

The Maharogi Sewa Samiti

Quarterly

October 2010

A Leaf from Baba's Life



Having decided on service of the leprosy-afflicted as his life's mission, the young Murlidhar Devidas Amte began expanding his knowledge about leprosy in every way possible. He started delving deep into books on the subject. He started volunteering at the government-run leprosy clinic in Warora and at the leprosy clinic of a renowned Gandhian, in the town of Dattapur in Wardha District.

Although a lawyer by training, he had soon learnt to diagnose and treat people with leprosy. But many decried the idea that a lawyer with no medical training should be allowed to treat patients. At the same time, given the fear and social stigma attached to the disease, there was a great dearth of doctors to treat leprosy patients, especially in rural areas. These circumstances prompted Murlidhar to join a course on leprosy treatment at the 'Calcutta School of Tropical Medicine.'

When Murlidhar was doing the course, there was no cure for leprosy although the bacillus had been discovered by then. One day, Dr. Dharmendra, a great scholar and researcher mentioned to his students that laboratory experiments to find a vaccine against leprosy using animals had failed and casually added that it seemed a human subject alone would be ideal for the purpose. The Professor did not expect his students to take him seriously, but surprisingly, the young Amte rose up to boldly volunteer himself as a guinea pig.

The risks involved were explained to him. But the zealous Amte was not ready to retract. He thought about sacrificing one life to save millions of lives. He had arrived at the decision to volunteer for the test by weighing all the pros and cons of the issue. The risks were outweighed by his confidence that his equally sacrificing wife would take care of him if he contracted the disease.

Following his offer, the young Amte was infected with the dead and live bacilli. But the test was upset by the fact that his robust body did not contract the disease. However, for Baba, the experiment was a personal success as he was now finally sure that he had conquered forever his fear of the dreaded disease.

Though without previous medical training, he completed the course as 1st among 28 post-graduate medics. By the time he returned home, the discovery of diamino-diphenyl-sulphone had made leprosy curable. With this wonder drug in hand, he began treating leprosy patients in 60 villages around Warora. Therein was the humble but dynamic transformation of Murlidhar Devidas Amte into the great 'Baba Amte' as we know him today. He is the person who said that: "After I die, let it be said about me that I was a man who believed that RESPONSIBILITY IS NOT TRANSFERABLE."

(by Kannan G.)

From the Secretary's Desk



Dear Friends,

I am pleased to be in touch with you once again with this 6th issue of our Quarterly Newsletter.

Through our newsletters, we are not only able to update you with our activities, programs and projects being carried out at Anandwan

and other project sites from time to time but also able to convey the impediments we come across.

I would like to express my sincere thanks for your encouraging response to all previous issues of our quarterly newsletters. It boosts our morale to carry forward the legacy of Baba Amte with renewed vigor and commitment.

The good news for this quarter is that during the current rainy season (June to September), we have received a very good rainfall of around 1350 mm. As a result of this, our agricultural operations are in full swing. The days of concerns for availability of water for drinking, domestic purposes and agricultural operations are over for the time being. All ponds at Anandwan & Somnath, which had completely dried up during the last two years, are now overflowing.

With each edition of newsletter, more & more friends are getting added to our mailing list. All our new friends are requested to kindly inform us if they wish to receive previous editions of MSS newsletters. Alternatively the earlier newsletters can be accessed on our website – <http://www.anandwan.in>

With warm regards & best wishes,

Dr. Vikas Amte

OUR VISION:

Creative Humanism - Creation of an environment where there is creative expression of the abilities of the disabled; where there is non-exploitative harnessing of human and natural resources; where there is constructive synthesis of the able-bodied and the feeble-bodied.

OUR MISSION:

To restore the dignity of socially outcast people by helping them to enhance their livelihood capabilities and helping them empower themselves to contribute back to the society constructively.

OUR STRATEGY:

Provision of medical aid, education and employment to the aforementioned, along with a comprehensive physical, occupational, psychological and social rehabilitation.

