

MEMOIRS OF ABDUL RAZZAK THAPLAWALA
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MEMOIRS OF ABDUL RAZZAK THAPLAWALA

BY ABDUR RAZZAQ THAPLAWALA

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BIRTH PLACE REVISITED

BY: ABDUR RAZZAQ THAPLAWALA

I had migrated from Bantva in the 3rd week of November, 1947 after the houses of Muslims were attacked by Hindu farmers on 15th November, 1947. The houses were attacked inspite of the fact that there was night curfew and Sikh soldiers were on duty at each Street and Mohalla. At that time, I was 11 years old but I still remember the sounds of save us or (Bachao, Bachao) from the women folks whose houses were being attacked.

On 16th November, 1947, when the curfew was relaxed for a few hours, all the residence of Bantva gathered at the Bazar outside the main gate (Zapa) of Bantva. cas well. Although, there was no bloodshad in Bantva but the houses were attacked in the presence of Sikh solders. The residents of Bantva were fearful and decided to leave for Pakistan as soon as possible. Because of this decision, the 25,000 Muslim populations' majority of whom were Memons decided to migrate to Pakistan. Within 3 days, the residents of Bantva started leaving for Bombay or Okha from where they migrated to Pakistan by steamships.

After migration in the 3rd week of November, 1947, I did not have the opportunity of visiting Bantva and its surrounding cities until 21st March, 2005.

I was invited to participate in a seminar on cement industry being held in the first week of January, 2005 at Mumbai. I was also invited by some cement machinery manufacturers to have a look at machinery manufactured in India. I decided that I should visit Mumbai and surrounding places but at the same time I should take this opportunity

of visiting my birth place. I therefore applied for visa to Indian High Commission with including visa for Rajkog, Junagadh and Bantva. Unfortunately, Indian High Commission lost my passport and inspite of several efforts, the passport could not be found. I had to obtain a new passport.

BOMBAY

The World Memon Organization (WMO) had organized its 5th Annual General Meeting at Mumbai from 25th to 28th March, 2005. I decided to take this opportunity to visit my birth place. Many persons who were attending the conference of World Memon Organization (WMO) had applied for visa to visit Bantva but no visa was granted to them. As I had applied for visa to Rajkot, Junagadh and Bantva in December, 2004, I was granted the visa of Rajkot, Junagadh and Bantva in addition to Mumbai. I therefore, decided to leave for India on 21st March, 2005 – a few days earlier for Mumbai Conference. In Mumbai, I had requested a very senior elder of our community – Bha Adam Noor to kindly arrange for my visit to Junagadh & Bantva. I left Karachi by PIA Flight No. 274 at 9:00 A.M. and reached Mumbai Airport at 11:00 A.M. (India time). My friend had sent a person to receive me at the Airport. I took a taxi to the office of The Memon Educational & Welfare Society. As requested earlier, they had booked a flight living for Rajkot at 7:00 P.M. that very evening.

RAJKOT

I left my luggage in the office of The Memon Educational & Welfare Society and took a small trolley bag with me which contained clothing for 3 days. The Jet Airways flight took me from Mumbai to to Rajkot. The flight time was 45 minutes and the return fair was Rs. 7,800/= . At Rajkot Airport, I was received by a friend Mr. Farooq who was requested by Mr. Adam Noor to receive me. Mr. Farooq was there at the airport to receive me. He had booked a room in Hotel Kavery, Rajkot. It took me one hour to reach my Hotel. We had arranged a

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Suzuki Hiroof for our tour. Before living Rajkot next morning, I was shown the Adamjee Boarding House at Rajkot. The plaque at the Adamjee Boarding House read following in Gujrati:

“Sir Adamjee Haji Dawood constructed this Boarding House at a cost of Rs. 14,050 on the occasion of the wedding ceremony of his son. The foundation stone was laid on 2nd February, 1941 by the State Resident Major G.B. Williams. The Boarding House was completed and declared open on 19th Janaury, 1942 by Janab Haji Abdul Shakoor Baig Muhammad Subasha.”

