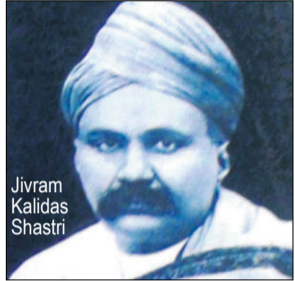


## Gujarat's heritage pharmacy exported medicine to Mahatma Gandhi

By Nayan Dave

The Godal town, situated around 40 km from Rajkot is well known for beautiful palaces, its town planning and education initiatives taken by rulers of erstwhile princely state Gondal. However, very few people know about Bhuvneshwari Ayurveda Pharmacy- more than 100-year-old traditional Indian medicine, which in fact contributed to Mahatma Gandhi's good health. Besides, founder of



this pharmacy Jivram Kalidas Shastri, royal physician (Raj Vaidya) of erstwhile Gondal state, first time coined the title 'Mahatma' for Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

On the 27th January 1915 Gondal Rasasala (Ayurveda Pharmacy) had a special guest. A grand reception was arranged for Gandhi and his wife Kasturba, who came back from South Africa in July 1914. No one knew that the function would become a milestone in the life of Gandhiji. In the welcome speech, Jivram Shastri, first time ever termed Gandhi as 'Mahatma' (The Great Soul) with reference to historic movement against apartheid in South Africa from 1908 to 1914. This epithet 'Mahatma' later became a universally accepted synonym for Gandhiji and he has been immortalized as 'Mahatma Gandhi' in the world history.

Mahatma also had great respect for the royal physician and said that he used to read Ayurveda literature published by Shastriji. "Ayurveda is ancient Indian science to keep up the health of millions of Indians living in villages. I recommend shape and live his life on the basis of Ayurveda. May Rasasala be able to render more glorious services to Ayurveda," said Gandhiji during the function. In fact, traditional Ayurveda medicines manufactured at Rasasala were exported to South Africa at Tolstoy Farm, around 35 km from Johannesburg, where Gandhi and his followers were staying for Satyagraha campaign during 1910 to 1913.

The founder of this heritage pharmacy dedicated his whole life for Ayurveda till he passed away at the age of 110 in 1978. His septuagenarian son Acharya Ghanshyamji has kept the essence of pharmacy alive. "We have hardly made any changes

in the process of making Ayurvedic medicines. Unlike other pharmacy, we have decided not to plunge into bulk manufacturing; rather most of the processes are still manual. Perhaps this might be the reason, we are still falling in SME (Small and Medium Enterprise) category despite being one of the oldest Ayurveda medicines making unit in India," he says.

Interestingly the doors of the pharmacy remain open for even unknown



visitors. When the unit was redesigned in 2003, Ghanshyamji's son Dr Ravidarshan made it a point to design the unit in such a way that visitors can have a look at traditional manufacturing process without disturbing the men at work. Still waste woods and cow dung are being used as fuel for special processes. The pharmacy is manufacturing around 300 Ayurveda formulations to cure different diseases and OTC (Over the Counter) products.

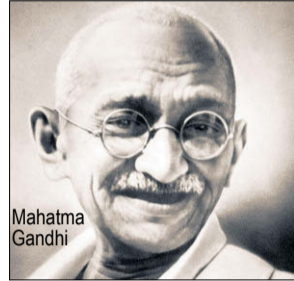
When it comes of heritage sites in Saurashtra peninsula, Gondal town is having great importance. Tourists would be enticed to visit Gondal to see superb town planning by its erstwhile ruler Maharaja Bhagwatsinhji, a vintage car museum, temples and fantastic palaces and buildings constructed by rulers of Jadeja dynasty. Along with these attractions, the century old pharmacy also generates great interest amongst them, especially foreign tourists. Even the National Geographic Channel took note of the heritage pharmacy.

On expansion of this pharmacy and modernization of manufacturing process to cater larger market, Dr Ravidarshan says, "We want to grow organically and want to keep traditional method of making Ayurveda medicines intact. We have mechanized certain processes to cater to the increasing demand. But we can't take risk on specialized processes prescribed in age-old Ayurveda literature written after years of experience. If we do that just to produce medicine in bulk, the essence of Ayurveda will die."

**Common Belief:** The common belief is that Rabindranath Tagore first called Gandhiji as Mahatma. It was just around seven years back that Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad came out with

a document that revealed how Gandhiji was referred to as Mahatma by the founder of Gondal Rasasala. The document was presented by Gandhian Manubhai Parekh describing about a public function organized much before Tagore calling Babu as Mahatma. With the document ambiguity over who first called Gandhiji as Mahatma ended.

**Ayurveda Tourism:** The management of Bhuvneshwari pharmacy is also promoting



Ayurveda tourism. Last year around 500 foreign tourists have visited the pharmacy to see traditional Ayurveda medicine manufacturing process. Unlike heritage sites abroad, there has been no entry fee to visit the pharmacy. When asked about taking fee from tourists, Dr Ravidarshan said that taking fees from guests were against the Indian tradition and culture. "Our intention is to keep ancient Ayurveda and its processes intact."



## MAHABHARATA In divine light

By Rajen Vakil



## The Story of Kartikeya – 4

The young Skandha lifted his bow and started raining arrows on the huge mountain called Swetagiri or White Mountain. Here we can take the 'white mountain' to symbolically mean our soul and the arrows are arrows of attention. Our attention is always other-oriented but this young boy's attention was going inwards (and we shall see later that he destroys the negative samskaras which block his path).

