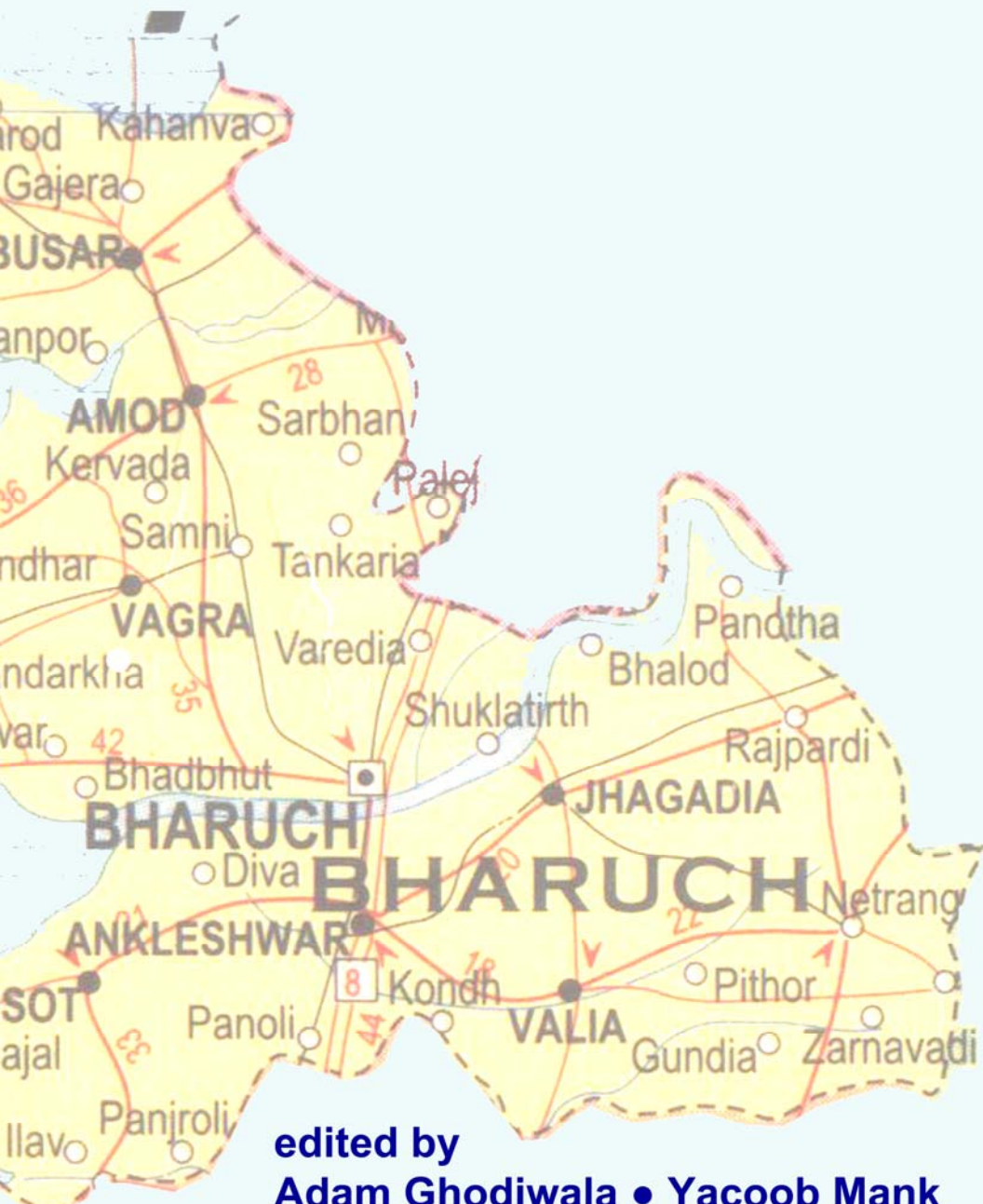


# BHARUCHI VAHORA PATEL

## A BRIEF HISTORY





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edited by  
**Adam Ghodiwala • Yacoob Mank**

Co-ordination  
**Intiaz Patel**  
**Siraj Patel “Paguthanvi”**  
**Sufi Manubari**

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Bharuchi Vahora Patels are densely populated in the region north of the river Narmada in the Bharuch and Vadodara districts of Gujarat, India. This fertile belt, suitable for growing cotton, is called "Kanam". Hence in some circles the Vahora Patels of this region are known either as Bharuchi or Kanamiya Vahora.

Bharuchi Vahora Patels are an ambitious and adventurous community. They have migrated to various parts of the world and are now settled in Africa, America, Britain, Canada, etc.

Bharuchi Vahora Patels are a very close knit community. They have their own unique identity, a distinct culture and their own customs, norms and traditions.

Unfortunately, there was no comprehensive, authentic record of the history of this vibrant and dynamic community.

This book is a modest attempt to fill that gap and give the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community and its younger generation their first book of their history.

*This book is published with the financial help of a Bharuchi Vahora Patel donor from the UK who wishes to remain anonymous and:*



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A brief history of the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community in India, Africa, Britain, Canada and the USA.

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## Muhammad Munshi



Muhammad Munshi is an eminent member of the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community. He was born on 15 May 1931 in a highly respected family in Manubar, District Bharuch, Gujarat, India.

After completing his primary school education in his village, he joined Haripura Sarvajanik High School in Surat. He passed the Secondary School Certificate Examination with Sanskrit. For his further education he moved to Mumbai and joined the VJ Textile Institute. Here he obtained a Diploma in Textiles and worked for Tata Textiles Limited for a year.

In 1954 he migrated to Kenya, East Africa and established his own flourishing business there.