Establishment of Anandwan Agriculture Technology School

The Anandwan Agriculture Technology School (ATS), a joint initiative of MSS & Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture (India) started functioning from the current academic session 2010-11 at Anandwan. It is affiliated to the Maharashtra State Agricultural University viz. Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh Krishi Vidyapeeth, Akola.



The ATS was formally inaugurated on 10 September in the presence of Dr. V. M. Mayande, Vice-Chancellor, Dr Panjabrao Deshmukh Krishi Vidyapeeth, Akola, Mr. Prakash Apte, Managing Director, Syngenta (India) Ltd., Dr. Marco Ferroni, Executive Director, SFSA, Switzerland, Mr. B.T. Seshadri, Executive Director, SFSA (India), Mr. Devendra Phadanvis, Member of Legislative Assembly, Nagpur, Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh Krishi Vidyapeeth, Akola and Dr. Vikas Amte, Secretary, MSS.

Although a small happening, it has a value infinite in the background of agricultural situation in India particularly in Vidarbha region of the State of Maharashtra.

As we know, agriculture is the mainstay of Indian economy sharing major employment in the form of rural labor force, accounting for 27 per cent national GDP and feeding more than 100 crore population. The sector contributes 21 per cent of the total exports. However this sector is not up to mark due to lower (<2.2%) than expected (>4%) growth rate and shrinking share in GDP over the years due to decreasing productivity for various direct and indirect factors. Obviously food Growth (1.2%) is also trailing behind the population growth (1.7%).

The technological gains of early years of green revolution have exhausted the crop yield potential showing wide gaps in actual and potential yields. Besides various factors for such debacle, ineffective transfer of technology is one factor that needs immediate attention. The education in agriculture paves way for technology-transfer and creates the conditions that enable farmers to acquire skill and use the same for decision making in farming for better and profitable output. Realizing the importance of agricultural education, Baba Amte established Anand Niketan College of Agriculture at Anandwan in 1965.

There is a wide network of institutes of agricultural education in India but considering growing population in the country and variety of agriculture-related problems, it is inadequate. In Maharashtra, especially in Vidarbha region's eastern part where MSS' areas of operations are located, is comparatively backward in all respects including agriculture. We therefore felt a need for location specific development. Access to agricultural education leads to achieve it at lower levels so that the farmers

and their pals would improve their agriculture and life as Human Development Index in closely related to the development of agriculture in every part of India. This thought motivated MSS & SFSA (India) to think of an Agriculture Technology School at Anandwan affording 2 year diploma for rural youth who cannot afford college level education in agriculture which require substantial money and duration.

The availability of land, irrigation, vicinity of Agriculture College, well developed dairy unit, infrastructural facilities like students hostel, rural and social background, financial back up from SFSA (India) and above all, our strong desire moved the competent authorities to allot ATS to Maharogi Seva Samiti. Unlike other agricultural schools in the state, the extension wing for transfer of technology has been attached to the ATS to improve the agriculture in areas around Anandwan. In this venture SFSA (India) is with us from the very beginning, in fact motivating and mobilizing MSS for this project.



The school has strength of 60 students on its role for the first year. Well-equipped laboratory, library, farm equipments, computer unit, class rooms, 50 acre demonstration field, playground have fulfilled teaching requirements and ensured the academic atmosphere.



The school is run as per university norms by one principal, two teaching supervisors, three agricultural assistants, one livestock supervisor and other supporting staff.



The subjects to be taught are as under:

1st year: basic principles of agriculture, production technology of important crops, fruits and vegetables, agriculture implements, machinery and irrigation, plant protection, rural sociology, agricultural extension and Information technology

2nd year: Organic farming, seed production technology, nursery management, floriculture, green house technology, animal husbandry, poultry, sericulture, farm produce processing, cooperation, credit & marketing, Work experience in agricultural industry



MSS is closely associated with SFSA (India) since 2004 through Dr. Partha Dasgupta, Advisor, SFSA. MSS acknowledges, with sincere thanks, SFSA (India)'s support in modernising and streamlining agricultural operations at Anandwan and Somnath. SFSA (India) has now entered into an agreement with MSS to provide funds for infrastructural development and operational costs of ATS.

