

Dharmaj Village: A name that sounds ordinary, but its story reshapes everything you know about Indian villages. Nestled in Gujarat's Anand district, this village has redefined rural India, blending global wealth with a deep sense of home. Here, every family tells a story that spans continents. But their hearts never left this 17-hectare patch of land.

Dharmaj's panchayat model is a national lesson in governance. With resources, local support and NRI involvement, the village achieves true self-governance. Each year, Dharmaj Day on January 12 draws NRIs home, celebrating the village they have built together.

Dharmaj is more than wealth. It is a blueprint of ambition, unity and vision. It proves that a global outlook and local devotion can create something extraordinary, a village that is rich in resources, heritage and heart.

Economically, Dharmaj is a marvel. It has 11 bank branches, spanning nationalised, private and cooperative lenders, that collectively handle deposits exceeding Rs 1,000 crore, that boasts highest value per capita for village of size in SE Asia. The first Dena Bank branch opened here on December 18, 1959. Gram Sahakari Bank followed on January 16, 1969, under H.M. Patel, a Dharmaj native and later India's finance minister.

The local economy is built upon agriculture focused upon growing tobacco and associated nicotine products distributed nationwide. The wealth remains mainly been reinvested within the village.

Dharmajians migrating and their decedents have proudly retained affinity towards native village and have engaged in efforts directed towards betterment in health and educational facilities for villagers at home. They have become Dharmaj's backbone and contributed towards cleaner village with unobstructed roads, free of garbage piles or stagnant water marring the landscape. Cleanliness is accepted as a shared responsibility, enforced by the Panchayat and embraced by every villager.

Entertainment and green spaces developed reflect equal foresight. Such as the Surajba Park carved out in Gouchar offering recreational facilities to include swimming pool, boating, water slides and lush gardens at modest rates.

Further, the fifty bighas of common land provide green fodder year-round for livestock at nominal cost for the villagers to boost village economy and welfare.

Also an underground drainage system, operational since 1972, remains unmatched by many Indian towns and cities

History

Dharmaj remains a predominately Patidar (Patel) occupied village, with Patidar community noted to have settled in Dharmaj in two major phases. The earliest ancestors, Narsinhbhai Patel took residence initially at the “Juni Khadki” (Sardar Chowk), migrated from the village of Jargal (Thasra Taluka of Kheda district) to settle in Dharmaj in the year 1155 CE. The residents of the Juni Khadki can thus trace back their lineage over 870 years as of the year 2025—a remarkable testament to the village’s rich and ancient heritage.

The founding ancestors of the current three major Patridar *khadkis* (residential clusters), Rudjibhai Gadabhai Patel (uncle) and Rangabhai Tarpadbhai Gadabhai Patel (cousin) are noted to have migrated from village of Virol (Sojitra Taluka) in 1675 CE, marking the beginning of a 350-year-old lineage of their descendants in Dharmaj village. The *Dharmajwala Khadki*, remarkably still exists in Virol today, preserving the mark of historical connection.

Dharmaj continued to subscribe to mutual principles adopted by the Leuva Patidars of Charotar, through the tradition of community organization through the *Gol* system (alliance for managing social affairs) as been practiced by early generations.

Places of Significance & Interest

1. **Varahi Mata Mandir:** Village Kul Devi or Gamtal Devi -inaugurated by our great dada, **Ranga Patel from Virol Village**. A first stop as entering village for all Dharmajians to pay respect to village’s Kul Devi where our ancestors would have sought blessings upon various adventures.

2. **Shree Jalarm Mandir** – Largest Shree Jalaram Mandir outside **Virpur**, visited by many devotees.

