

Shri Manubhai Pancholi

Recipient of Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Constructive Work-1996

Date of birth 15.10.1914; 9th Grade High School

The greatest contribution of Shri Manubhai Pancholi is as an Educationist, a Constructive Social Worker, a man of letters as well as a thinker.

He studied in a regular school, only up to 9th Grade. He left home as well as his studies in order to join the freedom struggle led by Gandhiji. After his release in 1934, he entered the field of education with the late Shri Nanabhai Bhatt and has remained a real teacher all through life, making various experiments.

He did the work of basic education from 1937 to 1953 at Gram Daxinamoorti-Ambia, Dist Bhavnagar. In the field of Nai Talim, he established agriculture and cattle breeding as an alternative craft in the development of villages. He framed the curriculum of agriculture, dairying and cow keeping for the Post-basic schools and implemented it. There are nearly 300 Post Basic Schools run under this experiment in Gujarat.

He founded a rural institute of Higher Education at Lok Bharati, Sanosra in 1953 and it was a unique experiment of Higher education in the form of Nai Talim in India.

There are 18 Gram Vidyapeeths which have accepted the curriculum of Bachelor of Rural Studies started by Lok Bharati. The Government of Gujarat has recognized all these institutions.

For effective training of rural people in citizenship and for making them a more productive resource, education must be taken to their doorstep. With this idea, an institution Pandit Sukhlaji Lok Vidyalaya was founded in 1978 at Maidhar, Taluka Palitana, Dist, Bhavnagar by Shri Manubhai Pancholi. Under this programme training classes for cattle breeders, farmers, craft workers, youngsters and youths, social workers and women are held from 3 days to months.

Like this Lok Vidyalaya, Shri Manubhai has started around the village a small centre of education and the teachers of Lok Vidyalaya and experts from various fields hold a village camp for 3 days turning the whole village as a centre of education during these days. In this way nearly 7000 people have been trained in the building of gas plants, organic fertilizers, drip irrigation, water conservation project, land conservation, afforestation, fodder, cattle breeding, new varieties of seeds, peoples' organization, village development and citizenship. The women folk are being trained for child care, nutritious food, care of health, home decoration, etc.

Under the auspices of Lok Bharati nearly 100 non-formal education centres are run at Shihor, Palitana, Umarala and Gariadhar Talukas. Not only that but under this project a village like Sansora having a population of 10,000 has been made completely literate.

The various educational programmes conducted are:

Degree courses for education for Rural Development and Rural Leadership.

Training Colleges for Basic education and Teachers of Secondary and Primary Education.

Panchayat Raj Training Centre for Panchayat Secretaries and Sarpanchs.

Wheat Research : Lok Bharati did research on wheat for eleven years and in 1978, a new variety of wheat named LOK -1 was developed. At present the LOK -1 variety is sown in 10 lakhs ha. of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and UP. The LOK- 1 gives 15% more yield than all other varieties of wheat resulting in Rs 20 crores of benefit to the farmers annually.

Water Conservation Project : Lok Bharati suffered a lot of scarcity of water during the period of famine and failure of monsoon. There is a river called Sindari which flows by the side of the institution. A check dam was built on it and the canal was dug, the water is diverted, the land is stabilized and 7 ponds were dug for the water conservation project.

This has been an exemplary project all over Saurashtra. Till today, Lok Bharati has implemented the project of water conservation through farm ponds in the 7 neighbouring villages.

Village Adoption Project : To make villages self-dependent, in 1975 the village adoption project of Lok Bharati came into existence.

Till today, under this project, 7200 farmers having marginal land of 15 acres or below have been involved and covered in the 50 villages. The following activities are done under the constant guidance of these project centres : Survey, Training, Foundation of village development committees, crop planning, loan arrangements, intensive agriculture, store room for implements, implement hire scheme, sale of crop, etc.

With the participation of local agencies like Gram Panchayat, District Panchayat, Co-operative Committees, District Co-operative Banks, Milk Producers Committee, etc, a village is adopted for 4 years. The bank provides loans and the interest is paid by the various Foundations. The Lok Bharati works as coordinating agency. Farmers have got the loan to the tune of Rs 50 lakh through banks during the last 15 years. At the end of 4 years, the farmers have been able to get double production. It is notable that full recovery has been done to the Banks.

At the end of 4 years, this project is handed over to the village committee. That committee continues to do the follow-up work. It gets the fullest cooperation of the villagers in the matter of cash money, labour and in the form of kind.

Under the village adoption scheme, not only the production on the fields was increased but nearly 12 lakh new fruit and other trees were planted on the fields. The relief centres were conducted during the period of famine and people were provided with grains, wheat, fodder and fodder centres were run at various places.

Manubhai is an outstanding creative writer. His work includes 6 novels and plays, 7 books on Social Philosophy, 3 on criticism, 4 on education, 6 on history, 7 biographies and 2 collections of letters.

AWARDS/PRIZES, ETC RECEIVED EARLIER : Bharatiya Sahitya Academy Award for his novel 'Socrates', Bhartiya Gyanpeeth Moortidevi Award, K.M. Munshi Award by Gujarai Sahitya Academy; Award of Padma Bhushan, D. Lit. Degree awarded by Saurashtra University 1991; Narsinh Mehta award for literature.