Since 1974, he settled in Britain and lives with his family in Chorley, near Preston. Throughout the years, the Munshi family have dedicated their charitable activities towards the social and educational development of the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community in particular and other communities in general. The huge complexes of religious and secular education and other buildings of public use which stand in Manubar and the city of Bharuch are the result of their incessant and very generous flow of donations. This will be their legacy for the future generations, which will preserve the name and fame of this philanthropic family.

The Bharuchi Vahora Patel community will always be grateful to the Bharuchi Vahora Patel *Ratna* (Jewel) Muhammad Munshi and his family for the tremendous contribution they have made over the years for the progress and betterment of their community.

## PREFACE

**Vahora Patels** are mainly populous in the region north of the river Narmada in the Bharuch and Vadodara districts of Gujarat, India. This fertile belt, suitable for growing cotton, is called Kanam. Hence, in some circles, the Vahora Patels of this region are known either as Bharuchi or Kanamiya Vahora.

Bharuchi Vahora Patels are an ambitious and adventurous community. During the British Raj, a considerable number of them migrated from Gujarat, India and settled in various parts of Africa (Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire, Zambia, Zanzibar and Zimbabwe), where the present Bharuchi Vahora Patel population is the fifth generation since the advent of their forefathers in these countries.

Bharuchi Vahora Patels have also settled in America and Canada for over five decades.

Migration of Bharuchi Vahora Patels in Britain started in late 1950 and the present young generation is the fourth generation of early settlers living in various towns and cities across Britain.

Bharuchi Vahora Patels have also settled in Dubai, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia either for employment or business. In addition, Australia, Denmark, France, Mauritius, New Zealand, and Portugal also have small populations of Bharuchi Vahora Patels living there.

Bharuchi Vahora Patels are a very close knit community. They have preserved their unique identity through centuries. They have a distinct culture which is based on Islam. They also have their own customs, norms and traditions.

Unfortunately there is no comprehensive, authentic book or record of the history of this vibrant dynamic community.

There are, however, some documents containing useful information. One such document is the “Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency - Surat and Broach” published in 1877 and the another document is the “Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency - Gujarat Population: Musalman and Parsi” published in 1899. These documents give detailed information about the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community as recorded by British officials in the late nineteenth century during the British Raj.

In 1954, Ibrahim Dadabhai “Bekar”, a well-known writer, poet and editor of a Gujarati magazine called “Patel Mitra” (later on renamed “Insaan”), published the “Patel Directory” with sketches of some of the outstanding members of the Vahora community of his time.

In 1984, Deepak Bardoliar (Musaji Isabji Hafizji) published a brief history of Sunni Vahoras. This is a valuable source of information about Bharuchi Vahora Patels. The second enlarged edition of this book was published in 2011.

In 1999, Deepak Bardoliar also published “Vahora *Vibhutio*” (Dignitaries), which records the achievements of Bharuchi Vahora Patels in various fields.

In addition to this, there are many elderly people in their 70s and 80s in the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community who are a rich source of oral history. But unfortunately this had not been recorded by anyone, until now.



In 2010, **Yakub Patel Sarodi** (advocate) who resides in London felt the need for a history of Bharuchi Vahora Patels. He talked to his friend **Ismail Kaduji**, originally from Nabipur, about the project who invited us (editors and co-editors of this book) to his residence in Salford, near Manchester, for further discussions.

The meeting which lasted for an hour and a half arrived at the following conclusions:

1. It is crucially important to write a well-researched, authentic history of the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community. Such a book will provide information regarding our traits and make the future generations aware of our roots.
2. An awareness of our past, present and future will create a sense of continuity, strengthen the bond between generations, and preserve our identity as Bharuchi Vahora Patels.
3. The Bharuchi Vahora Patels residing in foreign lands (Diaspora) will feel close to the mainstream Vahora community back home in India. At present Bharuchi Vahora Patels are a fairly close knit community. A historical sense will help keep the social structure intact and prevent alienation and disintegration.
4. This book will help to preserve the value-system, traditions, norms and customs of the community. These values will be disseminated and help with the socialization of our children.
5. This book will contain information regarding our present educational, economic and political position. We will know where we stand, what we

have achieved in these fields and where we lag behind.

6. Through a survey, this book will identify the problems of the community and discuss the probable causes. This will help to resolve the problems. The information can also be used to prepare an action plan for uplifting the community.

At the end of the meeting, we agreed to undertake the very difficult and time consuming task of gathering and compiling the information from various sources and present it in the form of a book to the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community in India and also to the large number of Bharuchi Vahora Patels settled in various countries all over the world.

When we decided to go ahead with the project, we were aware of the Herculean nature of the task. We knew that we would need plenty of source material to write an ambitious book like the history of Bharuchi Vahora Patels. Such material and references may not be easily available in Britain and to obtain it from India may not be easy either.

Despite these apprehensions, we felt that this project was very crucial to the welfare of our community and must be implemented. We decided to make all possible efforts to collect the information and present it in the form of an authentic document covering the past, present and future of the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community.

This book does not claim to be a fully comprehensive history of Bharuchi Vahora Patels. Although we have taken the best possible care, to some readers the information compiled in the book may seem to be

incomplete or in some respects it may seem to be inaccurate. Nonetheless, it is a modest effort to give the Bharuchi Vahora community, including the younger generation, their first book of their history.

We would appreciate it if the readers draw our attention to any gaps or inaccuracies or incomplete information in the book. Your suggestions and any additional information provided by you will enrich the second edition of the book in future. This is only the beginning of the documentation regarding the Bharuchi Vahora Patels. This may inspire others to collect more detailed information and come out with a more comprehensive history of our community.