3. **Clock Tower** – Centre of Town
4. **V.N.High School**
5. **Shree Swaminarayan Sampraday** – Vadtal Taba established in 1960
6. **Surajba Water Park** – recreation including swimming, boating etc. and wedding venue – popular for school visits
7. **Indubhai Patel College of Pharmacy**
8. **Biotechnology Centre**
9. **Dharmeshwar Mahadev** – Oldest temple in village's
10. **T.B.Hospital Dharmaj** – Only one in Anad District
11. **Medical Complex Comprising:**
 - a) Sharda General Hospital – Founded by Dharmaj Society of London
 - b) Prabhulila Physiotherapy Centre
 - c) Pushpadeep Children Hospital
 - d) Urmila Polio & Orthopaedic Hospital
 - e) Zaverba Maganbhai Patel – Dental Hospital
 - f) Ipcowala Santram Medical Complex – Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Allopathy
 - g) Ipcowala Santram Laboratory & X-ray
 - h) Gyaniji Maharaj – Dispensary
12. **H M English Medium School**
13. **Reverse Osmosis Mineral Water Plant -**
14. **Vipassana meditation centre**
15. Village Heritage Centre – protecting & preserving our rich architecture

FAMOUS PERSONALITIES

DHARMAJ RATNA: DR HIRUBHAI MULJIBHAI PATEL (H M PATEL)

H M Patel was born on 27th August 1904, completing his secondary school education at St Xavier's High School, Mumbai at the age of 15 was sent for further studies to England. He studied philosophy, politics & economics at Oxford University gaining BA. He simultaneously studied for ICS at University of London as an external student and gained high grades for competitive examination.

On returning to India in 1927 he initially served as assistant collector in Larkhana district, Sindh province, subsequently joining Finance Department in Mumbai as Deputy Secretary. Later from 1937 to 1939 he took up the post as Trade Commissioner of India for Northern Europe (Hamburg), moving to London until his return to India in 1940.

He continued his role in Civil Service, having been appointed as Deputy Secretary, Deputy Director General in the supply department. Later he continued as Cabinet Secretary until 1947 and subsequently serving as Defence Secretary until 1953. He also served as the Secretary of Food & Agriculture followed by Secretary in Department of Economic affairs, and finally as Principal Finance secretary, when he remained closely associated with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

During the reign of Junta Government, in 1977 he served as Finance Minister and later in 1979 became Home Secretary.

He is recipient of prestigious Albert Schwartz Medal for his activities in the conservation of natural resources and animal welfare and Nargis Dutt award (posthumously) for making of the film "Sardar" in 1993.

HM Patel was elected president of the Charotar Vidya Mandal which runs a number of educational and charitable institutions in Vallabh Vidyanagar. He also established the Charotar Argoya Mandal, Pramuk Swami Medical College and Shree Krishna Hospital (Karmsad)

H M Patel was found of reading and was fluent in various languages to include English, Marathi, Sindhi, Persian, Hindi, Gujarati, German & French.

He passed away on 30th November 1993.

PROFESSOR SATYAVRAT PATEL (SATUBHAI)

Son of principal R K Patel, V N High School of Dharmaj born on 1st September 1931 attained international reputation as Law Professor at internationally reputed Maharaja Sayajirao University of Vadodara, died at young age of 50.

Following his initial years schooling at Dharmaj & Borsad he went to Mumbai for further studies and proceeded to be accomplish LLB degree from Mumbai university in 1955. There after he took up Professorship in Law Department at the M S University Vadodra and remained there.

Here he wrote more than 15 books embracing religion, culture, politics and law, many of which remain point of reference internationally. His book “The Soul of India” depicting our rich Indian culture and India’s contribution to modern world remains well read and praised. His works remain recognised by The International Court of Justice of Netherlands.

DHARMAJ RATNA: DR AMRUTABEN HIRUBHAI PATEL

Daughter of Dr H M Patel, born on 13th November 1943, completed her graduation in Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry at Mumbai University in 1965. She subsequently served as Animal Nutrition Officer for Amul’s largest cattle feed factory at Kanjari, Kheda until 1971, whilst also undergoing intensive training in animal nutrition from Rovet Research Institute in England.

There after in October 1971 she joined National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) as project executive in the Management & Manpower Department at Karnal. Here she progressed swiftly under taking on various key positions to include appointment as Chief Executive at NDDB on 1st December 1986, and advancing to appointment as Managing Director (Operations) on 9th September 1988. Then on 19th June 1989 she was also appointed as Director of the “Dairy Development Technology Mission” of the Agriculture Ministry of the Indian Government.

