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# AN EVALUATION OF HALPATI HOUSING SCHEME

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BY  
Rash Bihari Lal



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સામાજિક સંશોધન સંસ્થા  
ગુજરાત વિદ્યાપીઠ  
અમદાવાદ-૩૮૦૦૧૪

*BY*  
**Rash Bihari Lal**

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## FOREWORD

In order to acquaint those who are interested about the research works conducted at Tribal Research and Training Institute, this research report is being released in mimeographed form. If researchers, social workers, administrators, students and other scholars who are involved in tribal development works make certain suggestions after going through this report, this will help the Institute in its future works. I congratulate the researchers who have conducted this research work.

**R. D. ADATIA**  
*Mahamatra*

At the instance of the Director of Social Welfare this evaluation study of Halpati Housing Scheme was undertaken by the Institute in the year 1976. The findings of this report are based upon the first hand information of field work by the senior research personnel of the Institute, in some selected villages of Surat and Valsad districts. The offices of the Directorate of Social Welfare and the Collectors of Surat, Valsad, Bharuch and Vadodara districts also provided necessary information for this enquiry for which the Institute expresses its gratefulness to the concerned personnel.

Siddharaj Solanki  
Acting Director

EVALUATION OF HALPATI HOUSING SCHEME  
IN GUJARAT STATE

Numerically the Dublas or Halpatis are one of the strongest tribal group inhabiting the plains of south Gujarat. According to 1971 census, they numbered 3,88,589 out of the four million tribal population of the whole of the State, thus constituting 10.4 per cent of the total tribal population. Although numerically one of the strongest, economically speaking they have been, since centuries, one of the weakest tribal group in this State. There is no recorded history to illustrate their economic situation during the Mughal period of Indian history but it is generally believed that like other tribal groups of that region, Dublas were also settled agriculturists owning agricultural land for cultivation. The great famine of 1693 which devastated the Deccan and Gujarat forced the poor tribals, amongst whom the Dublas (during those times perhaps they were part of the Bhil tribe) were in majority, to accept the position of slaves. Further, during the Maratha rule of the Deccan and of the region which now-a-days constitute of Surat and Valsad districts, the mass of these people were forced by the administrative system on the border line of starvation. When incapable of discharging the demands of the rapacious Marathas, they were deprived

of the means of subsistence. During the Maratha rule the agricultural classes were reduced to a subsistence level and were without resources when crops failed. There were recurring famines with terrible loss of life. The land revenue was farmed out and offices, great and small, sold to the highest bidders. The administrative system deteriorated and became disorganized, oppressive and arbitrary. Those in power squeezed what they could out of the unfortunate cultivators, whilst the custom of making 'inam' i.e. revenue-free grants of land to officials and followers increased the burden on poor cultivators like "Dublas". When the Britishers took over from the Marathas, these "Dublas" had already reduced to acute economic degradation. The Britishers introduced ryotwari settlement in this region i.e. the actual cultivators of the soil were recognized as proprietors. But it appears that in the course of ryotwari settlement, no distinction was drawn between hereditary owners of land and 'farmers' of the revenue (one who used to pay revenue to the government on behalf of the cultivators, ofcourse, after collecting from them). This resulted in large scale transfer of land from the actual owners to others. In this manner the Dublas went on losing their land and this process was completed after the arrival of the Britishers. Due to pressure of population (more and more people immigrated on

account of the peaceful situation brought about by the British administration), the demand for agricultural land gradually increased. Then the burden of rents and permanent indebtedness had greatly increased among these tribals which ultimately reduced them to slavery i.e. they became bound to perform services for their master, in return for loans which they could seldom hope to repay. The tendencies towards loss of holdings by the cultivators and an increase in landless labourers <sup>have been connected with the problem.</sup> of indebtedness as well as with changes in the land and tenure systems. Dublas are a classic example in this respect. One may venture to ask why the Dublas only suffered most. The answer is that these were the only tribal people who had been inhabiting the plains whereas other tribal groups settled down in mountains and amidst dense forest and to a great extent escaped economic molestations. Circumstances forced Dublas accept serfdom as a means for living. As the number of landed peasantry and traders rose in South Gujarat, the economic plight of the Dublas worsened and by the end of the last century, the only way left to them was to become 'Halis'. The english equivalent to the term 'Halis' meant a person who had been bounded to the chain of servitude for life long and there was no scope for him to break this chain and become free from his master. By the turn of this century, the system of debt-slavery in South Gujarat had become institutionalized. The non-tribal communities in

South Gujarat which mainly included Patidars, Anavils, Banias and Parsis employed these farm servants, normally on permanent basis, after paying a nominal wages on yearly basis but looked after their family needs of boarding, lodging and even clothing. During an inquiry conducted in the course of Bardoli Satyagrah, it was revealed that on an average, a landlord spent Rs.120.00 per annum towards the upkeep of his bonded labourer and his family members, which meant Rs.10.00 per month. For this paltry amount the landlord got the services of nearly all the family members of his 'Hali'. As the Halis were debt-slaves, meaning thereby that they had accepted the position of serfs in lieu of the debt which had been advanced to him by his master to meet expenses on certain social ceremonies, mainly celebration of marriage. So long the debt was not fully repaid, he was not to get his freedom. But it was next to impossible for a 'Hali' to repay his debts, on the contrary due to subtle but fraudulent way of calculations, the amount usually went on multiplying and a 'Hali' had no other choice other than to resign to his fate of remaining as a bonded labourer to his master. If one could come in employment of a benevolent master he was lucky enough as his miseries would not be that intolerable as was the general situation in which the 'Halis' were treated like beasts. Their precarious economic condition and the naked exploitation aroused the conscience of social

workers and as long back as in 1923-24, feeble attempts were made to lessen the miseries of Dublas. But such was the grip of the landlords over the economic system of the region, that against their retaliation to social workers efforts, the latter had to surrender and the system of 'Hali-Pratha' went on continuing. In 1938-39, both Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel got interested in the economic plight and exploitation of Dublas and they pledged to eradicate that system of human degradation. Due to their intervention, some concessions were granted by the landlords to the Halis but, nevertheless, the 'Hali-Pratha' did not meet its Waterloo. However, it started getting disintegrated soon after second world war was started. It was because the crops started fetching handsome prices and to patronize the whole family of a 'Hali' for meeting the boarding, lodging and other essential requirements was realized as a poor economic bargain. Hence, the landowners started to prefer employing labourers on daily wage basis which was a far better way to buy labour cheaply than to supply food for all the members of the family. So long there was not a flourishing market for the grains the old system was advantageous for the masters. But, although, the bonded labour system started getting disintegrated, it was not completely abolished, it remained in existence till recently.

