

## K. S. Lavkumar Khachar of Jasdan

**Kishor Kadiwar:** 703B, Silver Star Apartment, Opp. Sharda Baug, Nr. Sardar Baug Circuit House, Rajkot-1. kishorkadiwar@gmail.com

Mr. Lavkumar Khachar of Jasdan was perhaps one of the most respected and eminent personalities in Gujarat and the whole of India in the field of nature education and conservation. In fact, his name is synonymous with Nature Education. He spent his life studying nature passionately and taught people to understand and love it.

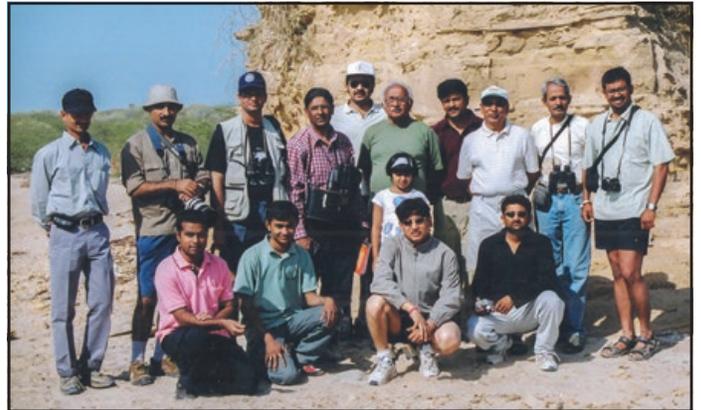
He was born in the erstwhile royal family of Jasdan in Saurashtra, ruled by the great warrior clan of Kathis. He spent his childhood in the natural surroundings of Hingolghadh and he imbibed the interest in wildlife at that tender age and obviously the natural beauty of Hingolghadh and its surroundings inculcated many qualities in him as a true naturalist.

He was educated at the Rajkumar College, Rajkot where he started his career teaching Biology and Geography in 1956, after completing BSc (Botany) with Honors from St. Stephen's College, Delhi. As a student of Biology he was greatly influenced by Biologists such as Charles Darwin.

As a teacher he pioneered the concept of "Back to Nature" focusing on outdoor adventure activities for the young. He started by taking small groups of students during summer vacation for camping on the bank of mountainous Manaslu Nala in Manali region.

While at Rajkumar College, he took a group of students to trek from Kathmandu to Thyangboche Monastery at the base of Mount Everest, a journey of over 15 days one way. Rajkumar College was the first school in India to undertake such a venturesome trip. I was fortunate to be a part of that team.

His creative implementation of Nature Study Programmes so impressed the board of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) - India,



that he was given the responsibility of conceiving and initiating its Education and youth movement in 1976.

In 1984, he took charge as the Director of Sundarvan – a Nature Discovery Center in Ahmedabad under the aegis of the Centre for Environment Education (CEE). Today, State Governments and Non-Government Organizations (NGO's) are following the model created by him across India. He was instrumental in declaring the Gulf of Kutch islands as the first Marine National Park and Sanctuary in India.

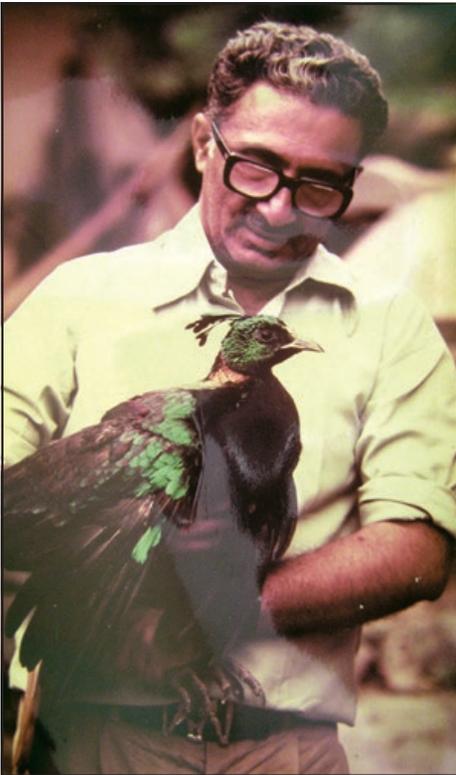
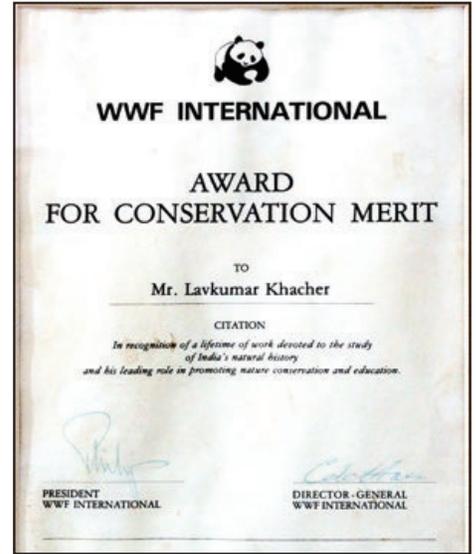
He had a close association with eminent people such as Dr Salim Ali, the most renowned ornithologist of the country who has written prolifically on birds of India. Gurdial Singh, a former Principal of the Doon School was instrumental in helping Mr Lavkumar to put forward the idea of declaring Nanda Devi basin into a protected area.

