

LETTERS TO BABU

Gijubhai

Originally written in English

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Edited by Shri Manubhai Pancholi, Takhatsinh Parmar,
Rasendra Pandya

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PREFACE

Gijubhai left the Dakshinamurti Balmandir in 1936. After that he was besieged with invitations to visit, and to advise and guide the increasing number of institutions and experiments that were inspired by his thinking and work. In 1938 he travelled to Kutch to visit new Balmandirs that were being set up, to guide and mentor educators, and to conduct teacher training programmes.

As always, he continued to be a prolific letter writer. Even as he travelled, visited new places and met new people, he wrote about his experiences and his impressions to friends, students, colleagues, and family members.

This small selection of letters to his second daughter Divya (Babu) who was at that time about 17-18 years old, reflects all this, as well as a father's love for his daughter and concern about her wellbeing, studies and activities.

What is unusual about these is that they were originally written in English. They were typed from his handwritten letters. The letters are reproduced as they were originally written.

Vanku-Cutch

5-3-38

My dear Babu,

Your letter undated reached me this evening. I am really glad to learn that you like my letters and think that they are useful to you. I am encouraged to write more and more to you and this letter bears proof of what I feel.

By grace of God my work progresses well and I find myself occupied the whole day. I have classes twice a day. The morning classes commence at 8 AM and end by 11 AM. Then there is a long interval of four hours. During the interval we lunch, rest, read and write. At 3.30 again the work begins terminating at 5.30 with a national song. The fatigue is removed by music after every heavy lecture or demonstrative lesson. In the evening we are out for a long walk. It is pleasant to walk in the open fields of Cutch under deep blue canopy of cloudless sky. The sunset if not gorgeous is in a way beautiful. The beauty lies in its simplicity. No sudden changes of colour after colours. No rapid succession of bright lights and dark shadows. It is all slow steady glow of the yellow disk that sinks quietly at times behind the low hills or at times behind the dusky horizon of Cutch. I have a liking for all types of sunsets. It is new and fresh every day and that brings joy and freshness to me. It is a fit time to pray and I pray within.

Things are going on OK. A month will be soon over and I will pitch my tent at Vaso. You are busy with examination otherwise a trip to Cutch would be worth its while.

With love to all.

Yours Gijubhai

PS Is masi OK? I like to hear her wonderful talks. They are always very interesting.



Vanku

1-4-38

My dear Babu,

It appears that you are true to your faith and you do not reply to my letters. Never mind, I shall continue writing and would fulfil my promise.

Yesterday night our party of teachers reached here safe and sound. We had to travel almost the whole day. The journey was rather tedious. On the way it was a great pleasure to see deer roaming in the open space of Cutch. I saw King-crows, partridges, skylarks and shrikes in particular. The route was barren and treeless and sandy.

We have begun our work from today. This place seems to be nice and pleasant. The atmosphere is good.

One should see Cutch in order to know its backward people, dry landscape and peculiarly open space full of hills and hillocks and little shrubs and thorn trees. It is so very different from green Gujarat and nearer, somewhat, to Kathiawar in some respects.

Bachu is expected here in the last week of April. You all must see Cutch someday. It is worth the trouble of travelling.

I hope you will excuse my bad hand this time.

With love to Tiku and Sushi.

Yours Gijubhai



Vanku-Cutch

16-4-38

My dear Babu,

I am expecting your letter every day but every post in the evening disappoints me. However I agree in your favour and say because the examination is drawing nearer, Babu must be very busy and hence she can't pen a line or two.

Two days back I had been to Ishwarnagar, an educational institution, on the annual festival of the same. It meant a journey by car of 100 miles—coming and going and it rather went difficult with my health. By now of course the fatigue is gone and the pleasure of the trip remains.

Tomorrow we are going to the seaside, four miles from here. I have been there once. The beach is pretty nice. It can well be compared with the Juhu site of Bombay. The Arabian Sea roars there with so many lions' roars, and the waves of the seas dash towards the shore like mountain-like horses with white foams in their mouths.

It is such a grand sight. The dashing waves ultimately break up on the shore and disappear into the beautiful sands on the beach.

Lately it is foggy every day. I am reminded of our days in Panchgini. Everything seems to be bathing in the white cloudy fog and it is really lovely.

I am not keeping very fit but with the aid of medicine I am going on well.

Tell Sushi and Tiku that I am writing to her tomorrow.

It is 9.30 in Cutch which means 10.30 a.m. S.T. and it is growing hot. I don't think there is copper/smith about here to act as that whether worry as Europeans put it.

That is enough for the present.

Yours Gijubhai.

Vaso

9-5-38

My dear Babu,

Leaving behind us the din and noise of the city life of Ahmedabad we are here in a comparatively quiet place. We are occupying one of the rooms of a newly-built boarding house which is well ventilated and which allows full light from the sun. Our room is well furnished and possesses all the necessary requirements that I would like. We have unpacked our things and the wall cupboard and writing tables are not without their occupants. If one comes here and sees our room one can hardly detect that three days back it was an empty space inhabited only by ants and other insects.

We have begun our work right through. The drill bell dispels our morning dreams and suddenly throws us in the line of activities of the world: morning duties over, we are at tea. It is one of the functions that remains constant; though the tea sets, tea quality etc. vary. Tea over, we run to the classes where educational activities commence from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. with intervals in music.