As MD at NDDB she played pivotal role in the management and implementation of the third stage of “Operation Flood”, the world’s biggest project aided by World Bank.

In recognition of Dr Amrutaben's commitment and achievements through her engagements earned her notable awards to include **Padmabhusan** by the Indian Government, **Sardar Patel Award** and **Woman Achievers Award**.

In addition she remains committed to further expansion and development of Shree Krishna Hospital at Karmsad, the project initiated by her father, where she remained Chairman until retirement in 2013 .

Dharmaj Pattern Pasture Improvement Plan

Dharmaj's Panchayat's elaborate plan and action to regenerate / convert village's designated Pasture or Grazing land, otherwise dormant, into viable and productive green land capable of supporting village economy and uplift residents standards of living.

The scheme has been implemented since early 1970s, that has enabled villagers to secure bales of fresh grass delivered to door steps at low cut price, where cows traditionally maintained.

Under the scheme, with hard work the ragged & barren ground work was levelled, provision created for regular water supply resourced through village domestic waste being re-cycled and fresh bore wells, enabling ripe environment for cultivation of fodder and planting of trees to create eco- friendly environment to help regenerate common land.

The implementation of the scheme has enabled creation of recreation centre consisting of lush lawns of Surjba Park, Swimming Pool and Water rides etc. attracting visitors and enhancing sports.

The whole scheme has been carefully studied and praised by representatives from World Bank, Foreign Governments, Amul, and other dignitaries from all forms of life. Indeed a team of five State Government ministers visited the Pasture in 2007, and based on Dharmaj Scheme coined a model scheme as "Dharmaj Pattern Pasture Improvement Scheme" with intention to implement these in rest of Gujarat and elsewhere.

Indeed India's current Prime Minister, Shree Narendrabhai Modi has in several of his earlier speeches, whilst Chief Minister of Gujarat, has praised to Dharmaj's Scheme as unique working model to study and adopt all over.

Heritage and Conservation

Whilst Dharmajians have continued to extensively migrate they have remained loyal to mother village and have proudly contributed towards investment in the development of essential village facilities. They have also, for sentimental reasons, held on to possession of original ancestral family homes, that have though remained largely unoccupied and empty, in many cases without essential repairs and regular maintenance etc.

The lack of essential maintenance and active use have exposed contemporary latent architecture to neglect and destruction and risking wipe out links to rich legacy of our fore fathers.

In recognition of the significance of restoration and preservation of our heritage for benefit of for future generation, a pilot initiative has been set in motion with aims to protect & preserve village's rich architecture from deterioration, with active involvement of the local community and heritage enthusiasts across the globe, through a variety of training and volunteering opportunities.

The goal of the "heritage initiative" is to make all Dharmajians aware about our Dharmaj's rich ancestry and establish links to the ongoing development process of raising awareness among the people of Dharmaj and the next generation.

Dharmaj Day -

Dharmajians have elected 12th January, also marking Swami Vivekananda's birth day, each year to celebrate Dharmaj Day to commemorate contribution by non resident Dharmajians, with initial gathering held on 12th January 2007 in Dharmaj. This time of year forms preferable period for most NRI visiting home land to join in celebrations and meet with old friends at home and from other parts of the world to catch and monitor progress.

At the first Dharmaj Day, notably **DHARMAJ RATNA** awards were felicitated to Late H M Patel, former Finance & Home Minister of the Central Government and Shree Jashbhai Patel (Bapu) the promulgator of the Pasture and as resident of Dharmaj. On same day three **Dharmaj Gaurav** awards were felicitated to three proud young individuals who achieved pinnacle of glory for the village in fields of education and sports e.g Cricket, Gymnastics & Education .

The Dharmaj Day celebrations have thus continued annual thereafter on 12th January with Dharmaj Ratna and Dharmaj Gaurav awards presented annually.