Such was the plight of Halpatis under the institution of Hali-Pratha which had taken a firm root in south Gujarat. Thus, all Halpatis depended on the landowners for their livelihood. The most basic necessities of human beings, as we know, are food and shelter. For both these, the Halpatis had to remain entirely dependent upon their masters. Majority of the Halpatis had never owned a single inch of land. So even for the purpose for erecting a hut, they had no other alternative other than to approach their master for sparing a piece of land for the purpose of erecting a hut. Since the dwellings of the Halpatis have been small huts, not much land was required for erecting that. In view of this, the landlord had normally no grudge to oblige the Halpatis by allowing them to erect huts on their land. Moreover, in most cases, the piece of land which used to be spared by the landlords was used to be uncultivable waste land. So the owners had not to incur any kind of loss. The other side of the picture was that by allowing their serfs to erect huts in their own land, they could wield complete control on their serfs. Having total dependence upon their masters for food and shelter, the Halpatis were compelled to put themselves under the mercy of the masters. In this manner, the landlords had iron grip over the Halpatis and to be free from this shackle was next to impossible because if they dared to do so they could even become shelterless,

apart from being thrown out of employment. Thus, the hut, for the Halpatis, played a significant role in making them subservient to the landlords and even enduring all kinds of inhuman torture inflicted upon them by the landlords. Their women also used to be violated by some landlord but that had to be tolerated. If they showed even any resentment or made protest, the first thing they were to lose was their hut. Forcibly they were evicted and that too in matter of no time. Whether the hut had been constructed with the financial assistance given by the Master or by one's resources, the fact remained that the hut was erected in the land of the Master which enabled the later to threaten him with eviction whenever the 'Hali' did not behave properly. Thus, the problem of erecting one's own hut in one's own land put an economic compulsion on the Halpatis to remain under the yoke of his Master. From the economic as well as the larger social viewpoint the Halpatis had been put into a doomed and paralytic situation from which there appeared to be no salvation for them. Struggling hard for the entire life for a precarious existence did not even provide them to earn the bare necessary income to own a small piece of land where they could erect a small hut measuring only 12'x 10' floor area. If some of them were fortunate enough to be in service of a kind hearted Master, they were granted a small piece of land, on permanent basis, for the purpose of erecting a hut.



But such fortunates were few and far between.

Lack of resources to own even a small hut had been an important aspect of social dynamics for Halpatis in South Gujarat. The landlords had been merciless in exploiting the Halpatis for their powerlessness in owning a house to shelter his family members. This aspect had been one of the root causes of the pathology of Halpatis. Even the huts, which they could erect in the land of landlords and also with the financial assistance from the landlords in majority of cases, were extremely poor and wretched. Lodging, sometimes with mud walls but oftener of wattled bamboo chips or sticks or millet stalks smeared with cow dung and mud. The roof used to be peaked or conical and had deep overhanging eaves. Most of those huts were thatched with grass or teak and palm leaves. The 'wigwam' in which they were taking shelter alongwith their family members was hardly fit for human habitation. The effects of such wretched, unsafe and unhygienic dwelling upon the physical and mental health of the Halpatis could very well be understood. The physical health of the Halpatis was as impaired as one would expect based on knowledge of their housing conditions, which was just brutal and inhuman. It is indeed extraordinary fact that in face of high rate of diseases and death, so many Halpatis survived.

Viewing the acute problem of housing for the Halpatis, eminent Social Workers like Shri Jugatram Dave had attempted to generate a concerned feeling amongst the authorities for tackling this issue with earnestness. Soon after the country got independence these Social Workers started a movement, in all seriousness, to improve the living conditions of the Halpatis. A plan for constructing one hundred houses in ten villages of Halpatis had been submitted to Shri Morarji Desai, the then Revenue Minister of Bombay State.<sup>2</sup> According to the plan estimate, Rs.500/- had been earmarked towards the cost of one house. Out of this total amount of Rs.500/-, a Halpatis family was to be given Rs.100/- as subsidy while Rs.400/- as loan. Although to repay<sup>a</sup> loan of Rs.400/- was a heavy amount for an average Halpati family, in view of their extremely poor condition as well as exploitation at the hands of non-tribal landlords, a vain hope was nurtured by Shri Jugatrambhai and other Social Workers that with the dawn of independence there would be all round development of Halpatis and subsequently their earnings would also go high which would enable them to repay the loan. But nothing of that sort happened and in absolute terms there had been no improvement in the earning capacity of a Halpati family. In any case, the proposal regarding construction of 100 houses could not merit serious attention of the then government and thus did not materialize. However, Shri Jugatrambhai

and party pursued this issue. Later it became clear to them that the financial burden for the construction of houses for the Halpatis would have to be borne by the government in entirety. It would be sheer impossible, in their miserable poverty, to contribute even a small part of the total expenditure involved in the construction of a house. Although these Social Workers did not relish the idea of dependence on government machinery, they had no other alternative other than to approach the government to approve a scheme for the construction of houses for Halpatis. But somehow or other, the then Government of Bombay did not show keenness towards this scheme. After the formation of Halpati Seva Sangh in 1961, the matter was pursued vigourously and ultimately they succeeded in convincing the newly formed Government of Gujarat to take up this issue in all earnestness. And it was in the fitness of matter that the Government of Gujarat, soon after coming into existence took the decision to provide financial assistance to Halpatis so that they could secure land and construct houses. With a view to get this implemented, Government of Gujarat on 29th July, 1961 constituted a committee 8 members, both officials and non-officials, with the Collector of Surat as Chairman. Prominent Social Workers like Shri Jagatrambhai Dave, Shri Zinabhai Darji and Shri Lalbhai Naik were made members of the committee. This committee was initially given a term of one year but from year to year its terms was

extended by the Government. In 1964, as a result of the bifurcation of Surat district, two committees, one each for Surat and Valsad district were constituted. (Formerly the area of the present Valsad district was part of Surat district.) The Surat district committee consisted of six members while that of Valsad of five members<sup>3</sup>. In both district committees, the District Collector functioned as the Chairman of the Committee.

