place in the country, where production by maximizing exploitation, deprivation of minimum wages, and the absence of any regulation of the working hours, either in the industry or trade or mercantile profession. This grim reality, probably which has worsened in the 1920s, was the

Dhanyavad Friends

stark future facing overwhelming mass of rural areas. Hence if by chance, they migrate to urban areas, living conditions and working hours, would only remind them about the stark reality and grim future for them in this country. This was the realization I derived while doing research under Dr. A. R. Desai.

I could also cite another very striking example of how working with Akshaybhai enlarged my perspective and expanded and enriched my inquiry. When I approached Dr. Desai, I had a vague understanding of my area of research. When I joined for research in sixties, the thrust of Community Development was an intensive application of the modern, more production technology and management of agricultural mode of production. The main agents of this rural transformation after a long, haphazard period of land reform, with its major objective of Zamindari Abolition, feudal mode of production, replacing the same by more intense, modern methods of cultivation, greater use of fertilizers, and in place of feudal lords and zamindars, rich farmers adopting modern methods of agriculture, with decentralization of administration, by focusing elected body of Village Panchayat and encouraging the rich farmers, adopting modern methods of agriculture for the reconstruction of Indian agriculture and modernizing of the rural society.

Unfortunately, the experiment proved to be a big flop as it only led to further exploitation of poor, ordinary tenants, the actual tillers of the soil, who cultivated the soil without any legal entitlement or having their names on the official land records. Land reform could not extend any legal protection to the overwhelming mass of temporary tenants, or agricultural labour, they were left out of land reform legislations. Hence for this overwhelming majority of rural agricultural population, national independence could not bring any relief. They continued to toil in same ways, faced by harsher reality with increasing population in rural areas. Even by chance they migrated to urban areas, conditions did not improve for them in living as overwhelming majority of the poor, consisting of large section of the migrants from rural areas, living conditions were lethally hazardous, living in slums, as there was no other possibility of stay, overcrowded slums, with no drinking water facilities, overcrowded toilets, small overcrowded rooms. Hence shifting to urban areas was of greater compulsion than a matter of choice. In the absence of any other

option, they were forced to stay in such crowded locality, with no security and equally bad working conditions.

Working under Akshaybhai was such an exhilarating experience, as while developing deeper insight in understanding the dimension or magnitude of the research problem, it also enriched your understanding, and indeed one developed much deeper understanding of the problem. When I approached Akshaybhai for research, I had a vague idea of working on the impact of the community development projects on rural India. Akshaybhai raised my level of understanding; from the impact of the community development projects it expanded to doing research on the entire programme and the policy of the Indian government for rural reconstitution. As a result the scope of my research extended to practically all developmental measures for rural reconstruction, beginning with land reforms, zamindari abolition measures to other dimensions of rural transformation. In short it expanded to practically all important measures by the State including tenancy reforms, cooperative movements, Panchayati Raj and such other measures for rural transformation. Ultimately when I completed my research, it proved the survey and critical appraisal of the entire strategy of the Government for rural transformation and reconstruction. It turned out to be an exhaustive appraisal of the entire strategy and measures for rural transformation.

Pushpa and my exposure to the Trade Union Movement



Com. Pushpa Mehta Secretary, RSP Maharashtra

While I was doing my Ph.D. research, within a passage of a month or two, Akshaybhai came to know about my political background and activities connected with the student and working class movements and my first exposure to Trotskyism in politics and also my close contacts with Communist Party leaders. He was surprised and was immediately pleased to know about my political background. Initially, he introduced me to Comrade Kolpe who was an eminent journalist and was an active part of the Trotskyist Movement. At that juncture, in late fifties they were working in Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), which had a large working-class base. But this entry tactic, as in Bhavnagar, in Bombay also was not successful and could not help the Party in expanding its mass base. I was also disillusioned with their radical proclamation. Akshaybhai was also in close contact with the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP).

In late fifties and sixties it was led by Comrade Pushpa Mehta who was also a known and highly committed labour lawyer and totally dedicated to the Party. She was also well-known in Bombay's political circle. RSP had a strong working class base among the silk workers and some small engineering units. It had excellent team of workers. Comrade Thagpan, later resigned and formed independent party with a strong base in Kamani Company. Pushpa was a fiery speaker and could always draw audience with emotional appeal. Because of her commitment she was quite popular among left circles. For instance, Comrade George Fernandes also admired her and respected her.

Pushpa usually fought dismissed workers' cases, who hardly had any capacity for legal fees. She fought her Union cases and other labour cases keeping working class cause in focus.

Because of her deep commitment and also competence in labour laws, she commanded lot of respect even from other established and well known lawyers in the Court. I still remember, UTUC had conducted a strike for the recognition of the elected workers committee for bargaining with the employers, and this was not acceptable to the management, as it was quite convenient for them to deal with recognized and even left trade unions who usually settled the issues by sacrificing the workers' cause than giving representation to genuinely elected working class committees.

In one such strike for the recognition of the genuinely elected workers' committees, in a well-known silk factory, Shree Shakti Silk Mill with several units in the city, workers had gone on strike. It was a prolonged battle. I think that was in the year 1962 when the emergency was declared due to the India – China war, so things were more difficult. To conduct illegal strike during emergency needed a rare courage and commitment. Hence Management succeeded in filing criminal case against her and other labour leaders involved in conducting the strike.

During this period well known pleaders like Sri Krishna and several other eminent lawyers, and an eminent Judge, Suresh also were in Labour Court. In Court, keeping in mind Pushpa's commitment, and putting her behind the bars, in jail, the Court placed before her the other option to pay a fine of Rs.500 (500 during that time was not a small amount). In any case to pay the fine was possible, easy solution and the Court Judges,

even opponents, with their high respect for Pushpa, wanted her to pay the fine and settle the issue. But Pushpa refused to pay and opted for ten days imprisonment. In the Labour Court neither judges nor eminent labour lawyers like Sri Krishna wanted her to suffer imprisonment. Hence they persuaded the court that, the payment of the fine would be their responsibility, but Pushpa should not be sent behind the bars, even for a week. Thus Pushpa commanded such high respect even from her opponents. When she passed away, Justice Sri Krishna and many eminent lawyers sent a very warm condolence letter. Even though in court they were opponents, but their personal relations were very warm and Pushpa used to attend weddings in their families. Thus personally she commanded a lot of respect, affection of her opponents.

I can cite several examples of her commitment to the cause of the working class and socialist movement. As I recollect, during our wedding, I think it took place sometime in 1962, a sudden phone call from my old friend and a prominent well-known citizen of Bhavnagar, who was well established and used to run his own daily news paper and had wide contact with the establishment, Pratap Shah, well – known citizen and also a close friend. But I had lost contact with him, since I shifted to Bombay. I was surprised when all of a sudden I received a phone call from him, telling me that how could I forget a friend like him on the occasion of my wedding. He insisted that he wants to give us a party in a well known five star hotel in Bombay, at that time it was known as Volga. He said that I must come with Pushpa for lunch in this hotel. He was such a close associate once upon a time, when I was staying in Bhavnagar, quite an old story. But in this case it was difficult not to accept the invitation. So I agreed with Pushpa's consent to go for lunch in that hotel. Pushpa was quite reluctant, but I persuaded her as it would be unfair not to accept this invitation as he was a close old friend. Anyway, with reluctance we accepted the invitation, I think for me, as well as for Pushpa going for lunch in such a luxurious five star hotel was very uncomfortable. Pushpa suspected some hidden motive. Hence she insisted that if she finds anything against her principles, she would not accept the lunch. In any case we went for the lunch. Pushpa had a hind sight, it was not just a marriage party, there was a specific motive, when we reached the Lunch Table where Pratap Shah was seated she noticed that an employer of Gujarati community was sitting in a distant corner. Suddenly he came over to our table and started talking to Pushpa,

admiring her work, talking about his factory and dispute. Pushpa became so wild and said that I would not accept the lunch, if he is making the payment. In that case we would make the payment, only then she would accept lunch. Ultimately we found some solution; my friend said he is going to pay as he had invited us. The employer then requested, if would she permit to offer garland on wedding occasion, which also with great reluctance Pushpa accepted. One could imagine her popularity among workers from the fact that in our wedding there were almost 500 people; out of these more than 400 consisted of the workers, representing different silk units. In our gift, they gave us two big steel cupboards, which we used for almost 40 to 50 years till we shifted our residence from Santacruz to Andheri.

In this context I am also reminded of another equally interesting incidence. Pushpa's father was a staunch Arya-Samaji and his friend circle also largely consisted of people who had similar views. His close friend, and a well established businessman who was also a committed Jana Sanghi, through his Jan Sangh associate, persuaded Pushpa to join Jan Sangh. As a matter of fact, he actually arranged a meeting between Pushpa and Dattopanth Thengadi if I remember the name correctly, who was holding a high post, was also involved in R.S.S. Trade Union work, probably all India head of one wing of Trade Union, he specifically came to Bombay, at the invitation of Baxi to talk to Pushpa, as they were looking forward who could shoulder the responsibility of trade unions at the state level. Pushpa reluctantly visited Baxi's residence, where Thengadi talked very sweetly to Pushpa, praising her leadership quality and commitment for trade union movement. He requested as they were looking forward to lead trade union movement in the state, whether Pushpa would oblige by accepting the offer of leading the movement at the state level. Pushpa bluntly refused and told her uncle's friend, how he could even think of such a possibility. Anyway, they were disappointed and Pushpa was disgusted with such offer.

I cite one more example of the tremendous respect she commanded in top level trade union leadership. Girija Gupte, my close friend and associate since, 1981, her father Vadsantrao Gupte was Secretary of the All India Hind Mazdoor Sabha, Trade Union wing of the Socialist Party. He wanted to publish biography and contribution of Trade Union leaders at a national level belonging to different political organizations and trade

unions. He compiled a volume of eminent trade union leaders with adherence to different political parties or ideologies, he was very keen that Pushpa must contribute about her activity and give a short sketch of her biography.

It was quite interesting to note that in Trade Union field they were rivals and must have publicly criticized each other and Pushpa's trade union activity was specifically targeted against his union and leadership. They were bitter rivals. Despite such differences, he was extremely keen that Pushpa must contribute and write about her work and biography.

Pushpa was reluctant for the simple reason that she never thought that she could write about her or give a brief sketch of her life and work, focusing her trade union work and objectives in joining the trade union movement.

It is surprising to know that, he was reluctant to publish the book without Pushpa's article. Ultimately I also persuaded, wrote article in her name, as she would never write such article.

Thus it is difficult to think about the quality and commitment of the trade union leadership at that period, i.e late eighties, if I remember correctly.

