

Rebuilding knowledge bricks: Forgotten points of references



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Indian aspiration for becoming a knowledge society will not be fulfilled if the mind of a young learner in different parts of the country is not impregnated with diversity of learning traditions. I wish to recall what three institutions builders have achieved in the last hundred years and more in the field of creating new standards for using local language, unleashing new metaphors and triggering an unparalleled knowledge infrastructure.

Can we sustain these traditions, can we reinforce them and can we celebrate these in every day life. Can we talk about them in our schools and colleges, clubs and crossroads. Dhirubhai Thaker (91) and his team of 1,700 experts have dedicated to Gujaratis around the world, a collection of 25 volumes of *Gujarati Vishwakosh* comprising 23,000 articles. Is there any debate taking place on what Bhagwatsinhji, former king of Gondal and Kasinadhuni Nageshwar Rao did to trigger library revolution in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, their efforts for education for girls and others, and other reforms in learning systems? And why not?

Not many may recall that once when Bhagwatsinhji observed women carrying huge load over their heads, he realised

their pain so intensely that he got visamo, shoulder height platform built every mile along the road so that they could shift the load on them and take rest.

A single woman could bring the load down on ground but could not lift it alone, she had to just keep walking. He made the education for girls compulsory more than hundred years ago, while we are still debating the need for it. He also created a comprehensive Gujarati dictionary and an encyclopedia Bhagavadgomandal, for which Gandhiji felt inadequate to write an introduction.

He triggered a revolution in learning by setting up libraries. Who cares about them any more in modernising Gujarat, whether children read books or not.

Kasinadhuni Nageshwar Rao, who popularised salt satyagrah in Andhra Pradesh through his newspaper and mobilised participants, was a freedom fighter and founded an extraordinary Telugu journal *Bharati*. He created a unique benefit sharing model in which income from tradition knowledge based pain balm was used to support a literary journal.

The 1920s was an extraordinary time when in Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh and many other states (will recall them in coming months), created new traditions of learning.

Why should the works of doyens like Thakkar, Bhagwatsinhji and Kasinadhuni Nageshwar Rao not inspire

younger generation of leaders, entrepreneurs and politicians to invest in building basic knowledge infrastructure bricks by brick so that our children will become more curious, concerned and creative.

MINDS ON THE MARGIN



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