

The Lifestory of Kamlaben: Time is omnipotent

*Karl Osner, Exposure- und Dialogprogramme e.V.
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My Parents House

This is the story of my life. My story consists of the years of my struggle and how the wheel of life has changed continuously during those years. I was born in 1943. My grandparents came from Madhya Pradesh. My mother – Suniyabai – was born into a weaver’s family. As a child she went with her mother selling self-woven sarees and cloth. When he was a small child, my father’s parents came to Ahmedabad and decided to stay there. My grandfather was a bidi contractor, and later my father did that also.

I was happy as a child. My father’s business did well, we ate well and had everything we needed. My father was always kind to me and was a great influence on my life. He was a devout person. He was a member of a group which sang “bhajans” (religious songs). Like King Harishchandra, he always insisted on speaking the truth. He lent money to workers on 2% interest, which was much lower than the going rate, then they paid him back in instalments. He always said, “Time is omnipotent; we might be in their position tomorrow”.

Ever since I was a child, I had an inclination towards the spiritual. When I was seven or eight I went to the Jagannath Temple with my grandfather. I wanted to stay there and my grandfather realised my love for God.

Getting Married

I married at the age of seventeen, according to the rituals of my caste. My husband was of the same caste and our parents knew one another. After the wedding I came to my husband’s house in Pathan’s Chawl and started married life. We lived in a joint family. My father-in-law and mother-in-law worked in the textile mill, but their two sons were jobless. I also had two sisters-in-law. When I was with my parents I was allowed to play all the time. My in-laws did not allow me to go out. Still, it was not too bad and I began to adapt to my new home. Two or three years passed happily.

Unhappy Days

However, my husband and his brother could never get a job. I think their parents spoiled them, did not make them fit for working. So we all lived on the earnings of my in-laws. As prices rose, so my in-laws’ problems increased. They made us feel



unwelcome. There were often quarrels. Then my father-in-law starting beating my husband and his brother. My husband starting beating me. Sometimes my father-in-law and brother-in-law also beat me. They began to be quite cruel to me. I remember once I had gone to see my parents. My husband told me to be back by seven in the evening, but there was a bus strike and I was delayed by half an hour. My in-laws refused to open the door for me, and made me stay outside on the doorstep all night. I realised that if my husband was not working then I had would have to work. But my father-in-law did not want me to as it would look bad for him. So when he went to the mill in the morning, I would go to the neighbour and learn to make bidis. Later I started making my own bidis and earning money. When my father-in-law came to know, he did not mind much because I stayed at home to work and did not go out and shame him. However, whatever I earned was taken by my father-in-law. He gave one rupee to my husband and fifty paisa to me for our personal expenses. Even though I was contributing to the household, they did not stop beating me. They did not understand or respect me. In that family they did not understand women, even my mother-in-law was kept suppressed by my father-in-law. They do not know what it is to be a woman – her needs, her feelings, her tremendous shakti (strength).

Leaving the House

My first son Harish, was born in 1964. My daughter Durga was born in 1966 and son Pravin was born in 1972. Before the birth of Pravin in 1972, I gave birth to Kalavati but she only lived one year. As the number of children increased, the tension in our house grew. There was so little earning in the house, and then the house also was so small. My brother-in-law was also married and he also had two children by then. We were thirteen people living in one room. My father-in-law kept telling his sons to stand on their own feet, to leave the house. But without a job, where would they go?

When Pravin was three months old, a quarrel broke between my father-in-law and my husband. It was the worst quarrel so far and my father-in-law ordered us out of the house. My husband told me “Come on, pack your things and let’s go.” I refused to leave the house. I said, “I would rather die than leave the house”. Then I saw my husband leaving and I followed him. I had received my wages on 7th and we were forced to leave the house on the 9th. My wages were taken by father-in-law. So we were left with nothing.

When we left the house we wanted to take all three of our children. But my father-in-law refused to let us take Harish. He said, “You can take Durga and the baby.” In that family they valued sons, not daughters. We came to a bus stop and sat there. We wondered where to go next. My husband said that we should go to the river bank and stay there but I refused. The river bank is where people who have no other home stay, not respectable people. It is not considered safe. How could I stay there as a woman?



