

## **SHRI MAHENDRABHAI MEGHANI – A Short Introduction.**

Mahendrabhai, or “MIMI” as he is known to his children and grandchildren, was born in 1923 as the eldest of nine children of Smt. Damayaniben and one of the greatest poets, writers and literary giants of India and Gujarat, Shree Zaverchand Meghani, an ardent follower of Ghandhiji’s “Non-Violence” movement, and on whom GHANDHI JI had publicly bestowed the title of “NATIONAL POET” ( राष्ट्रिय शायर – Raashtriya Shaayar).

In 1940, Mahendrabhai graduated from high school in Mumbai, and joined L. D. Arts College in Amdavad for further education. As he was getting ready to move from Mumbai to Amdavad, his father suggested, “It gets very hot in Amadavad, so make sure you cover your head with a Topy”. In compliance with his father’s suggestion, Mahendrabhai started wearing GHANDHI TOPY that even today is a special and distinguished part of his attire.

Being a good student, after second year at L. D. Arts College, in June of 1942, he decided to join the then famous ELFINSTON COLLEGE in Mumbai for further studies. This, however, did not last very long and Mahendrabhai quit college as he joined Ghandhiji’s “QUIT INDIA” freedom movement and actively worked with the violent faction of this movement.

His father was very worried. However, Mahendrabhai quickly turned to being an ardent follower of Ghandhiji’s Non-Violence movement, Ghandhian thoughts and literature.

He decided not to go back to college and joined his father in the publication of the famous Gujarati publication ‘PHOOLCHAAB’(A Basket of Flowers).

In 1944, Mahendrabhai Married Nirmalaben. Within four years of his marriage, his father Zhaverchand Meghani suddenly died in March of 1947. Mahendrabhai took over all the activities and thus started his Journalism carrier.

In 1948, Mahendrabhai came to Columbia University, New York for further studies in Journalism, Mass Media and Broadcasting. During his short stay in USA, Mahendrabhai interacted extensively with the cosmopolitan student population and frequently visited the then newly started UNITED NATIONS (U.N.O.).

Mahendrabhai returned back to Mumbai, India in 1949 with a very strong desire to start a monthly journal for more discerning gujarati readers. On January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1959, the republic day of India, he started publishing now well known monthly magazine MILAP. The standard of articles published in MILAP was so high that it was considered very prestigious, even for well-established literary personalities, to be published in MILAP.

Tired of the hectic life of Mumbai, Meghani family moved to Bhavnagar, Gujarat, and Mahendrabhai got very busy with publication of MILAP and running LOK MILAP bookstore. In 1969, as India was excitedly celebrating one hundredth birthday of MAHATMA GANDHIJI, Mahendrabhai decided to celebrate this unique event with a very special twist. He wanted to convey to the rest of the world the special cultural, historical, geographical and social heritage and richness of GANDHIJI’s birthplace “BHARAT” ( भारत – India). Keeping this central

thought in focus, he compiled a special collection of 400 books published only in India that explicitly conveyed this message.

To make this a truly publicly supported non-profit project, Lok Milap trust was established to collect One Lakh Rupees for this project through vast participation by people at large with individual, interest free loan contribution on no more than One Hundred rupees' per family. A booklet titled "DISCOVERING INDIA BOOK EXHIBITION" was published and sent out all over the world requesting participation form abroad.

Arrangements were lined up to exhibit this set of 400 books only in the cities and towns of various countries where the sponsoring organization would by this set for donation to local libraries and other community organization. Mahendrabhai, and one of his younger brothers Jayantbhai, traveled to various continents and countries such as UK, USA, Africa, Australia, Mexico, and Fiji etc.as part of this unique celebration of Gandhi Centenary Celebrations. This event was wildly successful, and all the loans given under this program were fully paid back upon Mahendrabhai's return to India.

Mahendrabhai's focused desire, dedication and hard work to offer most value based high quality and cost effective literature, from all walks of life all over the world, to Gujarat and Gujaratis is manifested in yet another very noble project called "ARDHI SADI NI VANCHAN YATRA" ( અર્ધી સદી ની વાંચન યાત્રા – Half a Century of Travel in Literary readings).

Four volumes of well-balanced representative collection of last FIFTY YEARS of Gujarati articles, stories, poetries, etc. written by young & old, famous and not-so-famous writers, poets and critics, are published for quality reading enjoyment of Gujarati speaking and reading communities across the Globe. In spite of the high cost of book publishing in today's economy, 150,000 copies of this set of four books have been sold at a deeply discounted and subsidized rate of approximately \$20 per set.

Many many more such worthy projects have been completed by Mahendrabhai and the Meghani family in last 50 + years. Many more are in planning stage. All this is done with only one noble thought in mind – to serve Gujarati Language and community.

In summary, Mahendrabhi Meghani and the entire Meghani Family has been very active in cost effective, high quality publication and distribution of Literature to propagate, further and extol the importance of value based, virtuous, simple living and high thinking most exemplified by The Father of our nation, and The YUGA PURUSHA ( યુગ પુરુષ – The Man of the Century) MAHATMA GANDHIJI.

It is our distinct pleasure and proud privilege to invite and welcome MAHENDRA BHAI MEGHANI, a life long ardent follower and active supporter of Gandhiji's thoughts and actions through last 70 years of his literary and social activism even at the mature young age of 87 years.

Ashok & Sudha Bhatt  
10500 Arden Villa Drive  
Bakersfield, CA 93311  
661-247-5260  
[agbhatt@yahoo.com](mailto:agbhatt@yahoo.com)