Her commitment to the Party, i.e. Revolutionary Socialist Party with which she identified all her life, was so deep that even in our family if there would be any dispute, or she would be unhappy about any event or friction in the family, she would with least hesitation state, I would prefer to go to Delhi, where Comrade Tridib Chaudhari had his big flat, as he was a Member of Parliament. Incidentally, Comrade Tridib Chaudhari got elected to the Parliament six times with little efforts, because of his past sacrifices. He was a part of, I think Anushilan group, counter part of Bhagat Singh's Navjivan Bharat Sabha in Punjab. Thus there was a powerful attraction and such leader command, such respect and sacrifice. She was totally identified with the RSP and working class cause till the end of her life. And the party also reciprocated in the same manner. After her death, I think sometime early part of this century, in the subsequent Party conference, the Party workers created a special huge pandole in her name. In other words the entire conference paid huge tribute to her contribution for the Party. After her death, for almost two decades, whenever the Party Comrades from West Bengal visit Bombay for some

assignment, invariably they would visit our house and bring kurta and some other gifts, would spare time to come to our house. Thus even after passing away the Party always held her in high regard. Comrade Nani Bhattacharya, well known leader of Plantation Workers in West Bengal also loved Pushpa so deeply that I could visit tea plantation area along with Comrade Pushpa, probably in late nineties.

Unfortunately after our marriage, with her heavy schedule in the labour court, she could attend the party office only in the evening. Before our marriage, the situation was quite different, as the office was located on the top floor, a huge terrace of her house; she had greater access to the office. As I was also having Morning College, close to Santacruz, Mithibai College, located in Parle West, we usually went together to the party office, and workers would bring their problems and would be in office till eight in the evening. Often we used to take food downstairs where her family lived. Around eight or eight thirty while we would leave, invariably we would meet Asghar Ali Engineer, whose office was hardly ten minute from the Party office. He usually left his office at that time and would come towards the station to eat his paan. So that was the routine.

This was the situation for quite some time. But in early eighties there was a drastic change, rather a big debacle, as textile mill owners decided to shift their office and factories to remote areas where union formation would be very difficult. A similar situation also occurred in silk industry. Units were shifted to remote areas. This was a big setback for the union. Textile workers went on a prolonged strike, which lasted over a year, under Datta Samant's leadership. Nothing came out of this prolonged struggle, workers in large numbers lost their jobs.

Silk industry workers also suffered a similar fate. Most of the units were closed. This was a huge tragedy, Unions without Workers. Our union was the first victim as we lost our base and had many full-timers without any work. This tragedy I think affected Pushpa very badly, and she suffered a nervous breakdown.

In any case, she never fully recovered from this mental shock; she was also suffering from diabetes since long. Ultimately she passed away on 5th October, 2002. Even for her funeral all eminent trade union leaders, including Datta Samant, were present.

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Pushpa's condolence meeting was also attended by a large number of people. Even Asghar Ali Engineer and Dr. Ram Puniyani were present and expressed their condolences. I used to receive condolence calls from her well-wishers and co-workers for almost a month.

Last incidence I recall when I was working with Yuva Bharat and Supreme Court Judge P. B. Samant and Kolse Patil also had collaborated. A large meeting of youth and other activists from young people working around Bombay was called. In this meeting, Justice P. B. Samant was supposed to come. He came little late, the meeting had to be concluded before that. When somebody informed him that I also known as Pushpa's husband was present, he without wasting a spur of moment, suggested that if Pushpa's husband is present, let him preside and initially address the meeting. He did not know the vast difference in my relative humble personality, who would rarely address mass meetings. But he presumed Pushpa's husband must be a good speaker. Such was her image before even such senior dignitaries like P. B. Samant.

Mithibai College

While working with Akshaybhai for my research, when Akshaybhai became Reader, he was also entitled for research assistance. For this purpose there was a provision for the post of Research Assistant with moderate remuneration of Rs.2500/-. Akshaybhai with his becoming Reader, i.e only after my working with him for one year, he promoted me to this post of Research Assistant. Hence I worked with him as a research assistant for almost ten years.

After working over a decade he only suggested that I should look for a suitable teaching job, in a college, as I had married in 1962, so also had family responsibilities. He only recommended my name to the then Principal, A. B. Yagnik who used to visit Akshaybhai regularly, whenever he would come to the Fort Campus for the Senate meeting. He had very high regard for Dr. Desai. Mithibai College located in Vile Parle was also started few years back before I joined that college. Akshaybhai's recommendation was more than enough for me. He was actually looking for talented and known academician who also enjoyed wider recognition as a scholar. Hence without any second thought, he approved my appointment. He only took my formal interview and gave me a job as Head of the Sociology Department.

Thus for me it was not only a teaching assignment, but a serious responsibility of starting a new department. Initially, there was only a vacancy for one full time lecturer and one part-time teacher for the junior college which also was a part of our college.

When I joined there were hardly around 30 students offering this subject. But for me this teaching assignment was not at all easy, as I was not comfortable in teaching, i.e. in giving lecture to the students, as I was quite shy, and diffident in taking lecture, in short in teaching assignment. Hence I thought of an easy way. Instead of lectures, I started giving notes. But the students were not happy, and they protested with this style of teaching and the matter reached to the Principal. Principal Yagnik was so sympathetic because of Akshaybhai's recommendation, that he inspired me and told me how to change my style of teaching. In any case within a fortnight I could pick up the style and became very popular with the students. Within a short time Sociology became a very popular

subject. Over a short time it became a big department with one full-time and one part-time teacher in Junior College and almost four full-time teachers in the Senior College. As a matter of fact it became almost the biggest department in the Arts Faculty.

Dr. Yagnik, the Principal of Mithibai College, really wanted to have well known experts in their subjects, with public reputation to join the College. He actually went out of the way in selecting good teachers. Thus in this Mithibai College, Gujarati Department was headed by Shri Mansukhlal Zhaveri, a very well known figure in Gujarati literature with administrative experience. Subsequently, Sitanshu Mehta, an eminent academician with double doctorate in literature from the Bombay University and also research degree from a well known American University also joined our College as the Head of Gujarati Department. Chandrakant Bari, another eminent literary figure who must have presided over at Gujarati literary gatherings several times, and extremely well known as a Gujarati literary scholar also joined Mithibai College in Politics Department. The Head of Politics Department Prof. Nagindas Sanghavi was equally known in literary as well as political circles for his writings. He used to regularly write for a well established magazine of great reputation, thousands of copies of which were published. He used to regularly write for this magazine, for probably more than forty years. He was also my close family friend, and had joined the Mithibai College, right from its inception.

Similarly, Hindi Department was headed by my very close friend, Dr. Samat Thakur, who was associate editor of the well known Hindi periodical Dharmayug. Prof. Nissim Ezekiel who headed the English Department was also a giant in the field of English literature. Same was the case of Marathi and Philosophy Departments.

Similarly, Mithibai College also attracted students known for their high talent. Well known film actors, directors, and musicians' family also were encouraged to join the College. Some of them became very well known actors, directors, and musicians.

While reflecting back on my Mithibai days, I can't forget my acquaintance with Shama Dalwai when I was associated with the Revolutionary Socialist Party. Shama had also joined Mithibai College in Economics Department. She and Hussain Dalwai, Mungekar who later became Vice-

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Chancellor of the Bombay University were actively connected with new radical formation, which was actually a splintered group from the Socialist Party. Shama and Hussain had become close friends and my association with them till today is as close as it was during my Mithibai years. Though we might have pursued different types of political career, our personal relations are close, intimate and equally warm even today. Thus personal relationship has always played a dominant role in my life, than political ideology. This is equally true of Comrade Vasu, who had different political and trade union affiliation, but our personal relation had been so close and warm for the last over at least forty years.

I can also cite another equally relevant instance. Shashi Gavaskar and Kalpana Gavaskar had been such close friends; I always felt that they are part of my being. That relationship is so deep and strong as it was probably forty years ago. Hence that has been my great fortune, that political or personal differences, of style of functioning has never affected my personal relationship. Hence, I was also very close to Dr. Desai, but even with Ashgar Ali Engineer my personal relations have remained very close, warm and my admiration for both of them is equally high. However, it is true that Dr. Desai not only enriched my understanding of the Marxism and especially the nature of transformation, especially agrarian transformation under the Congress rule after independence and whatever theoretical or practical contribution I could make to movement for socialist or humanist, egalitarian movement in this country, to a large extent is the outcome of my training, and richer and deeper understanding I could develop about the nature of transformation taking place since independence under initially the congress and now under political Hindu sectarian rule under Modi.

Reflecting back to my Mithibai College days, there are multiple self reflections. But the main reason while I still happily reflect on those days after so many years was the ample free time we used to get in our teaching job. As I was the head of the Department, I had to take only 12 lectures per week. Per day it just used to be two lectures and I still remember one day used to be totally free. University examination work was totally voluntary. And usually I used be even avoid that with big vacation and such free time in college work, we could really concentrate on enriching ourself by reading. And I used this time to enrich myself theoretically. I was also in-charge of library, so could get books of better

academic insight, and books on of variety of subjects. Thus during college, though income was limited, I had ample time to read and write and also do other activists of my choice. Hence there was genuine freedom, with healthy academic atmosphere. I really was fortunate to spend almost 27 years of my life in such atmosphere. Apart from reading and writing, I could involve myself in other activities. I got enough time to spend in our Trade Union as we had a morning college. Hence by 12.30, or one we could go home. Thus, though income was limited, we got golden opportunity to enrich ourselves academically and also getting involved in Trade Union. After passing of Dr. Desai and especially since my retirement from the, Mithibai college, my involvement in movement has taken a strikingly different turn.