My Grandmother's House

We had not taken anything before leaving the house. Everything was under the control of my father-in-law. We were left with nothing. The only place where we could really go was my family at Premdarwaja, but I did not suggest it. A bus came which was going to Premdarwaja, but I did not say anything. If I had said anything, my husband would have taunted me for the rest of my life, saying that really I had wanted to run back to my parents. I waited for him to suggest it, then it would be his idea, not mine. At last he said that we should go to my maternal grandmother's house. When the next bus going to Premdarwaja came, we got in. Durga and Pravin were with us when we went to my grandmother's house in Jugaldas Chawl. We had not eaten anything but we told her we had. My grandmother's age was 70 or 75 years at that time. I cried a lot before my grandmother. She said, "Why did your in-laws do this to you? Let's go and ask them." But I refused. I thought it was my misfortune that such a thing had happened. I told her that we wanted to stay with her. I asked her not to drive me out of the house and promised that I would roll bidis and cook for her. She said, "You can stay here for as long as you like". My husband found work in a chemical factory. He earned forty rupees a month. I rolled 750 to 800 bidis a day and earned one rupee and seventy-five paisa a day.

I did not contact my father. Then he came to my grandmother's house. She said, "As long as I live, she can stay with me." For two months my father did not come there. In my community (as in most Indian communities) once a girl has got married she should not return to her parents' house. One festival day I was invited to have lunch with them. I did not accept the invitation. My mother came but I refused to go with her. My father should have come to invite me. Then he came and I went with him. After that the next four years of my life passed quite happily.

In the early days I got one rupee and seventy-five paisa for one thousand bidis. The amount was raised to two rupees. My husband was getting sixty rupees. I kept aside fifty rupees for our expenditure and gave him ten rupees for his personal use. After many years I began to store some grocery. I stored 2 or 3 kgs of rice, dal, sugar, jaggery etc. I spent one hour more from 10 o'clock to 11 o'clock p.m. in rolling bidis. My father helped me by cutting leaves for bidis.

Bad Luck Again

I had another child, Chandrakala, and after her birth, my health started to deteriorate. One day I was running a temperature. I was shivering. My father covered me with quilts and blankets. In the evening he took me to a doctor. We had to pay five rupees for injection. During these years my husband went to Pathan's Chawl every day to meet his parents. He did not go inside the house but met his mother and sisters and



came back. On that day (when I was ill) he came at 10 o'clock p.m. The doctor said I had typhoid and I remained in bed for about a month. Once again we were facing a financial crisis. I could not go to roll bidis. My father took me to his house. He also took me to Indore where I was cured. He also sent 300 rupees to my husband.

After I was cured I came back to my grandmother's house. But soon after my grandmother died.

My grandmother died in 1976. My maternal aunt came there after the grandmother's death and told us to vacate the house. She said that her son was getting married and she needed the house. She came with my uncle two or three times. They told me to vacate the house within two months. I started searching for a new house. I found one in Hatkeshwar. The owner of the house was called Baliram. He asked for 500 rupees as a deposit and thirty rupees a month rent. My father gave us the money and said that I could pay it back within two to three years. We had to shift the household articles. The rickshaw would cost three rupees, which I could not afford. My husband tied everything onto his cycle carrier and shifted everything.

My troubles increased day by day. My husband had taken a fortnight's leave from his work at the time of Chandrakala's birth. He was sacked from his job. He had lost his job, but for a fortnight he did not say anything. Every morning he took his lunch box and went out, because he wanted to hide this fact from us. He went to the park and ate his lunch. He tried a lot but could not get a job. Everybody called the new-born girl unlucky. I said, "No child is born with bad luck."

Once again I started rolling bidis. My daughter slept in my lap and I rolled bidis. I used to breastfeed the girl but I was not keeping well. I stopped giving her milk. I did not have money for tea. How could I buy milk for her? So I fried flour in oil and whenever she cried I mixed it with water and fed this liquid to her. This continued for about eight to nine months. Then I told Durga to soak biscuit in tea and feed her. I did not give her opium in order to make her sleep. I mixed saffron, nutmeg and sugar and gave this mixture to her. It did not have any adverse effect on her and she slept quietly. I could roll bidis when she slept. I had taught Durga some household work and also how to roll bidis. Both of us could roll one thousand bidis a day.

Joining SEWA

For many years my life was very hard. I remember once Harish asked for food and I told him to wait until I had completed one bundle of bidis. When I took the bundles to the contractor he threw away one bundle. I had not fed my son for this bundle and the contractor threw it away. I felt as if a morsel of food had been snatched away from my child's mouth. Who was there to help us?