A momentous task such as this could not have been accomplished single-handedly. We have received help and support from a number of people in the compilation of this book.

From start to finish, **Kamal Patel**, “**Kadam Tankarvi**” took great interest in this project, made valuable suggestions and edited the chapter on Bharuchi Vahora Patels in Preston.

**Ismail Khunawala** of London supplied source materials and diligently prepared the chapter on Bharuchi Vahora Patels in London.

**Yusuf Sidat** from Leicester took great pain in collecting information regarding the Bharuchi Vahora community living in Leicester. **Adam Davi and Iqbal Dhoriwala** provided the information for compiling the chapter on Dewsbury, **Babar Bambusari** on Blackburn, **Azmat Khandhiya** on Birmingham, **Babu Ghodiwala** on Lancaster and **Ayub Nabipurwala** on Manchester.

**Ali Adam Bhim** provided the information on the Bharuchi Vahora community in the USA.

**Ayyub Miyanji** prepared the chapter on the Bharuchi Vahora Patels in Canada.

**Aziz Tankarvi**, a renowned writer and journalist, collected information regarding the mainstream Bharuchi Vahora Patel community in Gujarat, India and edited the chapter that includes the problems facing the community today and how they could be resolved.

Many elders in the community have provided the details for this book either through face-to-face interviews or by talking to us on the telephone. Some young people spared their time to complete a questionnaire prepared by us on the perceived problems of our community.

We sincerely thank each and every one who has helped in gathering or providing the information and supporting the project.

May Allah make this book a useful source of information and inspiration for the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community and their present and future generations living in all the four corners of the world.

## BHARUCHI VAHORA PATELS : ORIGIN

The Vahora community consists of eighteen sub-castes. Among the Sunni Vahoras are Bharuchi or Kanamiya Patel, Charotari, Chopada, Ghanchi, Kadival, Kathoria, Maniar, Patani, Suhravardi, Surti and Visnagari. Among the Shia Vahoras are Agakhani, Aliya, Daudi, Ismaili, Lotiya and Sulemani.

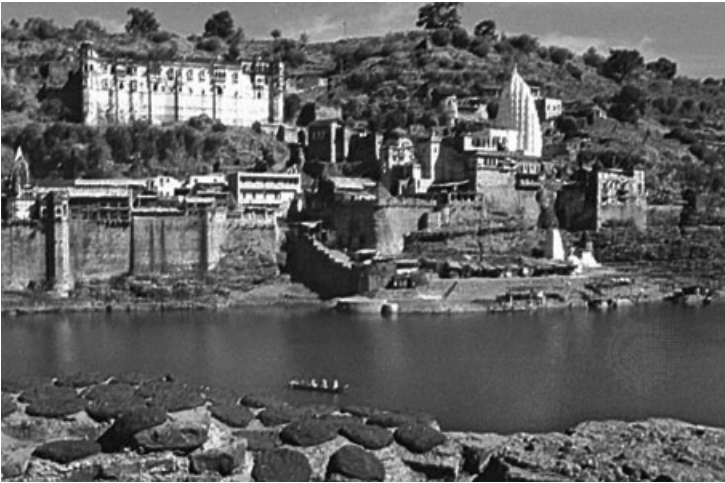
Bharuchi or Kanamiya Vahoras are known as Vahora Patel. Their main population is in the region north of the river Narmada in Gujarat, India. The geographical area between the Bharuch and Vadodara districts has agricultural land with fertile black soil known as Kanam, which is suitable for growing cotton.

Historical sources indicate that Vahoras have not originated from a single race. Three different branches have amalgamated to form the Vahora community.

1. Most researchers agree that Bharuchi Vahora Patels have a foreign element in them. There was a tribe called Bohara near Madina in Saudi Arabia. They were traders who sailed to Gujarat, India right from the first century AH (seventh century CE). The word Bahra means people of the coastal area. Vahora may be a corrupt form of Bahra. Some Arab tradesmen married Gujarati women and settled in Gujarat. Their progeny came to be known as Vahora.

According to a document published by the Bombay Geographic Society, some Vahoras have originated from the Israeel community of Arabia. Some of them claim to be the descendants of the Prophet Ismail (peace be upon him).

During the reign of Caliph Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), Hakam ibn Abi Aasi (may Allah be pleased with him) marched towards Bharuch. In Arabic books of that period, Bharuch is referred to as Baroh and Baros. These marching troops had pitched their tents at Tankari *Bandar* (Port) near Bharuch and established an Arab colony by conquering the areas around the **river Narmada**.



Abul Fazal has recorded that the Arabs reached Chanchvel via Gandhar and Bharuch.

During the Umavi period (Umayyad Dynasty), the supporters of Ahle-Bayt – the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) – migrated to Gujarat to escape persecution. These people settled in Bhadbhoot, Bharuch and Gandhar.

In 250 AH (870 CE) Suleman Basri visited India. In his travelogue, he has recorded the presence of Arab traders in Gandhar and Khambhat.

2. The second branch consists of the Sunni Vahoras converted from the Shia sect. Around 1100 CE, Shia preachers came to Gujarat attracted by the liberal policy of the Hindu rulers of Anhilvad (Patan). As a result of their propagation, many people embraced the Shia faith.

During the reign of Sultan Firozshah Taghlakh (1351-1388 CE), his commander Amir Zafarkhan conquered Gujarat in 1371 CE. He was accompanied by Sunni preachers whose influence encouraged some Shias to convert to the Sunni sect.

In 1391, Muzaffarkhan the 1<sup>st</sup> came from Delhi to Patan as the vicegerent of Gujarat. There were Sunni preachers in his entourage as well. Under the influence of these preachers, many Shia Vahoras became Sunni.

