

## AS I SEE IT



CB Patel

With the bountiful support, goodwill and blessings of my elders, dear readers, well-wishers, my dedicated team, my family and above all, the infinite grace of the Almighty, I have now entered the 60th year since I first arrived in Britain.

In the early hours of 19 November 1966, I stepped onto the soil of London carrying just a few belongings but a heart full of hope. There was, of course, a touch of fear and uncertainty, a young man entering a new country, a new world and a new life. The land was unfamiliar, the faces around me were new, but the spirit within me was steadfast.

There is a timeless line from the 1972 film *Shor*: "Jeevan chalne ka naam, chalte raho subah shaam..." — Life means moving forward; keep going, from morning to evening. In many ways, knowingly or unknowingly, this simple yet profound message has shaped my entire life. It encouraged me to keep walking even when the path was uncertain, to stay steady through storms and to continue serving, learning and growing each day.

Six decades later, as I reflect on that young man stepping into Heathrow with dreams and doubts in equal measure, I feel deeply grateful. The journey has been long, but it has been enriched by people, experiences, challenges and blessings that I could never have imagined at the beginning.

Whatever I have achieved has been possible only through the affection and encouragement of family, many friends who joined along the way, my colleagues past and present and of course, the boundless grace of the Almighty. Even today, at this stage of life, I consider it a privilege that I can continue contributing actively to the enduring publication journey of Asian Voice and Gujarat Samachar, while also remaining involved in community and public life. Truly, what more could one ask for? As I walk into the years ahead, I do so with humility and hope. I earnestly seek the continued good wishes and blessings of my elders, readers and well-wishers, so that the road before me stays filled with meaningful work, service, and a sense of purpose.

## A gift of God

By a lovely coincidence, on this very day I received three books as gifts, something I consider a special blessing from Goddess Saraswati, the divine source of knowledge and wisdom. It felt like a gentle reminder that Her grace continues to guide me and it filled me with renewed optimism for the future of our community.

The first of these books is **'Broken Mirror – Tutelu Darpan'**, an innovative contribution to the publishing world. What makes it truly unique is its bilingual format: Gujarati on the left page and English on the right. Yet the English is not a translation, it is phonetic. Every Gujarati word is mirrored exactly in English phonetics, making it accessible to young Gujaratis who speak the language fluently but cannot read the script. It is a thoughtful and timely concept for a changing generation. The authors, Vasuben and her husband Babulal Gandhi, are a couple I have known for many years. Their dedication



by Vasu Gandhi 'Palak' | લેખિકા: વસુ ગાંધી 'પલક'

to literature and to the community has always been unwavering and this new experiment reflects their commitment beautifully. I warmly congratulate both of them for this commendable effort. I have only taken a brief look through the book so far, but once I read it more thoroughly, I look forward to sharing a deeper reflection.

The second book is the **Silver Jubilee Annual Report** of Munshi Vidyadham, a respected and well-established educational institution in the Bharuch-Ankleshwar region. Situated near the Dahej bypass on the outskirts of Bharuch, this Vidyadham has been carrying out truly transformative work, particularly for the Muslim community. And I say this not just based on what the report describes; many years ago, I had the opportunity to visit the campus myself and witness their work first-hand. Today, nearly five thousand students pursue their education within this vibrant learning environment. This special

edition, chronicling the far-reaching and philanthropic initiatives undertaken by the Munshi Trust over the past 25 years, was sent to me by Hanif Patel, a resident of Ilford in East London. I am genuinely grateful to him for sharing it with me.