In 1980 Kamlaben and Subhadraben of SEWA came to Hatkeshwar. They told us to form a union of bidi-makers. What was to be done to form a union? We thought if we



united ourselves, we would get some benefits in future and paid five rupees as a membership fee. I got interested in their activities. They asked me if I was prepared to unite bidi-makers and make them aware of SEWA's activities. I said, "What is awareness?", and they explained it to me. When I went to give bidis to the contractor I talked to other bidi workers about the union. They asked what would happen. I said, "If we form a union, we can do anything. We work so hard, still we are poor. If we unite we will get benefits after five or ten years". I told them to identify our problems and take them to SEWA. Gradually awareness would be created. Then I called bidi workers from other areas. On the day of the meeting I spent one-and-a-half-hours in gathering other women. My husband said, "You have rolled so few bidis today". I said, "We should not consider such things. I will sit late at night and roll bidis". Some bidi workers refused to attend the meeting. They said, "We will not attend the meeting. We will incur losses". I told them that I was also spending time on the meeting which I could have spent otherwise. The meeting went off quite well. Many workers enrolled in the union. After two or three days, forty to fifty workers had paid the membership fee. I told them emphatically to join SEWA and fight for a rise in pay. The membership fee of rupees five was too much. I had to pay five rupees but I did not have the money. The money that I had saved by rolling bidis helped me and I paid five rupees. Thereafter when the workers of SEWA came I convinced more women to become members and to pay the membership fee. The membership fee was collected by SEWA full-time workers who issued receipts. Thus I helped in strengthening the union. I did not have the time to go to the SEWA office and attend the meetings. If I went there I would have less time for work and that would affect my income.

Death of My Husband

In 1981, my husband got a job as a security guard in Udhana, which is close to Surat, six hours away by train. He worked there for two or three months. When he was coming back home at the time of Diwali he tried to get off from a moving train and fell. He was badly hurt and all the money I had saved was spent after his illness. I sold my ornaments. The burden of the house, of earning, of looking after the children and of looking after my sick husband was on me. By then, I was again seven months pregnant. We had no money for the bus fare and so I had to walk every day 4 km from my home to the hospital to give my husband food. The strain was too much and I fell ill. This was one of the worst times of my life.

After my husband got better he said, "Let's go to Indore to celebrate the festival of Ganpati." I said, "Whatever I had saved has been spent after your illness. We will need at least Rs.200 to go there and come back". But he was determined to go. He went to his father's house. My two sisters-in-law were unmarried and were busy rolling bidis.



They were earning so he asked his sisters and mother for money. He took two pairs of clothes and went to Indore and celebrated the festival. I sent a note to Indore requesting them not to give him oily food. He was fond of eating fried food. During "Shraddh" he went to my brother-in-law's house and asked for "Bhajiyas" (a fried snack). His wife prepared them and that night he went down with a fever. They took him to a dispensary. He was delirious and kept repeating Harish's name, indicating that he wanted to see his eldest son. Then he breathed his last.

As soon as my husband got ill, his relatives phoned my father-in-law, calling all of us there. They said that Devkaran (my husband) was not well. On that day there was no electricity in the whole city. My mother-in-law did not tell me about my husband, she told me that one of our relatives was not well and we had to go to Indore. I sat in the train with my in-laws. Meanwhile, they must have got the news of his death. My sister's husband came to the station, and was shouting "Kamala ... Kamala", up and down the platform. I was sitting near the window of the train. When I heard my name I thought it was my imagination. But then he came nearer and I shouted to him, he came to where we were and asked us to get down with our luggage. We went back home. He did not say anything. At 12.30 some of the neighbours came and asked what was to be done. They told me everything. I said, "Our family members are there, but my children will not be able to see his face one last time if we don't bring him here." I told them to bring the body by car.

Our relatives hired a car and driver and brought the body back. They keep the body lying at the back wrapped up. Once they were stopped by the police. If they had admitted that they had a body there would have been many explanation required. So they said that their relative was critically ill and was being rushed to the hospital in Ahmedabad. The police were sympathetic and sent a message by wire to their colleagues that this particular car should not be stopped.

Living on my own

After his death my in-laws told me to stay with them. But how could I separate my soul from my body? I could not stay in that house without compromising my inner being, my self respect. My parents also suggested me to move back, so I told them clearly about my father-in-law's behaviour. If I had kept it to myself I would have gone crazy. My parents and my in-laws all invited me to stay with them, but I refused to go with them. I had my own house. Why should I go and live somewhere else? I stayed at my house in Hatkeshwar. The rent for this house was thirty rupees per month. It was very difficult for me to get Rs 30 a month as my only earning was through bidi rolling. I had to feed the children every day. I solved the problem by saving. Every day, from my day's earnings I saved Rs 1 in my savings box. This way, I had Rs 30 at the end of the month.