Mulla Jaafar Patani, who was born in a Shia family in the earlier part of the fifteenth century, was a learned man well-versed in Arabic and Persian. He suffered an injustice from Vali-e-Hind and Shia leaders. Therefore, he gave up his Shia faith and adopted the Sunni sect. A large number of people followed him and also became Sunni. His companions came to Bharuch and converted Shia Vahoras to the Sunni sect. According to Deepak Bardoliar, the religious and social structure of the Sunni Vahora community were formed during the times of Mulla Jaafar.

As Shia and Sunni Vahoras originated from the same race, they maintained inter-marriages. But in

1535, Sayyed Zafar Shirazi put an end to this custom.

3. The third branch consists of the Vahoras converted from Hinduism. Vahoras are linked with the Hindus of Maarwar, Rajputana and Uttar Pradesh. According to a note in Raasmala, during the reign of Sultan Ahmedshah (1420 CE), many Banias and Brahmins embraced Islam. They were called Vahora. Even today the Vahora surname is common among the Hindu Bania and Brahmin communities. The Rajputs, who embraced Islam during this period, came to be known as Mol-e-Salam or Malek. The Hindu converts from the non-martial race were also called Vahora.

In 1818 CE, Captain Owens (official of the British Raj stationed in India) conducted the first survey of the Bharuch district. According to the information obtained by him from the Vahoras of Tankaria, it is understood that some Maarvaris were captured during a battle and enslaved by a Hindu King. In 1618 CE, Emperor Jahangir freed them from their bondage. Impressed by the generosity of a Muslim Emperor and Islam's teaching about slavery, they willingly converted themselves to Islam. These freed and newly converted Muslim Maarvaris were settled on the waste lands of Gujarat.

The Vahoras of Sarod converted themselves willingly during the reign of Mehmood Begada. They are the descendants of a Brahmin called Manchha-ram from Morbi. Yakub Patel of Sarod who lives in London has a copy of the genealogical tree of his family. It indicates that the original name of Sarod was *Sahil-e-Rud* meaning village on the



river bank. The first convert was a Naagar Brahmin named Bhusa-ram from Mooli.

In 1479, Mahmud Begada conquered Junagadh. The vicegerent Manchha-ram embraced Islam. His son was married to a girl named Roopa who was the daughter of a Kshatriya. They had a son named Amiji. Amiji's progeny subsists even today.

Some Vahoras of Jambusar and Kavi were converted from the Ravalia, the Vahoras of Bhadkodra from the Baniya, those of Devla from the Rajput and the Vahoras of Tankari Bandar from the Bhatia or Lohana communities.

According to Ibrahim Dadabhai "Bekar", the famous humourist poet and editor of the "Patel Directory", some Vahoras are converts from the Chamaar, Dhed, Khatri and Modh Ghanchi communities.

Baheramji Malbari notes: "Vahoras were originally Hindus" so they observe certain Hindu beliefs and customs. Their racial branches are in Maarvar, Rajputanaa and Uttar Pradesh and are known as Hindu Bohra.

Referring to the impact of the Hindu caste system, Fazal Lutfullah writes in his letter dated 14 September 1878, "those who claim to have converted from the upper caste Hindus do not give their daughters in marriage to the Vahoras converted from the lower caste Hindus."

It is true that some Banias and Brahmins embraced Islam during the reign of Ahmedshah the 1<sup>st</sup>. However, Vahoras existed before that

during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Taghlakh. When a famous traveller Ibn-e-Batuta reached Gandhar, he was received by the sons of a Vahora chieftain.

According to Kadam Tankarvi, a founder member of the Gujarati Writers' Guild UK (1973), the regions around Bharuch were known as Laati in the olden days. Thus Vahoras residing there were called Laati Vahora. Even today a person living in pomp and luxury is called Laati *Sahib* (Sir). The Laati Vahoras are linked with the Kanbi Patels of the Charotar region of Gujarat. Their ancestors willingly embraced Islam and settled in *poni baso gaam* – the term used for the equivalent of one hundred and seventy five villages of the Kanam region. Every Bharuchi Sunni Muslim family has the Patel surname. Having said that, it should be noted that some Bharuchi Sunni Muslim families have other surnames as well, indicating either occupations (Munshi, Talati, Ughratdar) or residence (Ghantiwala, Padarwala, Vadiwala).

Patel is the most common surname among Bharuchi Vahoras. About the origin of this surname, it is said that the Solanki king gave uncultivated land in the Petlad Taluka. This land was divided into villages and for each village a head was appointed whose job was to keep all records. Each village gave a portion of their crop to the king, as a form of tax. The book in which this tax was recorded was called the *pat*, and the act of writing it down was known as *likh*; hence the head of the village was addressed as *Pat-Likh* and the people of the villages became known as Patlikhs. Over time, changes in the vernacular produced modern variations such as Patel, Patidar and Patil. Other common surnames among Hindus and Bharuchi Vahora Patels are Amin, Bhuta, Dalal, Desai, Gati, Karbhari, Meja, etc.

Apart from surnames, the dialects used by Bharuchi and Charotari Patels have similarities too. They say *poni* for *paani* (water) and *kon* for *kaan* (ear). They use the vowel “o” in place of “aa”. Hence Gandhi is pronounced as Ghondhi.

Among the Patels of Charotar, matrimonies are confined to clusters of villages such as *chha gaam* (six villages) or *satyavis gaam* (twenty seven villages).

Similarly the Bharuchi Vahora Patels kept matrimonies restricted to one hundred and seventy five villages. Like the Patels of Charotar, the Bharuchi Vahora Patels are adventurous and willing and ready to take a risk. Even today, *chaalti vahorvi* (to pick up a quarrel or invite trouble) is a common phrase among the Bharuchi Vahora Patels. Perhaps the Vahora identity has resulted from this trait.

