

Shri Gokulbhai Daulatram Bhatt

Recipient of Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Constructive Work-1982

Drawing deep inspiration from the life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, Gokulbhai Daulatram Bhatt has been serving the people with dedication during the last six decades by carrying out Gandhiji's Constructive Programme.

Gokulbhai Bhatt was born in 1898 in Hathal Village in Sirohi district of Rajasthan. In 1920 in response to Gandhiji's call he gave up his studies in college and joined the national movement. In the following three decades he immersed himself in the freedom struggle and courted imprisonment during the Non-cooperation movement (1921) the Salt Satyagraha (1930) and the Quit India Movement (1942).

Organising work was his forte. His centre of activities till 1939 was the Gandhi Ashram at Vile Parle, a suburb of Bombay. Thereafter he shifted to his native Sirohi, then a small, princely state in Rajasthan for organizing the people of the State to fight for their democratic rights as a part of the freedom movement.

Prior to independence, Gokulbhai was a Member of the Congress Working Committee for some time and President of the Rajasthan Pradesh Congress Committee. He was also a member of the Indian Constituent Assembly. With the advent of Independence, he became Chief Minister of Sirohi State. He played a significant role in the merger of the Princely states of Rajputana to form the State of Rajasthan in the Indian Union.

As a true Gandhian, Gokulbhai regarded Gandhiji's Constructive Programme as an integral part of the struggle for national regeneration. He has been working ceaselessly for the propagation of Khadi and Village Industries, communal harmony, removal of untouchability, Go-seva and prohibition, ever since he joined the national movement.

Gokulbhai's contribution for the propagation of Khadi and Village Industries in Rajasthan has been significant. He was a member of the All-India Khadi and Village Industries Board (1956-57) and has been Chairman of its Rajasthan branch since 1977.

Gokulbhai has also been actively associated with Go-seva for over three decades as President of the Rajasthan Go-seva Sangh.

During the last fifteen years, Gokulbhai has been actively engaged in fighting the drink evil in Rajasthan. In 1967, he launched a movement for the introduction of complete prohibition in Rajasthan with effect from 1969, which was the Gandhi Centenary year. He inspired a large number of social workers to offer Satyagraha on this issue. In 1972 he undertook a fast unto death which he broke on the mediation of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Total prohibition was introduced in Rajasthan in 1980 mainly as a result of his sustained efforts.

As an educationist he has been actively associated with Gujarat Vidyapith (Ahmedabad) and Banasthali Vidyapith (Rajasthan) for several decades.

Simple and austere in his habits, Gokulbhai gave away to public causes, whatever remuneration he received while holding office.

In the true spirit of a *Karmayogi*, Gokulbhai, now over 80 years old, is as active as ever in the service of the poor and the down-trodden.