The Anadwan Institute for the Transfer of Agricultural Technology (AITA) is in the offing with the strong support of SFSA (India), SFSA, Switzerland and Syngenta (India) Ltd. for the service and development of farming community in the region. All praise to Mr. Prakash Apte, Managing Director, Syngenta (India), Dr Marco Ferroni, Executive Director, SFSA, Switzerland and Dr. Partha Dasgupta, Advisor, SFSA for their initiative and support.

MSS is indebted to Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh Krishi Vidyapeeth, Akola especially to Dr. V. M. Mayande, the able Vice-Chancellor who considered our ATS proposal as a special case and ensured approval and allotment. We are also indebted to Mr. Devendra Phadanvis, MLA from Nagpur who in his capacity as Member of Executive Council of Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh Krishi Vidyapeeth, Akola strongly supported our proposal in council meetings. MSS acknowledges Dr. D. G. Giri, Associate Dean (Lower Agricultural Education) of Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh Krishi Vidyapeeth, Akola for his cooperation and guidance in our efforts to establish the ATS.

Men and Matters

Visit of Mr. Anirudha Dutta, CLSA:

Mr. Anirudha Dutta, who works as Executive Director, Equity Research for CLSA, Asia's leading brokerage and investment group, visited Anandwan & Somnath on 21st July, 2010, in connection with our proposal submitted to CLSA Chairman's Trust, Hong Kong towards Comprehensive Development of Land, Water Resources & Irrigation at Somnath. He was accompanied by Ms. Frances Dydasco from a prominent investment group in Singapore. Both appreciated the developmental work of MSS towards socially outcast.

CLSA Chairman's Trust, had made a substantial contribution to our Drought Management Plan in 2009. Mr. Anirudha Dutta was instrumental in presenting our appeal for drought relief to CLSA Chairman's Trust.

Visit of Ms. Floor Grevink from Mitra Foundation, Netherlands:

Ms. Floor Grevink from the Netherlands came to Anandwan on 30th September, for a brief visit. She visited us after a gap nearly 3 years, to witness the progress of existing as well as new projects during the last three years.

Ms. Floor Grevink & her husband, Mr. Jasper Kappen are our close associates. They are the founder members of Mitra Foundation, The Netherlands. Mitra Foundation supports NGOs in India working towards the cause of vulnerable children, tribal populace and physically challenged.

Visit of Dr. Prakash Amte & Dr. Mandakini Amte to Switzerland:

Dr. Prakash Amte & Dr. Mandakini Amte, on invitation as Guests of Honour for the European Marathi Sammelan-2010, went to Zurich, Switzerland, from 23 to 25 July.

The objective of organising European Marathi Sammelan is to bring together the Marathi Diaspora living in Europe:

- to promote Marathi culture and the language
- to encourage the use of Marathi by the second generation Maharastrians
- to offer a platform for entrepreneurs and artistes to present themselves in Europe

The European sammelan is held every two years in different European cities.

Programmes and Projects

Free Diagnostic Camp for Cardiac Patients:

A free Diagnostic Camp was organised at Anandwan, on 9th August, 2010, for the benefit of patients from Anandwan as well as from nearby rural areas, suffering from cardiac ailments. This camp was organised in collaboration with Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College and Acharya Vinoba Bhave Rural Hospital, Wardha.



Dr. Satish Khadse, Head of Department-Cardiology along with his team of Cardiologists, successfully conducted this one day health camp. Total 200 patients were examined for hypertension, diabetes and any suspected cardiac ailments. After screening, 10 cases were detected for further examination and treatment. Out of 10, nine cases were selected for angiography test and one case was selected for operation since the patient was suffering from Rheumatic Heart Disease with mitral stenosis requiring replacement of valves.