The etymological root and literal meaning of the word Vahora also indicate their ancestry. The word *Bohra* is derived from the Arabic word *Barahir* used for commercial transactions and trade. In Arabic *Behr* means a fleet of camels, which indicate a trading caravan. Another interpretation is that the root word is *Bahurah*, which means multiple paths, suggesting a community made of various races. The Persian word *Behrah* means true path, which suggests a community on the right religious path. The Persian word *Behraj* is used for a wise businessman, which may have been taken from the word Vahora.

The words Vahora and *Vepari* (trader) might have been derived from the Hindi word *Byohari*. Both Hindu and Muslim traders came to be known as Vahora.

According to the book *Taarikh-e-Gujarat* (History of Gujarat), *Bayasara* means the guards of a ship. This word was used to describe the people who came to India as the guards of a cargo vessel and later settled there. With the lapse of time, *Bayasara* became Bahora and then Vahora.

It is recorded in the book *Safarnaam-e-Gujarat* (1887), that “the origin of the Vahora community is in Gujarat.” They are traders and craftsmen. The Hindi word for trade is *Vyavahar*. Many Vahoras have business links with Arabia through the sea route.

According to the “Patel Directory” (1954), the word Vahora is derived from *Vahorvu*, meaning transaction.

Bruhad Gujarati Kosh (Dictionary) gives the Sanskrit word *Vyavaharak* as the root of Vahora. It became *Vivahara* in the Prakrit language and *Vuhura* in old Gujarati. The meaning is, a Sunni Muslim Vahora community of traders.

The common surnames among Hindus and Muslims also give a clue to the origin of Vahora. Bhagvad Gowmandal lists Vahora - Vahora - Vora as surnames common among Bania, Kanbi, Nagar Brahmin and Muslim lenders. The surname Bhad is also found among the Bharuchi Vahora. According to the information provided by Umar Farooq Chamad of Tankaria, two brothers Bhima Bhad and Koda Bhad migrated from Dholaka-Dhandhuka to settle in Bharuch. Today’s Bhad families are their descendants. The Desai families of Dhandhuka, who were originally Rajputs, embraced Islam during the reign of Emperor Jahangir. They are also known as Vahora.

## PRE-INDEPENDENCE ERA

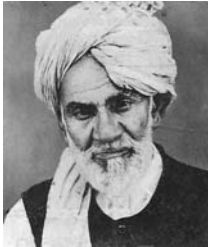
**Social structure:**

In 1877, the Bombay Provincial Government (during the British Raj) published the “Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency: Surat and Broach”. And again in 1899, the Provincial Government carried out another survey and published the “Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency Gujarat Population: Musalmaan and Parsi”. These two documents contain detailed and very useful information about the Bharuchi Vahora Patel Society during the late nineteenth century.

The gist of the relevant information, as recorded in these Gazetteers, is that many villages of Bharuch district have a large Vahora population. In appearance, bodily structure and life-style they resemble Hindu farmers. They are competent and hard-working. They are pleasant and sociable by nature. Their hospitality is well known. Their women are active, industrious, eloquent and good looking. Apart from doing embroidery and weaving, Bharuchi Vahora Patel Women help their men-folk in farming as well. And they have a dominant role in household affairs.

Bharuchi Vahora Patels have their own exclusive social structure. They do not indulge in inter-marriages with Surti Sunni Vahoras but do maintain all other relations with them. In the villages of Bharuch district, heads of the village councils are Bharuchi Vahora Patels. Hindu farmers respect them very much. If ever their bullock carts confront each other in a narrow track, the Hindu farmer generally gives way and lets the Bharuchi Vahora Patel pass first.

It is further mentioned in the Gazetteer that Vahora men are hot tempered, fanatic and independent-minded. Because of their violent nature, the non-Muslims of Broach (Bharuch) call them *Soldier Lok* (Army People). Citing an example, the Gazetteer notes that on 15 May 1875, two hundred Vahoras from the surrounding villages marched on to Broach to teach a lesson to a Parsi who had insulted their Prophet (peace be upon him) and hurt their religious feelings. This Parsi met his fate at the hands of the angry mob. They are courageous, hospitable and religious minded people. Men shave their heads, keep beards and wear *salwar* (loose trousers) and shirt.



Some men wear a **head dress** (a long piece of cloth twisted and wound round the head in circles), put on a turban or red or black cap.

The Gazetteer gives us a good insight of a well-to-do Vahora with an annual income of 1,000 rupees (a very big amount in the nineteenth century). It states that a Vahora with such a good income keeps two turbans worth 30 rupees each, eight cotton jackets worth 12 *anaas* ( $\frac{3}{4}$  of a rupee) each, eight waist coats worth 1½ rupees each, eight trousers worth 1 rupee each and four *khes* (shoulder cloths) worth 2½ rupees each. In addition to such a huge wardrobe, a Bharuchi Vahora Patel with an annual income of such magnitude would also have in his collection a gold embroidered turban worth 100 rupees and a velvet jacket worth 70 rupees and shoes worth 3 rupees to wear on special occasions. Some Bharuchi Vahora Patels put on a *pachhedi* (an unstitched upper cloth) and *kachhio* (under wear). If they

go to the court or Government offices, they put on a shirt with buttons made of gold and a *shervaani* (long coat).