The Boarding House is a beautiful building constructed on a plot measuring 12,500 sq.yards. When I visited the Boarding House, the building was in good shape but it was rented out to a Government department and two private firms. There were 15 boarders who were living in kitchen and dining room of the Boarding House. Out of these 15 students only 5 students were from Memon community. The Boarding House is located at the prime locality of Rajkot. Unfortunately, the Memon community of Rajkot does not appear to have taken care of the Boarding House and thus the wishes of Sir Adamjee Haji Dawood to accommodate Memon students did not materialize. This was a very sorry state of affairs. I explained this state of affairs to the community elders at one of the meeting of Board of Management of World Memon Organization held at Mumbai on 27th March, 2005. I was told by some Indian dignitories that they are trying to revive the Boarding House. According to a conservative estimate, the present value of land and building of Boarding House is about Rs. 25 crores.

Rajkot has a population of about 1.1 Million people out of which 100,000 people belong to Muslim community and there are about 5,000 persons who belong to Memon community.

JUNAGADH

After visiting the Boarding House, I left Rajkot for Junagadh. It took me 2 hours to reach Junagadh because it was a very good Highway. During our journey from Rajkot to Junagadh, we also passed through the city of Jetpur. It looked like a well populated and prosperous city. Unfortunately, I could not go and see any place of interest in Jetpur as I did not know anything about it. I reached Junagadh at about 2:00 P.M. After taking a room in a hotel and finishing our lunch, I decided to spend the afternoon for sight seeing of Junagadh. First of all, I went to see Nawab Mahabbat Khanjee College. The College has separate buildings for Arts and Science. It is still known as Sir Mahabbat Khanjee College.

After visiting the College, I visited the Makbara of Sir Mahabbat Khanjee. It is a huge, beautiful, and artistic historical structure. Besides the Makbara, there is a big & beautiful Mosque. I do not know how many Muslims offer prayer in this Mosque. After visiting the Makbara of Sir Mahabbat Khangee, I took round of Junagadh & saw many new gates built on the roads.

Then I proceeded to see the Girnar Mountain and Data Darbar. The main Mazar of Data Darbar is situated on a mountain and it was difficult for me to climb such a height. At the bottom of the steps of Data Darbar, therer is a Chilla of Data Darbat. This Chilla or Dargah is a beautiful place. I photographed it. I also photographed the stairs leading to the Data Darbar on the mountain. I remember that in my childhood, I had climbed the stairs and seen the Mazaar of Data Darbat up on the hill. This was not possible this time because of my age factor. While returning from Data Darbar, we saw a small Dargah or what we call Chilla of Peer Geban Shah.

After returning from Data Darbar, I was told to visit the Memon Colony built by World Memon Foundation in Baker Falia. This colony had 4 Apartment Buildings and was built by World Memon Foundation in Association with Dhoraji Association. The condition of the colony was

pathetic. The water & sewerage lines were not functioning and the entire compound of the colony was dug up for improving water & sewerage lines. The residents of colony were very poor and complaining that no steps had been taken by the builders of the colony to do the necessary repairing work. Some of the ladies of the colony told me to see their rooms and observe the sub-human filthy conditions in which they were living. Two persons supervising the sewerage work told me that no resident of colony was prepared to share the expenses except those living on ground floor who were most affected. I hope that the World Memon Foundation and Dhoraji Association will take steps to come to the rescue of poor residents of this colony which was in Baker Falia.

Junagadh has a population of 700,000 people out of which 100,000 people are Muslims. The population of Memon community in Junagadh is about 11,000.

VANTHALI

I spent the night in Hotel Paramount of Junagadh. Next morning, we started for visit to Bantva - my birthplace. The road leading to Bantva was good and passed through Vanthali. There were farms on both the sides of the road. Within an hour, we reached Vanthali, our first stop in the journey to Bantva. On the main road of Vanthali, there is a Jamia Taaleem-ul-Quran, which is run by Jamia Taaleemul-Quran Charitable Trust, Vanthali. The Jamia was established in September 1996. Almost all the trustees are non-Memons but funds were coming from the Memon philanthropists from all over the Gujrat. It has a magnificent & beautiful building. More than 1000 students are studying at this Jamia and the Jamia is spending Rs. 42 lacs per year. The students are taught Arabic, Farsi, Hifz Quran, Nazira Quran and computer science. They have a very well stocked library, Masjid and residential quarters. I visited a classroom where lessons in Hadees were being taught to the students. I also visited their computer room, which contained 10 modern computers. The following are the statistics of the students studying at the Jamia.