Revolutionary Socialist Party, Maharashtra

Before I touch upon this subject, I must refer to my involvement in the Trade Union and the price I paid for the same. Although Pushpa was the main Leader of the R.S.P. and the UTUC in Mumbai, there were quite a few others who were also working as almost full timers in our union. In this context apart from some working class activists who were thrown out of the job and joined UTUC full timers, there were quite a few, who were committed and competent who were part of the UTUC. In this context I must first refer to Com. N.K Karnakaran who had worked in Nagpur for a couple of years in in Nagpur quite a few years back. Actually even in Mumbai, his contribution was quite exemplary. He was from Kerala, and attached to RSP and UTUC from young age. He was also a fiery speaker and very militant, committed to the RSP and Trade Union movement. Unfortunately, as far as I remember in late sixties or early seventies, there was a split in RSP and the U.P. unit under the Leadership of Com. Keshav Prasad Maurya, if I remember the name correctly, left RSP and formed, a rival unit of the RSP in U.P. Their major difference, as far as I remember, was on the character of the Soviet Union, which they characterized as a state capitalist state, while for the official line, U.S.S.R was a degenerated working class state; this was very close to Trotsky position. Com. Thegpan was another who also worked as a full timer. Subsequently Com. Sunder Navalkar who also was practicing in Labor Court, and very close friend, and who was attached to and loved Pushpa as well her sister Usha. She was like a family friend, who earlier worked with the Communist Party of India. She also left RSP and UTUC on some theoretical ground. Actually she was arrested in seventies as a Naxalite along with Com. Sunil Dighe and Com. O. P. Dixit. I was very close to Comrade Dixit and this relationship lasted till the end in spite of theoretical differences. As a matter of fact, quite a few committed and theoretically sound Comrades had joined UTUC during seventies. Roger Silverman and his associate Comrade Mukund Singh also joined UTUC as full timers, and Roger Silverman, who belonged to militant group, that had merged with the Labour Party, but represented Trotskyist position. In this context, even one Comrade, I forgot the name was, but by qualification Doctor, who left Pakistan, he actually ran away from Pakistan and settled I think in London, he had also come to Bombay and worked as a full- timer for some time, I think in seventies.

Uday Mehta

Though I joined in the RSP, my moorings were in Trotskyist Movement and Dr. Desai was very dedicated and committed Trotskyist. As a matter of fact, after my joining the RSP, several such Comrades were working or associated with the UTUC and the RSP with strong theoretical differences.

Com. Pushpa Mehta and Dr. Uday Mehta



In this context, I have memories of Comrade Amar Jasani who along with his equally or more prominent wife Dr. Vibhuti Patel who were working with Comrade Magan Desai, who represented and who was the main nominee and Secretary of the Trotskyist Unit in India. He originally belonged to Communist Party, was in jail for some time. Dr. Desai was instrumental in getting him released from the jail as then Chief Minister of Gujarat, Hitendra Desai, if I remember the name correctly was Akshaybhai's close friend.

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Anyway, it was quite difficult to work with Comrade Magan Desai, I think the reason was his Stalinist Party, peculiar authoritarian style of functioning. I also knew him very well; in fact he had stayed with me during his visit to Bombay.

I was close to Trotskyist Comrades because of my close contact with Dr. Desai. Dr. Amar Jasani and Vibhuti Patel in this context, in all probability, shifted to Bombay from Baroda. Dr. Desai introduced them to me and also the RSP. As a matter of fact Comrade Amar joined UTUC as a full-timer with a nominal remuneration and worked I think for almost two years. I was quite close to both Comrade Amar and Comrade Vibhuti.

It is quite strange, but significant as Amar and Comrade Gayatri also in Santacruz joined UTUC for some time. Unfortunately, UTUC and RSP were passing through very bad phase in late seventies and early eighties. Jairam Shetty, who was a dismissed worker from the Jasmin Silk Mill located I think in Mahim, also joined RSP and UTUC and worked as full-timer for number of years. As a matter of fact he was also staying in Maharashtra, Santacruz East, where UTUC office was located. Pushpa's father had given us entire huge terrace as office and we had made quite spacious office with two rooms. We functioned in this office for many years, much before I joined RSP after my marriage with Comrade Pushpa. Unfortunately, after our marriage, Pushpa's residence where we were staying was located in Santacruz West. This house also actually was Pushpa's fathers; he had purchased a small bungalow some time in middle fifties and had shifted to that house. The house where I stayed with Pushpa was a rental premise of Pushpa's father, was lying vacant and the Parsi landlord had filed a case for possession of the premises. Luckily with our marriage, we could save this premise, as the fully furnished house was given to us by Pushpa's father, as they were fully with Pushpa's decision of marriage and they were equally happy with me also.

Hence Pushpa's shift from her house in Santacruz East, where our office was located she could not attend the office as before. We used to go to the office every day in the evening after Pushpa's return from the Labour Court. Shetty as was available to the workers all the time in the office and was also practicing in the Labour Court as in Labour Court, it is not necessary to hold lawyer's degree to practice. Shetty was quite competent

who had initially worked very devotedly to the cause and was quite friendly with me also. But he gradually developed authoritarian tendency and unfortunately started drinking. He would come to the office drunk and used abusive language.

Fortunately, Comrade Jasani was working as a full-timer. He was not only very competent, but also devoted to the cause of the workers. He has established a good hold over the workers. Hence with his active involvement and respect which Pushpa commanded over the workers, we had called a general body meeting some time I think in the late seventies where over a thousand workers participated. Shetty was also present in the meeting and the general body accepted our proposal for a new committee for the Union and a resolution to expel Shetty from the Union. It was passed without any problem as he could not mobilize any support. So he was thrown out of the Union. For this I personally feel Pushpa's popularity with the workers was definitely the primary factor, but for Comrade Amar's support and work in the Union for, I think, almost two years, this would not have become possible.

After this setback, Shetty was wild and looking for revenge, retaliation and we had not perceived this. Unfortunately, some time during 1981, while I was at the Santacruz West Bus Stop along with my close friend Prof. Jha's daughter, Shetty under disguise was not wearing spectacles which he otherwise always wore, came to the Bus Stop and hit me with some weapon, he was carrying in his hand, on my chest deeply and ran away. My friend's daughter took me back home. Our neighbour there was one Dr. Kumud Patel, our and especially Pushpa's childhood friend, promptly came home, reported there was internal hemorrhage. We informed my brother promptly, who was a well known Doctor and he contacted Nanavati Hospital. Dr. Joshi who was his close friend promptly admitted me to Nanavati Hospital. The Doctor who examined me informed that it was a case of severe internal hemorrhage and too much blood has flown in my chest and would need a major operation. Promptly I was shifted to the operation theater, my brother also was present. By then even in Mithibai College, students and professors, including Principal C.T. Bhastana were informed. Large number of students, as I was quite popular in the College, rushed to the hospital. Amar was by my side all the time. Dr. Desai also rushed to the hospital with other friends. My operation lasted for more than seven hours.

Luckily my life was saved. There was a crowd outside the hospital with Akshaybhai upset and worried about my health. I had to stay in the hospital for over a fortnight and after that almost a month more complete rest, I could come back to College.

Before this incident happened, Principal Bhasana, who trusted me and respected me a lot, had offered me Vice-Principal's post, which I was quite reluctant to accept. But after I recovered he was firm that I must accept that position. In any case to escape from the administrative responsibility, with Dr. Desai's active cooperation, I applied for two years fellowship. It was very difficult to get acceptance, I think even in our Sociology Department, nobody had acquired the fellowship. Nevertheless with Akshaybhai's active cooperation I prepared a proposal for this fellowship. I thought of making a deeper appraisal of Rajneesh's philosophy and his following, his preaching, the type of disciples, the type of following he attracted, including his departure from Poona, stay in USA, his departure from Goa under mysterious circumstances and from USA coming back to India till his passing away.

Dr. Desai was extremely happy with my study. As a matter of fact, it turned out to be not only scholarly but live and interesting perusal of Rajneesh and appeal of such Godmen, that Popular Prakashan immediately agreed to publish a book. This book on Rajneesh drew wide attention and the Maharashtra Times on central page published an exhaustive review of the book. Dr. Desai interestingly came to know about this review from his friend, and ex – Vice Chancellor, Ram Joshi, who met him during Dr. Desai's walk in Shivaji Park, where Prof. Ram Joshi often joined him. He informed Dr. Desai that his student's book on Rajneesh had been reviewed and the review was published on the central page of Maharashtra Times.

I would like to refer again back to my Mithibai days. My involvement in administration as the then Principal Bhasana insisted that I must continue as Vice-Principal even after completing my post-doctoral research project for which I was awarded fellowship for two years. The Principal was specifically interested in my continuing as Vice-Principal as I was quite popular with the staff; with most of them my personal relations were close and mutual admiration. Secondly I had no administrative ambition as I was least interested in Principalship, even if

in future such opportunity came. It is not easy to find a person with some competence, wide popularity, little administrative efficiency.

Anyway I had a wonderful time in Mithibai College. I worked as Vice-Principal, not only under Principal Bhatsana, but also under the Principal who was earlier head of Commerce faculty and my very close friend. He was very closely associated with late Mrinal Gore as earlier he had worked as a Principal in a school in Goregoan, with the trustee team of people, close to Mrinal Gore. It was a pleasure to work with him and before my retirement I worked for a short time with Ms. Rupa Shah, with whom also, I had close personal ties. She also held me in high regard.

During my career in Mithibai College, I was also involved in College Students' Council's work. I was selected as the Chairman of the Students' Council and with heavy responsibility of conducting the College Annual Festival with students' performances, music, drama, etc.

Mithibai attracted very talented young students, good in drama, artists of high caliber. In this connect I still remember my close relation with Ashutosh Gowariker, who was also our student and very active in College Day Annual Festival. We had become very close, he used to keep relationship even after leaving college. There was some kind of emotional bondage.

My popularity with the student world must be good as recently in last September, 2021, in College Alumni Annual Function, they invited me as the chief guest and I was given a very warm reception. In this connect my colleague who took over as the Head of the Sociology Department, Usha, came all the way from Ghatkopar to meet me for a few minutes.

Sociology Department in Mithibai College was gradually built by me. When I joined there was only one post of the head in sociology department; when I left there were six people as the Department has expanded so fast. In TYBA there were above 200 students offering this subject.

Another equally significant achievement was our Department getting recognition as Ph.D. Centre and students could enroll under me for Ph.D. guidance. This was something quite rare as undergraduate college getting recognition for Ph.D. degree. Fortunately few students enrolled with me, were also very bright. Suresh who was working with the Kashtakari Sanghatana and who was holding far more degrees than me,

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enrolled under me. It was a great pleasure. Now also he and his entire family, wife and daughter having their independent Lawyer's Chamber in Chennai, are so close and our personal ties are very strong. Although technically I was his guide but, I learnt a lot from him. He is now convener of the All India Centre for Civil Liberties, working among the tribals in Dahanu and Palghar districts. I and Pushpa were very close to the Sanghatana, its founder Pradip and his wife Shiraj.

Adsule who did Ph.D. under me used to teach in Nirmala Niketan, his research work on NGOs working on housing was also very significant. As a matter of fact now it is also published and available for public readership.

With Prof. Adsule also, though my relation started as a research student way back in late eighties, my relations are not only very close, but we are working together for last over forty years. Now he is in Dhule, he was the principal of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar College of Social Work in Dhule. Now he is an advisor and also crucial part of the management of the College. With my advanced age, I am now ninety, so I would persuade him to write about our joint activities. Another student, Lata Murugkar, who was Professor from S.N.D.T. College worked on Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra that research work was also published and is a significant contribution in understanding Dalit Movement.