Wives of Bharuchi Vahora Patel farmers wear a *sari* (a loose cloth of approximately three to five meters long wrapped around the whole body); *cholee* (blouse) and *chaniyo* or *ghaghara* (long skirt). They wear *sapaat* (foot slippers). They wear gold ornaments such as a *damani* (head chain), *tilak* (dot) on their forehead, *nathly* (nose ring), rings on their fingers, ear rings (made of silver and worn by piercing their ears), gold coated necklace type ornaments popularly known as *kanthee*, *katesari* (waistband), *momno* (locket made of glass beads), *kambbi* (silver leg bangles) and *sankla* (anklets). Their ornaments are beautifully designed, thick and heavy in weight.

The Bharuchi Vahora Patels' pronunciation of the Gujarati language and accent are different from those of the Daudi Vahora. They distort and pronounce Muslim names such as Ibrahim as Abhlo, Ismail as Asmaal, Vali as Valyo, Yusuf as Ispo, Aamena as Amlī, Ayesha as Aahli and Fatema as Fatli.

*Khichadi* (boiled rice mixed with lentils) and *kadhee* (curry soup made from yogurt) is their staple diet. Apart from this, they consume a variety of other food such as fish curry, fried fish, meat curry, vegetable curry, plain rice or pilau rice and coarse bread made from jawaar flour, millet or wheat flour. According to the Gazetteer, alcoholic drinks were non-existent among Bharuchi Vahora Patels, although a few were habituated to smoke *ganjo* (opium). However, if they lost their senses and misbehaved after consuming opium, the community would look at them with disrespect and hate them. Their social structure is rigid and they hardly ever marry outside their own caste.

Bharuchi Vahora Patels still follow some Hindu customs. Like Hindus, their women mourn the dead by crying and beating the chest. And at the beginning of a wedding ceremony, just three days before the wedding, they distribute boiled *laang* (lentils) and *vaal* (brown chickpeas) in the name of Vaanudev, a Hindu wedding custom that is also known as the *vono* ceremony. At night, village women gather at the houses of both the bride and the bridegroom and sing wedding songs and apply turmeric paste on their face, hands and feet. This ceremony is known as *peethi*, which nowadays is also known as *mahendi* (henna) among the Bharuchi Vahora Patels.

The Gazetteer, in its survey, notes that like Hindus, Bharuchi Vahora Patels also arrange community dinners on various occasions such as weddings, deaths or when a woman conceives. Because printing presses did not exist in the villages, Bharuchi Vahora Patels had their own interesting method of extending invitations. They would prepare a list of invitees and would give that list to the village barber who would go round the community and verbally invite those who were on the list. Wedding meals would be prepared mostly in the open air and it is customary for men to eat first and the women afterwards. The village barber was considered to be a very important person for such occasions and, for his services, he would be honoured in kind as well as in cash by the party concerned. This system of extending invitations is still in use in the villages.

On the wedding day, the groom along with relatives and invited guests goes to the bride's residence in the form of a procession led by a music band including drums and approximately four to five feet long trumpets known as *dhaturu*. In the procession, women would walk



behind the men folk and sing wedding songs. When the procession reaches the bride's residence, ladies from both sides come face to face with each other and start teasing one another by singing humorous and sarcastic wedding songs. Sometimes they overdo it, which results in swearing and bitter arguments. But it's all intended to be fun – an innocent customary way of enjoying wedding celebrations, especially by women.

Here are some typical wedding songs:

*Taara monmaa oyraa mug  
Balaadaa bolto kem nathee*

These couplets are specifically sung by the women from the bride's side to tease the groom when he arrives in a procession at the bride's residence. Referring to the groom as a tomcat, the women sing:

*Is your mouth full of mung beans?  
You tomcat, why don't you utter a single word?  
(Or are you scared of your soon-to-be wife?  
Ha..Ha..Ha..).*

In retaliation, the women who are in the procession from the groom's side would retort by singing:

*Taaraa ghar maa nathee karso  
Tyaare shinne teyro navso  
Maaraa navlaa vevaay  
Tane doodh ne saker paun*

*When you do not have even a small water jug in  
your house to serve water;  
Then why did you invite the groom to your place?  
Well, we do understand your situation;*

*Don't worry, since we have established a new relationship, in place of water we will offer you milkshake to quench your thirst.*

These wedding songs are sung by both parties to tease one another as a form of clean fun and not in an offensive or derogatory way. They give ample opportunity, especially to womenfolk, to express their joy and fun in the company of other women.

At the *peethi* ceremony, they sing:

*Musabhai ni laakadiyo  
Ne Mariyam vouv naa bayda  
Laakadiyo tau bhaagi geyo  
Ne bevad vayraa bayda  
Jovo re loko vonaa naa tamaashaa*

In a joyous teasing mood, women sing:

*Musabhai (the groom) has got hold of a stick and, to test the strength of it, he lashes it onto the back of Mariyam (his bride).  
What a pity! Although unintentional, Mariyam has got seriously injured and the stick has broken into pieces.  
O people! Come and see the farce of peethi.*

### **Agriculture:**

The Gazetteer gives a lot of information in respect of agriculture and its allied trades. It states that the Bharuchi Vahora Patel farmers grow *chanaa* (chickpeas), cotton, groundnuts, jawaar, lentils, rice and sesame seeds. In addition to farming, they are actively involved in rural trading and marketing. The Government of the East India Company has created Cotton Experimental Farms in the Bharuch District to improve

the quality of cotton. The chief of the project was James Landen. In 1855 he set up a ginning and spinning mill in Bharuch, which was the first cotton mill of its kind in India. The machinery for this mill was manufactured in Blackburn, UK, imported through the Manchester Cotton Exchange and shipped to India from its nearest port Liverpool.

The 1899 Gazetteer points out: “the Vahora cotton growers sell their cotton to Landen’s mill through its agents, where the cotton goes through the ginning and spinning process.” Apart from the senior management, the rest of the mill workers are mostly ordinary, poor, uneducated Indians living in Bharuch and its surrounding area.