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| | | |
|----|-----------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. | Aalim | 21 |
| 2. | Qaari | 41 |
| 3. | Hifz | 35 |
| 4. | Naazra | 426 |
| 5. | Computer studies | 21 |
| 6. | Tailoring | 19 |
| 7. | Education upto 7 th standard | 168 |

The Jamia is also running Markatib or schools at the following places other than the main Jamia in Vanthali:

| | | |
|----|-----------|--------------|
| 1. | Vanthali | 350 students |
| 2. | Nawalakhi | 150 students |
| 3. | Lilwa | 100 students |
| 4. | Sattalpur | 50 students |
| 5. | Koab | 100 students |

A Memon colony is situated very near the Jamia. I went to the Memon Colony. The colony has been built by World Memon Foundation with the help of Vanthali Memon Jamat. The buildings in the Memon colony were apparently in good condition but the ladies at the colony complained that they have the houses but their manfolk have no jobs. They were doing different labour work and hardly earning enough to meet both ends. They requested that the community elders should do something to provide some sort of jobs for their manfolk.

The population of Vanthali is about 20,000 people. This includes 4,000 Muslims and about 1,500 people belong into Memon community.

After Vanthali, we proceed to Manavadar, which was only 22 KM from Vanthali. I did not see any place of interest at Manavadar. The distance between Bantva and Manavadar is only 8 KM.

BANTVA

From Manavadar, we proceeded to Bantva "my birth place". To begin with I went to the office of Bantva Municipality which is known as Bantva Municipal Bureau. The offices of Municipality are located on the first floor of building which we know as Mohammadan Library of our old days. I met the officers of the Municipality and told them that I had come to see my birth place. They were very kind and sent one of their man with me to take me around the Bantva. To begin with we went to what was known as main gate or Zapa of Bantva. The Zapa was no longer there. We went in the bazaar inside the Zapa till the Jamia Masjid. It's a very beautiful Masjid and the inside and outside condition was still very good inspite of passage of time. My house was behind the Jamia Masjid in Jangra falia. The way to Jangra falia started with residence, offices and motor garages of Adam Haji Peermuhammad (Adam Limited). Unfortunately, all the buildings in this area including Adam Limited's offices, residential houses and the motor garages had decayed with the passage of time or has been demolished and only a locked compound existed. I proceeded further to see the house where I leaved but could find none because all the houses in Jangra Falia, Agasi Falia & the passage to Rankot were demolished and nothing could be recognized.

After visiting the Masjid, we went outside the so-called Zapa. There were shops and bazaar outside Zapa and I could see that all kinds of shopkeepers were doing roaring business. Here I met Mr. Nikom Advocate an old friend of brother Siddique Polani. I gave him the copy of History of Banva which was given to me by Siddique Bha. Mr. Nikom Advocate was very happy to see us. He accompanied us to the tour of Bantva. There was a Masjid known as Barwali Masjid outside the Zapa. It was locked and was in very bad condition. I also went to see the Mazaar of Bukhari Sharif. The Mazar is now situated in a beautiful garden and it is in good condition. Going back towards Mohammadan library, we saw Mosque built by Hussain Kasim Dada. It was in a very bad shap. Then we started for Madrassa-e-Islamia and Yateem Khana. The Yateem Khana has been converted into a Girls School and Madrassa now

contains a Boys School. The foundation stone of Yateem Khana Islamia Bantva read as follows:

“The opening ceremony of this building was performed by Bantva Sardar Gadh Darbar Saheb Zabardast Khanjee on Tuesday 21st Jamadiul Aakhir 1356 Hijri and 8th August, 1939.”

The Girls School and Boys School are being run by a Trust. The Trust is renovating some buildings and also constructing new blocks.

The foundation stone of Madrassa-e-Islamia read as follows:

“Madrassa-e-Islamia was opened by Left. Col. J.A. Oilfield Political Agent of Sorath Parant (Province) on 21st December, 1930.”

