

DHARAMPUR DEVELOPMENT ABHIYAN



Key to Economic self-sufficiency

**Land Development
&
Water Management**

Talisman

I will give you a Talisman.

Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, try the following expedient :

Recall the face of the poorest and the most helpless man whom you may have seen and ask yourself:

“Is the step you contemplate going to be of any use to him?”

“Will he be able to gain anything by it?”

“Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny?”

“In other words, will it lead to Swaraj or self rule for the hungry and also spiritually starved millions of our countrymen?”

GANDHIJI.

In this small booklet, we are presenting an humble attempt to use Gandhiji's *Talisman*.

1. Dharampur – Kaprada Present Position

In the whole of Gujarat, Dharampur and Kaprada Talukas in Valsad district are remote and economically most backward areas. The tribals living in the forests on the mountains are the **poorest people in Gujarat**. Central Government as well as Gujarat Government have accepted this fact and worked out special schemes for them. Accordingly, substantial relief measures are announced for this area. However, most of the development budget is spent on Dharampur city and the adjoining cluster of villages in the plains as well as on administration. The tribals in the forests are and remain in more or less the same situation as they were before independence.



**Village Waghval, November 2000.
Mr. Yogesh Gupta (Share Broker) with the
villagers.**

**A villager had died. The people had come
near the lake for the last rites. The rites
consisted of
drinking Deshi liquor.**

Excluding four months of monsoon, they have no occupation throughout the year. They know how to live on forests, and forest products. Most of the forests have been cut out for timber.

Agriculture is difficult on the slopes of the mountains. There is no industry worth the name – not even cottage industry. Animal husbandry is also absent. Hence, after Diwali many people come down from the mountains and go to Valsad, Vapi, and Umergam etc. in search of labour jobs.

Our attempt is to see to it that they get enough work to continue to live in their native villages in the forests. Primary benefit of it is that they will have a more **dignified human life**. The secondary benefit could be that to some extent, there would be **reduction in the number of slums in the cities**.

We hope, we are following Mahatma Gandhiji's advice by helping the poorest to gain control over their own lives.

2. How to develop this area?

From Kutch, Saurashtra & rest of Gujarat, millions of people have migrated outside for centuries. Most of these people still have contacts with their native places. They keep sending remittances to their relatives and donations to their native places. These contributions help in the development of rural Gujarat. However, the people who have migrated from Dharampur (and Kaprada) are only illiterate unskilled labourers. They can hardly make their own living. They cannot send any remittances back to Dharampur, which could help the development of that area. That means, almost all the donations have to come from the people not belonging to Dharampur.

Dharampur is situated in Valsad. The forests are almost similar to the famous Dang forests. However, the forest people are different. They are still unaffected by the temptations and greed of the modern civilisation, money, commercialisation etc. The people are quiet, innocent and live a very simple life. They are prepared to do whatever work is available. We have received tremendous response in all the development programs from the tribal community of the area.

VEDCHHI PRADESH SEVA SAMITI earlier constituted a committee - Dharampur Vikas Samitee [DVS] to execute various development programs in Dharampur Taluka, when the project was initiated in 1989. DVS is doing the following activities in Dharampur [including Kaprada] Taluka:

1. Education
2. Land Development
3. Water Management
4. Health Care

3. Education:

3.1 Shri Bhikhubhai Vyas & Smt. Kokibahen Vyas are basically educationists. They first started night classes for adults in 1989, followed by Non Formal Education [NFE] classes for youth and Balwadies for kids. Finally they ended up by starting formal residential primary schools [Chhatra Shalas] in 1993. They began with 1-2 standard schools. By now, there are **7 chhatra shalas upto 5th standard**. The students reside in the chhatra shalas. During daytime they learn and study in the Shala - rooms. At night, they sleep in the same rooms. They are provided food, clothing & books by the chhatra shalas.

3.2 Every chhatra shala caters to the needs of a few surrounding **villages**. A village may be spread out in about ten “**falias**”. A falia is a small group of twenty to fifty Kachcha houses. These falias are dotted on different corners of the mountains. Some times the distance between two falias of the same village may be several kilometres. If these students have to come from their homes to the schools, they have to walk all this distance. On the way they may have to climb up and down big hills - twice or thrice, pass through forest and cross streams. As such, daily travel between schools & homes is not practical. Hence most of the students have to stay at the school itself.

3.3 **No fees** are charged at present for any students. The reason is very simple. Most of the people in Dharampur live below the poverty line. As such, they cannot afford to pay any fees.