Skandha then started shooting arrows on the son of the Himalayas, Krauncha. Birds who had made the mountain Krauncha their abode, took flight to the peak of the mountain called Meru. Many of the arrows hit hordes of vultures and they fell to the ground with piercing screams. Skandha then threw a very powerful bolt of lightning on Swetagiri, which burst into pieces. Torn apart in many places with fire emitting out of her, the Earth (Prithvi) was in pain. Together with the other mountains, Prithvi bowed before the young Skandha. The minute Prithvi surrendered to Skandha, all the fires and eruptions

stopped. The mountains found their place on top of Prithvi and she was restored to her former glory. Since all this happened on the fifth day of the waxing moon, people pay homage to Skandha on this day.

The mountain on which Skandha was born was in the Chitraratha forest. With his birth, all sorts of strange things began happening there. Married couples who lived in the forest started fighting with one another. The medicinal herbs which grew in Chitraratha began exhibiting properties opposite to their natural healing ones. The rishis were disturbed and they started doing a yagna for shanti. The people of the forest started blaming the wives of the rishis for all that had happened. They blamed the god Agni for having intercourse with the wives of the rishis and producing this terrible warrior-like son. Several people had seen the female eagle fly to the top of the mountain and they pleaded to her to do something. None of them

knew that it was actually Svaha who had taken the form of the rishi's wives and had intercourse with Agni six times. They also did not know this she-eagle had been possessed by her.

The eagle believed the people and went to Skandha and told him she was the mother who gave birth to her. At the same time, the six rishis learnt that their wives had spent a night with Agni. Not aware that it was actually Svaha who had taken their form, all six rishis left their wives. Only Arundhati remained with Vishwamitra as Svaha had not been able to take her form. Svaha tried to explain to the rishis that their wives were innocent but they would not listen to her. Vishwamitra knew the real story as he had invisibly followed Svaha when she went to meet Agni. He had watched what had happened between Svaha and Agni, and immediately accepted the birth of the great Lord. He went to bow down before Skandha.

(To be continued...)

All past articles on the Mahabharata can be accessed from <http://epaper.asianvoice.com> or from <http://www.3stepbreath.com/mahabharata.html>

## Physically-challenged Amdavadi drives into record book

Born without the right forearm, Harish makes an all-India motor expedition record by driving 16,000 km in 29 days

Purvi Apurva Shah

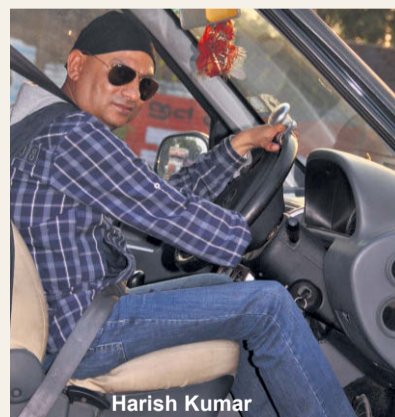
"Your attitude determines your altitude." That is exactly true in the case of 42-year-old Harish Kumar who was born with one hand only. Despite being physically-challenged he zoomed into the Limca Book of Records for the fastest solo all-India motor expedition. Born without the right forearm, Harish drove 16,000 km across the Indian terrain in 29 days and created this record.

Harish has proved that disability does not mean inability. The lack of right hand never deters him from achieving what he wanted. His confidence and perseverance compensated for his shortcomings. "Since birth, I had a deformed right hand. I earlier felt bad about it but then I started exploring the possibilities and also later took on to activities such as driving," said the IIT-Delhi and IIT-Roorkee graduate. "I wanted to be independent and normal like everyone, so I took up driving and soon it became a passion for me," he added.

"Ever since I laid my hands on my father's car in 1999 for the first time, I fell in love with cars and even participated in Himalayan car rally and other national competitions. When I came across national records, I decided to challenge myself and went through the categories. One can take north-south or east-west 'border to border' journey or entire coastal highway and complete it in record time. However, one category attracted me and that was all-India driving expedition," said Harish.

"My full-time job as well as the heavy cost of driving expedition did not stop me from pursuing my inner

drive to go for the record breaking journey. I found the sponsorship and brushed on my will-power to go ahead." There are lots of things that we do not have control over but we do have control over our response to those things. Mental attitude – the power we hold in our heads and get going attitude made him start the expedition.



Harish Kumar

Harish had started off from Gandhinagar on April 22 morning and completed the journey on May 21. He covered 15,963 km across 28 states and seven union territories in 29 days 6 hours and 20 minutes and returned to Ahmedabad on May 21. The Ahmedabad-based telecom professional and driving aficionado, completed his journey across the nation in less than a month to set an Indian driving record for a disabled driver. What makes his initiative more challenging is that he drove in an unmodified vehicle. "I drove an unmodified sports utility vehicle (SUV) and set the record under a new category of the 'Fastest All-India Expedition by differently-abled.' I

had to face difficulties like bad roads and severe weather conditions," said Harish who was accompanied only by a navigator. Passionate about travel and driving, Harish trained to drive normal vehicles. "I have been driving my car since 1999. I chose not to modify my car since it would restrict my driving capability. Because of the decision I can now drive any regular four-wheeler. We drove the entire day and covered long distances stopping only at nights for a break," said Harish. "Driving across different terrain, passing through little villages which seemed like windows to the past and interacting with different people made the trip interesting. It gave me new insight into the varied culture of India. The trip is one of my most memorable experiences. I can now proudly say that I have seen almost every nook and corner of the country," he said.

From snow storm in Jammu and Kashmir to rough riders on Kerala highways, Harish experienced true India. "People extended warm support without any connection," he said.

However, the journey was not a smooth one. Kumar and his companion had to spend some nights in their Tata Safari itself, eat whatever were available and brave rough roads. "I want to chronicle my experiences after some time and share it with public," said Harish.

His next dream is to drive all the way from Ahmedabad to London and set a record. But that needs big money and he has appealed for sponsorship. He is optimistic and hopeful of driving into uncharted land and to open a new doorway for the human spirit.