These were difficult times for me. We did not have enough to eat. I was working all the time and so was my daughter Durga. My in-laws took away the bigger boys—Harish and Pravin. Although I missed them, I thought at least they would be well looked after. But the worst was how people treated me. They were cold to me. They made remarks to show that I was not worth much. It seems that instead of feeling sympathy for me, they were afraid that I would ask them for something, now that I was a widow. So, I stopped going to people's houses or inviting them to mine. Anyway, I was working so hard just to survive.

I continued working as a leader for SEWA. It gave me self-worth and peace of mind. It made me forget my own troubles. I enrolled hundred members within two months. Some bidi workers were reluctant to join the union. I explained the benefits of a union to them. I told them that if they joined the union, they would no longer remain poor. I wanted to enrol more members and strengthen the union. I went to other areas like Sindhurai where other bidi workers lived. I was selected as a leader in SEWA: I started classes for the education of bidi workers in my area. From other areas other leaders were elected. I trained six more leaders within a year. Thus a body consisting of forty bidi rollers leaders – the trade committee - came into being. The problems of bidi workers were discussed and resolved.

Once there was a discussion on savings. Savings would help us in difficult times. For us, fifty paisa or one rupee was important. But all these bidi workers lived in scattered areas. They could not come to the central SEWA office. So we had collection boxes for savings and the keys of these boxes remained with the bank. Whenever I went to SEWA the members wanted to give me their boxes to deposit their savings, but I did not take them. I took the boxes of those I trusted. I took out seven rupees or ten rupees from these boxes and the amount was noted down in a book. When a woman had one hundred rupees saved, interest of one rupee fifty paisa or one rupee seventy-five paisa was given.

Our bidi committee began to bargain with the employers. In our own areas we took on the contractors, and together we bargained with the main employer. We said, "The rate you give us for 1000 bidis is too low, it is below the minimum wage. You must increase it." Slowly, the rates we were given began to rise. It rose from five to seven rupees due to the union. As the rates went up, I also began to earn more.

Over the years our union went from strength to strength. There was a convention of bidi workers regarding the problems related to bidi-making. A large number of bidi workers attended the convention. I was extremely happy. The Minister of Labour, Sanat Mehta, attended the convention. One of the bidi workers from my area - Bhanuben - garlanded him. At the convention we discussed price rises and union. We also distributed "pedas" (sweets).

Our Union became more active. The first case was filed against the bidi company owner, Jivraj Bidi, and his contractor, Mr. Abdul Kalam. This case went on for ten



years. In 1989, we came to a compromise and the workers got good compensation. The price of bidi also increased. Other contractors Sheru, Yasin, Thakkar, started giving us bidi leaves of inferior quality. They raised the price of bidi but supplied leaves of inferior quality. This would not benefit the workers. With the bad leaves we could not complete 1000 bidis and had to buy more leaves. So our price rise was neutralised and we did not benefit from it. We started having talks with the contractors. At that time I was working for a contractor named Bhagwandas Koshti. I made 1500 bidis per day. He stopped payment of the workers. If I did not get paid I could not cook food. He did not give us any money for three days. Bhagwandas said, "If you cannot live, it is your responsibility and your misfortune. Do whatever you like". He had not paid fifteen days' wages. We filed a case. The labour inspector came and settled the case. Abdul Kalam had to pay the full amount and to continue to give us work.

Moving House

Meanwhile, I continued to struggle to keep my family together. My landlord died and his son wanted me to vacate the house. How could I do so? I said, "I am a widow. Where would I go?". I paid him the rent regularly. I had the receipts and told him that I would take the matter to the court. Four or five months passed. Then he said, "I am going to increase the rent and deposit. You can stay here for one more month. Then find another house". I had nobody on whom I could rely. So I told my landlord, "If you want me to leave, you must give me the deposit I had given you when I rented the house: If I have to look for new house, I need the money in my hand because I will have to pay deposit to get this house. So he gave me back my deposit of Rs 375. I started to search for another house.

In 1985, I could find one in Bhaipura. The deposit of one hundred and forty rupees and seventy rupees for monthly rent were fixed. There were no running water or sanitation facilities in this house. We had to go to an open ground for defecation.