3.4 So far, a **Swedish organisation** –TUFF was financing 100% of the cost for running all the seven schools, with major support coming from the Swedish Government. Their donation was also helpful for some projects other than schools. It is the policy of the Swedish government to support the development projects for a limited period, however noble and successful the work may be. They do not prefer the projects to be aid - dependent for a very long time. Hence, while they are satisfied with the activities and achievements of Dharampur project, from the calendar year 2002 they have reduced the grant to 50%. From the year 2003, they will withdraw completely.

3.5 The setup at the upper level is also going to change shortly for administrative reasons. Vedchhi Pradesh Seva Samittee [VPSS] was the original parent body. Now it will take over the execution of Dharampur Project from VEDCHHI PRADESH SEVA SAMITI [VPSS]. Both the sister NGOs have identical objectives and approach. It will be the same Dharampur Vikas Samittee [DVS] and the same leaders\cadres that will execute the project, on the same lines followed during last 12 years, since the inception of the project.

3.6 Since GSS and VPSS were getting Swedish funds for more than 20 years, they had not applied for any grant from Government of Gujarat. Now, because of budgetary constraints, Gujarat Government has decided not to finance any further residential schools. Apart from these constraints, there is another reason why these schools are not entitled to get Government grant. As per Gujarat Government rules, a school desiring grants should employ teachers with minimum educational qualifications fixed by the govt. [That is PTC]. DVS does not have teachers with PTC qualification in chhatra shalas, although they are quite competent and highly motivated. They have been given training as teachers and social workers by DVS.

3.7 At present DVS employs most of the teachers from amongst the local tribal youth. The local people speak Kunkna language. When the children come to the first standard in the schools, they do not understand anything except Kunkna language. Gujarati is not their mother tongue. The PTC qualified teachers from the rest of Gujarat cannot speak Kunkna. Also, they do not want to come to distant places, full of scarcity in every respect, like Dharampur forests. In some villages of Dharampur, where the Gujarat Government schools are established, the teachers simply do not come for the four months of monsoon in many cases. In the rest of the months also many of them are irregular. They come [some times by turns], mark attendance, take salary and disappear. To get success in Dharampur schools, it is necessary to have local people as the teachers. The locals do not mind all the difficulties of the forest villages. These teachers have hardly studied up to 12th standard. Hence these schools are not entitled to Gujarat Government grants.

3.8 On one hand, DVS is not receiving grant from the Government; and now the foreign aid is also going to stop. That is why it will need donations from private trusts, individuals & well - wishers to continue these schools – an important facility for the children of this most deprived and neglected area.

3.9 At present there are **900 students** in these 7 schools. Annual expenditure stands at **Rs. 22,00,000**. This includes the salaries of the teachers, cooks, other supervisory staff and cost of food. On an average, the **cost per student per year comes to Rs. 2500**.



Charming tribal girls and boys, Age - 4 to 10 years, Playing Garba, Waghwal.

3.10 With all these constraints the **students** are given excellent education as per Gujarat Government syllabus - rather much more than that. Within about two years, all the students learn Gujarati. They are also taught dances, drama, drawing, games and many other creative activities. They are also taught to spin cotton yarn on Amber Charkha for a pair of clothes. During our several visits of the schools we have seen the students doing excellent performances. They are “little wonders” in their own right. Their **teachers** must be said to be the “great wonders”. In spite of all the constraints, they teach the students so well. The teachers live with the students. Apart from teaching; looking after the students throughout the day - with emphasis on habit formation and value development - is also their job. Simultaneously, all development work including health care etc. is also conducted or assisted by the teachers. That way school is not only a teaching place amidst four walls, but rather a spring - board for all -sided development of the surrounding villages.

4. Present Agricultural situation in Dharampur

Even today agriculture is the most basic source of employment for villagers in India. It can provide employment to a large number of people, with the least possible capital investment. Well-managed agriculture is the most effective instrument for poverty alleviation in a country like India - well endowed with natural resources.

For agriculture one needs flat land and water. In mountainous slopes, getting flat land is not possible. One has to develop the land.

The rainfall in Dharampur is more than 100 inches per year, on an average. Hence water supply should be abundant. However, the fact is contrary. The paradox in Dharampur is that all water falling on the mountains runs down to the valleys. From there it flows to the rivers. There are many rivers and dams in Valsad district. Valsad would never have water scarcity. However, that water is of no use for the people on the top of the mountains.

A simple comparison can be made with the terrace of a 30 floors tower in Mumbai. All the rainfall on the terrace will run down. Once the rainfall is over, the terrace will be dry.

Since forests have been cut out, water percolation in the ground is minimum. There are no natural lakes and hence no storage of water. Hence agriculture in Dharampur is wholly dependent on rains. The tribals grow cheapest and early variety food grains, which can grow easily on slopes and may survive dry spells during monsoon.