While approving the need to give financial assistance to the Halpatis for construction of houses, the State Government issued the following brief explanatory note.

1. The Halpatis till were leading the life of servitude. This community partly because of its utter povety and backwardness and partly because of the social disabilities under which it labour is the worst sufferer in the matter of Housing. In Surat district there are about 60,000 families and most of them have neither land or huts of their own. This community is mainly agricultural landless labourer. It may be recalled here that in Surat district, a system of bonded agricultural labour akin to serfdom was prevelant in recent past. The members of this community were initially given advances by the agriculturists primarily for their marriage. In return of the advances the Halpatis agreed to serve the matter until the advances are repaid. The remuneration

paid to the Halpaties was so low that in effect the advances were never paid off during the life time of many and thus the labourers had to serve their masters for their whole life. The most pressing problem so far as the Halpaties are concerned is with regard to their housing and therefore, it is necessary to provide them with both house sites and to extend financial assistance for the construction of their houses in order to make them independent from their landlords and also to improve their housing conditions. The scheme envisages grant of financial assistance for the purchase of house sites and for the construction of the houses to the members of this community as indicated herebelow.

2. The Government waste lands for house sites wherever available may be given to the members of this community for the construction of their houses free of charge to the extent of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  Gs. In case Government waste lands are not available for this purpose the applicants may purchase the house site belonging to others by private negotiations and subsidy to the extent of Rs.200/- or the purchase price whichever is less should be sanctioned as subsidy towards purchase of Housing sites. As regards financial assistance for the construction of tenament, it should be on the basis of loan-cum-subsidy in the ratio of  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the total estimated cost of Rs.1000/- per tenament (i.e. Rs.250/- loan and Rs.750/- as subsidy). The construction should be in

accordance with the type plan. Nevertheless suitable changes in the plan may <sup>be</sup> made in order to conform to the rural and to the needs and requirements of dwellers.

### 3. Disbursement of loans and subsidy:

The subsidy for the purchase of house sites should be paid in full when the beneficiary transacts the sale deed in accordance with the law in force. As regards loan, amount equal to Rs.250/- should be paid in full in the beginning. The first instalment of the subsidy equal to Rs.375/- should be paid when the construction of the tenaments reaches rooflevel on the strength of the certificate to that effect from the Mamlatdar or the BDO as the case may be. The second instalment of the subsidy assistance equal to Rs.375/- should be released for payment when the construction work is finally completed on the strength of the certificate from Block Development Officer having jurisdiction over the area in which the applicant resides.

(B) The loan assistance payable under the scheme should be interest free and **should be recovered** in 10 yearly instalments of Rs.25/- per annum. Repayment of loan will commence after one year from the date of receipt of the second instalment of the loan.

### 4. Implementing Authority:

The Collector of Surat will be the implementing authority for the said scheme.

Procedure for application for assistance under the Scheme.

The applicants seeking assistance under this scheme should apply to the Collector of Surat through the Mamlatdar of the taluka in which he is residing. The Mamlatdars concerned should submit the applications to the Collector of Surat after due verification with his remarks within 15 days of its receipt from the applicants. In disposing of the most needy and deserving and those who are landless agriculturists and who are in the fear of eviction. Having regard to these considerations, the Collector, Surat should sanction the loan subsidy assistance as indicated above. The construction of houses should be undertaken under the supervision and guidance of the Block Development Officers concerned.

A careful reading of this note would make it clear that the State Government was very much seized with this problem and at the earliest opportunity after the State was formed, the government undertook the programme of solving the housing problem of the Halpatis. Although there was no particular scheme for construction of houses for Adivasis in the Third Five Year Plan, the government of Gujarat undertook a special programme of Halpati Housing Scheme viewing the magnitude of the problem of Halpatis. This was a laudable move in the right direction in order to free the Halpatis from the bondage of landlords.

In the 'brief explanatory note', as given above, it was mentioned that for construction of houses, an amount of Rs.750 was to be given as subsidy and an amount of Rs.250 as loan to each beneficiary. But in a booklet published by the Director, Social Welfare Department, Gujarat State, titled 'Halpatis and Halpati Welfare in Gujarat' (this publication is in Gujarati language but strangely nowhere the date of publication has been mentioned), the amount to be given as subsidy and as loan, has been given as Rs.250 and Rs.750 respectively. Why there is such a contradiction, the reason is not clear. The figures mentioned in the text of the 'brief explanatory note' is likely to be correct one.

In the beginning this scheme was executed in Surat district. From 1962-63 to 1963-64, assistance used to be given for both purchasing the land as well as construction of houses. In Valsad this scheme was introduced in 1972 while in Bharuch in 1975. Baroda district is yet to execute this scheme although in government proclamation the scheme is being operated in all the four districts mentioned above. The first grant of Rs.1,50,000 was sanctioned in the year 1963. So the actual implementation of this scheme was started after 1962, although the committee for this scheme had been constituted in the year 1961 itself. This implied that it took nearly two years for the government to implement this scheme after the formation of the committee. Why the delay occurred, no explanation has been provided anywhere.