I retired from the Mithibai College in 1993 and I still remember the warm send-off organized by the Principal Rupa Shah. Our College library which could accommodate over seven to eight hundred students was fully packed. It was really painful departure. Rupa Shah, also almost had tears in her eyes and the staff members' attachment was visible. Anyway it was a painful but memorable event for me in my life.

Hence I was very fortunate, first of all doing my research under very competent, yet very humble Prof. Dr. A.R. Desai who was an incarnation of learning and humanism.

Compared to that our present time, teaching and academic career, contrast is very glaring. As I came to know from my very close and dear friend, Girija who teaches in Parle College, college life has changed so profoundly, almost it has become like factory with putting signature when you enter college and signing even when one leaves college. One works full time for, maybe, six to eight hours. There is hardly any time

left for reading and writing, as when one gets involved with routine work, that consisting of conducting regular test, setting papers, marking presence of students, I don't know but it appears, there is so much routine administrative work that the wall between the administrative and academic job has been totally blurred. Only poor compensation is high salary of few who are selected as permanent staff. They get such high salary that mind is diverted to such non-academic pre-occupation as wearing good clothes, buying private vehicles and talks totally devoid of academic nature. So library or reading books or pursuing any genuine academic work sounds abnormal. Hence I was lucky that I spent my academic life, with full satisfaction of pursuing academic work, mixing with students, holding discussions on various topics in the staff common room. Hence after almost three decades since I retired from my job, I am haunted by days I enjoyed and could carry out my academic work along with getting involved in various other activities, including trade union work, because of my total commitment and full time pre-occupation with trade union and radical political activities.

Unfortunately, as I came to know from Girija, even students' expectations, interests and understanding about Indian Vedic Period or early history of this country, as they come to know from the official sources is equally problematic. The kind of impression they gather from the National Education Authorities, is also based on unusual kind of glorification of the Indian past, Vedic and Medieval period and deeply rooted prejudice against minorities, especially the Muslims. This is the most unfortunate part of the present education system, syllabus, literature authorized by our National Council on Education. In this sense, we were lucky that I throughout my educational and teaching career could imbibe appropriate knowledge and information about Indian history, right from the Vedic to the Medieval Period.

Asghar Ali Engineer

I was so lucky to have been associated with stalwart of Bombay; as a matter of fact this city is known for his contribution not only in academic field but about the path of development adopted since independence and the type of complex problems and sufferings undergone overwhelming majority of population, both in rural and urban areas.

Asghar Ali Engineer, during early part of his career, was so much involved in movements during eighties and nineties, when his office had become the central focus of radical movement and mass upsurge. We witnessed during the early neo-liberal phase and the types of reforms and structural change experienced by the country and especially our prime metropolitan, industrial hub of the country. Mumbai was really true hub of the Indian working class movement and the powerful influence it exercised even at the national level. Under the neo-liberal phase the en-mass shift of industries, especially the textile mills, which provided jobs to lakhs of workers, was known for the working class solidarity and militant movement witnessed the closure and shift of the major industries, especially textile, silk and even engineering units closed down, and quite a few shifted to interior area and that too with the units which used new technological innovation, retrenched workers on a massive scale and were located now in different, remote destinations in the country.

Apprehending this imminent change and the challenges faced by the toiling strata in the city, Ekta, which consisted of a huge collaboration of the trade union activity, intellectuals, film stars, progressive writers, trade unions even belonging to diverse left parties, all came together on a common platform and I am quite proud and happy to state that the main centre where these activities were planned was Asghar Ali's office located in Santacruz East and was pushed by Asghar Ali and Comrade Pushpa Mehta as they were totally non-controversial people. Two big marches, one starting from Fort reaching to Thane, which was a two days yatra, with night halt, hundreds of activists participated, and local people arranged for their night stay and food. The second march was organized from, I think, Mahim to Kurla, which also was a huge success.

When one reflects back one could certainly be proud of the fact that both these yatras were organized in the middle of eighties, if I remember correctly, and in both these yatras practically all trade unions, artists, intellectuals, and people belonging to various organizations, practically the entire progressive mass of Bombay participated.

It is really heartening to learn that initiative for both these yatras came from Asghar Ali Engineer, Pushpa Mehta and I was also actively involved, apart from Girija, Meena Menon I can't count the names, who collectively participated in these yatras.

It is equally heartening to know that both these yatras were organized as a protest of the apprehension, dangerous implications of the neo-liberal policy, the path of development adopted under the pressure of the international lobby of neo-liberalism, which in a sense was surrender of our assurance to the toiling people of this country on the eve of independence of the independent path of development, for the all round progress and development of the toiling Indian humanity, as pronounced by late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, as the declaration to the path of development this country would follow. This was a major, fatal departure from the assurance given on the eve of independence.

I am to state that we could apprehend this danger of the new form of neo-liberal enslavement, even before it was fully implemented. This warning, apprehension has been proved historically so adequate. But unfortunately we had no such strength to stop this country from adopting such dangerous, suicidal path of development.

As I recollect in nineties, after the demolition of the Babri Masjid also, under the banner of Ekta, we had taken out a march from Dadar to Churchgate to register our protest. This yatra also received an overwhelming support. All left parties, trade unions, progressive writers and actors like Om Puri and several intellectuals had participated in this yatra and had made a deep impact on Mumbai.

In all these yatras, Asghar Ali Engineer and Pushpa Mehta were prominent. I of course played a supportive role. As I reflect back, I really feel inspired that I was a part of such historical march. Historical in the sense, that such yatras we have not witnessed in the last few decades.

After the decline of the trade union movement, and unfortunately succumbing to trade union movement under the pressure of the New

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Economic Policy adopted by the Government of India, under Narsimha Rao's Prime Ministership, and as I recollect, Manmohan Singh was the finance minister under the compulsion of IMF and assurance of the conditional release of economic assistance. Trade unions also as I remember could not give any powerful resistance and under the scheme of voluntary retirement, it was surrender, and which led to the closure of many factories and the workers' losing jobs in a big way. I think that was the beginning of the decline of the Trade Union Movement and along with this any effective workers' resistance. I think we have not witnessed any powerful Trade Union Movement since that period. But certainly, I would like to state that it is the passive response of the subjective factor that has continued in a big way in workers' losing jobs and Bombay from the heroic centre of the working class movement, and a city which was a source of inspiration to the Indian working class turning into the Ghost Town.

Anyway, EKTA, though never could fill such vacuum, was certainly a strong response of the toiling strata, progressive writers, radical artists and other NGOs to protest against the onslaught of the working people.

Anyway such collective response, a unique kind of resistance, where stalwarts like Ashgar Ali Engineer, prominent artists like, Shabana Azmi and Javed Akhtar also actively supported this protest movement. We have still not found such collective resistance for the last few decades. I along with Pushpa were fortunate to be a part of such protest movement.

In this context, I must mention my close association with Asghar Ali Engineer, my close friend, my ideal, my source of inhibition and was extremely lucky to have close allocation with him till he was alive. As a matter of fact, the Centre for Society and Secularism was conceived by him, and I was a part of this process since inception, right from the meeting I don't exactly remember the year, but when this proposal for the establishment of such Centre was made, when several activists including some known radicals also participated in this meeting. Apart from them many prominent intellectuals, missionaries, known progressive experts in this field of communal harmony were present at this meeting, where this proposal for the establishment of this Center was drafted and approved. Initially the centre was functioning from a relatively smaller office, located in Santacruz East and was controlled by the progressive Bohra leaders, some of whom were financially also well

off. We functioned from this office for several years, but then it was not possible for a person of Asghar Ali's eminence, deep commitment and a rare convert, with exceptionally high endurance power to continue with this lot, who were businessmen with their own interests.

In this context I would like to comment on extraordinary ability and rare intellectual competence and commitment as I could clearly see in my friend, philosopher and guide Asghar Ali Engineer. It was a rare experience to work with him. I and Pushpa were very close associates of Asghar Ali Engineer. Many activities we jointly sponsored in the sense we were active participants of numerous activities he undertook. Asghar Ali was an active and leading light of yatras, as I narrated earlier.

Right from the inception I was associated with this centre for communal harmony and peace. Even when the centre was established, he wanted me to work as the Director of this Center in Santacruz East office and my retirement also coincided. I joined the Centre as the Director for a short time. But unfortunately, I could not continue for a longer time. The reason for my withdrawal from the Centre was my inability to adjust with this new office routine. In Mithibai we used to have morning college and I was to be free by 12.30, one in the afternoon and take rest in the afternoon. This new routine of working from 11 to 5 as usual office timing was quite difficult for me. Secondly, I could not have continued with Asghar Ali's expectation. To work in his office the requisite ability to become his substitute was essential. This office routine and my inability, in spite of my attachment and admiration for Asghar Ali, I realized I would not be able to play that role of becoming his substitute. For instance he used to get number of invitations for delivering lectures or to attend some important conference. I could not become even his poor substitute. This realization and the new routine compelled me to discontinue the office and submit my resignation from the post. Our relations were so close and his expectations were also high, I felt I would not be able to fulfill these expectations in spite of my deep admiration and close friendship. It took several days to tell him that I would not be able to do sufficient justice to the job. With great reluctance and lot of hesitation after several days I had to tell him that I would not be able to continue and would not be able to join him. It was a very painful decision and I know it would hurt him deeply. But in my situation I had no other option. Instead of continuing and not coming up to his expectations was

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something unbearable to me, so ultimately I mobilized all my courage and with lot of hesitation conveyed to him my inability to continue on this post and share such responsibility. I knew, it came to him as a great emotional shock. But I was quite helpless.

In any case my withdrawal from Directorship did not affect our relationship. I was as close and dear friend and deep admirer of him till he lived. His relations not only with me, even for Pushpa were so deep and full of gratitude and admiration for him till he was alive. It was such a close bond, based on deep admiration, which enriched my life. Still his memory and my affection and admiration for him is as intense as it was during our acquaintance.

One could imagine about his competence for the simple fact, he started weekly column in a prestigious magazine where even good scholars or even well known academicians could not find space. In this magazine I think when Krishna who was also incidentally my close acquaintance, Asghar Ali wrote a regular weekly column in this magazine for almost I think 30 years.

I can write another ten to fifteen pages on Asghar Ali even then probably it won't do justice to his competence, sacrifice, dedication, humanism that I witnessed till he passed away.

Committee for the Right to Housing

Personally for me also early nineties was a period when I could become a part of the initiative which was not dominated by any political party.