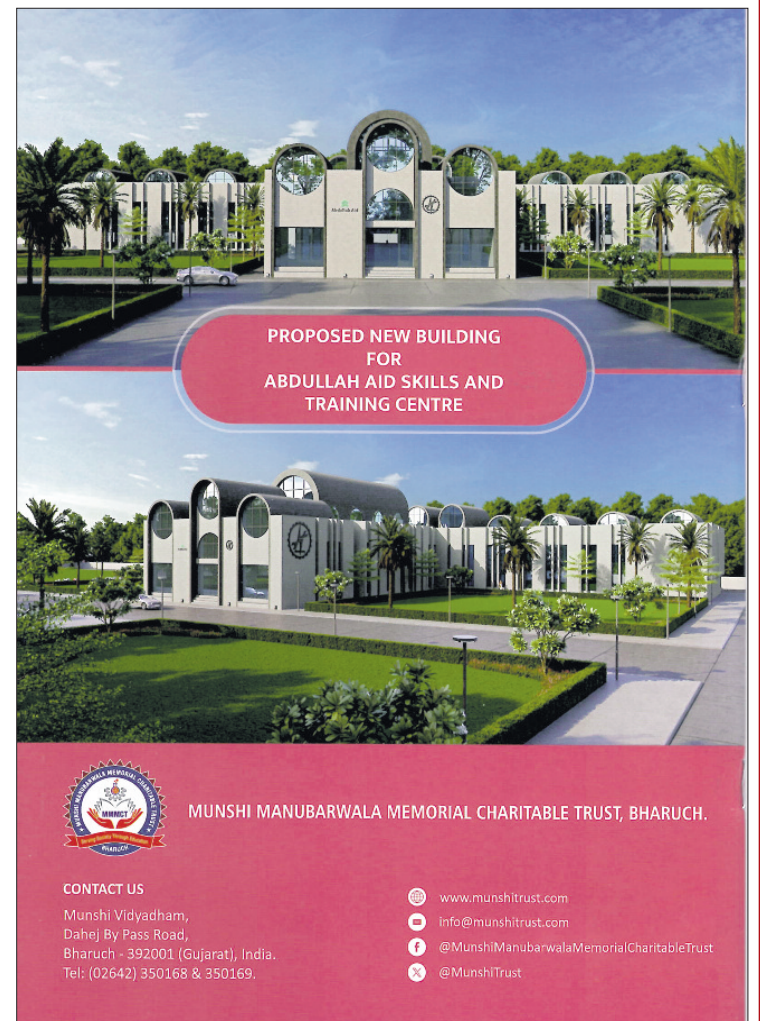
The third book arrives with a warm connection to Nairobi. Dineshkumar Devchand Pethraj Shah has graciously sent me a substantial 270-page volume from there. Titled **'In Quest of Knowledge – A Biography'**, it narrates the life journey of his late wife, Vibhaben. Written by Kaushal Mahatre, the book serves not only as a record of an accomplished woman's achievements but also as a deeply heartfelt tribute to her memory. I have yet to go through it page by page, but even the brief passages I have read so far reveal the depth, dignity and inspiration her life embodied.

Vibhaben was a daughter of the Oshwal community and even as I write this, it feels difficult to use the word "was." She was born in Nairobi in 1953 and married Dineshkumar in 1978. Gifted with an exceptionally sharp mind, she went on to achieve remarkable academic distinction. She completed her M.Pharm, qualified as an FCCA (Chartered Accountant) and later earned an MBA. A woman of such brilliance did not stop there, in 2019 she achieved her Doctorate, a milestone that reflected her lifelong commitment to learning. But, as destiny would have it, an incurable illness emerged

Dr Vibha Dineshkumar Shah  
MPharm, FCCA, MBA

soon after and in 2021 she departed for her heavenly abode, leaving behind a legacy of wisdom, grace and inspiration.

This book offers a vivid and beautifully illustrated portrayal of the Shah couple's 42 years of married life. At its very beginning,

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readers are welcomed with a glimpse of Vibhaben's own thoughts, penned in her elegant handwriting, a reflection not only of her intellect but also of her kindness, sensitivity and deep commitment to service. And just as Vibhaben devoted herself to higher studies across various fields, it is equally true that Dineshbhai stands shoulder to shoulder with her in scholarship. Born in Nairobi, he holds advanced degrees in Economics and Statistics, bringing his own depth of learning to their shared journey.

Dear readers, books have always been the mirror of our society and as an Editor, I have long found joy in observing the many social currents that shape our lives. Receiving three books on the milestone date of 19 November felt especially meaningful, almost like a silent blessings.

## Tale of legacies

In the iconic film *Shree 420*, brought to life by the greatest showman Raj Kapoor and the luminous Nargis, there is a timeless song, "Pyaar Hua, Iqraar Hua...". One of its most memorable lines says: "Hum na rahenge, tum na rahoge, phir bhi rahengi nishaaniyan"

— even when we are no longer here, our footprints, our memories and legacies will continue to live on. These and many more such publications, which give form and voice to precious memories, gently remind us of that very sentiment.

Recently, your beloved news weeklies Asian Voice and Gujarat Samachar completed a vibrant journey of 53 years and entered their 54th year. To mark this milestone, the Soneri Smrutigranth was published, a commemorative volume created with the very intention of preserving memories in words, capturing the shared history, emotions and moments that define our community's journey. We earnestly hope that the same affection, encouragement and steadfast support you have so warmly given us over the years will continue to guide and inspire us in the years ahead.

Whenever we begin a new journey, our minds naturally fill with uncertainties, but we must never let fear take charge. It's our willingness to try, to take that first step, that carries us forward in life. The path is never straight; it's a roller coaster with twists, turns, highs and lows. Yet when the ride finally slows and comes to a halt, what matters is that we're still standing, steady, strong and wiser. It was the same inner resolve that had always pushed me to face challenges head-on and overcome whatever life placed before me.

Every experience leaves its imprint, offering something to learn. The beginning is always the hardest, but those who persist and persevere are the ones who rise to the top. This is what life has taught me. And just as important is the way we connect with people. Keep meeting, keep communicating, keep building meaningful bonds wherever your journey takes you. Life will continue to move forward, but it's in our hands to leave a lasting mark, so that long after we are gone, we live on in the memories of those whose hearts we have touched. Looking back, I can say without hesitation that this attitude has carried me through every phase of my journey.