

# TRIP INTO TOWN

Gijubhai

Translated by Mamata Pandya

Original Gujarati: *Gaam ma* Author: Gijubhai Badheka

Shri Dakshinamurti Balsahitya *Avalokan Granthmala*  
(Observation Series)

Editors: Shri Gijubhai and Taraben

Publishers and Distributors: RR Shethni Company. Princess  
Street, Mumbai 400002 Gandhi Road, Amdavad 380001

Re-edited and Republished October 1976

English translation copyright 2021 Mamata Pandya

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Gijubhai believed that there was an educational opportunity in everything. What was missing was the guided observations that could help children look more closely at the world around them, and discover new things.

A lot of Gijubhai's writing for children shares his own observations about places, people and things. His short essays on different aspects of the world around us—landscapes, flora, fauna, people and activities have been published in the *Avalokan Granthamala* (Observation Series) of which this is one title.

Gijubhai used to take the Balamandir children on short excursions to nearby places. This booklet *Gaam ma* describes a trip into the commercial part of Bhavnagar, that was (and is) locally *gaam*. It follows the children as they visit different bazaars, shops and other establishments, and records their responses to the exposure.

Translating this also brought back many personal memories for me. For years, as children, we used to be taken on almost the same route in the *gaam* by our aunts! The names of the many of the commercial areas and streets remain the same even today.

In 1989 the *Avalokan Granthmala* series was also recommended as a resource for Adult Education and Non formal Education Centres

[1]

Greetings Gijubhai! Where are you off to with your troop?

"Today is Sunday so we are taking the children to show them the town. On Sundays we either go on an outing, or we do some cleaning, or we put up a play."

"Taraben is not with you today?"

"Taraben is out with the younger children. There are more children now, so we have to make two groups."

"Where is Monghiben?"

"She is with Taraben."

"Ranchhodji is not to be seen these days? He used to go with you earlier."

"Yes. Ranchhodji is in Mumbai these days. He is running a balmandir in Ghatkopar."

"Well then. Off you go. *Jai jai.*"

"*Jai jai!* Good bye. Come to the Balmandir."

"Yes I will."

“Where shall we go first?” asked Gijubhai?

“Let us go and see the library first; from there we will go to Vora Bazaar; from the bazaar to the vegetable market, and then we will take the road to the station.”

“OK. Let’s start then. Get all the children together. I will give them some instructions before we set off.”

“Look children. Today we are taking a trip to see our town. There are a few things that you should know. First of all, do not enter any place without asking. I will tell you where we can go and where we cannot. The second thing to remember is that you should not touch anything without permission. We can look at things for as long as we like, but we should not touch them. The third thing, you know that we always speak softly when we do our work, we should do the same even when we are out. Even if we are in a noisy place, we should continue to talk softly. And the last thing, when you hear the whistle, you should stop looking and come out.”

After the instructions were given, the children were counted. Then we set off for the library.

There were so many cupboards in the library! The cupboards had labels pasted on them: ‘Stories’, ‘History’, ‘Politics’, etc.

Ramu said: “Gijubhai! This cupboard which has Stories written on it will have all story books, isn’t it?” And the one with History will have history books?”

“Yes. That is correct. This is like what we have in our Balmandir, where each pigeon hole has a set of similar books. Here they are put in the cupboards.”

Chandu said: “The library in the Balmandir is small; this library is big enough for the whole town. “

There was a Reading Room in the library. There were newspapers on the tables. One table had Gujarati magazines on it, another one has English magazines; the third table had daily newspapers, and the fourth one had weekly issues. A couple of people were sitting and reading quietly.

Lallu and Mohan found the ‘Balmitra’ and ‘Baljivan’ magazines and sat down to read these.

Devchand and Ravji picked up the newspapers—‘Gujarati’, ‘Hindustan’ and Saanj Vartman’ and tried to slowly read the headlines. Shamji and Venilal were looking at the photographs displayed in the library.

Kusum and Champa were sitting together on a chair and were chatting.

When everyone had had a good look around, we left the library.

### [3]

We reached Vora Bazaar and looked around. All the shops were owned by Voras (Bohras). The shops had so much to sell. One shop sold only bangles! All kinds of bangles: thousands of bangles.

The shopkeeper called to us: "How are you Teacher? Will you buy some bangles for the girls?"

I said: "No, Voraji. We have brought everyone to see your shop."

Voraji showed all kinds of bangles. The children exclaimed at the colours: "Look, this one is blue; this one is purple; and this one is red and yellow."