Readers' Response

We express our sincere thanks to all the readers who sent appreciative messages to the fifth issue of our Quarterly Newsletter (April - June 2010). We are pleased to quote here some of the feedbacks.

<p>Dear Sir,</p> <p>I was very happy to receive & read the Quarterly newsletter. It was not only informative but also inspiring (article on Mr. Narendra Devghare). "A leaf from Babas Life" was very interesting & it further raised the respect towards Smt Sadhanatai. We thank you for sending us this newsletter & hope to receive future editions. Additionally this is a very good medium to be in contact.</p> <p>I also wish you all the very best for various programs being launched by your team & wish we could participate in some.</p> <p>Hoping to visit Anandwan one day with my family.</p> <p>Warm regards...</p> <p>Milind Oak</p> <p>(Mr. Milind Oak is our close associate based at Bangalore. He works as Manager-Industrial Projects [Global Supply Chain] with Schneider-Electric (India), Bangalore)</p>	<p>Dear Kaustubh,</p> <p>I read the 5th issue of MSS Quarterly with much delight. The report on the Youth Camp (Shramanskar Shibir) at Hemalkasa brought back happy memories of the times when I attended similar camps at Somnath..now more that 40 years ago! It is inspiring and gratifying to note that the noble vision of Baba is continuing to unfold with vigour and passion. It is good to note also that MSS has now transitioned to harnessing the cyberspace to make its case!</p> <p>I wish you and all my friends at Anandwan all success in their endeavors on behalf of the disabled and the disenfranchised.</p> <p>With best regards,</p> <p>Sudhir Prabhu</p> <p>(Dr. Sudhir Prabhu is our long time associate. He's now based at Jacksonville, USA)</p>	<p>Dear Kaustubh,</p> <p>We have gone through the wonderful quarterly report and are amazed by the work you people are doing. We are proud of being associated with you people though through a very small contribution from our side. We pray to God that all of you will achieve whatever is your goal.</p> <p>Hope Dr. Vikasbhau is keeping good health. Convey our regards to him.</p> <p>Yours sincerely,</p> <p>Mrs. Mrudula Mande Smt. Leelavati Bhagvant Mrs. Savita Shashtri</p> <p>(Mrs. Mrudula Mande based at Nagpur and Smt. Leelavati Bhagvant & Mrs. Savita Shashtri based at Bangalore are our close associates & supporters.)</p>
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On 16 December, 1967, Shakuntala was born in village Rahati of Wardha District in Maharashtra State as the second child to a poor but happy couple. But their happiness was not to last long, as, when she was around only two years of age, she was rendered disabled by a severe polio-like infection. Gradually she lost all control over her upper limbs. Her face became deformed. Her speech was also greatly impaired turning her almost voiceless and helpless.

Oppressed by destiny and restrained by poverty, the family was just not in a position to give her any medical care. Over the years, as the number of her siblings grew, her existence was naturally pushed to a lonely corner of the house. Fate had forbidden her right to all the pleasure and pursuits of childhood including education, friends and fun. Even attending to her daily needs meant needing the assistance of her mother. Thus, wrenched by unshared emotions and drenched in self-pity years went by silently for that poor soul.

When she was around 15 years of age her father set up, for her, a small grocery shop adjacent to their house. To the amazement of the local customers, she started picking up the supplies, packing them etc., all with her feet. Compelled by circumstances and guided by instinct, she had already started harnessing the abilities of her feet to fight the cruelties of her fate. Soon her mood went upbeat and her confidence began to build up. But somewhere down her heart dissatisfaction was brewing up silently due to the monotony and insecure seclusion of her existence. During those desperate days she fortunately chanced to hear about Anandwan and that turned out to be a turning point in her life.

