

October 18th, 2003 – One-day conference – Chicago
“Understanding and Catalyzing A Campaign for Gram Swaraj in India”

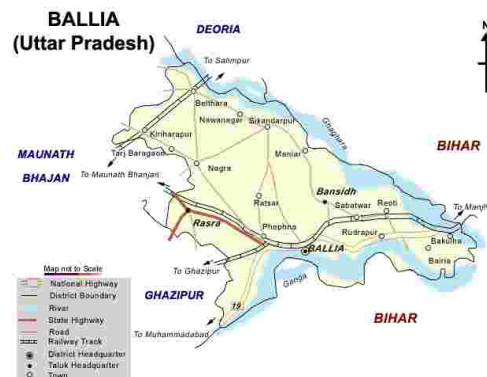
Professor Jagdish Shukla, George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia.
“A Gandhian Vision of Gram Swaraj and Experiences in My Village”



My mother who spent her lifetime in the village encouraged me to establish a college in the village so that students from the rural areas, especially girls, can get college education. Every time I went to India for professional meetings, I made it a point to visit my village. I have visited my village once or twice each year for the past 32 years.

As I began the project to establish the college in my village about five years ago, I faced several hurdles.

There were many questions raised by the university system and the state education system. Many villagers, divided along caste system, were skeptical about the true intent of the project. Many students wanted to establish a procedure for cheating in the examinations. I had to take a very firm position (zero tolerance) against cheating and for a minimum attendance requirement to allow a student to a candidate for examination. My younger brother, and a retired teacher from that area, who is currently the Principal of the college, fully embraced and implemented their strict policies.



Today, this college has a very high reputation for honesty and integrity. In fact, because of our strict no cheating policy and a high level of discipline, many parents who live in the large urban city of Ballia want to send their daughters to this college in a village. The college has about 450 students, 300 of which are girls.