Both the schools are know known as Sunshine schools. On the way to Madrassa-e-Islamia, I noticed the buildings of Bantva, Gymkhana & Muslim Trust. I was told that Memons from Dhoraji were taking care of some Mosques & Dargahs in Bantva and no Memon from Bantva was giving help.

BANTVA RAILWAY STATION

After visiting the Yateem Khana and Madrassa-e-Islamia, I proceeded towards the old Railway Station. The outside building of Railway Station looked good as I remembered it in my childhood. Inside the building, I also saw the Ticket Distribution window, which still has the instructions for passengers in Gujrati. On the other side of the building, however, there were no signs of a Railway Station. After seeing the Railway Station, I proceeded to see the hospital built by Haji Habib Culcuttawala. The hospital building was old but not in very bad condition. Now it houses a library. Along side the hospital building, there was a mosque. I visited the mosque built by Haji Habib Culcuttawala. It was in a pathetic condition. All the Mehrabs and the mimber had decayed or demolished. A Muslim family was living inside it. They

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requested us to enter the mosque premises after taking off shoes. We did that but I was very much disturbed by seeing the condition of the Mosque. No mimber, no mehrabs but the lining for safbandi for Namaz could be seen.

The Kohinoor talkies, the only cinema house in Bantva was opposite the hospital. It was closed. I was told that it functioned for a few years as Jay Hind Cinema.

Then I proceeded to Bantva Memon Jamat Khana. A portion of Jamat Khana was functioning as Sindhi student's school. I could see the classrooms & desks where I studied upto 2nd class before joining Madrassa-e-Islamia. The Class Rooms of the school were apparently in good condition and I could see school desks in most of the rooms.

Then I started for going out of Banva and saw Ahmed Dawoods Gening Factory, which is now running as Oil Mills on Pajot Road. Our friend took us to the house of the Late Danilal Kalilal who worked as Manager of Haji Habib Calcuttawala. He died on 10th April, 2001. His son Kanti Bhai invited us to his house and served tea to us. Mr. Kanti Laal is also a retired person and had good collection of books.

Bantva is said to have population of 18,000 people. There are only 150 Muslims and 3 or 4 Memon families in Bantva.

The Bantva, Thapla and Kodvav are part of the, what is known as Manawadar Taluka District: Junagadh.

THAPLA & KODVAV

My surname is THAPLAWALA but my parents or elders had not told me the meaning of this surname. After coming to Pakistan, I looked at the maps of Gujrat and saw that Bantva was surrounded by many small villages and many families had their surname linked with these villages including Balagam, Kodvav, Pajod etc. These villages included a village

named THAPLA. I had a keen desire to visit & see THAPLA. We left Bantva and started our journey towards these villages. On our way to THAPLA, we passed through Aiklaria and then the Kodvav. I was told that the population of Kodvav was 1500 persons belonging to Patel community. After seeing Kodvav, We proceeded towards THAPLA. It is a small town with a population of 600 people. At the outside of THAPLA, there was a Mazaar or Chilla of Peer Geban Shah. It was being looked after by a Muslim couple Mr. & Mrs. Fakeer Allah Rakha Qasim. Both the THAPLA & KODVAV have small schools. The school in THAPLA is known as Study Centre and the school in KODVAV is known as school. I have photographed both schools of THAPLA & KODVAV which may appear in this article.

After seeing THAPLA, we decided to start our return journey. We decided that instead of going back to Junagadh, we should directly proceed to Rajkot through Sardargadh & Dhoraji.

DHORAJI

Before reaching Dhoraji, we went through Upleta by pass. We started for Rajkot at 2:30 P.M through Sardargadh. We reached Sardargadh at 3:00 P.M. and proceeded towards Dhoraji. Dhoraji is a sprawling city. We went to see the Mazaar of Peer Sailani and the Mosque near it.. In Dhoraji, we went to Dhoraji branch of Memon cooperative Bank Limited and met its Manger Mr. Aqeel R. Patel. He said that the bank had deposits of Rs. 10 crore on 31st March, 2004. The total loans amounted to Rs. 3 crore at the year ended on 31st March, 2004 and bank made profit of Rs. 25 lacs during that year. Mr. Imran A. Furniturewala is Chairman AND Mr. A. Majid Patka is the Vice Chairman of the Bank. The Bank has 70 branches all over Gujrat and in Mumbai. Late Janab Al-Haaj Zakaria Aghari established the Bank.

