



# RITAMBHARA VISHVA VIDYAPEETH

(Originally :- SHAKTI DAL - 1956)

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Date : \_\_\_\_\_

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NAWAB ALI YAVAR JUNG  
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## THE UNFORGETTABLE INCIDENT OF MY LIFE.

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(It is necessary to give a background before describing the unforgettable event.)

The first opportunity I had of meeting Pujya Gandhiji was about 51 years ago when he came to our house in the Ranpur Village. I was given the privilege to anoint his forehead with kumkum and garland him. I remember perfectly that I performed this ceremony by standing up on a stool. Babu immediately picked me up and fondled me. He stayed with us for 4 days. During those days, I used to give a fragrant & beautiful rose from our garden daily when I went to pay my respects to him in the morning and then play about some where near him or at times in his lap. Since then I have always snatched any opportunity I had to be near him and I have always learnt something from it.

In Ranapura, girls of our family got the opportunity to learn, play and move about with a lot of freedom and so I was brought up in a free and uninhibited atmosphere. My father used to collect the children of the family and the neighbour-hood, teach various excersies and games and then organise competitions of the same. On festival days and specially on the New Year day after Divali all of us children, along with my father, Ji-kaka (my uncle, Shri Amritlal Sheth) and other elders, used to go to visit all the religious places of the village. After that at the end we used to go towards the three cannons, placed in the empty pool of the compound of the Kali Temple, situated in the historical fort of Ranji Gohil, between the two rivers Bhadar and Goma flowing in the outskirts of our village. These cannons were of three sizes, big, medium and small. Competitions used to be organised to pick up these cannons and throw them on the opposite side, and prizes were given/Ji-kaka. We kids also used to try hard to pick up the small cannon but were not successful. Once when I could just raise the small cannon and with a little force could throw it on the opposite side, my joy knew no bounds. The people present cheered me with resounding claps. I also got a good prize.

In Amreli (Saurashtra) in 1930 a summer camp for physical training for women was organised for a month under the leadership of Shri Bhagwanjibhai, younger brother of Dr. Jivraj Mehta, and Smt. Shantaben Yodh. My father sent me for the training. The subjects taught there were lathi, lezim, dagger-throwing, Parades, Self-Defence, Yogasana, Shrandan, to make slivers out of cotton, spinning, etc.

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On entering this camp, after a few preliminary tests, I was given the responsibility of the camp Captain. 70 women from Gujrat and Saurashtra participated in this camp. When, at the end of one month, a test was taken, I stood first.

Thereafter the Satyagraha movement began. Many people from our family took a leading part in the movement. My father, uncle, brother, sister and myself we all went to Jail in turn. During this movement we had to go from village to village in Saurashtra on foot. Big bags of Salt, prepared during the Salt Satyagraha had to be taken on our shoulders from one village to another, avoiding the notice of the police. We girls used to go on these trips in the burning noons with as much burden as we could carry, dripping with sweat. We selected this most inconvenient hour as the police used to rest during this period after their destinations.

During the Satyagraha movement batches of men and women used to move about together. Under the circumstances there were occasional instances of unpleasant and unsavoury incidents. Moreover, at some village where we would be camping, the drunkards, mischief mongers and loafers, would try to harass us. Keeping this in view, as I knew the wielding of dagger well, I used to keep a small but sharp dagger hidden at my waist, though I always used to pray when I arranged it at my waist 'O Bhavani, please watch that you may not have to taste somebody's blood; but give me courage and valour by being hidden in my waist, so that I can face any dangerous situation.' This small dagger gave me immense strength on many occasions.

Daily I used to be the first to get up, and get ready for the day, after bath and other things and so arrange my dagger without anybody's knowledge. But one night we were late in the women's meeting after the public meeting and so next day I got up late, and the other girls in the group knew about the dagger. Immediately there was talk about the thing. They raised an objection that it is against the very principle of non-violence, and we would complain about this to Bapu. After the evening prayers of the day, the leader of the camp asked me whether this was correct. I replied in the affirmative and said, 'I do not see anything wrong in keeping the dagger for self-defence.'

It was certain that he would tell Bapu about this. So I thought that I myself must clarify this matter with Bapu. During this period Bapue came to Rajkot. I went to meet him. When I found him alone, I took out my dagger and put my question. Bapu laughed, hit me twice in the back, and said 'Bravo! I prefer violence of the brave a thousand times better than the non-violence of the cowards. Moreover, women should learn the art of self-defence and should not depend upon others for it. If you have strength and courage in your heart because of the dagger, why should anyone else take objection to it? But I would consider you my real daughter only when you teach the women of our country to be fearless by giving the training.'

After this incident, my interest and insistence for the art of self-defence as well as physical health, physical training, regular exercise, discipline etc. increased. I also became full of zeal to teach others whatever I knew of the above subjects, as well as my desire to know more and more in the field, also increased.

I went to Sabermati Jail after being arrested in the Satyagraha movement. I was fortunate to get the affection of many women leaders of Gujrat including Pujya Kasturba Gandhi, Smt. Maniben Patel. A group of 40 ladies from Sindh also had come there with a sentence of 2 1/2 years, and I had the opportunity to know the Sindhi women leaders. All these ladies were



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very much senior to me in age. My younger sister Labhu and myself appeared to be just kids amongst all of them. Our way became easier because of the affection of the elder women. There also I taught Lathi & dagger wielding with crude stems, big and small, cut out (trees). I also gave training to the women in parade etc. Sometimes we used to enact small plays.

Shakti Dal has been established on this inspiration of Pujya Bapu. His message is still resounding in my ears. In expanding Shakti Dal into Ritambhara Vishva Vidyapeeth also, it is Bapu's inspiration to develop the spiritual strength along with the physical. 'Balance is not possible without the co-ordination of physical and spiritual strength, and it is the demand of the age to give such training to the Indian women,' is the opinion of Pujya Vinoba, Bapuji's favourite disciple.

Podmima A. Pakvasa

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