During the early part of the last century, i.e. during early nineties, I came in contact with the NGO, called the Committee for the Right to Housing. Prof. Adsule, who was incidentally also my research student for Ph.D, was largely instrumental for my association with this Committee for The Right to Housing. As I recollect, this Committee has a long history, Adsule was a part of this long history, when this organization functioned from different locations and was associated with various NGO's working in this field. In this context, Father Allwyn, if I remember the name correctly and many other prominent activists were associated with this movement. Hence it operated from different offices; I think it had a close association with YUVA, Goregaon Missionary Centre under Allwyn. In short CRH has a rich history. When Prof. Adsule joined, we attempted to function through Mithibai College Research Centre. The College management was kind enough to give me a big room on the second floor of the college for this Centre. CRH operated for sometime from this centre and we had organized several meetings from this centre. Subsequently even after my retirement in 1993, my association with the CRH continued. Sanjay Shinde was working with us as a full timer and we had substantial influence in Bandra East Ward, covering Behrampada to Andheri. We had a sizeable mass base, we were also recognized as a centre with significant influence in slum areas of the Bandra East Ward, right from Behrampada to Khar East, Golibar. In this context, I recollect when late V.P. Singh had visited Bombay, Medha Patkar was also quite active. Apart from that there were Left Party and intellectuals who were also involved in slum dwellers rehabilitation and promoting their rights. In this context we collectively organized mass meeting which was also attended by V.P.Singh. Medha Patkar was also an active participant along with other left groups. This massive public meeting sometime during late nineties was organized probably in Shivaji Park. Pushpa also attended this meeting and we were main organizers. In short our mass work in slum area was very well recognized.



Mr. Ramesh Satpute, Dr. Uday Mehta and Justice Hosbet Suresh

In this context I would also like to refer to our noteworthy work in Airport area, largely located in Santacruz East, which came under Airport limits. Ramesh Satpute who was deeply devoted to the cause of Airport slum area inhabitants, formed a federation of the residents and its influence spread from Santacruz East slums to Bandra East. Ramesh was actually a Government employee holding important post in the office. But he was actively involved in this movement. He knew me because of Pushpa, as Pushpa had actively helped them in organizing leather workers, those having small hub in Bombay. Most of them came from the Scheduled Castes. It was a strong protest movement against their eviction and Pushpa addressed these workers' meeting, was actively associated with their mobilization. Ramesh had very high regard for Pushpa and as I was her husband he exhibited similar attitude towards me. I actively helped them in organizing these slum dwellers, staying in Santacruz East to Bandra East. It was a big mobilization, we had several public meetings and organized big protest march culminating in Bandra East at the Collectors office. This movement went on for several areas. The meeting for this movement used to be held at my residence and along with me many other Comrades joined the march. In this context active involvement of Com. Anthony, his wife and Girija, along with Shashi and Jayshree was very significant. We conducted this movement for several years. Ramesh who was continuing with his job and was suffering from a number of ailments also passed away. I presided over the meeting organized in his memory in Santacruz East. Since then we

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could not continue this movement as the torch - bearer of the movement was no longer present.

But this experience was of immense significance to me. As a matter of fact continuous involvement with such movements kept my spirit alive.

Awaz Adhikar Kruti Samiti

As far as I recollect, in the beginning of the year 2000, I along with my other comrades with whom I have been working at least since 1980s, Comrade Vasudevan Nair, a close comrade with whom I have shared my ideas and attempted to take the working class movement forward, and its impact on the state government especially with regard to different toiling sections, right from industrial worker to other toiling strata in the city, Com. Golandaz who was the convener of the joint action committee of the Trade union, was also a close friend because of my association with the trade union movement. As a matter of fact along with Com. Pushpa I liked to attend the joint Trade union committee meetings. My close associate and research student Dr. Jalindar Adsule who was then a prominent face and close associate of Abu Azmi, who is still President of the Samajwadi Party, we together made a bold and successful attempt to bring together all Trade Unions, left party leaders and activists, including CPI, CPM, Lal Nishan and other small groups, Mihir Desai a prominent radical lawyer, Yuva Bharat activists Shashi Sonawane, Firoze Mithiborwala, Ramesh Pimple and Jayashree. Apart from these people many other activists used to participate in the meetings.

As I recollect, under the leadership of veteran leader Com. Yashwant Chauhan we had organized a huge public meeting in Azad Maidan and the impact on the state government was visible. Our delegation was invited for a meeting with the Home Minister, who gave us assurance for sympathetic consideration of our demands. I think demands included problems of all toiling people, right from footpath dwellers, hawkers, workers working in industries and other establishments.

I think this type of collective efforts of practically all unions, left parties, leading intellectuals, youth organizations and other like-minded sections, was a unique achievement and probably as far as my memory goes a unique joint endeavor for the city. Unfortunately we could not carry on this movement for a long time in the absence of the grass root support and lack of grass root organizations. But in Bombay's working class movement history, this kind of collective effort was truly of great significance.

Thus I had good fortune of becoming a part of such historical event and it is indeed my great fortune to work in close association with such committed, radicals, not only nationally but internationally known Com. Vasudevan, leader of the Blue Star, hotel workers and several other working class associations. Since young age he has been a part of national, international working movement. I am lucky to have such Comrades as my close associate for over forty years. He was also equally closely associated with Com. Pushpa.

Similarly, Prof. Jalindar Adsule right since I know him as a research, student, but has been active in slum dweller's movement for several decades. After leaving Bombay, he joined as the principal in Dhule College, where in last six to seven years he has enriched the institution and contributed in a big way for uplifting not only the teaching standard, but building up a unique relationship with the students. His successful attempt to provide almost free lunch to a large number of students who come from distant rural areas, his successful endeavor in raising academic standards, holding state, national as well as international conferences and seminars with participants coming from different parts of the country. He has been able to attract well-known academicians, including UGC chairman for conferences. Still he is very active even after retirement. We have decided to set up a Research Centre in the College, involving not only academicians, but activists, prominent social reformers like the President of the Andha Shraddha Nirmulan Samiti, an organization known not only nationally but also internationally. I have been his close associate for the last over forty years. Right from research fellow days in late eighties to this movement, we have been jointly conducting various activities. Recently I have donated my huge library, a rare collection of sixty years, to his research unit. We are planning to organize various academic activities that could contribute in this direction.

Yuva Bharat

The emergence of the Yuva Bharat, as I recollect some time in 2002 was a memorable event of my life. Hopes it generated and the type of the first gathering, if I remember correctly at Lucknow historically also was a significant event. Optimism was all pervading and evident from the fact that, the event brought together young, idealist, committed young people who came together to forge a new path of development in this country, which had already experienced a deep crisis as a result of the implementation of the neo-liberal policy under the pressure of the IMF and global imperialist lobby. 1990s was the turning point of the Indian economy, when the government under the leadership of P.V. Narsimha Rao and Dr. Manmohan Singh as the finance minister toed the IMF line of abandoning any dream or possibility of continuing with an independent path of development in this country. Under the economic pressure and political pressure, the Indian government paved way for the implementation of the IMF policy. Hence I reflect now, there was a sense of disillusionment, especially among the young people, irrespective of political affiliations. Hence as I recollect this first conference of Yuva Bharat attracted a large number of young people, if my memory is correct, there were around 600 young people, having either no political affiliation or also significant number with wide range of political affiliation or background participated in the event with high expectations. As a recollect, there were hard core Gandhians, youngsters with Socialist background, even those with sympathy or affiliation with Communist parties, assembled together to chalk out a new path of development. Of course, all were committed to egalitarian social order, but were disillusioned with the correct left or Congress, even Socialist parties. They came with high expectations.

Even leaders who were instrumental in organizing this event had a rich background, of either working with socialist parties, especially as I think from the north, U.P. and Bihar, Maharashtra and Bengal. The objective was to evolve an independent, radical, egalitarian path of development, certainly with no illusion of opting exclusively for electoral politics.

My acquaintance with Yuva Bharat was primarily through Com. Vilas Sonawane, Ramesh Pimple who had recently migrated from Baroda and settled down in Mumbai, Jatin Desai, and several other young activists,

especially hailing from the Kandivali (East) suburb, predominantly from the slums adjoining Lokhandwala Complex. We had developed a sound base of youngsters, under the leadership of Com. Shashi and Jayshree Sonawane. I was and am still very close to Shashi and Jayshree. We have been working together since 2000.

Yuva Bharat activities continued for a long time at least till Com. Shashi was actively involved. He worked as a full-timer for near two decades. After that he ceased to be youth and there has also been a gradual disintegration of Yuva Bharat in last two decades. Apart from Yuva Bharat my association and active participation with Com. Shashi and Jayshree has been continued till today. Even now we are a part of the Platform for Social Justice, for the over a decade.

Yuva Bharat in all probability could have evolved as an active organization contributing to the cause of socialist and egalitarian movement in this country. But unfortunately, the movement almost collapsed since Shashi's withdrawal basically on account of his age, when he could not be a part of the youth movement as he had crossed forty and unfortunately we could not find any effective substitute who could mobilize and run the organization with a full time devotion. Apart from this there were other equally important and more significant causes, as I think which contributed in the collapse of the youth movement. As I mentioned earlier, Yuva Bharat attracted a large number of youngsters with widely different political backgrounds, to hold them together within some common, radical, egalitarian framework was not an easy task. Secondly apart from this major factor, equally grave cause was the short sighted and ego- centric rivalry of the political leadership. Leaders at the top, though competent, influential with radical past, it seems, were in a hurry to gain limelight at the state and also at the national level. There was almost a competition, rivalry for capturing leadership of the Yuva Bharat. This short sighted policy, and narrow vision proved a deadly obstruction. Hence along with other factors, this prime factor, according to me proved fatal and obstructed the path of development; perhaps a possibility for a glorious chapter of Indian history came to tragic end. I would largely assign the failure or shortcomings of the leadership which led to disintegration of such promising movement. There might be other factors, but I strongly feel this failure and shortcomings of the subjective

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factor proved to be more fatal than any other serious ground for the gradual disintegration of the movement.

Although Yuva Bharat experiment could not make much headway in this country, but my collaboration with Com. Shashi and Jayshree continued for a long time. We worked together first in Bombay Eastern suburbs and consequently in Santacruz (East), Airport slums, which were facing a threat of eviction for the expansion of the Airport area. Along with late Ramesh Satpute who did a pioneering work in Airport slum area for a long time, we jointly organized many programmes, regular public meetings and organized several morchas, solidarity marches against this threat of eviction.