Next to the bangle shop there was a toy shop. The children stopped to look at the toys. The shopkeeper was friendly. He showed them all kinds of toys: monkeys that flew, cats that moved their necks, and fish that swam in the water. The shopkeeper forgot his work and played with the children. He seated us on a cushion and gave us some chopped *supari*.

Voraji said: "I have a daughter. Will you admit her to the Balmandir?" His daughter Shirinbai was sitting close by. He pointed to her and said: "This daughter".

I replied: "Yes we will. She is the right age. Send her from tomorrow."

Voraji was very happy. He said: "Here, take some of these toys."

I said: "These are not the kind of toys we keep in the Balmandir. We have different kinds of toys there."

The children said: "Gijubhai, let us go to that shop there. The one with all the pictures hung up and where the phonogram is playing. Look the tigers and lions and giraffes are moving their necks. We also want to go to the watch shop."

The tigers, lions and giraffes were moving their necks almost as if they were real! We blew the whistle, but the children would not move. They were so busy looking that they forgot the rules. Children are children after all!

#### [4]

Then we walked on to Jechand's cloth store. Jechandbhai asked: "What is this expedition?"

I told him: "Today we have brought the children to look around the town. Will you show us your cloth shop?"

"What is there to see here?"

I said: "There is a lot for children to see here. Who sells the cloth, what kinds of cloth you keep, how you sell it, all this is interesting to find out."

Jechandbhai invited all of us to sit down in his shop; just then some customers came to the shop; one asked to see some thick cotton used for mattress and quilt covers. The shopkeeper took out the rolls of the fabric. One customer asked to see material for *ghaghras* (long flared skirts), and the other wanted cloth for a coat. The fourth one said: "Show me some pure khadi."

The children were watching all this with great interest. The shopkeeper showed the customers the different kinds of cloth that they needed.

The children said: "Look at all the different designs and patterns on the material."

Leeluben said: "I would like to draw this border."

Vasant said: "Tomorrow I will draw a flower like this."

Champak said: "I really like this colour. I will try to make it with my water colours tomorrow."

The children were so happy to see the designs on the sarees. Moolji and Bhagvanlal were busy feeling all the fabric. "Oho, this one is so smooth; this one is a bit rough; this one is not so nice; this one is really good."

Dayaben said: "Gijubhai, let's go to the khadi shop. Let us see what kind of khadi we can get there."

We all reached the khadi shop. Jagubhai was my old friend; we studied together. He asked all the children to sit down, and then showed beautiful samples of khadi.



Sushila said: "We should all wear khadi only. It is so nice."

Kusumben said: "We do wear khadi. My uncle brings some nice khadi from Mumbai."

Babi said: "We always buy khadi from the Khadi Bhandar in Mumbai. Look the clothes I am wearing are made from that khadi."

Jagubhai said: "Yes you get very good khadi in Mumbai. The people there can also spend more to buy that."

Ramnik said: "Gijubhai, I am thirsty."

Jagubhai called for water for everyone. We all drank water and started to go towards the vegetable market (*shaak peeth*).

## [5]

The vegetable market was very busy and very noisy. Rasila put her fingers in her ears.

"Oh baap re, so much noise! My eardrums will burst." The vendors were all yelling at the top of their voices. "A seer and a quarter of *doodhi* for one paisa, one paisa for a seer and a quarter" "take it away for one paisa a seer. Going cheap. *Bhindi* and *karela*: one paisa a seer!" "Chillies, chillies; one anna for a seer, a seer for one anna!"

We went into the market. One stall was selling only *suran* (yams). Piles and piles of yams.

Revu said: "So much *suran*!"

Kaku asked: "Gijubhai, what is this one with thorns?"

Harjivanbhai said: "That is called *kantola*."

Dadu said: "Let me see what they are like."

Madhu said: "Look they are selling cheebhda (melons and gourds). Balu brings these every day for us to eat."

We met Bhagvan, one of the vegetable vendors as we walked. "So Gijubhai, you have brought your Balmandir with you! Would you like to buy anything?"

"We will buy, if you say so. Give us something that the children will like."

Bhagvan said: "Why don't you take some corn cobs. They are very tender these days. You can get them roasted by that man there."

I said: "OK then. Let us buy 20 corn cobs."

Bhagvan bought them and got them roasted.

We all sat at one side of the market and started nibbling on our corn cobs like monkeys.

Kulin said: "Gijubhai, let's go to that shop across the road. They seem to be making tops there."

[6]

We set off. There were a few shops making wooden items on the lathe. One was making tops—big and small, one was turning out pegs and legs for furniture; one was making *velans* (sticks for rolling *chapatis*). The children were fascinated to see the wood shavings fly as the lathe turned and rounded the wood into different objects.