Another person of royal heritage was RS Dharmakumarsinhji of Bhavnagar, an authority on the Great Indian Bustards and a keen birdwatcher. Mr Dharmakumarsinhji jokingly used to say that naturalists are very few in India and just like the bustards, breed at a slow pace!

The beautiful property of Hinglaj farm overlooking the Beas river in the Himalayas was Mr. Lavkumar's summer home for the past 30 years. From his home he launched the nature education and camping movement that has been replicated and emulated nationwide by other nature lovers. The Hingolghadh Nature Conservation Education Programme (HNCEP), which was founded by him, is still instrumental in opening the eyes of nature lovers to the natural and cultural landscape, at the same time contributing to the local economy without threatening the local culture.



*"There no longer is any need for struggle to survive. Survive we have and will, we now need to concern ourselves to live life fully with confidence and joy."*



Our mountains are holy, our rivers divine, the ocean surrounding us is to be revered, and the flora and fauna (alas today so impoverished) to be cherished.

Mr. Lavkumar was recipient of the following awards for his dedication to Nature Education:

The Salim Ali - Loke Wan Tho Lifetime Award for Excellence in Ornithology for his pioneering work in Ornithology.

Certificate of Merit awarded by His Royal Highness Prince Philip for his contribution in initiating the Youth Education Movement and developing the Nature camps for WWF - India.

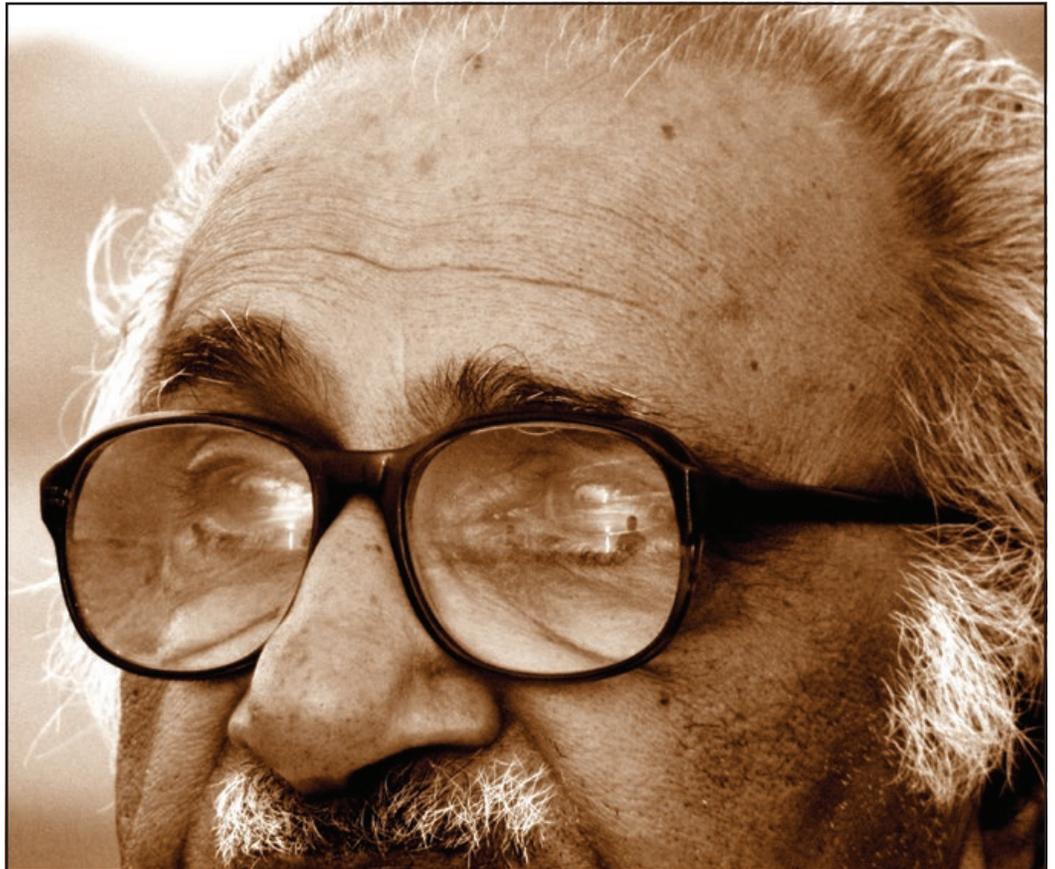
In 2004, he was awarded the Venu Menon Lifetime Achievement Award.

Lifetime Achievement Award as "Guru" from the Galaxy Education System in 2004.

Award from the Gujarat Government on the Republic Day 2006 for contribution to Wildlife Conservation.

His demise on the 2nd March, 2015 has been a great loss to nature lovers all over India and especially to Gujarat. To continue his legacy, we as individuals and organizations must endeavour to propagate and promulgate his teachings to the young and to our future generations in whom he had much hope. He wanted to instill the basic qualities of building a spirit of adventure in our young boys and girls and to give them a holistic approach to their lives and for them to be good citizens and leaders of our Nation. □

*"In the democratic milieu of our times, we must have a very significant and defining role to play. Bird-watching and bird photography are self indulgences unless there is concern for the welfare of the objects of pursuit. Concern also is not enough, it has to be translated into personal understandings and life styles that will help iron out the conflicts and create a world where mankind and birds can live in harmony."*



*"Light and life are the same thing for there is darkness in the absence of light as there is death in the absence of life and life as we now understand it the biological manifestation of light."*