

MY INSPIRATION:-VAGAD SEWA SANSTHAN (SOURCE OF INSPIRATION AND FOUNDATION HISTORY)

BHARAT SINGH

Vagad Sewa Santhan Trust , Banswara was founded by me in the role of founder trustee along with fifty- one other trustees when on 19 September , 2002. it was registered at the office of the sub-registrar, Banswara . The idea to found such a trust and provide services first arose within myself when in 1998-1999, I was posted as Additional Superintendent Police at Udaipur. At the time I came in contact with young men and women addicted to “smack” while investigating related criminal cases. “ Smack” is a refined opium derivative. The addicts in their lingo called it “gardola” or “gurdulla”. Most smack addicts are lower and middle class youth. After enjoying the smack experience the first two to three times addiction sets in and a person becomes so restless that. he/she needs it three to four times a day; lack of it results in physical and mental torture.

In the beginning a person feels energised but this lasts only for a short period: thereafter the intoxication takes over and the person drifts into dreamy thoughts. The addiction becomes so acute that the person thinks of nothing else but how to sustain the addiction; human relationships and social rules and norms no longer concern him. When I looked at some of the case histories closely I found that even normally intelligent and reasonable people were willing to offer their sisters, daughters and wives to potential clients to fund their addiction; and if they were still short of funds they turned to stealing. If unable to obtain smack or opium they would slit open the neck and hand blood vessels either to commit suicide or by bleeding , to reduce the extreme restlessness and pain . In the Udaipur localities where the youth addiction problems were growing were visited by me where I publicly explained about the effects of smack and admitted addicted youths to hospitals as also organized special de- addiction camps. Smack addicted persons first try smack to enjoy sexual activity. Slowly they get addicted and the sexual pleasure diminishes and ends as the addiction takes over. They then recruit friends and relatives through promises of enhanced sexual pleasures through use of “gardola” thereby augmenting the addiction circle to provide more sources to sustain their own addiction. Ingoing the dangers, even women encourage the youth as at first the smack/opium usage prolongs and accentuates the sexual experience.

Where I got posted as Additional Superintendent Police at Banswara I got acquainted with the opium menace prevalent in the Patidar, Vagadia and Hatkhara farming communities where opium, as a celebration item, is used on social occasions such as births, engagements, weddings, deaths, karaj, pagdi-rasams, kalaji maharaj ke devri (one of the local diety) where any pledges made earlier are redeemed, entertaining guests, etc. Then I visited the three Patidar social segments (with sixteen chokras.....groups of villages are termed chokra....) and organized/attended meetings in Banswara and at various villages. A meeting was organized at each chokra level .Visits to Kalaji Bawji temples at Sagrodh, Padoli Rathore, Bodigama. (where opium is publicly offered) were carried out and where the priests were requested to spread the message that kalaji bawji (the diety) was not pleased only with opium offerings but would be better pleased if the offerings included holy water, coconut and saffron. The addicted persons, by correlating opium with kalaji had created the social norms and produced undesirable results for the Patidar society, by burdening the individual financially since they were obligated to follow the social norms. After one year of discussions with the heads and panches of the society they finally agreed to ban the usage of opium as a social tradition. The opium-using uncle advices his nephew that opium usage enhances energy to work in the fields and therefore whenever hard work is required then use opium “mawa” so that the work can be done. Since the usage of opium “mawa” enhanced sexual pleasures even the women did not look at the downside but encouraged its usage.

Families who were well-off, where there were many bread-earners, managed the economics but families less well off were ruined, as land was sold and marriages were broken. The opium addiction led to unsuitable

marriage alliances. As the addicted person gets old he suffers even more as he is unable to earn enough to finance the addiction and increasingly relies on the other family members. In families where the second generation is free of the habit, they suffer mental and physical problems. I have explained the ill-effects of opium/ smack usage to affected families and urged them to keep at least the next generation away from the social menace. One year of such efforts did bear fruit in terms of creating social awareness and the ban on this social custom. The women especially welcomed this change. During this mission I developed close rapport with the patidar, leyuma, vagadia, and Hatkhara individuals and communities. To achieve the ban on opium as a social custom I received special help and cooperation from Patidar jagriti mandal, taging bhai nogama, ranchod bhai, lalji, wakil sahib karji, khemji bhai karji, khumansingh barodiya, kalyansingh chich, gautam bhai mukhiya siyapur, kachra bhai Hatkhara partapur, nathubhai mukhiya paloda, dalji patel daduka, mahipalji bor, mahipalji lokia, gokul bhai karji, gokalnathji aasan, gajendra Patidar khodan, jeevan bhai, khumansingh chich, kailash Patidar jolana, keshavlal aasoda, paymji oda, ranchod chokhla, shridharji joshi, retired deputy police, bodhla maharaj, baluramji, mogjibhai mungana, nathu bhai udaipura, gamerchandji wakil sahib, kuriyabhai, parthingbhai badgam, gautambhai ghatol, tanjing bhai badana, paymji bhai chokri. The ban benefited the community by saving them approximately one crore rupees per year and this saving was then channeled into economic development.

On 5 April 2002, a meeting was held at Nursing Training School hall at Mahatma Gandhi Government Hospital, Banswara to discuss the developmental issues related to the hospital and the town; where it was almost decided to shift the Chief Medical & Health Office (CMHO), Banswara from its rented premises to the Dharamshala building. At this meeting I urged the then Collector Banswara Shri Rajivsingh not to go ahead with the decision but to repair/renovate the building and to use it for public lodging. All the persons/organizations attending the meeting then, as a challenge, authorized me to carry out this task. I accepted the challenge because of my faith in the cooperation and help that would be extended to me by the leyuva, vagadai, hathkhara & Patidar communities. The proposed trust to be set up to manage the running of the Dharamshala which would provide free food, hair-oil, soap, and lodging. All sixteen chokras of the Patidar community revived the almost forgotten "hukri" tradition and decided to contribute eleven thousand rupees each for this humanitarian cause. This inspired me to approach the town people to become trustees in the proposed trust. Today the trust has 134 trustees and by god's grace the numbers are increasing. Every caste, religion, area, and segment of society is represented as a trustee.

The Mehta family, Professor N.K. Mehta, Devilalji, Shri Jainarainji, Shri Pravind Mehta, have in memory of their father Shri Lunjimaganji, donated Rs. 5,00,000 to open a Lifeline Medical shop which is located near the PMO Office and which sells medicines at wholesale purchase price. In Rajasthan, according to govt. of Raj. Lifeline project, the Banswara Lifeline is benefiting the common man. This facility is unique as the market prices are beyond the reach of the poor. Shrilal Jani family donation to the Dharamshala construction is noteworthy and laudatory.

Vagad Sewa Santhan Trust, Banswara runs a hostel facility for the deaf & dumb children at Kalikamata (bhojapaliya). The trust is trying to obtain, with govt. help, a better building. The trust also established a farmers cooperative samiti with the express aim of providing fair prices for farm produce.

The trust also assists to transport the needy's dead bodies to their homes and assists in cremation expenses. The needy patients are also assisted in ambulance expenses to Ahmedabad or Udaipur hospitals. The trust has organized special camps for polio patients operations, is thinking of such camps for children, elders and women related diseases. In conclusion I would like to thank all donors whose help and generosity has contributed to the cause of human service.

Founding & Managing Trustee,
Vagad Sewa Santhan
Nandli Ahadha, Dungarpur