Another contradiction which appears in the above mentioned publication of Social Welfare Department of Gujarat State is regarding financial assistance for the construction of houses to be given to Halpatis. It has been claimed in that booklet<sup>4</sup> that at the instance of the then State Chief Minister it had been decided in a meeting called on 2.2.1965 that financial assistance to Halpatis should be given only for purchase of land. It was thought that by giving assistance to them for construction of houses, the coverage of Halpati beneficiaries would be less as the quantum of financial assistance for construction of houses was greater than that for purchasing land. Hence, if assistance for purchasing land only was provided, the coverage of beneficiaries would certainly be high. In view of this, it was decided in that meeting that at the first instance, money should be provided to Halpatis under the scheme for purchasing land only. The amount of subsidy to be given to each beneficiary for purchase of land was fixed at Rs.200.00 which was subsequently raised to Rs.450.00 by a government notification in the year 1969. It was also decided that once the landless Halpatis were provided with land, then only financial assistance for construction of houses might be provided. "On account of the decision arrived at the aforesaid meeting, providing financial assistance for construction of houses had been stopped with effect from 2.2.1965 and now only financial assistance for purchase of land is being given"<sup>5</sup>. Hence lies the contradiction. From the information supplied by Collector of Surat (vide his letter No.LND/BCW, dated 8.4.1976)

as many as 1492 and 992 Halpatis had received financial assistance for construction of houses during 1964-65 and 1965-66 respectively. One fails to comprehend the reason for discrepancy in these two statements. If the information supplied by the Collector of Surat is taken to be correct one (there is no reason to believe otherwise), then the question arises as to from where the fund was allocated. Was it from the fund allocated under the scheme of Halpati Housing Scheme or from elsewhere? In this connection it would be also not out of place to mention that in a report of Halpati Seva Sangh published in 1973, it was alleged that "despite the efforts of the Sangh for the last five years for chalking out a scheme for construction of houses for those Halpatis who have been granted land, no action has been taken. Once again, the Sangh has approached the Governor of Gujarat State this year and the latter has accepted the proposal. It has been now decided to start constructing houses for Halpatis from this year. Halpati Seva Sangh has prepared a scheme for this which has been forwarded to the Governor"<sup>6</sup>. But this report also mentions afterwards that the Central Government had sanctioned a scheme for construction of two lakh houses in Surat, Valsad and Bharuch districts out of the funds allotted in the Development Blocks and accordingly altogether 1800 houses in these three districts, 600 in each one, have been constructed through Halpati Seva Sangh as well as through the District Panchayat of the respective districts."<sup>7</sup>

Looking to these three different versions, one by the Director of Social Welfare, Gujarat State, second by the Collector of Surat and third by the Secretary of Halpati Seva Sangh, one is put to utter confusion. If the first and third versions are to be believed, then there should be no construction of houses during 1964-65 and 1965-66 while if the second version is taken for granted, then, as mentioned earlier 1492 and 992 houses had been constructed during the above mentioned years. But when the later version is accepted as correct one, the question arises regarding the source of the financial assistance given to the Halpatis. Was it from the fund earmarked specially under Halpati Housing Scheme or was it from the funds of District Panchayats or of Development Blocks in the respective districts? No clear answer can be got. However, the informations supplied by the District Collector of Surat had been regarding the construction of houses under Halpati Housing Scheme. One has no alternative other than to accept the information as supplied by the District Collector of Surat and to reject the other two versions. While making on the spot study in some selected villages, the houses were right there but the occupants had no idea about the scheme under which the houses had been constructed nor they had any idea about the source of financial assistance. In most of the villages, the beneficiaries did not receive any money as financial assistance but the houses were constructed through either Halpati Seva Sangh or through a prominent social worker

of the area or through some private individuals. In villages of Bardoli, Valod and Palsana talukas, the houses had been constructed through Halpati Seva Sangh, while that of Valsad taluka through Shri Chhotubhai Govindbhai Patel. In Bhuvasan village of Bardoli taluka the houses had been constructed through Shri Punjyabhai Patel, who happened to be the Sarpanch of the village. The funniest thing to be noted here is this that under the Government scheme, the houses were to be constructed by the beneficiaries themselves. In this connection the District Collector of Surat has supplied the following information:

" So far as this district is concerned, the construction of houses is not being made by the Halpatis themselves nor the contract is given to any contractors. So far as official record is concerned the loan and subsidy is being given to Halpatis considering the fact that they are constructing houses but in fact the houses were constructed by Halpati Seva Sangh, though no official contract is given to this institution. There are also no government orders to give any contract to any contractor or institution for constructing the houses. According to the scheme the Halpati himself has to construct his own house from the loan and subsidy being given by government".<sup>8</sup>

It is really mysterious how the Halpati Seva Sangh came into the picture. The intention is here not to cast any kind of aspersion on the authorities of this Institution but to point out the shady nature of approach in solving the acute problem of housing of Halpatis about which government reports never fail to lament on the gravity of the plightable condition of the Halpatis. Another fact to be noticed here that for implementation of the scheme committees had been formed at district as well as taluka level, consisting of eminent social workers and top officials. Why the deviation was made from the official resolution of allowing the Halpatis to construct the houses by themselves? Were the Halpatis not to be relied? One does not get the answers to these queries. But at Valod village, it was found that the Halpatis themselves had constructed the houses. This village was, perhaps, the only exception. It was learnt there that the Halpatis were being threatened that the amount of financial assistance given to them as subsidy and loan would be recovered from them as they had not constructed the house according to the design fixed by the government. On enquiry it was revealed that the Halpatis of that village as well as a few other villages too had never been shown the design by any official. It is, ofcourse, difficult to make verification of this allegation but the fact remains that is it a matter of great seriousness or concern if the houses constructed by the Halpatis do not fit according to the fixed design?

One can only remark that this is nothing but a kind of cruel joke on a people, most of whom live below poverty line. Again, if officials were so serious about the construction of houses according to fixed design, such concern was not shown in cases where the houses had been constructed through Halpati Seva Sangh or private individuals. At village Bhuvasan, for instance, for four Halpati households one big hall-type house had been constructed, which means that four houses under one common roof. The partition wall separating the four units were not provided. The occupant families themselves erected the partition walls by using Karsathi (sticks of cotton, Tuer and gowar plants) and mud. There was almost complete absence of any privacy. Well, one can very well question - "do such poor people need any privacy? One can find one's own answer:

What is being explained here is that raising the question of fixed design is nothing but a humbug and which was raised only because the Halpatis of Valod and one or two more villages dared to construct the houses by themselves, a thing which the government had itself resolved.