Vallabhdas said: “My father is a carpenter. We have these tools at our home.”

Amrutlal said: “I even know how to use a *randho* (wood shaving tool).”

Just then my friend Bhimji the carpenter came, and said: “Oho Gijubhai! Out with your Balmandir are you?”

He took all the children into an inner room and showed them all the finished items. He showed a small box with beautiful carving. He said: “I want to put this in an exhibition.”

The box had so many small drawers inside. They were studded with glass. When each drawer was opened a little bell tinkled. It was a lovely box.

The carpenter said: “This costs a hundred and fifty rupees.”

The children said: “A hundred and fifty rupees! O *Baap re!*”

Lakshmi said: “look there is Taraben’s group. See Monghiben is at the front. Tulsi is at the back, he seems to be tired. And look how Halima is walking here and there.”

Gijubhai said: “Now everyone be in one line; and let’s count.”

Taraben’s group reached.

“Gijubhai! Namaskar.”

Everyone greeted the group with namaskar. Halima clung on to Gijubhai.

Gijubhai asked; “So Halima! Where have you been?”

Halima said: “We went to the *talwala* (the oilseed person). He knows us.”

Gijubhai asked: “What is the *talwala* called?”

Halima said: “I do not know.”

Badrinath said: “He is called a *ghanchi* (one who presses oil).”

Nilu said: “There was an ox that was going round and round there. The cover from the *til* (sesame) seeds was being removed and the seeds were being separated.

Gijubhai asked: “Did you taste the oil?”

Vasumati said: “Yes. Taraben made us smell the oil. We also tasted the left-over pulp after the oil had been squeezed.”

Gijubhai asked: "How did it taste?"

Jasumati said: "It was good with jaggery. We all ate some."

Balubhai said: "Gijubhai! We went to the *mochi's* (cobbler's) shop."

Taraben said: "The children enjoyed looking at the different kinds of shoes."

Gijubhai said: "That's right. The older children enjoyed walking around the vegetable market."

Monghiben said: "We should take the children to see the town every week. They get to see a lot of things".

Gijubhai said: "Maybe not every week but we will come this side once in a while."

Tansukh said: "Gijubhai let me tell you! The *mochi* was stitching like this and he had kept his foot like this."

Gijubhai said: "Good. But tell me what kinds of shoes did you see there?"

Nanubhai said: "What kinds? Um there were big shoes, there were chappals; there were slippers. There were white ones like my small sister wears, also like the ones that Taraben wears, which are turned up in the front."

Hansaben said: "But there were no rubber boots. I wanted rubber ones."

Liluben said: "Rubber ones are sold in the Vora Bazaar. I have seen them there."

Gijubhai asked: "So where else did you go?"

Tansukh said: "Where else? We went to the temple. The one in the centre of the lake."

Harjivanbhai said: "Oh, so you must have gone to the Gangamata mandir? Right?"

Taraben said: "Gijubhai! There is beautiful carving in the temple. Even the little children kept looking at it."

Monghiben said: "The children loved sliding on the marble. It was difficult to bring them away!"

Gijubhai said: "That is what happens also when we go to Takhteshwar temple."

Devi said: "Taraben, Taraben! There was a goddess in the mandir. Gijubhai! We sat there and quietly prayed."

Badrnath said; "It was very peaceful. There was no disturbance."

Gijubhai said: "But Taraben! Did the children have a snack? The older children have eaten roasted corn on cob. We have got some for the younger ones."

Jasumati said: "We also had a snack. We sat in the temple and had peanuts and puffed rice (*shing-mamra*). We had brought it with us from the Balmandir."

Gijubhai said: "Oh that is good. Now let us go to the photographer's shop."

We all reached Shantilal's shop.

Shantilal said: "It is good to see you all. Come in, come in. Children, go in and sit down on the *durree*. Then I will show you everything. Would you like some water to drink?"

Taraben said: "Yes, we would all like to have some water."

Shantilal said: "Gijubhai! Let us take a picture of everyone today, as all are together."

Gijubhai said; "All those who want to have their photo taken, raise your hands."

Vasantben said: "I want a photo taken."

Indumati said: "I do too."

Sharda said: "I will get a photo also."

Jasumati said: "Gijubhai, Gijubhai! Me too."

Shantilal said: "Look. All of you come this side. Sit as I tell you to. Then I will take your photo."

Taraben said: "Tiku! You be the first one to get your photo taken. Shantilalbhai will tell you how it will be done."