Out of the Rs 375 which I had received from my old landlord, I spent Rs 147 on the next deposit and the rest on buying grocery for the month. This was the first time that we did not have to worry about what to eat every day. Also it was cheaper to buy groceries wholesale rather than a little every day. I was happy that the children could eat regularly now. I began to feel a little secure.

The price of bidi also increased from seven rupees to ten rupees. I started forming a union here. In Bhaipura I had a nice house where twenty women could sit and conduct a meeting. Around this time my mother-in-law died.

Riots

These were the years of the Hindu-Muslim riots. I used to sleep outside the house. Fortunately, the riots did not affect Bhaipura, it remained peaceful. But there were people who deliberately stirred up riots and who could not bear to see us peaceful. So



in order to incite us they came at night and tied bangles to a pole, indicating “You are weak and cowardly like a woman.” At night, some goons came. They tied some more bangles with a note saying, “We will attack you at midnight”. There was a panic in Bhaipura. Everybody got frightened. They started asking one another what would happen. Everyone agreed to keep awake at night. I thought, “As long as we are still alive, we can do anything”. I told them that they were only thirty men whereas we were one thousand. I slept out of my house. Others hid themselves with some weapons. I kept an exhaust pipe of a rickshaw with me. For days we stayed awake but nothing happened. In the adjacent area at Khokhra there were disturbances but our area remained peaceful.

We had to go to open grounds for defecation at night or early in the morning. Because of the riots some women stopped going out. They were frightened. One day a woman came and asked me to take her to a place for defecation. There were four to five women. I said, “Shakuntala, why are you afraid of such things? They cannot do any harm to us. Women are meek and docile but when necessary they can become Kalimata (the goddess of destruction). Since my husband’s death I have become strong”.

My life in Bhaipura was better than it was in Hatkeshwar. But my problems with my in-laws continued. They did not respect me, did not consult me, even on my own affairs. When Harish and Durga were old enough, marriages were arranged for them. We had decided to have both weddings at the same time, to save costs. My father-in-law made all the arrangements, he did not bother to consult me. I felt very hurt.

Trouble with Daughter-in-Law

Many years passed. My father-in-law died. Harish told me to come and stay with him in Pathan’s Chawl but I was not ready to go there. I wanted to remain independent and also I had bad memories of that house. Some elders of the family and my daughters forced me a lot. In 1989, I went to Pathan’s Chawl in Raipur. Harish was a married man now, with two sons. I got along well with my daughter-in-law in the beginning. Then she started to complain, she did not like me working for SEWA. She said that her mother-in-law left the house at ten in the morning and came back late. After two or three months she saw me putting aside the money for membership fee. She said, “Where did you get that money?” Then I explained everything to her. I told her how I collected membership fees and money for savings accounts. I also explained to her about SEWA.

My daughter-in-law did not like my going out of the house so much. I told her that I had been working like this for the last twenty years. I did not do household work. I told her that I would never do that. I only rolled bidis and did outdoor work. If I took over the household work she would be totally free. But it was not possible for me. I told her that



I would do the work which I had been doing for as long as I had the power, strength and soul.

I had many quarrels with my daughter-in law. So I left the house very early. She poured her anger on the children. She scolded them and beat them. Harish did not say anything. My daughter-in-law was immature and lacked manners. I rolled five hundred to seven hundred bidis. Harish was working as a foreman in a garage.

We stayed together for three years. Harish had two sons and one daughter. In 1991, Harish bought a house in Ghodasar. We all went there. At the time of "Muhurat" puja (house opening) was performed with the readings from the scriptures. I stayed there for three days and then went back to Pathan's Chawl. My daughter-in-law did not want me to stay with her. I did not tell my son why I had decided to go back to Pathan's Chawl. I bore him in my womb for nine months experiencing excruciating pain. Could there be greater pain than this? I told him that if he needed my help he could come to Pathan's Chawl.

Harish wondered why I had left his house. He thought, "If I don't give her provisions how will my mother manage?" So after I left Ghodasar, Harish did not give money or provisions hoping I would come back to him. Now I did household work as well as rolling bidis. I taught Chandrakala to close the "mouth" of a bidi. She did not like this work. This went on for four months.

Durga in Trouble

Durga's husband left her and then did not come back. We searched for him a lot but could not find him. At last we got tired and left off searching. Durga had a one-year-old son and a young daughter. After three months I went to her house in Hathijan. Durga was not keeping well. She was down with a fever. Her neighbours said, "What kind of a mother you are. You don't ask about your daughter's health". Durga did not have the money to pay her rent. I gave her three hundred rupees for rent and three hundred rupees for a deposit. Durga's husband was a vegetable vendor. He spent all his earnings on gambling. Durga worked as a housemaid. The food she got from the houses kept her alive.