The District Collector of Bharuch, however, has made it clear that in the construction of houses, the help of Halpati Seva Sangh had been taken. Infact, while interviewing an ex-President of Surat District Panchayat who also happened to be a member of District Committee formed for

the implementation of Halpati Housing Scheme, it was learnt that the then District Collector of Bharuch had approached the Halpati Seva Sangh to undertake the work of construction of houses for the Halpatis in that district. Here again, one does not get any clue as to why deviation was made from the stand taken in government resolution.

The District Collector of Valsad, however, has stated that "the houses have been constructed not by contractor but by halpatis themselves." Our own enquiry in some selected villages, such as Pardi Parnera, Rola and Rella falia of Dungari village, revealed that the houses had been constructed, as pointed out earlier, through Shri Chhotubhai Govindbhai Patel of Pardi Parnera village.

In all the cases where the houses were constructed through some one else other than the beneficiary himself, not a single paisa was handed over to the person concerned. In Bardoli taluka villages, it was informed that the beneficiaries were used to be taken to the Mamlatdars office at the taluka headquarter and there they were made to put their signatures or thumb impressions on official documents, without being informed about the nature of documents. After they put their signatures, the amount of subsidy as well as that of loan used to be paid directly to the representative of the Halpati Seva Sangh. Earlier, in one village of Palsana taluka, the sanctioned amount of loan Rs.300 had been paid directly to

the beneficiaries. Before this, the Halpati Seva Sangh had already obtained the amount of subsidy i.e. Rs.900 on behalf of each beneficiary and had constructed the houses. On instigation of one influential leader of Palsana taluka, the Halpatis of that village refused to give the amount of loan to Halpati Seva Sangh. This episode made the latter cautious and the authorities henceforth managed to prevent the Halpatis to receive the cash from the concerned official.

In Valsad, however it was revealed that the Social Worker, who constructed the houses for the beneficiaries, opened bank account separately in the name of each of the beneficiaries. Several complained that they never even saw the face of 'pass book' of the Bank.

As already made clear, it was difficult to know the actual truth in such cases. It was, however, quite clear that the money sanctioned to them as subsidy and loan, was never handled, in majority of cases, by the Halpatis themselves. Any institution or any person may be above suspicion or doubt, nobody would deny this, but it is always desirable to be extremely fair while dealing money transaction on behalf of persons who are mostly illiterate and completely ignorant.

The scheme is at present, in operation in three districts of the State, viz, Surat, Valsad and Bharuch. According to the information supplied by the office of the respective District Collectors the number of Halpatis who have been benefitted, is as given in the following Table.<sup>9</sup>



TABLE I

Number of Halpatis in different district who received financial assistance

District Taluka	Total population	Estimated number of households	No. of house holds to whom financial assistance given for land	No. of house holds to whom financial assistance for construction of house given	Percentage out of total number of household
1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>SURAT</b>					
Palsana	16022	4005	10	1048	26.1
Chorasi	29110	7277	49	1314	18.0
Olpad	15081	3770	1060	1068	28.3
Kamrej	17427	4356	30	460	10.5
Bardoli	28021	7005	-	977	13.9
Valod	7085	1771	48	252	14.2
Mangrol	3465	866	-	-	-
Mandavi	5477	1369	4	120	8.8
Mahuva	5943	1485	-	183	12.3
Vyara	899	224	-	-	-
Uchhal	137	34	-	-	-
Nizar	-	-	-	-	-
Songadh	186	46	-	-	-
Total of Surat District	128853	32208	1201	5422	16.8
<b>VALSAD</b>					
Navsari	38596	9649	284	120	1.2
Gandevi	15589	3897	22	-	-
Bansda	919	229	-	-	-
Valsad	10642	2660	305	273	10.3
Chikhli	12599	3149	180	280	8.9
Pardi	13216	3304	-	40	1.2

Table I Contd...

1	2	3	4	5	6
Umbergoan	12851	3212	-	-	-
Dharampur	567	141	-	-	-
Total of Valsad District	104979	26241	791	661	2.5
<b>BHARUCH</b>					
Bharuch	3762	940	-	-	2.4
Vagra	7793	1948	-	42	2.1
Jambusar	8255	2063	-	-	-
Amod	4704	1176	-	-	-
Ankaleshwar	2770	692	-	165	23.0
Hansot	4799	1199	-	160	13.3
Jhagadia	27	7	-	-	-
Nandod	6	2	-	-	-
Valia	507	126	-	-	-
Dediapada	37	9	-	-	-
Sagbara	2	-	-	-	-
Total of	32662	8162	-	367	4.5
GRAND TOTAL	266494	66611	1992	6450	9.68

Looking to the figures, it is clear that only a very small percentage i.e. 9.68 of the total number of Halpati families had obtained financial assistance for construction of houses. The most poor percentage, as is obvious, is in Valsad district. When seen from the point of view of taluka, Palsana and Olpad in Surat district and Ankaleshwar in Bharuch district have greater number of beneficiaries in comparison to other talukas. The poorest performance is in Navsari taluka (1.2) while it has the largest population of Halpatis in the State. Some talukas, such as Umbergaon, Gandevi in Valsad district, Mahuva in Surat and

Jambusar, Amod and Bharuch talukas in Bharuch district, which have considerable Halpati population, have not a single beneficiary. Again, looking more carefully, it becomes apparent that out of the total beneficiaries in Surat district for the purchase of land, a lion's share, 88.3 percent had been in the Olpad taluka itself. Why concentration of beneficiaries on such a large scale in only one taluka? Is't because of some political consideration?

On a closer look in the year-wise figure given in the Table II and III, one gets the clear impression that the scheme had been implemented in Surat district in most erratic fashion. The maximum number of beneficiaries, so far construction of houses is concerned, is in the year 1964-65. In recent years, i.e. from 1973-74 onwards, the numbers are not all encouraging. In fact one would have expected more vigorous effort in these years to solve this acute problem. As far as Valsad and Bharuch districts are concerned, the execution of the scheme has only recently started. But viewing the situation in Surat district, one can't prevent to get the impression that a sense of apathy prevails in the efforts of the government to cover greater number of Halpatis. This also becomes clear from a statement of figures issued by State Government in reply to a question raised by Shri Gosaibhai Chhi. Patel of Galalpole in State

TABLE II

Number of Halpatis who received financial assistance for purchase of land in different years in different talukas of the Surat district.