DVS wants to change all this. They are targeting considerable progress in agriculture by the following means:

5. Land Development:

DVS is encouraging the tribals in developing their land. The slopes can be converted into small flat terraces of land by simple methods. Each family would bring stones from the nearby area and arrange them in a small wall of about two feet height. These walls [bunds] could be thirty feet or even fifty feet long, depending upon the topography of the land. Once the bunds are made on the gentle slopes, the land is left to itself.

DVS pays labour charges in the form of food grains to the villagers. It is paid on 50% of normal daily wages basis. Rest is considered beneficiaries' contribution.

When monsoon sets in, the rain - fall washes the surface of the mountains. It brings considerable silt. When this water with silt passes through the mud-stone walls, the silt is trapped and retained. It finally settles in the fields on account of the bunds. The water runs away. In this manner, in one monsoon, the piece of land behind the wall will gather precious soil of about six to ten inches. After the monsoon, that piece of land is ready to grow some grains.

When this process of trapping silt goes on for three years, a flat bed of soil of about two feet depth is generated. This is an excellent soil for growing rice, which the villagers love and need.

When a large part of the mountain area is developed with soil bunding program, it looks like terrace farming in the mountains of Himalayas or Ootakamund (Ooty). This is the most effective way of stopping degradation of denuded mountains.



Once Bandhpalas are built, rice is grown on the terraces.

There are faster ways of developing land. With heavy earth moving machinery, several terraces can be developed within a month. The tribals can get immediate results from the very first rainfall. They would not have to wait for three years. However, this requires large funds. Whereas soil - bunding by human labour is the cheapest possible alternative. It provides much needed employment to the villagers at their doorsteps and creates fixed assets in the form of developed land. The process is slow. However, with the constraint of funds we have no alternative. Nearly 1000 hectares of land has been improved or reclaimed in the last 8-9 years. Much larger work remains to be done.

This year, we want to spend Rs. 5,00,000 in payment of labour charges [food grains] for soil bunding.

6. Water Management:

Water management is done through well recharging & check dams.

7. Wells

Generally, a falia has a well. The well water is used for human consumption. However, many wells start running dry from the month of March. Then the villagers have to walk several kilometers and climb mountainous routes, to fetch water.

DVS has constructed 103 wells so far, with the labour contribution of the community. It has now started a program of recharging the wells. The attempt is to ensure that there is sufficient percolation of water so that the wells should provide water till June, when it starts raining. This can be achieved by following methods.

7.1 Trenches:



These trenches raise the underground water table by percolating water; prevent soil erosion; and help afforestation.

Normally, the well is located in a low area. Trenches are dug on all the slopes and the land surrounding the well. These trenches can be of any size. Normally DVS digs ten feet long, two feet wide and two feet deep trenches. The soil removed from the trenches is kept in a mound on the lower side of the trench. Several such trenches are made on a slope. The rainwater travelling on the slopes gets trapped in the trenches. Whatever water overflows from one series of trenches will get trapped in the next series of trenches. Overflow from the second trench will get trapped in the third trench and so on. This improves the percolation of water considerably.

DVS plans to grow trees on the mounds near the trenches. This way, there can be good afforestation. There are some difficulties. The wandering cattle can eat away the plants. We have to provide protection at the least possible cost. We hope to tackle these problems and grow more trees.

The trees & the trenches together help in water percolation. In future it will grow more forest products.

7.2 Recharging:

Direct recharging of wells can also help. In this process, a filtration block of six feet by six feet by six feet volume can be dug up. (The size of the filtration block will vary with the topography and size of the well.) This block has to be filled with layers of porous material like bricks, sand, coal etc. The block will be filled in for about four feet depth. Thus, after filling, the block will be two feet deeper than the surrounding land. The flow of rainwater will be directed in the filtration block. From the bottom of the block, filtered water will be carried through a pipe to the well.

This way, the well will be filled up with almost every rainfall. This water will spread underground through the well. As the ground water supply increases, the life of the wells through the months of April, May, June also improves.

8. Check Dams:

All the streams in the mountain become alive during monsoon. Water flows with tremendous force. Again in a few days after the monsoon, these streams become dry.

Following Mr. Rajendra Singh's experiment in Rajasthan, DVS has planned to build several check dams in Dharampur. During the period of January to June - 2001, seventy check dams have been built. For the season - Jan. to June 2002, we have planned 59 check dams. Already by 18th Feb., more than 20

check dams have been completed. We expect to complete all the dams by 31st March & then concentrate on other development work.