After Dhoraji, we proceeded towards Rajkot. We reached Rajkot in evening time on 23rd March, 2005. I had a booking to leave Rajkot by evening flight next day on 24th March, 2005. Since I was very much tired

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and nothing to do at Rajkot, I decided to go to Mumbai next morning. I went to Airport and changed my flight to morning flight. From Airport, we proceeded to Imperial Hotel where a delegation of World Memon Organization had arrived on that very day. The delegation was ready to proceed to a dinner function of Saurashtra Memon Jamat. My name was included in the delegation but I apologized to the President of World Memon Organization Haji A. Razzak Yaqoob Gandhi and Dr. Nasir Y. Fulara that being tired I will not be able to attend the Dinner and accompany them to UPLETA next morning. At the Rajkot function, the Sourashtra Memon Jamat had reserved a trophy and shawl for me but as I could not attend their function, they sent the trophy to my hotel in Mumbai. I will always cherish this beautiful trophy reminding me of visit to my birthplace. I stayed in hotel Royal Inn near Rajkot Airport and proceeded to Mumbai by Jet Airways Flight No. 9W-3410 on the morning of 24th March, 2005. At Mumbai, I stayed at Hotel Suba Palace where all senior members from Karachi were staying. It was at a walking distance from Taj Hotel where all the functions of WMO where being held.



My Memories of Bantva

By: **Abdur Razzaq Thaplawala**
(Article written for book Akse - Bantva)

The Bantva's Memon community migrated from Bantva in November, 1947 and majority of them settled in Karachi which is a cosmopolitan city. The migration proved to be a bonanza to the members of the community. It's financial condition improved greatly. While there were ten to twenty millionaires in Bantva, today you can find hundreds of millionaires in the community. It is not because of inflation or change in purchasing power of money but because of real change of economic condition of the members of the community.

Almost sixty years have passed since we migrated to Pakistan. Recently I had a chance to visit Bantva for the first time after migration in 1947. This revived my memories and I decided to share these memories with my community. Before Partition, most of the manfolk of Bantva used to get themselves employed by four or five business tycoons of the city and served their offices spread all over India. They used to sign a forty years agreement with their employers and stayed at upcountry branches for ten months. In these branches, they used to start as a peon and ultimately rose to the post of the Accountant or the Branch Manager. Every year they used to come to Bantva on two month's leave without pay and stayed with their families. Their salaries were meager but sufficient to meet the requirement of their families according to social set-up at that time. During these two months, they had nothing to do except to spend their life with families and friends. They had established some sort of one room clubs in upper floors of some buildings where they used to meet their friends and mostly played cards.

Their employment conditions were very stringent. They used to work in buildings, which had shops on the ground floor and living quarters on upper floor. These living quarters mostly consisted of a large common room where they took their meals, took rest and went to bed at

nights. The employers supplied the meals. They remained at the disposal of the employer for twenty-four hours and could not go to sleep before the Manager.

Their salaries were revised after the expiry of forty months' contract. The change of employer was very difficult. The four or five firms of tycoons operated as a cartel and nobody hired an employee of other firms without permission from the existing employer.

A few enterprising persons had set up small shops in Bantva mostly dealing in groceries & clothing. They were small number of people and therefore Bantva could boast of very few shops. The womenfolk bought their clothing from these shopkeepers. They will communicate their requirement to the shopkeepers who will send their salesmen to the houses with thans of different type of clothes. The purchases were therefore made at home. The womenfolk did not visit the shops. They also used to get their cloths stitched at home by tailors who used to come with their sewing machines at their houses and at time stayed there for eight hours for days depending upon the quantity of work. Most of the tailors were Hindus.

Their manfolk used to buy groceries for the whole year when they came to Bantva on two months leave.