Subsequently Com. Shashi and Jayshree also actively participated with us when we organized programmes under Awaz Adhikar Kruti Samiti banner. Huge masses were organized, where all left Trade Unions, political parties, including Abu Asim Azmi's Samajwadi Party were actively involved under this banner. We had organized a huge rally in Azad Maidan, and the state government had to take a serious note of this protest and had to call us for negotiation. Com. Golandaz, Com. Vasudevan, Dr. Jalindar Adsule and myself were the joint conveners of this network where all left political parties, Trade Unions, progressive intellectuals, lawyers like Mihir Desai, Com. Yashwant Rao Chauhan who actually led our Azad Maidan historical March. Since then, I don't think, we have been able to organize such joint protest march in this city. As I recollect, in the journal published by the Yuva Bharat I had contributed an article, raising number of issues faced by the Yuva Bharat.

Center for orphan girls and deserted women

I know Vijay Karande, for the last over three decades. It was a small beginning I think, there was very small accommodation at Khar and children used to come in the morning and spend the day at the Centre. About Vijay, one thing I can never forget, his deep and genuine commitment coming from the bottom of his heart. He also married a girl who was companion in this mission. From this small beginning where initially I used to visit frequently and hold periodical meeting at the Centre and also often at my residence. I was quite close to the group of activists committed to this cause.

From this small beginning, the small centre has acquired a huge dimension. Earlier I think we had three centers, one at Goregaon (East), one in Malad (East) and third somewhere on the Malad beach. I can never forget the royal treatment he would willingly offer to the orphan girls. I think gradually the number crossed sixty to seventy. Right from their school education, where the Centre made arrangement for the transport along with imparting training in dance, music; really he could alter their fate. Now I think his main activities have been shifted to Karjat where he has acquired a big plot of land and quite a few deserted women, in poor mental and physical conditions are not only given accommodation but medical treatment as well. The small centre has now blown into a big institutional complex. In the initial years he was struggling even for a rental place with inability to pay even rent regularly and no security of accommodation. From that stage it has flowered into a huge institutional set up whose monthly expenditure must be to the tune of at least 3 lakhs. Vijay has no big contact, and as far as I recollect there is always uncertainty of regular income. One could almost say that his good work, commitment to the cause of helpless, orphans, deserted women somehow always ensures regular income. He wanted me to visit his Karjat Centre and because of age and health, I could not visit his Centre. I know it is the biggest grievance against me and probably would never forgive me. My inability more than physical I think in my case it is also psychological. I would always feel sorry and forgive myself for my inability to visit his centre where it has proliferated with huge concrete structure. I think even he pursues cattle, cow rearing and protection

activity there. I think he has a team of doctors, who regularly visit the Centre and take care of physical and mental condition of the inmates. Any way I cannot easily forget my work and sharing of little responsibility with him for several years.

Lastly, I must refer to comparatively brief but that too would be a period of at least over a half or one decade during sixties and seventies, if I remember correctly of working with NARC - Centre for de-addiction and rehabilitation of the drug addicts. I was also chairman of this institute. Britto could initially establish himself and the Centre very well for almost a decade. The Centre acquired international recognition. As a matter of fact he dragged me to his conference in Bangkok and subsequently in Delhi and Simla. These conferences were a huge success, a number of leading social scientists and activists used to attend such gatherings. Unfortunately some personal weaknesses of Britto led to his downfall and ultimately the downfall of the Centre. Unfortunately the later phase of his life was a big tragedy. I was helpless to change the situation as it was his own misfortune for which he could not blame anybody. His wife Prema was also equally known and her Centre I think was located in Pooona. She also worked for many years. But subsequently I lost contact with them.



Dr. Uday Mehta's 90th Birthday celebration with some members of the Platform For Social Justice- Prof. Girija Gupte and Ms. Shweta Damle

Platform for Social Justice

In last over a decade, we have been able to successfully set up this kind of platform. In last over a decade, we have been holding fortnightly meetings inviting activists, experts, eminent literary figures, academicians, lawyers, Trade Union leaders, Farmers union activists, prominent literary personalities, social and religious reformers on this platform and we are running this platform regularly, with periodical meetings in Bombay, to review the activities of this platform.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that the platform is led by prominent trade union leaders like Comrade Vasudevan, a well-known critique like Shukla Sen, eminent social work academician Dr. Jalindar Adsule and religious reformers and a radiologist Dr. Iqbal, Shweta also equally well known activist. She has built up an extremely devoted and committed team of activists who have been associated with the organization almost since its inception under her leadership. Her areas of activities are wide and extensive, right from working with the young girls living in Bandra East slum areas. She has been able not only to mould these girls, doing number of activities with them; this has profoundly changed their personality. Kalam with his post graduate degree in political science and now also legal practitioner, his commitment to the cause is quite exemplary. During the COVID period, they did excellent work with local population. Their work with workers, compelled to migrate the city during the COVID period is also incomparable. Host of activities are conducted by them, right from creating provision for latrines in the residence, to air-pollution to improve the plight of exploited population.

At my age, I have entered nineties, my past memories and the deep satisfaction of working with committed, competent and especially left activists has made tremendous impact on my life. The lot of people who must have influenced my life is very exhaustive.

My Close Associates

I am extremely thankful to my close friend. Dr. Ram Puniyani, who, it won't be exaggeration to say that since the sad demise of my beloved teacher and guide, Akshaybhai Desai, who always encouraged me to write and because of him I could as long as he was alive. But since his sad demise in 1994, I must thank Dr. Ram Puniyani, I don't know how to express my gratitude in words, he has been my source of inspiration and motivation since last over twenty years, I published several books with his active collaboration.

This autobiography is also the outcome of his suggestion and for helping me make up my mind for undertaking this venture. He also suggested that I must write about Pushpa, as we have not been able to give due justice to her. Since his suggestion and subsequently my realization of the validity of his suggestion, I also attempted to write about her; and it has indeed proved a rewarding exercise.

Lastly my very close friend, a devoted associate Prof. Jalindar Adsule and also his wife Rachna, because of their active cooperation, whatever I wrote, they got it typed at their Research Centre, they also went through the manuscript after getting it typed. But for this help I don't think any of my work would have seen the light of the day. I have no words to express my deep gratitude towards them. In this sense I am extremely lucky to get the support of my friends, especially Shweta, with whom and the entire team including Kalam; not only did she train them but could win their loyalty and commitment which indeed is unique. This team has always supported me and I could bank on them for any work.

I don't know how to express my gratitude to Irfan Engineer who always stood by me and like his father; our relationship has been so warm, so intimate. I could always bank on him for any kind of support emotional, intellectual. Apart from this, Dr. Iqbal has been a great help, especially not only in conducting this platform activity, but being closely associated since the days of Yuva Bharat, since 2000.

Kalpana, and Shashi Gavaskar are actually my family. I could depend on them for any kind of assistance. Even now I am confident, in my life, for any kind of crisis, especially even when I am sick, they would be there to take care of me.

Shama and Hussain Dalwai, probably are my longest associations since my days in Mithibai college. They have always extended such warmth and during my entire crisis, especially doing the last phase of Pushpa's illness, they stood by me. They were with me throughout this period.

Shashi Sonawane, Jayshree and other friends always supported me and were part of all my activities since 2000. As a matter of fact my friends are my capital. Sudhanshu also stood by me during my personal needs. I can't express my gratitude to him. Vilas also trusted me and extended his warm comradeship till he lived. This is equally true of his family, especially his daughter Mukta who is very close to me.

Lalita Dhara, Lalli has been such a close and deep friend; it is difficult to express my attachment for her. As a matter of fact, Lalli deserves all credit for my stay in Andheri becoming comfortable and my not feeling lost. I can't forget the weekend cultural programme of classical and light music which for quite a few years, I did not miss, watching this programme with Lalli, was a great pleasure. As long as I was active and used to freely go out in Andheri, I never missed this programme along with Lalli. Lalli actually filled the vacuum in my life, which I experienced after staying in Santacruz for over 40 years with our trade union office and Asghar Ali Centre's regular visits.

Amar and Vibhuti, also are close associates and Amar worked with me in UTUC and was with me in the Hospital when I was stabbed by our own trade union activist, and became critical after the chest injury.

I can't conclude my introductory observation without referring to my dear friend Suresh and Shaila and their daughter. Suresh has been such a source of not only inspiration, but the root cause of life spirit, confidence I could retain in myself. Even if I don't call him, or phone him, he is always with me. He, Pradip and Siraj in short Kashtakari Sangathana founders, after losing faith in left politics, I could only derive inspiration from their dedicated work. Pushpa also visited Dahanu several times for fact finding or other activities. I always looked forward for them for fresh inspiration and refreshing insight. Neeraben and Mihir were so close to me, they always treated me as a family friend. Our first Ph.D. batch students, M.N.V. Nair and Shashi Shekhar Jha also were such companions one could never forget.



Dr. Uday Mehta with Mr. Sharad Nair

In concluding remarks I can say that my friends have been my capital and the only capital, which has been a source of inspiration, and optimism at the fag end of my life, such warm relationship and work we did together has been a constant source of inspiration and peace of mind.

I am also extremely thankful to my friend Sharad Nair, who after leaving Asghar Ali's Centre, joined the CRH, and took over the responsibility of running the organization. He stays in Vasai, and in the adjoining tribal area, which is quite backward in every sense of the term, in education, in fertility of land, dry land with low fertility, illiteracy. He adopted that area and decided to find employment for the handicapped in this area. He through his hard labour found employment for nearly seven to eight hundred handicapped people.

For me, I depend on him for all my personal requirements, my homeopathic medicine, he is able to procure and deliver me for the last several years. But for him I could not have been able to maintain my health. Hence I am very grateful to him for rendering such valuable assistance.

My association with Shukla has been for over three decades. As a matter of fact, Com. Shukla knew about Pushpa and me much before we met, I think late eighties, because his father was a prominent Leader of the RSP in Calcutta and Shukla knew about RSP since his childhood. But we met

in Bombay I think only in late 1980s. Since then I have been associated with Com. Shukla and he has been also actively connected with the platform. Earlier even after communal riots in 2002 in Gujarat, Com. Shukla visited Ahmedabad with other comrades from Bombay. Ramesh Pimpale was instrumental in organizing team from Bombay. Since then Shukla has been a part of all activities, I have done in Bombay for the last 30 to 40 years. Com. Shukla is not only a sharp intellectual; he has a vision and experience of working with wide range of progressive groups including Trotskyist. I am extremely lucky to have his association in our activities, his presence and comments with our Platform for Social Justice are always sharp, meaningful and one can learn a lot from his appraisal. Apart from political association, he is our personal friend and I could always bank on him for my deeper political understanding and more enriching perspective in understanding any current political issue or theoretical dimension of the problem we discuss. I always hold Shukla high in personal and political appraisal. His association has always been a source of developing deeper insight in understanding current situation. Our relations have remained always very warm.

As a matter of fact when I think of my friends, comrades, who were also like my teachers, who enriched my life, the lists, would be quite long. I am not able to recollect all names, especially at this age.