When she reached Anandwan Vocational Rehabilitation Center, she was interestingly admitted into the Department of Handicrafts. Having to learn handicrafts, not with hands but with feet, was an incredibly challenging proposition, indeed. But Baba Amte, Sadhana Tai, Dr. Vikas Amte, Shri. Sadhashiv Tajne and the like had just no doubt about the viability of the task as they were confident about the indomitable will of the girl and of the facilities and inspiration that they could offer. So, overruling all difficulties and overcoming all impediments, arrangements were soon made to provide her necessary training, motivation and facilities under the able supervision of Shri. Sadhashiv Tajne.

Shakuntala soon mastered skills such as threading a needle, embroidering on set designs etc all with her feet. Slowly but surely Shakuntala became independent and refined in

many respects. She even picked up the art of eating with a spoon held in her toes. All these seemingly small but great achievements kept boosting up her confidence and urging her to ever persevere for greater success.

Today, she has a separate Greeting-Cards-Making section in Anandwan. Her resolute will power, creativity and feet now craft exquisite greeting cards in hundreds of designs. Today, this girl or rather young woman affected with cerebral palsy is the cynosure of all those who visit Anandwan. It is so not only because of the beauty and precision of her craft but also because of that beautiful and innocent smile she ever sports on her distorted face. Those smiles silently speak volumes about the undying spirit living inside that half-dead body.

Her life is not in her hands
Neither are ours in ours
But she holds it in her legs
Thus above us she towers.

[For a small poem on Shakuntala by the same author, please visit the following link:

<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/v-2007-the-feat-of-her-feet/>]

(by Kannan G.)

Thinking with Thanks

Smt. Sudhatai Lodha & all members of Lodha Family, deserve special thanks for their substantial contribution to our Project 'Creation of a Constructive Corpus Fund'. Lodha Family is closely associated with the cause of MSS since last 26 years. And what is more important here is that all members of families, in which the three daughters of Smt. Sudhatai got married, are also staunch supporters of MSS.

We are also grateful to Suryakant Pawar Foundation, Pune, for the benevolent support to our project 'Creation of a Constructive Corpus Fund'.

We would like to convey our sincere thanks to M/s Suryavanshi Commotrade Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai, Shri. Narayanji Rathi, Mumbai, Indian National Press (Bombay) Ltd., Mumbai, Mr. Murlidhar & Mrs. Madhuri Potnis, Pune, Shashikant Bhide, Mumbai, Mrs. Swaran Ahuja, Mumbai, Ms. Neela Joshi, Mumbai as well as hundreds of compassionate contributors who generously extended their support towards the corpus fund.

Shri. Ashutosh Joshi from Pune contributed a substantial amount towards our Drought Relief Plan and Water Resource Development Works at Anandwan. We express our gratitude to Mr. Joshi for his valuable support.

We acknowledge with gratitude the significant contribution from Damien Dutton Society for Leprosy Aid, USA towards the cause leprosy afflicted. Damien Dutton Society for Leprosy Aid has been contributing continuously for so many years towards the leprosy work of MSS.

Most of the financial assistance is received for drought management plan & also for our ongoing development & welfare programs through the goodwill & pioneering efforts of CARING FRIENDS, inspired & guided by our close associates, Shri. Rameshbhai Kacholia & Shri. Nimeshbhai Shah from Mumbai. They continue to contribute substantially in their individual capacity as well. We are thankful to them.

We express our grateful thanks to Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture,

Switzerland, Dr. Schweitzer's Hospital Fund, UK, Village Sans Frontiers, France, Shri. Jayant Bapat & Friends, Australia for their continued support to various ongoing important programs & projects of MSS.

Due to space constraints, we apologize that we are unable to name each & everyone who extended support towards humanitarian cause espoused by MSS. We will forever value their kind-hearted support.

- Kaustubh Amte (Assistant Secretary)

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Dr. Vikas Amte - Secretary (Chief Functionary)
Dr. Prakash Amte - Assistant Secretary
Mr. Kaustubh Amte - Assistant Secretary

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