The dam sites have to be carefully selected for storing maximum water with minimum labour. The sites should be safe enough to withstand the force of the monsoon waters.



Hedpada Village

Building Check dam
for lake.
Year 2001

As per the laws governing forests, no civil construction using cement & steel can be made in the forest. In any case DVS does not have the funds for such costly material brought from outside. They build the check dams with 100% indigenous material like stones & soil. The stones are dug up and brought from the mountain side. The soil is dug up from the land behind the check dam site. A robust wall is made from these stones & soil. The only expenditure in making these dams is labour charges paid to the villagers. No machinery is used and no outside material is used. At the most, they may have to use some cement in sensitive areas like "overflow points".

Smt. Kokibahen Vyas, Mr. Santu & others had visited Rajasthan and stayed with Mr. Rajendra Singh and learned the techniques of building check dams. They have now trained several volunteers who have understood this skill. This year again more volunteers are being trained in the skills of selecting dam sites and construction of dams.



**Dungarsen Dam
Work in Progress
April, 2001.**

**How much work these tribals can do
without any modern equipment!**

**Only source of their energy is their
own realisation
that they have to do this work.**

All these check dams create small lakes. The mountain slopes do not permit very large lakes. In fact, the walls can be called “Nala Plugs” and the lakes may be called ponds. However, even these small ponds are very effective. They supply water for the thirsty cattle for several months in a year. They are excellent irrigation tool during monsoon. They also help in water percolation, finally recharging the existing down - stream wells.

Compared to the year 2001, this year, the work has been started earlier. Some check dams have already been constructed in streams. Small flows of water in these streams are now trapped & small lakes have been formed. These have already proved to be sources of drinking water for the cattle & wild animals.

9. Food for work:

All these programs are conducted on the principles of 'Food For Work'. DVS does not build any check dam or conduct any program in Dharampur as a charity. For all the programs, the villagers contribute 50% in the form of labour. They even give away their small patch of land that may fall in the lakes under construction. Many times the land for schools as well as check dams is contributed free of charge by the land owners. In fact, DVS does not spend any money for land. It is either contributed by the Village Panchayat or by the individuals.



**So many Tribals get food for check dam work.
Jan / Feb., 2002.**

The villagers are paid 50% of the normal wages for their labour. The balance 50% is their own contribution, because the project is being executed for their benefit. DVS considers their involvement and contribution quite essential. This 50% labour charges are paid only for check dams, well recharging and soil bunding. In case of building schools, in many cases the villagers contribute land, timber and free labour. Where the labour charges are paid, they are paid in the form of food grains. Mainly a cheaper variety of rice is supplied.



Food being distributed at village Dhamni - Seltipada.

Feb., 2002

This is the bare minimum that is paid to the villagers. If the wages are not paid, then they would have nothing to eat, forcing them to go to the cities for their livelihood. When the labour charges are paid in the form of food, they stay in their villages, work in the villages and create infrastructure for agriculture that again increases food, fruits and vegetable production.

10. Results of the development work:

As a result of the development work mentioned above, land has been saved from degradation & made useful for farming. The villagers have started taking better quality rice crops. The well recharging work has been done so far in limited places. The check dams have been extremely useful. Some photographs will tell the truth. The villagers are very happy about all the programs & they are fully participating. More than 5,000 tribals' lives have been affected positively by check dams built in the year 2001 alone. The impact of all the work by DVS is spread over several villages and thousands of tribals.



The result of hard work by the tribals of Dharampur. A small lake filled with water during Monsoon of the year, 2001.

11. Tribal Intelligence

This is a small lake in Dharampur taluka. The lake is at a high level in the mountain. The tribals have so planned that over flow from the lake is taken by gravity through narrow canals in the downward agricultural land. Almost, 20 acres of land have been irrigated by this small lake. They use the lake as an overhead tank in our house. The lake gets filled almost every week due to rains. The farmers carry the water to their land through the canals. The whole process needs no machinery, no pipelines and no electricity.



Call it the tribal intelligence.

12. Health Care:

DVS does not have a regular set up for the health care programme. The following programmes have been executed casually, in cooperation with other NGOs.

The school teachers guide the sick and give medicines for primary ailments to the patients, coming from the surrounding villages. Four “Mother and Child Care Centers” are conducted, serving nearly 200 pregnant women and kids every year. Eighteen youngsters were given intensive training for Rural Health Care by experts. They are working as health volunteers in 18 remote villages. They are doing a good job where there are no doctors or any medical services worth the name. On an average 5 general check - up camps are conducted every year. The sick get free medicines there. About 1000 patients are treated every year in these camps. Special health check - up is organised of all the chhatra shala students. Additionally, emergency assistance is provided to the villagers in serious cases.