The houses used to get their water supply by women water carriers who used to bring water from wells with hand pumps installed in most localities. There was no electricity in the town. Kerosene lamps were used in homes. Some people used Petromex on festival occasions. The Municipal Committee had installed kerosene lamps in every street. The Municipal employees used to light the lamps at every evening and put them off in the morning. They used to clean the lamps and fill them with fresh kerosene in the morning trip.

The womenfolk were very orthodox in religious terms. They used to say to goodbye to their children and manfolk by saying that "Gaus Pak (Pir Abdul Qadir Jelani) or Panjatan will protect you". The things have changed now. Even the grandmas now say Khuda Hafiz or Allah Hafiz. A

few women were literate and used to recite Noornama besides Quran-e-Majid. Religious occasions were celebrated with enthusiasm. On Ghaiarwi Sharif, they used to light candles in their homes. In the month of Moharram, they used to visit Taziyas where they offered coconuts. The Bantva Seva Samittee, the forerunner of present Banva Khidmat Committee often tried to discourage this custom. In Shab-e-Baraat, boys & girls made extensive use of firecrackers and Phuljaris. The parents of a would be bridegroom will often send a gift of firecrackers to would be bride on the occasion of Shab-e-Baraat. The Eid prayer was offered at Eid Gaah ground outside the town. People use to take their children alongwith them to Eid Gaah ground for offering the prayers. Since Eid Gaah ground was at sufficient distance from the town bullock carts were hired mainly for the transportation of children.

The womenfolk cooked special foods on religious occasions. They used to cook MALIDA on 9th of Muharram and sweet white rice called PERRY on 10th of Muharram. On the day of Ziarat of Imam Hussain, the womenfolk used to make LAPPI, which was a sweet dish made from coarse wheat floor, Gur and Ghee. Sharbat used to be prepared by every household for distribution among the children in the Mohalla and friends on most days of first 10 days of Muharram. On first of Rajab and 9th of Zilhaj, they used to cook large sweet breads in special fires set up in the Mohalla. These breads used to be called LOT and had a diameter of almost two feet and thickness of one inch. The pieces of the LOTS were sent to friends and relatives.

The womenfolk almost daily assembled in their Mohalla.. set on the wooden cots and indulged in all types of gossips. During the month of Ramazan, they were used to Ratjaga when they played with KODIES. They also used to distribute alms to poors, which abounded Bantva in the month, in the form of breads spinkled with sugar.

Apart from these religious customs, they had their social customs. Khatna or circumcision was celebrated with tea parties at night. On the wedding occasions, lunch parties used to be held at Jamat Khana where

food consisting of Akni & Zarda was served. Sometime, the guests were served with "Sata", "Jillabi" "Mithai" and "Gathias".

In Bantva of those days, it was not easy for boys to marry easily contrary to what is happening today. They had to give 50 to 100 Tolas of Gold to marry a girl and also to give her a lot of cloths. Some poor eligible bachelors used to marry non-community women in different part of India, as they could not afford Gold and other expenditure on marriage with a Memon Girl. The marriage ceremony was held at the house of the bride. The bridegroom will go to the house of bride in a precession, which followed Milad reciters. The brides used to go to the houses of their husbands at night and go back to parents' home in the morning. This practice continued for a month or two.

There were two ladies school in the town where young girls were taught Quran-e-Majid and Urdu upto primary level. The boys mostly went to a school set up in Jamat Khana for study which consisted of four classes, which were called (1) Akaria", (2) Barpothi and (3) Class-I. These were the forerunners of present day Montessori, Nursery and Class-I. Each course ran for one year. After class one, the boys were shifted to Madrassa-e-Islamia – which was called "Bada Madrassa". Here classes were held in morning as well as in afternoon from class two to class eight. Here they were taught, Urdu, Gujrati, mathematics, history & geography. Anybody wishing to continue study after eight class had to go to Junagadh for matriculation. However, most of the boys were content with study upto eight classes. Some boys were sent to Amreli Boarding House for further study.

The ladies of Bantva hardly ever used to leave their houses. If they wanted to visit their relatives in daytime, they hired horse carts or "TANGA" which had "purda" so that the travelers can not be seen or recognized. The womenfolk used to wear "TOPI BURQA" with extensive embroidery work in gold & silver threads.