In view of the expansion of the cotton sector in Bharuch, a Parsi named Jamshedji Vakharia took the opportunity to act as an agent to buy cotton from the farmers and sell it to Landen’s mill. As it became a flourishing business, he established his own small ginning factories in Bharuch and Palej. The Bharuch complex became known as Jamshedji Vakharia Jeen. Palej became the centre of cotton trade, as it was in the midst of a number of villages growing cotton. The ginning factory in Palej was owned by Jamshedji’s son, Jal Sheth Jamshedji Vakharia, but it was managed by Bharuchi Vahora Patels.

Bharuchi Vahora Patels are basically farmers but, because of their courageous nature, they are in the police force and, due to their skills, some of them have their own businesses.

### **Education:**

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Bharuchi Vahora Patels started sending their children to schools.

The first graduate amongst the Bharuchi Vahora Patels was Khan Bahadur Vali Bux Patel, from Sitpon, who graduated in the year 1900. After obtaining his degree, he joined the Revenue Department.

In 1916, Ali Patel of Kantharia acquired his LLB degree and started a legal practice in Bharuch. Because of his legal practice, he became known as *Ali Vakil* (Lawyer) among the community. In 1923, he was elected as a member of the Bombay Legislative Assembly. It was he who was the founder of Anjuman-e-Islam and the first Bharuchi Vahora Patel to establish a school and a library in Bharuch.

Musaji Isakji Patel, another Vahora dignitary, was a High Court Judge in Junagadh, Saurashtra. Later on he was appointed as the Deputy Charity Commissioner in Ahmedabad.

Muhammad Vali Janab, from Tankaria, was Secretary to the Chief Minister of Junagadh, Saurashtra.

Ali Dadabhai Patel, also from Tankaria, qualified in 1912 as the first physician amongst the Bharuchi Vahora community. He was a civil surgeon in Bharuch and a member of the Bombay Province Medical Council. After retirement, he opened his own nursing home in Bharuch.

### **Politics:**

Taking into consideration the agitation and rebellion in 1857, by the Hindus and Muslims of India acting jointly against the British Raj, and the subsequent situations arising in India, Lord Ripon suggested to Queen Victoria's Government in Britain to show some flexibility to calm the uprising by introducing some sort of Home Rule. The Queen's Government, taking into

consideration the suggestion, passed the Local Government Home Rule Act in 1884, thereby allowing the Indians to participate in politics. Taking advantage of this reform, many Bharuchi Vahora Patels took part in elections and entered the District Local Boards and Municipalities as elected members.

The active participation of Bharuchi Vahora Patels in the political arena accelerated with the lapse of time during the British Raj and, as has been mentioned earlier, Khan Bahadur Ali Patel, from Kantharia, was elected to the Bombay Legislative Assembly in 1923.

In 1932 Vali Bux Patel of Sitpon became an MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly).

Ahmed Adam Patel of Sarod served as an MLA from 1946 to 1951.

Muhammad Ibrahim Makkan of Kolavna and Musa Hasan Saleh of Vora-Samni were awarded the title of *Khan Sahib* (Leader Sir) by the British Government.



According to the information provided by Dawood Azad, from the Bharuch District, presently living in London, **Musa Hasan Khan Sahib** was born in 1849. He had completed only the first year of primary education, but Allah had bestowed him with intelligence, wisdom and common sense.

This earned him a very respectful status in the community and beyond. In recognition of his services, the then British Governor, Sir Lawrence Roger Lumley, personally came to Vora-Samni and honoured him with a gold medal and the title of *Khan Sahib*. During his long

life of 108 years, he was a witness to the two major events in the history of India, namely the uprising against the British Rule in 1857 and the independence of India in 1947.

Another personality from among the Bharuchi Vahora Patels, Dr Ali Patel from Tankaria, was elected to the Bombay Legislative Assembly uncontested. He was also the President of the Bharuch District Muslim League, which drew its committee members from among the cross section of the Muslim community. The League's meetings were held on the first floor of Bismillah Hotel in Katopor Bazaar, Bharuch.

Many other Bharuchi Vahora Patels were also elected as members of the District Local Board. These include Ismail Akuji Patel of Sarod, Muhammad Master Ghodiwala of Tankaria, Vali Saleh of Zanghar, Suleman Amiji of Nabipur and Vali Ahmed Suleman Member of Paguthan who was also the elected member of Bharuch Borough Municipality and sub-editor of Bharuch *Samachar* (News) – the press and the newspaper was owned by a Parsi family of Bharuch.

Bharuchi Vahora Patels responded positively to the call for freeing the country from the British Raj and joined countless Indians who took an active part in the freedom movement of India. Within the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community, there were a number of supporters of Gandhiji. Freedom fighters among the Bharuchi Vahora Patels were Mahatma Adam Kabir, Musa Isa Captain, Dr Ali Ghodiwala, Adam Ismail Mustufabadi and Ibrahim Nayak who were all from Tankaria. Rafik Munshi of Kavi and Musa Hasan of Vora Samni also took part in the freedom movement. As the British Government who were ruling over India did not approve of the freedom movement, they started detaining and putting a large

number of people in jails throughout India. Mahatma Kabir and Musa Isa Captain of Tankaria were sent to Nagpur Jail. After India became independent on 15 August 1947, they were entitled to Freedom Fighters' Pension. However, these patriotic Bharuchi Vahora Patels did not even apply to receive this pension.

The history of the independence of India (1857 to 1947) bears ample evidence that Muslims throughout India in general and the Bharuchi Vahora Patels in particular were part and parcel of the freedom movement along with all the other communities including Bengalis, Hindus, Sikhs etc. These brave freedom fighters are remembered every year in India on Independence Day.