13. Financial Projections

13.1. Education:

The cost for 7 schools is Rs. 22 lakhs per year. This cost is expected to increase by about 5% every year, just because of inflation etc. If more students are admitted, the cost can increase accordingly. At present many families want their children to study. DVS is restricting the admissions in view of the budgetary constraints.

Donations can be given in any of the following manners:

(i) On an average, a school costs Rs. 3.15 lakhs per year. Any donor may adopt any one or more schools for a number of years that he or she likes. DVS will give full details of the working of the school, with periodical progress reports and arrange for visits of the donors.

(ii) The cost per child comes to around Rs. 2500/- per year. Any donor may decide to adopt the costs of a specific number of children for a number of years. DVS will supply the details of the child & the family and also of the regular progress made by the child.

(iii) In the extreme case, DVS may have to request some of the tribal families to pay in terms of food grains that they grow, for the education of their children.

13.2. Land Development:

The soil bunding costs totally depend upon the topography and the length of the walls [bunds] made. We are planning to implement bunding program in the year 2002 for a total labour cost of Rs. 5,00,000.

13.3 Water Management:

The cost for different projects for water management is highly variable.

The cost of check dams will vary greatly. In the year 2001, villagers have built some check dams with total volume of 4000 cubic feet (40 feet length X 10 feet height X 10 feet breadth). Whereas some check dams may have the total volume of around 1,000 cubic feet. In some cases, villagers have dug up the pond behind the check dam for a volume of about 1,000 cubic feet. In some other cases, the digging has been for more than 15,000 cubic feet. Thus, the cost of a check dam coupled with the pond may vary from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 1,00,000.

However, based on the experience for the year 2001 and the inspection visits made for the plans for the year 2002, it is estimated that on an average the cost of wages per check dam will be Rs. 15,000. VPS coordinators have inspected and decided to start work on 59 sites. The wage cost will be around Rs. 9,00,000. In addition, the other administrative costs and cost of salaries for the staff will cost about Rs. 1,00,000.

Accordingly the total budget for the year 2002 for check dams comes to Rs. 10,00,000.



**Small lake & Checkdam at Ozarda -
Batada village made during
Jan-Feb., 2002.**

This checkdam is constructed on a natural stream between two hills. Already a small pond has formed. In monsoon, it will trap good quantity of water. Village - Ozarda - Doifoda. Jan. 2002.



Well recharging - the cost of filtration blocks as well as trenches may come to about Rs. 10,000 per well. If we cover 50 falias in this year, the total cost will be Rs. 5,00,000.

Thus, our total budget for water management & land development projects is Rs. 20,00,000. We have received commitments for about Rs. 12,00,000.

We will first complete the check dams. The work on soil bunding and well recharging will be taken up, depending upon further donations that may be received.

14. Total budget for the year 2002:

	Need	Committ- ments	Balance
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
1. Education - Schools –total annual costs	22,00,000		
Less : Swedish Donation		13,00,000	
Net requirement for the schools:			9,00,000
2.&3. Agriculture & Water Management :			
Check dams:	10,00,000		
Well recharging:	5,00,000		
Soil - Bunding:	5,00,000		
Total requirement:	----- 20,00,000		
Less: commitments received		12,00,000	
Net requirement			8,00,000
4. Health Care [lump sum]	2,00,000		2,00,000
Total for 1, 2, 3 & 4	44,00,000		
Commitments received		25,00,000	
Donations required for the year 2002:			19,00,000
Donations required for the year 2003:			44,00,000

15. Different Projects for Donations

	Rs.
Donation per student per year :	2,500
Donation per well recharging :	10,000
Donation per check dam :	15,000
Donation per falia covering a check dam & well recharging :	25,000
Donation per school per year :	3,15,000
Donation for health care :	2,00,000
Donations required for the year 2002:	22,00,000
Donations required for the year 2003:	44,00,000

We appeal to you to donate generously in this humanitarian work for the most deserving and neglected section of the society, for any project of your choice. You are most welcome to visit Dharampur and see our projects.

16. Contacts for further information

For Dharampur.

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Cheques or drafts may be drawn in favour of
“VEDCHHI PRADESH SEVA SAMITI”

Drafts may be made payable at Valod, Gujarat.

The trust has registration under S. 80G of the Income-tax Act as well as FCRA registration under Foreign Contribution Regulation Act.

**As a result of the development work done by VEDCHHI PRADESH SEVA
SAMITI Vyara,
rice is being grown in Dharampur.**



**Service to man is Service to God -
Swami Vivekanand.**