As I have said, the migration to Pakistan has changed the status of the community. Education has flourished. The community can now boast

of thousands of graduates (Both Girls & Boys), Doctors, Lawyers, Chartered Accountants, Cost & Management Accountants and Engineers. Many are gainfully employed in national and multinational companies. Others are having their independent professional practices. Many people have established businesses, from small shops to small, medium and large industries. Many are working in stock exchange and have set up shops in cloth market & in Jodia Bazar. Quite a few have migrated with or without families to Middle East, U.K., U.S.A. and Canada and enjoying good financial status. These are the blessings of migration.

In Pakistan, the community is still divided into Jamats or Associations known after their ancestral villages like Bantva Memon Jamat, Kutiyana Memon Jamat, Jetpur Association, Dhoraji Association etc. Bantva community is the largest Memon community in Karachi. Besides Bantva Memon Jamat, it has Bantva Memon Khidmat Committee, Bantva Memon Rahat Committee, Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam etc. The community has set up many educational and Medical institutions like: Madrassa-e-Islamia, Raunq-e-Islam Girls School & College, Dawood Public School, Aisha Bawany School, Dawood College of Engineering and Adamjee Science College. The medical centres include a number of charitable dispensaries, Bantva Anis Hospital, Memon Hospital, Patel Hospital, Tabba Dialysis Centre, Aziz Tabba Cardiac Centre & Memon Medical Institute etc.

The Memons in Karachi are living in specific localities. Besides Kharadar & Mithadar, they will be found in many societies spread over area between Alamgir Road to Shahrah-e-Faisal besides Federal 'B' Area. Many Jamats have set up colonies for poor & lower middle class families in different localities of Karachi.

Many Memon personalities have participated in local, provincial and National politics and have occupied Munsitried posts. Mr. A. Sattar Edhi from Bantva has become an international personality by establishing Edhi Foundation and the world's largest Ambulance Service.

Last Days of Junagadh

By Abdur Razzaq Thaplawala
(published in DAWN)

The month of November 1947 was a month of tragedy for newly born Pakistan as India occupied two states, which had legally and formally acceded to Pakistan as part of the scheme of partition. These states are located in the present Gujrat provinces. The Junagadh State was surrounded by Indian Territory but it has a long coastline with a well-developed part for easy access to Karachi. The month will be particularly remembered by the Memon community as a month in which they faced one of the worst tragedy in the community's life time.

The community in general and the members of community from Bantva, Kutiyana and Junagadh had to abandon their birthplaces and migrate to Pakistan in November 1947. It is unfortunate that the month of November 2003 passed without anybody remembering this tragedy.

Mr. Yusuf Abdul Gani Mandvia, a bold Memon journalist of high caliber and writer of many books on pre-partition Indian Politics was present in Junagadh during the last days of the occupation of Junagadh. He had first hand information about these happenings. The following chronological account of these days is based on one of his books in Gujrati published in Karachi after he migrated to Pakistan after serving a three years imprisonment in Junagadh imposed on him by Indian occupation forces of the occupation of Junagadh. The following information is based on Mr. Mandvia's Gujrati books publish in sixteen and the information about happenings in Bantva and Kutiyana – the home of some of big business magnets of the Memon community. This information is based on "Tarikh-e-Bantva" by Mr. Aziz Kaya.

The Junagadh government conveyed its consent to accede to Pakistan as early as on 12th August, 1947. This decision was published in Dasturul Amal of Junagadh State on 15th August, 1947. The instrument of accession was however formally signed by Quaid-e-Azam on 15th

September, 1947 and accordingly the accession was notified in Gazette of Pakistan and Dastrul Amal of Junagadh State on that date. Mr. V.P. Menon, the secretary of States department of Government of India rushed to Junagadh on 17th September, 1947 and met Mr. Shah Nawaz Bhutto, the Chief Minister of Junagadh. Mr. Memon insisted that he had brought a message of Indian Government and will like to deliver the message to Nawab Saheb only. Mr. Shah Nawaz Bhutto showed his inability to arrange a meeting with Nawab Saheb as he was not feeling well. Mr. Menon expressed his displeasure over this refusal but finally conveyed the message of Indian Government to Mr. Bhutto insisting that Junagadh should withdraw its accession to Pakistan. Mr. Bhutto told Mr. Menon that the accession was now complete and according to international law only the Government of Pakistan can talk on the subject. Mr. Menon left after the threats of dire consequences.