Shantilal said: "See Tikuben, sit like this. Then I will show you everything. When I say 'one, two, three' look at me. Nobody should move."

“Alright; Ready! One, two, three!! Done.”

Tiku said: “But Shantilalbai! How does a photo get taken?”

The Shantilalbai made the children sit around him and explained everything. Then we went into the dark room where the glass was washed. He also showed us how the picture gets transferred from the glass to the paper.

Gijubhai asked: “Monghiben! What is the time? Should we get back to Balmandir or do we have time to go anywhere else?”

Monghiben said: “We have time. It is just three o’clock.”

Taraben said: “Now that we have come this far, why don’t we show the children Bhikhabkai’s printing press? Is it not somewhere around here?”

Gijubhai said: “It is close by. Good that you remembered. Alright, let us get both the groups together now. Taraben! How many in your group?”

Taraben said: “Twelve.”

“OK. We have fourteen in ours. Let’s keep count of twenty six.”

[11]

Bhikhabhai was sitting on a cushion on the floor. His glasses were on his nose, and he was reading.

Bhikhabhai said: “Do come in; Taraben, Monghiben, Gijubhai!”



Gijubhai said: “Bhikhabhai! We have come to see your printing press with the children.”

Bhikhabahi said: “That is very good.”

The printing was on in the press. Bhikhabhai himself came with us to show us everything.

Bhikhabahi said: “Look, this is where the children’s stories and other books are printed. First the letters have to be arranged in the block. This is the letter K, this is the letter CH. You can pick them up and look at them.

Bhikhabhai gave each one a letter to look at. Someone said: “But these are upside down!”

Bhikhabahi said: “Yes they are placed upside down but they come out straight in the print. Now let me show you how the letters look when they are arranged.”

Then Bhikhabhai showed us a galley that had been prepared. He pressed a paper on it and showed us the proof that was copied on to it.

Bhikhabhai said: “Look; the printing is done on this long paper.”

Jasiben said: “These are the proofs that Gopalkaka checks every day!”

Babu said: “I have also seen proofs.”

Babi said; “I have seen too.”

Bhikhabhai said: “So let us see, who all can read the proofs?”

Mukta and Jashi, Ashokrai and Amrutlal started to read.

Then Bhikhabhai took us where the printing was taking place and explained how books get printed.

Bhikhabhai said: "Once the plates are arranged, the paper has to be put for as many copies that are to be printed, and the machine has to be turned."

Chandraben said; "Liluben! This is very easy. So many pages get printed in a little time."

Then we saw the machine that cuts the papers, and the machine that binds the pages.

The older children were quite interested but the younger ones got bored. They had more fun watching the cobbler and the oil presser.

Monghiben said: "Gijubhai! The young children find everything new. They even stopped to see how the savoury maker was making the *ganthia*, and they just did not tire of watching the tailor at his sewing machine. They kept watching and watching."

[12]

Gijubhai said: "This is the grain market. Why don't we show the children a grain warehouse and shop? The children can get an idea about this too."

“Let us go to Raychandbhai’s shop.”

Raychandbhai smiled and said: “Well, well! The Balmandir is out today!”

Gijubhai said: “They are on their way on your shop, to see where the grains are stored and sold.”

Raychandbhai said: “Please come, I am happy! Consider this your shop!”

Everyone climbed up to the shop.

Raychandbhai said: “Let us go inside. The sacks are stored inside.”

We all followed Raychandbhai inside.

There were sacks all round. Raychandbhai made a small hole in one sack and said: “See, this is a sack of rice.” Then he made a small hole in another sack and showed some grains of wheat.

Sumatiben said: “What is in this sack?”

Raychandbhai said: “That one has *moong*”.

Sushila said: “Please show us”.

Raychandbhai took out some *moong* and showed us.

Jasumati said: “But we cannot see. Show us also.”

Gijubhai brought the younger children inside and said: “See, this is what we all eat. Wheat, dal, rice, *moong*, *chana*, *vaal*--all these we get from a shop like this.”

Jasumati was listening carefully and nodding her head.

Gijubhai said: "When your father comes to the market he buys wheat and dal and *moong* and rice from a shop like this."

Jasumati said: "Yes, yes. My father brings all this".

Halima said: "My father also".

Sharda said: "My father also".

Gijubhai said: "Yes, every body's father does. Mine also".

Tiku said: "Where is your father?"

Babi said: "He was there, but then he died."

Taraben said: "Let us go now. It is four o'clock."

Gijubhai said: "Yes. Let us get back home."

We all came to the big chowk and hired *tangas*. All the children were sent home in the *tangas* and the adults walked back to the Balmandir.



