Narayan Gajanan Acharya (Elias Nanasaheb)

Narayan Gajanan Acharya elias Nanasaheb was born at Wadavali village, Chembur in 1909. He was a son of Mr. Gajanan Acharya and Saraswatibai. Mr. Gajanan Acharya was a government servant. He paved way for the developments in chembur. The changes and progress that we see in current Chembur has its impetus because of Gajanan Acharya. He also contributes and involved in freedom fight movement of India. Narayan Acharya’s childhood was shaped by Gandhian philosophy as well as by his father’s and elder brother, Mr. Anant Acharya’s involvement in the freedom fight. Narayan Acharya was also called with love as Nana. His aspirations, opinions, personality was developed by his family’s active participation in freedom fight. He also wanted to pay tribute to the freedom fight since his early childhood days. He was very keen to discuss about national duty and their responsibility towards nation with his childhood peers. He had devotion towards work, firmness of opinions, and purity of mind. He was a man who lived on self-respect, self-discipline, intense love for his fellow members.

Political Life :

Narayan Acharya was a great socio-political reformer. He handled challenging tasks to publicize agenda of National Congress Party in pre and post-independence era of India. He actively worked as a President of District Congress Committee for 12 years. He maintained unmatched esteem in twelve towns in Chembur locality. He opposed fiercely Chembur’s police patilki as well as cattle’s camp as a symbol of slavery.
He sacrificed his family life as well as ample opportunities offered to him. He not only rejected ticket for M.L.A post but also a general membership in Mumbai Municipal Corporation. He was not thirsty for name and fame; this humanitarian spirit gave him energy to tackle all the dilemmas and problems in political, social life.

He has been labeled by his fellow men as a jack fruit or sometimes as a coconut. He used to reply to such comments as, “Whether it is a coconut or a jackfruit it must have utilization.”

The agenda of congress party in 1930 was literacy and khadi awareness, untouchability prevention. To exclude untouchability Narayan Acharya and his followers gave entry to untouchables into temples such as Mahalaxmi, Jarimari temple. They also supported intercast marriages and had meal with an untouchable which was banned in those days.

Nanasahab supported youth congress organization in Turbhe Tehsil for their active operations. His life and work inspired young men to join congress party. Nanasahab was a devoted activist because of which his intentions and actions met. A simple example of a foresaid can be realised when he gave his own land at chembur naka for congress office so that communication could be maintained.
Social Work and Contribution:

Narayan Acharya handled complaints from social work to family dispute. He contributed his whole life for liquor prohibition, picketing, facilities for refugees, rockel and grain supply as well as health facilities. His contribution for prohibiting liquor was tremendous. He was a strategic thinker. He knew that though the drinkers were plenty but alcohol – producers were few. He made plan to destroy alcohol plants situated at Turbhe and Govandi creek.

He was keen about cleanliness, sanitation from the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi. He and his fellow men operated cleanliness campaign in villages such as Ghatla. On every Sunday they, along with Narayan Acharya used to clean the village. Nana was a Brahmin but still he cut hair and also did shavings of people. He supported inter cast marriage. In reaction to that people pronounced abusive words in front of his house. They spitted in the front yard of Nanaji’s house but he least bothered such a hate.

Out of great affection towards people, Nanaji worked hard to develop Thakkarbappa colony, sindhi colony. In 1955 when rationing was closed, he himself started a shop of grains with minimum rates.

Due to political upheaval Gujarati families communities started migrating to Gujarat from Mumbai. But Narayan Acharya gave abduction and safeguarded Gujarati community.

In 1948 hazardous storm left the people of Mumbai in a plight. It destroyed building trees, small houses enormousy. In this critical situation a god like figure helped the refugees to survive and it was none other than Narayan Gajanan Acharya. He worked hard for the challenging rehabilitation of refugees. He started a school (which is now operated by Municipal Corporation) for the children of refugees. He submitted the proposal in congress session in 1950. The proposal got sanctioned and the school was founded.

In Ghatla gaon Vitthal Gurav and Narayan Acharya founded Aagale (Agari) Education Institute. This institute performed different social works such as
alcohol prevention, village cleaning, constructing roads, adult education classes and so on.

In 1947 – 48 migrated people from Lahir – Karachi Sindh region got rehabilitated in Chembur camp by Nanaji, being a president of Congress Division.

A refugee after partition Mr. Jamnadasji Chabra writes about his experiences he had in the company of N.G.A as, when they entered in Mumbai as a refugees they met a kind hearted man none other than Nanaji. They considered themselves lucky for coming in Mumbai after partition just because of Nana. The help received from govt. was scarce. We are highly indebted to Nana for the help in those critical days.”

**Chembur High school & N. G. Acharya and D. K. Marathe College**

He contributed greatly to the operation of chembur high school founded in 1954. He raised manpower and funds for chembur high school through drama festivals. The people who did not participated in freedom fight were involved in this purpose. He was a visionary. He dreamt that teachers must be involved in governing body chembur high school. He was severely opposed by orthodoxy people from governing council. What he dreamt of came into reality and twenty five years after a law sanctioned regarding the right of teachers to involve in governing council. Chembur High school practices democratic policies only because of Nanaji.
In 1938 Nana was selected as a divisional officer in Prohibition Guard, a volunteer organization. Nana worked whole heartedly for this organization but it was dismissed in 1949. In 1950 again he was selected at the position of Officer Commanding in Prohibition Guard Organization. Nanaji, as officer commanding of home guards covered ‘J’ zone of Kurla and Chembur. In 1930 he started picketing because of which he had imprisonment with hard labor. In 1950 Homeguard team took a campaign to stop liquor business held near Turbhe creek. Team patrolled all day and night in the creek. They were people from different religions such as Christian; Agari koli without any discrimination Nana had meals with them.

In 1984 to 1953 Nanaji worked day and night; he arrested 400 criminals and submitted 2 lacks Rs. liquor of smuggling in the court. He also caught 80 thousand rupees rice of smuggling. He was elected as major of organization by Govt. of Maharashtra during Pakistan’s incursion.

In 1946 to 1968 he worked laboriously as a member of Maharashtra Nashabandi Mandal.

Content courtesy-
Department of English, (Senior College)
N. G. Acharya and D. K. Marathe College
Chembur, Mumbai
Reference:
1. Ek Karmayogi- PBPP publication, Mumbai.1985