I told Harish about it. How could I feed three persons. Durga had not paid one thousand rupees to the owner of her house. The owner had threatened to take away her belongings if she did not pay the rent. Harish paid the full amount and helped Durga to vacate the house. We hired a tempo (small truck) for 300 rupees and shifted the luggage and brought everything to Pathan's Chawl. Her daughter was 9-10 months' old. Durga was not keeping well, and started vomiting. Then we came to know that she was one month pregnant. Durga wanted to abort the child but I said it is sin to do so. I told her to keep whatever God had given her. After nine months she gave birth



to a baby girl. Durga helped me rolling bidis, but with small children, how many bidis could she roll?

My son-in-law filed a case against us. He said that because his wife was earning I was not sending her back. Usually such cases are filed by women. We went to a Police Station and then to Panchayat. The Panchayat is the group of elders in our community who solve all such social problems, The ten respected men of the Panchayat came to my house, and with their assurance I sent Durga back to her husband.

Selling a House

Around this time we realised that we should sell the house in Pathan Chawl soon. It was because the municipality was going to widen the road and would cut down the pavement. The house extended illegally into the pavement and there was a fear that we may lose part of the house.

The Pathan Chawl house belonged to me. When I was young and still living with my in-laws, I heard that this house was for sale. Since my in-laws and others were such old tenants they paid very little rent. The landlord thought the property was useless for him so he wanted to sell it to the tenants at a low price. He came to my father-in-law and said, "I will sell you this house for Rs 3000." But my father-in-law, who was a mean man, said, "As long as I am alive I can live at a low rent, why should I buy the house?" He did not think about his children's future.

So, one day I went to see the landlord. I said that I would buy the house. When my in-laws came to know about it and there was a big fuss. My husband beat me. But I was determined. Finally, the landlord agreed to sell it to me for Rs 4000, I had saved some money and the rest I borrowed from my brother. That is how I got the house so cheaply when I was young. Now, twenty years later, I got an offer of 1.5 lakh rupees for this house. But the God within me ordained that I should not sell the house for an amount less than five lakh. I told Harish but he said, "Who would give such a big amount for this house?"

SEWA had filed a case against Jivraj Bidi regarding Provident Fund. Legally bidi workers are covered by the Provident Fund Act. Under this act both the employer and the worker pay into the Provident Fund Office. When the worker retires she gets the full amount. It is for her old age. But in Gujarat no employer is paying Provident Fund. That is why we filed the case. In order to understand how the Provident Fund worked we went to Sholapur with other bidi workers to study the procedure of the Provident Fund and how it was paid to the bidi workers in other states. There was a temple of Tulaja Bhawani. We went to the temple for "darshan". There was a stone there. Panditji said. "Think first and then put your hand on it". I said, "Mother Durga, let the



deal of my house be over and may my children live a happy life". And... the stone moved.

When I came back to Ahmedabad Harish told me to pack as we had to hand over the house. He had made a deal with Sardarji for rupees three lakh. But I refused to go. Harish said, "Mother is very clever. Whatever she says is right." I said that I was not selling vegetables, I was selling a valuable asset in the middle of a commercial area. Sardarji said that he was not ready to displease anyone. Within two hours he came three times. At last he agreed to pay Rs 475,000. But I said we have vowed not to sell for less than Rs 500,000. Sardarji also gave the remaining 25,000 rupees. He agreed to pay two lakh rupees within three days and remaining money within fifteen days. I said, "I will find out another house ". I told Sardarji that it was a lucky place and he would never be unhappy in his life. The house I sold him had running water, bathrooms and electricity, all of which was put in during the last 25 years. Earlier there was no water outlet and during the monsoons water filled up. Once it rained heavily and we sat on a cot. There was no bathroom and we bathed on the pavement. I still remember there was no electricity in the house 25 years ago. I rolled bidis by the light of a lantern. The cycle of life keeps on moving continuously.

Today, I have a house of my own bought from the money which I saved by selling the house in Pathan's Chawl. There is open space all around my new house. The house has three rooms, a veranda, a terrace.

My dream has come true. My house....

87, Dharmabhumi Society, Ghodasar, Ahmedabad.

Time is omnipotent.....