Two of my close friends, comrades with whom I started my trade union or political career, I must mention as I was with them right from 1960s. Com. Thakkapan, who also was for some time with the RSP, and was a veteran trade unionist of that time, whom I hold in very high regard. Though he left UTUC and the RSP, my personal bond and intimacy is as fresh and deeply rooted. I now also feel as close to him as I was in initial period of Trade union and political activities, that is in sixties. I can never forget Com. Bajaj though he was with CPM and earlier with the RCP, if I remember correctly. He was much closer to me than probably his own party comrades.

My past seems to be so rich and my age both conspire in a way that I forgot to mention very rich experiences and close associations, I had with people who are well known and have contributed nationally. Com. Mandal who has contributed internationally in the area of the Marxist philosophy and economic appraisals is one such associate. Fortunately I and Pushpa had opportunity to have a close association with them. In

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this context, I must also mention my close association with Com. Sanjay Sanghavi and Jane, both have been very close friends and we maintained live contact till I was more active in politics. Sanjay and Jane also visited my Andheri house where I have shifted one or two decades ago. Both of them had come to this house for lunch and we spent a long time together. I used to maintain contact with him till a couple of years back. As a matter of fact, Behrampada where we are working, he also associated with that. Our close associate Zubeda fought assembly election on his party ticket. I also used to visit his office whenever I got opportunity. Hence it is impossible to forget such close relationship which immensely enriched my life.

Dr. A.C. Shah incidentally who also stayed in Ramkrishna Mission hostel during fifties, we became close friends and subsequently when I was doing my Ph.D. research with Dr. A.R. Desai, he was also doing his Ph.D. dissertation in Economics Department. We used to meet often in the University Research Department. Subsequently he joined Baroda Bank and retired as the Chairman of the Bank. But even when he was a chairman of the Baroda Bank, our intimacy remained fairly intact.

Lastly I can't forget Com. Mandal and his life partner Gazzela, who visited Bombay, I think at the invitation of Bombay comrades and also for participating in a debate organized by late Dr. A. R. Desai in collaboration with the Economics Department. At that time it was headed probably by Dr. Lakadawala. Prof. Brahmanand was also very senior member and internationally known economist was head or a very senior professor in the Economics Department. During Dr. A.R. Desai's period, all the University post-graduate departments were headed by eminent social scientists. This was true of all the post graduate departments of the Bombay University. Mandal had a very lively debate with Prof. Brahmanand on global economy. It was a very enriching and well attended debate. As a matter of fact, I was fortunate to be a part of the Department of Sociology, when all Social Science Departments were headed by world renowned social scientists. And it was also matter of great pride that in spite of serious ideological differences these academic luminaries maintained close, warm, personal relations with each other.

Along with Mandal his life companion Gazzela also stayed in Bombay. As a matter of fact, she stayed for a longer period; she stayed with us for almost a week. It was indeed a great pleasure and very exhilarating

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experience. Mandal also came to our house for a dinner. Thus during my association with Dr. A. R. Desai, I got numerous opportunities to come into contact with national and international dignitaries.

Concluding Observations

Accidentally at Andheri we stay in fairly big flat for the last about two decades. This house is also accidental fortune. Santacruz West where I stayed with Pushpa, was also a rental premise, where Pushpa's parents lived for a long time. Just before our marriage my father-in-law with some good stroke of fortune could buy a small bungalow in Santacruz (East) where on the huge terrace he had given us a Union office. But Santacruz (West) rental house was lying vacant. Actually the landlord had filed a suit for eviction.

Fortunately with our marriage we occupied this house. It was very convenient for us. It was quite an old house with three to four rooms in a row which we could occupy. The rent was very low just 20 rupees. We stayed there for almost over four decades. Actually that was the place where comrades and friends visited regularly, Akshaybhai used to come regularly almost every week as his brother-in-law was staying quite adjacent to our house. Apart from Asghar Ali, I think all comrades, may be to the tune of hundred used to visit our home regularly. Political comrades with different affiliations, comrades from abroad, Com. Chaudhary and many other luminaries had visited our house. Some of them even stayed with us. I can't count the names of comrades with different political affiliations who used to regularly visit our home. Another main advantage of this house, apart from very low rent and bigger accommodation, the adjoining place was occupied by the Gujarati Club which was known for serving very good food at reasonable rate. They were our neighbours, our relations were close that anytime we could serve lunch to visitors, without even prior intimation.

In short, our house had become a centre of political activities. In 2000 the landlord sold the premises and builder provided us this spacious accommodation. As an alternative accommodation, as we were only two tenants, he could do it without any hesitation. Hence accidentally from our rental premises we shifted to this much bigger and spacious accommodation at Andheri. Unfortunately, Pushpa had passed away before we shifted to this accommodation.

Friends from whom I could learn and still I have sweet memories of close relationship, the list seems to be so exhaustive that I tend to forget

some close associations with people who contributed significantly in enriching my life. In this context earlier I missed to mention some important friends with whom I always cherished close relationship. Prof. Ghanshyam Shah, who was earlier director of the Centre for Social Studies, launched by late Dr. I. P. Desai who was also very close associate of Dr. A. R. Desai. I had gone to Surat with Dr. Desai long back when Ghanshyambhai was looking after the Centre. Since that time my relations with Ghanshyambhai have been quite close although we rarely meet. Similarly, I had good fortune of being close to Dr. Parshuram, the director of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, we had met at Britto's Centre in Andheri, when he was associated with the Tata Institute most probably as a Research Director. Though we met only on a few occasions, but relationship was quite close and full of affection. In this context, I was lucky to have close association with Prof. Dr. Mungekar whom I knew, when he was actively connected with the Yuvak Kranti Dal. Even when he became Vice Chancellor of the Bombay University, the intimacy remained intact. As I think of the Tata Institute I can never forget my intimate bond with Dr. Amita Bhide, lecturer at Tata Institute who always maintained a relationship with me.

I also can't forget Advocate Marukh Adenwala, very dear friend, very unassuming. I came in contact with her through Dr. Adsule when she used to come to Nirmala Niketan as a visiting Professor. Dr. Punalekar who was earlier in Bombay University, a close associate of also Dr. Desai and a leading member of our activist group in Bombay, subsequently he shifted to Surat. But we remained very close and this close relationship lasted till he left for Surat.

My memory really has become weak. I don't know how could I forget Rajni Desai, Director of Research Studies, and who brings out 'Aspect' a very scholarly, enlightening and radical bulletin for the last over several decades. Praful Bidwai, accidentally I thought of him as I was referring to his very significant critical appraisal 'The Phoenix Moment' published not long before in 2015. Praful was a close friend and we remained close till he was in Bombay. He visited my house several times. But the last visit, I can't forgot he came to interview while he was preparing his historically very significant, crucial work to understand the unprecedented rise of the right wing forces in this country. This became possible of course, because of the blunders and shortcomings of the Gandhi centric leadership of the

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Congress Party, the fatal mistakes, even if we find the betrayal of the toilers' movement a rather harsh term, of the left and particularly blunders, dogmatic, policies adopted by the Communist Party, both when there was no split and even under the influence of Com. Rajani Palme Dutt when they were not in power and much worse after they came into power in West Bengal and Kerala. As he points out the CPI (M) and the CPI are both cadre-based parties. Between them, they count more than 1.7 million workers, who as a rule are considerably more committed and active than members of most other parties. They have close to 130,000 branches/units and a strong presence, running, into more than fifty million members, in Trade Unions, Kisan Sabhas (peasant associations), landless agricultural workers' unions and women's organizations not to speak of youth and student associations spread across India. The CPI(M) is the world's second largest communist party in size of membership, next only to the Chinese Party.

He referred to blunders the party committed on the Pakistan issue, while declaring arbitrarily support to the Indian National Congress during the freedom struggle and even after the Congress came into power and sudden withdrawal as per the foreign dictates. In short Praful's book is an exhaustive critical documentation of the communist party policy and strategies before and especially after independence. As I suggested earlier when Praful was in Bombay along with Vinayak in the Times of India involved in various grassroots' movements, we were close.

Subsequently to my surprise, when he was interviewing leaders and activists in the left movement in the context of the massive work he had undertaken, he also interviewed me during his visit to Bombay. It was a matter of great honour to me as he personally came to my house with his team and interviewed me and spent more than an hour with me. He had actually requested me to meet him in the Press Club, Bombay for interview. But as my health and more than my health my personal habitual weakness, stopped me from visiting him at his suggested place. Nevertheless it was a matter of great honour to me that he came all the way to Andheri with his team. It was indeed a great privilege first of all for his regarding me in the category of a person who should be interviewed and still much greater honour coming to my house all the way and spending good time with me. This is something one can never forget. I was one of the fortunate to come in close contact with people,

who were really much higher in stature, quite a few of them with national and even international recognition.

Lastly, I can't forget to mention my close acquaintance with Hasmukh Shah who was the Chairman of the biggest Petroleum Unit in Bharat located in Baroda. He also worked as a personal secretary of Shri. Morarji Desai when he was the Prime Minister of the country for a short time. Hasmukh Shah was closely associated and we had a high regard for his honesty and competence. We also met when he was in Delhi and accidentally I was also in Delhi during this time. Though ideologically we differed there was some kind of personal bond with him which lasted for several decades even, after we left the college in Bhavnagar.

My memory has been partially affected by my age. Hence the recollection process is also not as sharp as is normally expected. In any case, one fortunate part is I still remember clearly the events that I passed through and fortunately the impact that they made on me is so deep that I may recollect as normally one expects, but still things appear quite fresh. Movement must have been quite deep, hence I recollect gradually and luckily for me, Pushpa being so committed and hard core activist, and my sympathy and largely identification for the cause of the toiling humanity in this country so deep. In this context I would like to mention the deep impact that Rajni Desai, known for her publication "Aspects" which is being brought out regularly for many, many decades, that it gives such wonderful insight in understanding the problem and the strategy and policy of the ruling classes, and continuity of pauperization and intensity of the suffering due to the policy and measures adopted by the ruling class especially in rural India for the last several decades. Even now these bulletins continue to be my main source of understanding particularly the intensity of the agrarian crisis, and increasing sufferings of the overwhelming mass of agrarian population and also simultaneous pauperization of their strata even when they migrate to urban areas. I consider myself lucky to know such committed and intellectually brilliant persons that probably accounts for my deeper understanding of the agrarian problem and the growing agrarian crisis for the last several decades. My personal acquaintance and such publications have been largely instrumental for whatever insight I have gained in understanding Indian reality and the kind of measures needed for their resolution.