Year	Number of beneficiaries taluka-wise								Total goldvi ha
	Palsana	Chorasi	Olpad	Kamrej	Bardoli	Valod	Man Man	Mahu	
1962-63	8	35	23	16	-	-	-	-	82
1963-64	2	14	377	4	-	-	2	-	399
1964-65	-	-	398	-	-	-	2	-	400
1965-66	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1966-67	-	-	44	-	-	48	-	-	92
1967-68	-	N	-	-	1	-	L	-	-
1968-69	-	N	-	-	1	-	L	-	-
1969-70	-	-	186	-	-	-	-	-	186
1970-71	-	-	32	-	-	-	-	-	32
1971-72	-	N	-	-	1	-	L	-	-
1972-73	-	N	-	-	1	-	L	-	-
1973-74	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	10
1974-75	-	N	-	-	1	-	L	-	-
1975-76	-	N	-	-	1	-	L	-	-
TOTAL...	10	49	1060	30	-	48	-	4	1201

TABLE III

Number of Halpatis who received financial assistance for construction of houses in different years in different talukas of Surat district

Year	Talukas in Surat district									TOTAL
	Palsana	Chorasi	Olpad	Kamrej	Bardoli	Valod	Man grol	Mandvi	Mahu va	
1962-63	16	55	7	-	45	-	-	-	-	123
1963-64	-	3	-	32	9	-	-	-	-	44
1964-65	208	664	243	151	226	-	-	-	-	1492
1965-66	-	209	215	68	188	156	-	40	116	992
1966-67	293	87	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	380
1967-68	-	-	229	-	-	-	-	-	-	229
1968-69	N	-	-	1	-	-	L	-	-	-
1969-70	-	-	186	-	-	-	-	-	-	186
1970-71	-	-	32	-	-	-	-	-	-	32
1971-72	N	-	-	1	-	-	L	-	-	-
1972-73	181	186	26	52	277	86	-	-	-	808
1973-74	300	110	-	45	222	-	-	24	39	740
1974-75	25	-	68	51	10	-	-	28	-	182
1975-76	25	-	62	61	-	10	-	28	28	214
TOTAL...	1048 (19.33)	1314 (24.23)	1068 (19.70)	460 (8.48)	977 (18.02)	252 (4.65)	-	120 (2.21)	183 (3.38)	5422 (100.0)

TABLE IV

Distribution of Halpatis according to year who received financial assistance for purchasing land in different talukas of Valsad district.

Year	Navsari	Gandevi	Chikhli	Bulsar	Pardi	Total
1971	115	17	15	-	-	15
1972	115	17	25	170	-	327
1973	46	5	60	6	-	117
1974	-	-	80	29	-	209
1975	123	-	-	-	-	123
TOTAL..	284	22	180	305	-	791

TABLE V

Number of Halpatis in Valsad district (taluka wise) who received financial assistance for construction of houses

Year	Navsari	Gandevi	Chikhli	Valsad	Pardi	Total
1971	-	-	-	-	-	-
1972	-	-	-	-	-	-
1973	-	-	-	-	-	-
1974	-	-	-	-	-	-
1975	120 (18.15)	-	228 (34.50)	273 (41.30)	40 (6.05)	661 (100.0)

NOTE:- Total number of house constructed - 96  
Under construction (Near completion) - 565

TABLE VI

Number of Beneficiaries who received financial assistance for construction of houses in different talukas of Bharuch district

Year	Ankaleshwar	Hansot	Wagra	Total
1973	50	115	-	165
1974	47	-	42	89
1975	68	19	-	87
1976	-	26	-	26
TOTAL.....	165	160	42	367

NOTE: 303 have been constructed while 64 are under construction.

Assembly. According to this statement given in the next page, although a provision of 6 lakhs had been made in 1972-73 for this scheme, only 2.61 lakhs were spent. Similar is the story in 1973-74 and 1974-75. Quite a substantial amount had been allowed to lapse although the problem of housing for Halpatis has been as severe as it was before. No explanation has been forwarded as to why the full amount was not spent. It certainly speaks the *laissez faire* approach of the government administration on such a vital issue which has been plaguing the minds of those who are seized with the situation.

## HALPATI HOUSING SCHEME

(Rupees in Lakhs)

Year	Surat	Valsad	Bharuch	Baroda	Total
<u>1972-73</u>					
Budgetary Provision	L. 2.75 S. 2.10 4.85	L. 0.40 S. 0.25 0.65	0.65	-	6.15
Expenditure	1.33	0.78	0.50	-	2.61
Achieved target	865 houses	382 land	166 houses	- houses	1031 382
<u>1973-74</u>					
Budgetary Provision	6.10	1.50	1.49	-	9.09
Expenditure	5.35	1.27	0.24	-	6.86
Achieved target	840 houses	436 land	14 houses	houses	854 436
<u>1974-75</u>					
Budgetary Provision	2.50	2.00	2.50	-	7.50
Expenditure	1.32	2.00	2.38	-	5.70
Achieved target	211 houses	62 houses 51 land	304 houses	- houses	577 51

Note:- L = Loan S = Subsidy

As is evident from the figures given in Table I, altogether 6450 Halpati families have been provided with financial assistance for construction of houses. Besides this 1992 families have been either given financial assistance towards purchase of land or have been granted land from the government waste land or village panchayat land. So a vast majority of the Halpati families are yet to be covered under this scheme. One does not know how many of them own land and have been able to construct houses by their own efforts and resources. Once again, let us refer to the booklet titled 'Halpatis and Halpati Welfare in Gujarat',<sup>10</sup> where it has been claimed that 29,595 families (in Surat and Valsad districts) have been living on their own land. No source for this figure has been mentioned. Again, it has also not been mentioned as to how many of them have constructed their own houses although this number of Halpati families have been included in the total number of families whose problem regarding housing has been solved, which has been estimated to be 43,432 in this booklet. The figures pertaining to Surat and Valsad district have been presented as follows:

1. Total families	64,729
2. Living on the land of government panchayat	1,645
3. Living on land of their ownership	29,595
4. Rehabilitated under the scheme of Halpati Housing Scheme	11,327
5. Regularized	865
6. Those whose problem has been solved	43,432
7. Left over families	21,287

The total number of families rehabilitated under the Halpati Housing Scheme has been given as 11,327 in this booklet whereas the figures supplied by the office of District Collectors of Surat and Valsad district speak of 6083 for construction of houses and 1992 for purchase of land. Even if these two figures are added together, the total number of beneficiaries under Halpati House scheme comes to 8075 in both these districts which still falls short of 3,252 families from the figure of 11,327 families claimed in the booklet. One surely gets the impression that the figures given in the booklet has been contrived to look impressive as there is no reason to have anykind of doubt regarding the figures supplied by the office of District Collectors. Even the number of 29,595 Halpati families who have been claimed to be living on their land appears to be contrived if one brings to his mind the relevant statement given in the 'brief explanatory note' mentioned on page 11 of this report, which says that "in Surat district there are about 60,000 families (during that time Surat district included the region of present day Valsad district too) and most of them have neither land or huts of their own". It would have been better if the Social Welfare Department of Gujarat Government could have clearly indicated the source of providing these figures in this booklet. In fact, on another occasion, the Department has supplied quite realistic figures in response to a question raised in the State Legislative Assembly by

Shri Kalubhai K. Vasava, the then M.L.A. from Dediapada constituency. In the information supplied by the Department of Social Welfare, it has been mentioned that 3031 houses had already been constructed under the Halpati Housing Scheme while 763 houses have been under construction. It appears that the information has been supplied on 12-8-1975. Although the figures mentioned here look quite realistic, on looking over back to the figures presented in Table III of this report it gives a feeling that either the figures supplied by the office of the District Collector of Surat is inflated or the figures stated by the Social Welfare Department in response to the aforesaid assembly question is under/arrive at a definite idea regarding the figures supplied by different sources. But the fact remains that the figures quoted in the booklet, referred above, are over-stated. Now, according to this booklet, only 21,287 Halpati families of Surat and Valsad districts need to be provided with financial assistances whereas on a rough calculation done on the basis of figures given in Table I of this report, much larger number of families than quoted above would need financial assistance to get rehabilitated. This means that still more vigorous efforts will have to be made to solve the acute problem of housing for Halpatis. It should be noted here that after the severe flood in 1968 in South Gujarat, Surat District Panchayat did the commendable work of constructing more than 5,000 houses on the financial grants received from the

Chief Minister's fund as well as from private organizations. In this case also, construction of houses had been done through Halpati Seva Sangh. Although these houses had been built around 1969, several of them were in demolished conditions during our visit to some of the villages. However, discussion on this is beyond the scope of this report.

It has been pointed out earlier that the Government of Gujarat has been right earnest in its policy decision regarding Halpati Housing Scheme. But the implementation part of the Scheme was been quite unsatisfactory. Although a high power committee had been constituted at district level, another at taluka level and some additional posts of Mamlatdar in the districts where the scheme was to be put in operation had been created, the actual construction work was carried out either by private individuals or Halpati Seva Sangh. If ultimately this had to be done, one may certainly ask what was the purpose of forming committees and creating additional posts of Mamlatdar. The Halpati Seva Sangh could have been directly entrusted to do this job. Infact, the scheme was to be conducted through the office of the District Collector of respective districts. But it appears that apparently the office of the District Collector simply played the role of disbursement of the amount of subsidies and loans, through the office of Mamlatdar. If the committee members as well as the office of the District Collector could have shown a little

bit more serious concern in the actual construction of houses, the amount earmarked for construction of each house i.e. Rs.1200/- would have been spent judiciously. In several village leading Halpati villagers lamented that the total amount of money spent in the construction of one house would not exceed more than Rs.950/-. Their calculation was in the following manner:

1. Cost of 600 tiles @ Rs.750 per thousand	.....Rs. 450.00
2. Cost of 100 Bamboos @ Rs.30/- per 100	.....Rs. 30.00
3. Cost of 25 wooden poles used for the support	.....Rs. 200.00
4. Cost of thick wooden pole	.....Rs. 125.00
5. Carpenter's charge	.....Rs. 55.00
6. Cost of nails	.....Rs. 25.00
7. Cost of Karsathi or Khupra	.....Rs. 50.00
Total	.....Rs. 935.00

These informants emphasized that since the materials had been purchased in big bulk for construction of all houses in a particular village, the cost-price would be substantially lesser than one quoted above. They also emphatically asserted that members of the beneficiary family themselves contributed their labour in erecting the walls and putting the tiles on the roof. On observation of the houses it was obvious that in the erection of walls, only clay and canes of cotton or jowar plant (Karsathi and Khupra) have been used.

The price of land should not be included here as the land was either obtained from the Panchayat or was acquired from some private party. For purchase of land, there was a separate provision. For instance, in Segvi village of Valsad district,

a big plot of waste and barren land had been acquired by the government from one Arvindbhai Chhotalal after paying Rs.8000/- per acre (The plot is survey No.216 of Segvi village)<sup>11</sup>. In this plot, houses for the Halpatis are yet to be constructed. Infact, the plot is far away from the main village and as such do not attract the Halpatis for getting rehabilitated there. It was reported that on this plot Halpatis of other villages are to be rehabilitated. Another plot of the above mentioned party has also been acquired although it was learnt that payment was yet to be made. On this plot 24 Halpati families of Segvi village are to be rehabilitated. In Inma village of Surat district too the plot of land on which the houses for Halpatis has been constructed belonged to a private party. It was not known to the Halpatis there as to how much money had been paid to the party.

In majority of the villages, the plot of land was quite at a distance from the main village. In this connection Broman observation need to be quoted here which is follows:

"Government money was used to build 52 new huts with tiled roofs, but not in the old place. Because the village authorities refused to put higher lying ground at the Dubla's disposal, a large part of them had to move to a distant site on the territory of a neighbouring village. One water well was the only public facility. Electric power wires pass right over the rows of huts, but there is no connection to them anywhere.