It appears that the rooms are hotter here than in Cutch. It was the soft waving of the sea wind that induced sleep at Vanku while here occasional hot gusts of wind drive away sleepishness that awaits us in our armchairs and cots. But I must say evenings are cool and pleasant. There is a fountain newly erected in our compound round which we

gather together for a quiet rest or aimless talks. At times I prefer to go out for a little walk as well.

Before we left the village we paid our respectful visit to a religious place. There was neither an image to worship nor a masjid to pray to Allah; but there was a lamp burning in a nice little temple and that was the object of reverence and worship. There goes a story that a bhakt after the name of Bhabharam thrived here and influenced both Mohmedans and Hindus in their spiritual uplift. Before he died there arose a dispute as to the disposal of his dead body. But as the story tells us, when Bhabharam expired there was nothing found in the room except a burning lamp and a heap of flowers. That ended a dispute into raising of such a temple and a lamp worship. The little place is beautiful. It is worth a religious visit. The cult of Bhabharam still exists and it is known as Pirana after the memory of Bhabharam's guru some Mohmedan Pir. The place is known as "Chichi Bai ni Run". Chichibai was the female disciple of Bhabharam and lived and died as a yogini.

We are planning two small trips: one to Pij and the second to Vadtal.

But the walks here are not very open, all horizon is blocked up with big trees and the lovely vision of the beautiful sunset in Cutch is wanting here.

It is the moon that peeps forth from the cloudy sky and sheds a cold dim light over everything on earth. Nights are cool and bracing. We retire to bed about 11 p.m. to rise

again at 5 a.m. with the ding dong of a bell that is both cruel and kind to the idle and the busy respectively.

This will do Babu, for the present. Hope you are all OK. I am OK.

Yours ever

Gijubhai



12-8-38

My dear Babu,

Thank you very much or your letter. It was full of details and was interesting.

Our work is in rapid progress and I hope within a fortnight things will be very nicely arranged. Indeed every day is full of new and varied experiences with respect to newly arrived students in a new situation. It will naturally take some time before they are adjusted thoroughly. I for myself am enjoying the time in understanding and guiding them.

My health is better and I feel it will soon improve and reach normal standard, and I get my khana from the kitchen twice a day and save both time and energy.

For the last three days the wind is blowing the whole day and night. It is indeed an unpleasant disturbance. The sky is not clear. This morning there was a poor drizzling for a short time. Last night the full moon remained clouded the whole night.

Balmandir will open about the 30th of August. Somabhai Bhavsar will work as an Acharya of Balmandir. Shashiben of Ahmedabad will help him.

Bachubhai is expected here on the 16th. He will deliver some lectures on birds and nature. Don't you think it is worthwhile coming here and passing some time here? Just think about it.

I hope you are all OK.

With B.R. to Mashi and all.

Yours Gijubhai



5-1-1939

My dear Babu Ben,

We reached here this morning and have resumed our work in right earnest. Students are pouring in from different places and the busy life here has once again revived. Lecturing work will commence from 6th morning.

Then we shall be working full speed. We have to make up for the loss of one month and there are many things to be done yet. However I shall keep my word of writing to you regularly and you must be true to your creed of not replying to me.

Bachubhai was at the station to receive us. It was indeed a pleasant surprise to me. Xmas holidays had brought him here. He left for Jamnagar.

I hope you are going pretty well in your studies. You must be following the same good routine of the day. While reading you must be coming out in the gallery to see the Khokhara hills and the effect of the light of the sun and the shades of the clouds on them. How pleasant it is to look at them. You had well remarked once that they were the ideals of steadfastness in friendship and love. They are immovable and unchanging: two most essential qualities in love and friendship.

Batukbhai's comings and goings must be same and as before. Evening visit to mama and mashi cannot be otherwise than usual. Tiku—a great scholar must be busy with paper cutting work and Sushi inter alias moti must now have taken to some new work in painting seriously, mother must be alright and attending to all with affection.

I am OK.

Yours affectionately

Gijubhai Badheka

Rajkot

18-1-39

My dear Babuben,

It is 5.45 in the morning and I am writing this letter to you. It is really pleasant to get up early in the morning and begin to work. After a good rest during the night, to work in the morning is wise.

In the morning all is quiet. There is no disturbance in the house, in the street or anywhere. All is calm. Because of quiet you can easily apply yourself to your work and you can put in two hours of work in one hour.

Some people retire very late in the night. They also get up late in the morning. When they get up all are moving about and there is a good deal of noise. Then it becomes difficult to read or write or do anything with concentration.

In the beginning it may be little difficult to rise early, but strong determination followed by quickly leaving the bed will soon dispel all unwillingness and laziness from all.

Nowadays I get up early, take little exercise while in bed and then commence work. I enjoy my work and find myself doing it in a short time comparatively. If you like you might try this.

Your preliminary is drawing near. You must be working hard. But please don't exhaust yourself. Work but

steadily and surely. No mere cramming. No anxiety or hurry worry. Read with understanding, then everything will be OK.

Bachubhai left yesterday. He delivered three lectures this time. The lectures were impressive and useful.

I am OK and so you all must be.

With B.R. to Tiku, Sushi, Batukbhai and all concerned.

Yours affectionately,

Gijubhai