Mr. Menon immediately went to Bombay and called a meeting of Mr. Saamar Das Gandhi a journalist of Rajkot and his accomplices who were already present in Bombay according to a pre arranged scheme. He unfolded the scheme of Arzi Hukumat (Provisional Government) to them.

On 25th September, 1947, a meeting was held in Madhav Garden of Bombay where formal announcement of the formation of Arzee Hukumat or Provisional Government of Junagarh was made. Mr. Samal Das Gandhi was nominated as President of the Provisional Government. Mr. Shamad Das Gandhi and some of his colleagues who were declared as ministers with various portfolios took oath of their respective offices. Shamad Das Gandhi was son of Mr. Lakshami Das Karamchand Gandhi brother of Mr. Mohan Das Karamchand, the father of Mahatma Gandhi. He was not a resident of Junagadh State.

Immediately after announcement of the Provisional Government, the ministers of provisional government proceeded to Rajkot and occupied Junagadh House there on 27th September, 2003. The Indian Government acted as a silent spectator.

As a part of preparation for occupation of the Junagadh the Government of India with Brigadier Guru Dayal Singh as Commanding Officer and head quarter in Rajkot formed a "Kathiawar Defence Force". Three war ships were anchored at the port of Porbandar. A squadron consisting of eight Tempest aircrafts was stationed at Rajkot and additional companies of Armed Forces were deployed at Rajkot. The Indian aircrafts started to fly over Junagadh territory at very low heights to harass the public.

On 8th November, 1947, Mr. Shah Nawaz Bhutto sent a letter to Mr. Nilam Butch, the Provincial Head of Indian Government in Rajkot requesting him to help him in restoring the law & order situation in Junagadh to stop the blood shade of the innocent citizens. Mr. Harvey Johnson took the message to Rajkot. The head of Indian Administration immediately rang up Mr. V.P. Menon in Delhi and read out the letter of Mr. Shah Nawaz Bhutto to him. Mr. Menon immediately rushed to the residence of Pandil Jawahir Lal Nehru and explained the situation. After consultation with various ministers and Mr. Valabh Bhai Patel, the home minister in particular, a formal order was immediately drafted and a notification was issued announcing the take over of Junagadh at the request of the Chief Minister of Junagadh. The notification promised a referendum in due course.

Mr. Shah Nawaz Bhutto left Junagadh for Karachi on the night of 8th November, 1947. On 9th November, 1947, the Indian Air force sent several sorties to fly at a low height on the Junagadh. Soon thereafter columns of Indian tanks, Armour Vehicles and Jeeps carrying Indian soldiers entered Junagadh State. At 6:00 P.M. on 9th November, 1947, Captain Harvey Johnson and Chief Secretary Mr. Gheewala, a civil servant of Junagadh State, formally handed over the charge of the State to the India.

The Junagadh was occupied on 9th November, 1947 but two days before this occupation, the 8th Sikh regiment reached Kutiyana on 7th November, 1947. More forces consisting of 40 trucks and 50 jeeps also joined the Sikh regiment on 8th November, 1947 to occupy Kutiyana.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born at Bantva Kathiawar, Mr. Abdur Razzaq Thaplawala has done graduation in Commerce & Law from Karachi University. He is a Fellow of Institute of Cost & Management Accountants of Pakistan. He is an active member of the Institute having served as Chairman Karachi Branch Council for 3 years & member National Council for 9 years.

Mr. Thaplawala has been associated with various community organizations since his school days. He was the Founder Secretary of United Memon Jamat of Pakistan. Mr. Thaplawala was also Founder Member of Memon Professional Forum & has been its President for the years 1989 and 1990. He has also served as President of Karachi Lions Club and Rotary Club of Karachi (Mehran).

Mr. Thaplawala has been very active in his professional field of corporate & taxation laws. He was President of Corporate & Taxation Law Society for three years and has over 100 articles published in different newspapers & professional journals.

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