

In the Office

By: Anil Chāvdā

(A poem translated from Gujarātī into English)

Translated by:

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From the picture behind the authoritative chair suddenly
A face with faded smile shook slightly
A wrinkle of the face deepened additionally.
The eye-glasses having arranged apt
Striking with the stick that old man rushed out
And started rummaging all the office drawers of the autocrat.
For a moment I thought:
This naked *fakir*, panting while wandering to and fro in loincloth,
is searching here for what?
Charges framed against him for these many years?
Truth's forgotten insistence?
Or false interpretations of those three monkeys' sculptures?
Wasn't he finding here, the dripping time from his hanging waist-watch,
misused by authority?
Was this old man trying to ransack the bundles of promises given to progeny?
Table drawers, files, behind and below the grand sofa—lockers,
Of a private office within an office, all private places
And after scrabbling all known-unknown corners
Like the poor's painful heart, his shivering two hands
In the chair of authority were searching desperately
From his sea-like eyes, on receiving despair even from there thoroughly
On the chair his invaluable tears dropped
Being unable to restrain, I asked,
“*Bāpu*, are you looking for something?”
With apercus eyes, at me he kept on staring
And spoke in a trembling voice,
“Yes, democracy!”

Bāpu: An address made to Mahātmā Gāndhi as a national father

Fakir: A Muslim Sufi holy man

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