

FUELLED UP

Rural Cooperative In Mehsana, Civic Body In Vadodara Offer Unique Gas Distribution Model

Success of CGD co-op in milk capital Anand

Maulik.Pathak@timesgroup.com

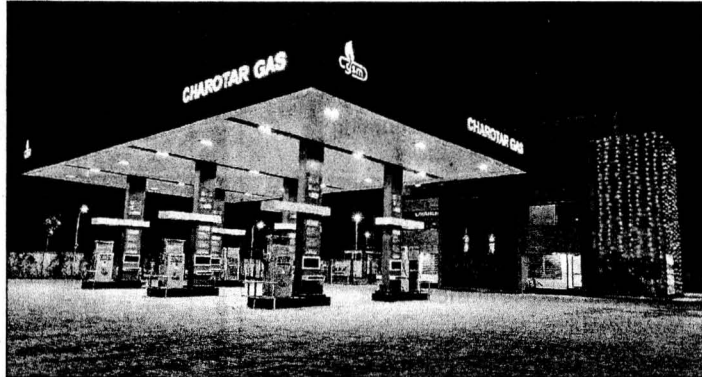
Bipinbhai Patel, 56, a farmer living in Gana village near Mehsana says his family members no longer venture to faraway places in search of firewood. His house, designed in the traditional style, where you enter through the kitchen instead of a sitting room, has been smoke-free for many years now as they have a connection of piped natural gas.

In nearby Vallabh Vidyanagar, considered a hub for colleges and universities, as many as 30,000 students eat their food in college messes that use piped natural gas. The gas to both these regions is not supplied by a corporate entity but by a cooperative in Anand.

“We were perhaps the first city gas distribution (CGD) in the country to reach out to



Bipinbhai Patel



rural households. We are now looking to expand to other areas,” said Has Mukh Patel, chairman of Charotar Gas Sahakari Mandali Ltd.

Anand is seen as a cradle of cooperatives in India with the success of its dairy cooperative movement. Based on the Amul model, Charotar Gas Sahakari Mandali, is the only such

cooperative in Asia. It supplies gas even to Amul factory in Anand. And its clientele today are about two dozen villages that have given up the age-old tradition of burning wood for cooking and have switched to a cleaner option.

“The services offered by Charotar Gas are quite good. Even if we can't pay bills for months together, our services are not disconnected and we are not hassled for payments,” says Patel of Gana.

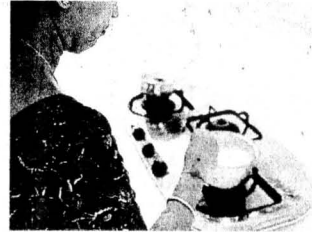
Charotar Gas also distributes natural gas to the end consumers

as fuel to power transport vehicles in form of Compressed Natural Gas or CNG. While CNG is seen as a substitute for conventional transport fuels like petrol and diesel, PNG is seen as an alternative for LPG.

Charotar Gas was registered under the Co-operatives Act in 1998 for natural gas distribution in Anand and its surroundings. It has been authorized by the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) for supply of natural gas in 843 sq km in and around Anand. So far it has covered 400 sq km, catering to over 30,000 households. It serves 122 industrial and 650 commercial units as well. It has one mother CNG station and two online CNG stations.

The cooperative clocked a turnover of Rs 132 crore and a profit of Rs 16 crore in 2019-20.

“We plan to expand our presence to Umreth and Borsad taluka in the next two years where we aim to supply gas to about 22,000 households,” Patel says. The cooperative also plans to set up CNG outlets in Umreth and Borsad.



TALE OF ANOTHER CGD

About 50 kilometres from Anand, one can find another unique model for CGD unfolding. Vadodara city has the oldest CGD network in the country that was set up by the local municipal corporation – Vadodara Mahanagar Seva Sadan (VMSS) in 1972. With PNG supply to over 1 lakh households, it's the only CGD in the country that is run by a civic body. In 2013, it formed a 50:50 joint venture with Gail Gas called Vadodara Gas Ltd in accordance with the PNGRB Act 2006, with an authorized share capital of Rs 215 crore. VGL had outlined a capital expenditure plan of Rs 200 crore with an aim to take the number of household connections to 1,80,000 in the next few years.