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As when I look back, and reflect I can't forget my dear friend Himmat Zaveri who was actively connected with the Socialist movement from his young age and remained committed to this cause till his last breath. He was widely known in political and especially socialist circles. His roots in the movement must be so strong that, I met Late Com. Madhu Limaye in his son's wedding. I think it was a kind of socialist family gathering. I was in close touch with him till he died a few decades back. But our relations were so close and we often met. In his last phase he had established a centre at Juhu, a fairly big centre, with a big hall where regular meetings were held. I was fortunate to be a part of his many activities

As I recollect my intimacy with Jatin Desai, another veteran Journalist and deeply committed to the cause of suffering humanity. Our relations were so close, that even now we hardly meet these days but I still feel the warmth of it. We have jointly worked as a team along with Com. Ramesh Pimpale for decades.

In this context I feel quite elated when I think of Ramesh Pimpale. I have seen his commitment, his dedication to the cause of the oppressed. Though he is more involved in his business activities, but the bond is still very strong. Recently he has committed to give substantial donation for building up library and allied activities in Dhule where my very close friend Jalindar Adsule and his wife Rachna are working for our Research Centre, and the library for which I have donated my huge library with set of books and magazines, apart from widely known Economic and Political Weekly, Frontline and apart from that various journals brought out by various left groups in this country. I was told that the total collection is over 1100 books and journals which of course are quite rare. The collection is the outcome of my buying progressive books and journals for over sixty years.

Incidentally I also attempted to help Mujib Khan who was well versed in art of direction, story writing, acting. In short he was all-rounder and quite progressive and liberal in his views and committed to the cause of progressive theatre, giving space to new talents. He as I remember produced quite a few plays, basically focusing on the writings of Premchand. Because of my proximity to Himmatbhai he could use his ample space, hall and other facilities for his play.

Lastly, I would like to refer to my and Pushpa's close friend, Jagdamba Prasad Dixit. He used to teach Hindi in St. Xavier's college. He was extremely talented person and a creative, radical writer, artist who can even direct plays, give live commentary. As a matter of fact some of his stories were also so appealing that one or two films were based on his novels. But he was also far more committed to radical cause. As I remember during seventies when political arrests had begun, he along with Sunder Navalkar and if I remember correctly Com. Sunil Dighe were arrested.

In fact, Pushpa was also picked up and interrogated for over five to six hours, as her name was found in Sunder Navalkar's diary. I was also not spared as Mithibai College, where I was working; they had kept a watch on my movement for a couple of days.

Incidentally, during my teaching career in Mithibai, I could come in contact with eminent Gujarati writers as Sitanshu Mehta, Prabodh Parekh and especially a radical novelist Chandrakant Baxi, known all over the country and particularly in Gujarat for his radical writings.

In this context, it is also interesting to note that in Mithibai College I had also opportunity to work with Prof. Kelkar who joined Mithibai as in-charge of the Commerce faculty. Just before his retirement he also got opportunity to work as the Principal of the College. We were very close friends. He eventually became a family friend as my brother who was quite known as a homeopathic practitioner; Prof Kelkar started taking treatment for this wife. Prof. Kelkar was staying in Goregaon and was closely associated with Mrinal Gore and Baburao Sawant who were the main architects of the Goregaon Socialist movement and they had a school and many other institutions under their control. Prof. Kelkar was one of the prominent members and also ran the school, managed by Gore Trust. Pushpa also knew Mrinal Gore, well known as activist in the Left Movement and they often travelled together in the local train.

Thus, in Mithibai I also got the opportunity of working with a colleague who had similar orientation. His closeness to Mrinal Gore was visible when in his daughter's marriage there were very few; handful of people and Mrinal Gore was one of them. She was the main guest and almost conducted the marriage ceremony.

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In my anxiety to finish this autobiography, and also write in a flow, memory goes back to the past, probably one loses logical sequence, even repetition of the same event or individuals, become a part of the narration. In any case, as I reflect events after finishing my major writing, I am reminded rather haunted in a pleasant manner, of events, experiences and days or rather years I spent with some of my colleagues.

Uday Mehta

List of Publications

1. Sectarianism, Politics and Development
Ed. Uday Mehta & Ram Puniyani
Rawat Publications, Jaipur, New Delhi, Bangalore;
October 2012
2. डॉ. आंबेडकर आणि बौद्ध धर्म, तसेच बौद्ध धर्म: सध्याच्या
भारतीय संदर्भातील समर्पकता
लेखक - डॉ. उदय मेहता, सुगावा प्रकाशन, पुणे
3. Agrarian Strategies in India
Vora and Vora Publications Pvt. Ltd Bombay 1975
4. Religion, Liberation Theology and Modern Godmen
Ram Puniyani & Uday Mehta
Sugava Prakashan, Pune, 2018
5. State Secularism and Religion: Western and Indian Experience
Co-editors: Asghar Ali Engineer and Uday Mehta
Ajanta Publications, Delhi 1998
6. Modern Godmen in India
Popular Publications, Mumbai 1993
7. Modern Gurus: Religion and Theology
Editors: Uday Mehta & Ram Puniyani
Maitri Books, Trivandrum 2021
8. Secularism in India
(Ed) Uday Mehta, Ram Puniyani
Kalpaz Publication, Delhi 2016
9. Modern Godmen in India : A Sociological Appraisal
Dr. Uday Mehta, A R Desai.
Popular Prakashan, 1993

10. Religion and Sociology
A R Desai and Dr. Uday Mehta
11. Paulo Freire : Relevance to Indian Teacher Education
Dr. Uday Mehta and Dr. Sheefali Pandya
Lulu Publication USA, 2016
12. Inside the Transforming Urban Asia: Processes, Policies and Globalization
Sharit Bhomik (Bombay University), Dr Uday Mehta (Mithibai College), Simprit (NAPM), Sweta Tambe (CRH), Deepika D'Sousa (Centre for Human an Rights and Law)
13. Elements of social and economic life in India
By Uday Mehta, M. D. David, D. M. Mithani ·
Himalaya Publishing House,1984
14. Religion and Gurus in Traditional and Modern India
By Uday Mehta
Kalpaz, 2018

Samata Shikshan Sanstha

Introduction

Samata Shikshan Sanstha was established in 1972 as an outcome of a strong social commitment towards the marginalized sections of society. It has been striving hard to work towards its mission to impart quality education and provide a conducive environment for children between 06-18 years of age. The organization focuses on students from rural areas belonging to socially and economically marginalized sections.

Vision

The vision of SSS (Samata Shikshan Sanstha) is inspired by the ideology of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar; it believes that the youth belonging to the marginalized groups of the society can only be empowered and developed through education.

Objectives

- To start Primary and Secondary schools, Colleges, Hostels, and Research Institutions etc. to propagate and spread education.
- To run government schemes like orphanages, old age homes, various surveys, etc.
- To organize various seminars, workshops, conferences and trainings aimed towards building a casteless and classless society.
- To implement support programmes for the children, specially girl children of disadvantaged women

Work of Samata Shikshan Sanstha

SSS provides hostel and school facilities for children in the districts of Pune and Dhule. It provides a safe and dignified environment for the development of needy and promising children, from a destitute background. It also runs a Social Work College in Dhule which offers Bachelors and Masters programs in Social Work. The College is affiliated to the Kaviyatri Bahinabai Chudhari North Maharashtra University, Jalgaon. The organization has been successful in making a difference and touching the lives of several children as is testified by its success stories –

one of its alumni is a Labour Officer in Pune Municipal Corporation, another is a Commissioner in Bombay Municipal Corporation, and many are employed as teachers and social workers.

Its work has been recognised by the Social Welfare Department of the Government of Maharashtra and the department of Education. It receives children's maintenance grant and salary grant for teachers and staff.

We believe in sustainable development and have taken steps in this direction. For the last 10 years, SSS has achieved complete energy self sufficiency by using in-house Solar and Wind Energy and Biogas. It is also partially food self-sufficient with organic farming and vermin - culture.

Institutions initiated and run by Samata Shikshan Sanstha:

- Anandashram Primary School, Pune – 1974
- Kasturbha Girl's Hostel, Dhule – 1975
- Samata Students' Hostel, Pune – 1981
- Mahilashram Girl's Hostel, Pune - 1981
- Bhagabai A Wagh Primary Aashram School, Dhule - 1990
- Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar College of Social Work, Dhule – 1994
- Extension Activities:
- Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University Study Centre, Dhule – 2012
- Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Rural & Urban Development Project, Dhule – 2015
- Ramai Poli Bhaji Kendra, Dhule – 2017
- Eklavya Research and Training Centre – 2017
- Indira Gandhi National Open University Programme Centre, Dhule – 2019

Eklavya Research and Training Centre

The Centre was initiated by the Social Work College run by SSS in 2017. It is recognized by the Kavayitri Bahinabai Chaudhari North Maharashtra University. We envisage the College to not be limited to just an educational institute, but a centre for excellence in conducting research

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and training on social issues and problems related to the deprived and marginalized groups in society. Further, we envisage it to be a vibrant Centre of social change and social commitment not only in the North Maharashtra region, but at the national level.

The Centre inculcates a spirit of research amongst faculty and students. It oversees the smooth and efficient coordination of research and development activities in the College, thus fostering overall growth and development. It constantly endeavors for quality enhancement.

The Centre organizes various capacity building workshops on research proposal writing, research methodology, both for students and faculty members to enhance their skills related to research. It forges academic and research collaborations with government and non-government agencies and establishes links with various organizations and funding agencies for sponsored research studies.

The Centre motivates students to present papers in university, state and national conferences and competitions and exhibitions like AVISHKAR at the university level.

Research infrastructure has been created, that include a computer laboratory, internet and a library with a collection of 1200 rare and reputed books and journals.

Objectives of the Centre

- To undertake, promote and coordinate research at the interdisciplinary level in areas related to the marginalized
- To disseminate research findings to policy makers, administrators, field functionaries etc.
- To provide academic and professional guidance and consultancy services to any Government and Non-Govt. organizations, academic institutions, personal or professional researchers
- To promote and enhance capacities of community based organizations and social activists
- To organize awareness camps, seminar/conferences (Regional, State, National and International), workshops, training programs, even training courses (Certificate/PG/Diploma/Degree) to

enhance the quality and capability of both faculties and the students.

- To create a bank of researchers, trainers and academicians to enhance capacities of Government and Non-Govt. personnel
- To conduct various projects (national and foreign; government and non-government) for enhancing the quality of both the research fields and the researchers and for the societal development.
- To publish research papers, periodicals and books for the betterment of the society and to expand the arena of research.
- Provide quality, cost-effective training designed to enhance knowledge, develop skills and enrich individuals and organizations.
- As part of our publication work, we are bringing out this autobiography on Dr. Uday Mehta which tries to capture his rich and varied social contribution in the changing socio-political context of society.