Frivolous economizing in material led to jerry building. The Anavil secretary of the regional cooperative had to resign when it became publicly known that he had sold wood intended for these huts and had pocketed the proceeds. Lastly, the new Dubla quarter is difficult to access. The men and women now have to traverse much greater distances to reach the houses and fields of the farmers, which creates much hardship especially during rainy season".<sup>12</sup>

It is difficult to disagree with the above observation on observing the new housing colony of Halpatis. In village Bhuvasan of Surat district, it was alleged that the Patidar Sarpanch of the village under whose supervision the houses for Halpatis had been constructed had used the wood meant to be used in the construction of houses to construct his own cattle shed. There was also a case going against him for embezzlement of money meant for constructing houses for Halpatis. Although no such case had been instituted against authorities of Halpati Seva Sangh, it was widely believed by leading persons of the villages that they have not performed a clean business but none could substantiate the allegations. However, there was great resentment in the minds of Halpatis against Halpati Seva Sangh, although they did not like to be open on this issue. But the refusal of the Halpatis of villages like Niyol, Baleshwar, Antroli, Malekpore, Chalthan, Dastan, etc. in Surat district, to handover the amount of loan i.e. Rs.300/- to the authorities of Halpati

Seva Sangh do reveal the resentment of the Halpatis against this organization's handling of the scheme.

Many of the houses or huts constructed under this scheme by private individuals or Halpati Seva Sangh were weak construction, offering little or no protection against the cold breeze in winter and rains in monsoon season. As pointed out earlier the dreary barrack type of construction in villages of Bardoli taluka, each accommodating four families was even not according to design approved by the government. No partition wall had been constructed although later on the families themselves erected a thin and workable partition wall. It is on observing these that one is struck with the feeling that had the government administration itself shown serious concern in the implementation of the scheme, things would have been certainly different. One can point out, for comparison sake, the houses built by government for poor tribals in Dangs district which are quite sturdy and better in appearance. Several persons were of the view that most of the houses constructed for Halpatis under the Halpati Housing Scheme would not last for more than 10 to 12 years.

Although the effects of housing upon social and psychological well being of its occupants have been much discussed but less well documented. The most careful of the few relevant studies<sup>13</sup> on the psychological aspect have produced findings less dramatic than one would expect. The link between housing and



mental health is not clearly established, but persons who reside in better houses do have higher morale and greater pride than those who live in wretched huts. In the context of social relationships between Halpatis and the other communities visible wealth such as houses are also used as indicators of status. Halpatis who have the poorest housing are least acceptable to the wider population of the region. When ownership, quality and condition of their housing is compared throughout the community, the economically poor Halpatis do not generally rate high. In this way, the poor and wretched housing influences the degree of acceptance and general status of the Halpatis. Housing is no abstract social and political problem, but an extension of the personality structure of the human beings. If the Halpatis has to identify with such poor and wretched huts, his sense of personal inadequacy and inferiority, already aggravated by job discrimination and other forms of humiliation, is reinforced by the physical reality around him. If their homes are clean and decent, their sense of self will be stronger. A house is a concrete symbol of what the person is worth. Housing alone does not lead to sound psychological adjustment. Still, at the very least, good housing improves health, lifts morale and thereby helps to generate a restless eagerness for change, if not in the adult generation then in their children. Hence, the support aid to Halpati housing must be continued by the State Government and the whole scheme must be tackled by government machinery itself.

It would be more appropriate, if a Halpati Housing Board is constituted to tackle the problem. The amount of money earmarked for construction of one house should be raised from Rs.1200/- to Rs.1800/-. It has been reported that this proposal is under active consideration of the government. It is hoped that an early decision will be taken on this, if it has not yet been taken. In this connection the government should also take note of the fact that the National Building Organization has evolved designs of low cost houses for rural area costing less than Rs.1500/<sup>14</sup>.

The Government administration should also seriously avoid any delay in implementation of this scheme, once the necessary finances is sanctioned by the State Government. It was found that right on 18th May 1969 the State Government had made the financial sanctions under Halpati Housing Scheme for the different districts for 1969-70 which was as follows:<sup>15</sup>

Surat	Rs. 1,80,000
Bulsar	Rs. 1,40,000
Baroda	Rs. 30,000
Broach	Rs. 20,000

But the actual construction of houses in Valsad district was undertaken only in 1975 while in Baroda district the scheme had not even put into operation when this evaluation study was started in mid-1976. It is difficult to visualize the reason for such inordinate delay.

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1. An American Indian hut usually of rounded or oval shaped, formed of poles, overlaid with leaves, mats or barks.
2. Dave, Jugatram - My life's story, Navjivan Prakashan Mandir, 1975, P.272 (in Gujarati).
3. One more member in each of the two district committee was added in the year 1968.
4. See 'Halpati and Halpati Welfare in Gujarat' published by the Director, Social Welfare Department, Gujarat State, Ahmedabad, nd; p.33 (in Gujarati).
5. Ibid. p.33.
6. See, 'Report on Activities of Halpati Seva Sangh for year 1967-73 and on Annual Accounts for 1972-73', published by Arvind Desai, Secretary, Halpati Seva Sangh, Bardoli, 1974, p.27. (in Gujarati).
7. Ibid, p.27.
8. Letter No.LND/BCW, dated 19.4.1976 from office of the Collector, Surat.
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10. 'Halpatis and Halpati Welfare in Gujarat', opp.cited.p.34.
11. This information had been supplied by a reliable official of the village Panchayat.
12. Breman Jan, Patronage and Exploitation, University of California Press, London, 1974, P.252.
13. Wilner, Daniel M., Walkley, Rosabelle price, "Effects of Health and Performance" in The urban condition, Duhl, L.J. (Ed.), New York Basic Books, 1963, P.224.
14. See, News item published in Times of India of January 6, 1977.
15. Government Resolution, Education and Labour Department, Resolution No.HSS-1067/26488-(69)-J, Sachivalaya, Ahmedabad-15, dated the 8th May, 1969.

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