### **Literature:**

The Bharuchi Vahora Patel's contribution to Gujarati literature is very significant. 250 years ago, **Abhram Bhagat**, a Bharuchi Vahora Patel of Pariej composed devotional songs that are sung even today. He was a disciple of Pir Qayamuddin of Ekalbara and was the one chosen by the Pir for enlightenment.

Abhram Bhagat, through his *bhajans* (devotional songs), has expressed the oneness of Allah and the love for the Prophet (peace be upon him). This is what he has to say about idol worshipping:

*PutloN ne pooje re Saheb nahiN male re ji,  
Teno tau nyaaro chhe vaLee desh.*

*You will not find God by worshiping idols, my friend,  
His existence is indeed unique.*

*Pani maa naakho re pathraa tau Doobshe re ji,  
Tene pooje thi tu kem re taresh.*

*If you throw stones in water, they will sink, my friend,  
How will you be able to swim the ocean of life by  
worshipping them.*



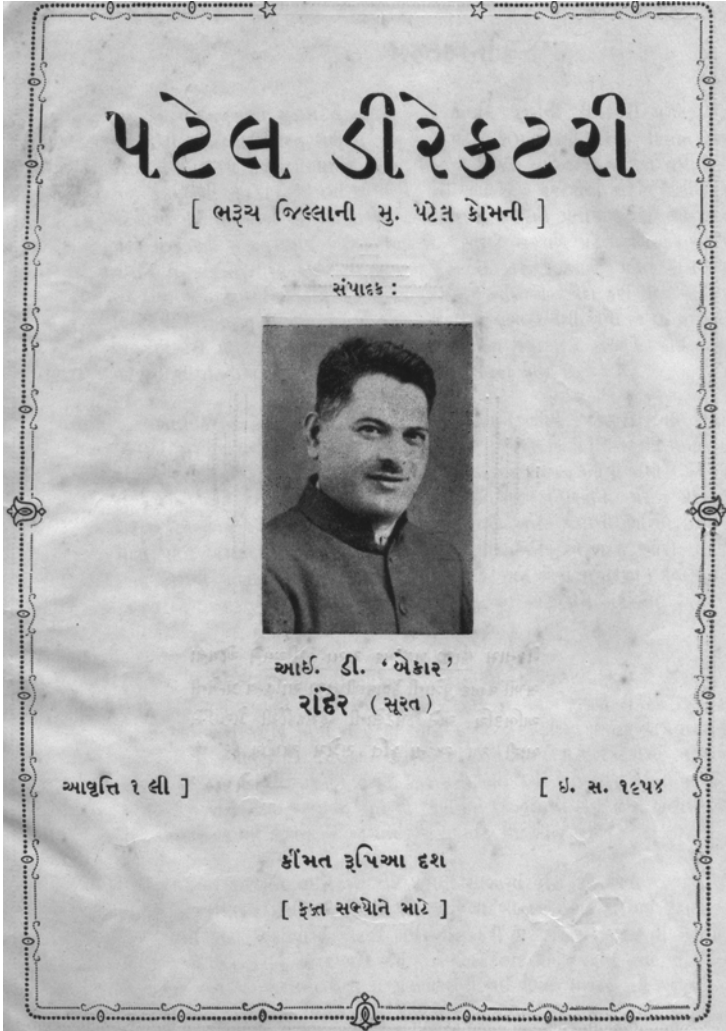
Abhram Bhagat was an illiterate farmer and, in his bhajans, he beautifully expresses his spiritual experiences in terminology which he derives from his knowledge as a farmer.

Late Ibrahim Dadabhai “**Bekar**”, a Bharuchi Vahora Patel of Khanpur, was a renowned humourist and satirical writer, occupying a prominent place in Gujarati literature. In 1932, he founded Muslim *Sahitya Mandal* (Literary Circle). Through *mushairas* (poetry recitals) he played a leading role in popularising the *ghazal* and *hazal* form of poetry in the Gujarati language.

He was not only a poet, but a good writer as well. He edited and published a monthly magazine called “Patel Mitra”, which was later re-named “Insaan”. The magazine served as a forum for the Bharuchi Vahora



Patel community. In 1954, he compiled and published the “**Patel Directory**” which contains some useful information about prominent Bharuchi Vahora Patels of his time settled in various parts of the world.



There were other contemporary poets and writers of “Bekar” in various villages of the Bharuch district. Well known among them were Mast Habib Sarodi and Umarji

E Sarodi; Adam Ismail Mustufabadi, “Majnoo”, Isa Delawala, “Bedar” Tankarvi, Ismail Mura-Munshi, “Patil” Tankarvi, Ibrahim Adam “Kabir” Tankarvi, Ahmed Agar “Divya” Tankarvi, Vali Patel and Yusuf Ashraf of Vahaalu, “Gumnaam” of Jambusar and Vali Ahmed Member of Paguthan. Besides these, Adam and Ghafeel were also known during this period.

In addition to the above, another notable writer and reformist of that period was the late Yusuf Munshi Kaviwala. He was the editor of a monthly magazine called Paigaam and through this publication he tirelessly endeavoured to bring about the reforms much needed within the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community.

In one of his articles “Are we *mo'meen* (believers) or *munafiq* (hypocrites)”, he writes about Bharuchi Vahora Patels and their shameless use of four letter words even in their normal day to day conversations:

*“Bharuchi Vahora Patels reveal their identity as soon as they open their mouth – you don’t need to ask them. This is due to the fact that we, the Bharuchi Vahora Patels, not only start our normal conversation with swear words, but continue the talk or carry on gossiping in the same manner thoughtlessly using four letter words in each and every sentence we speak. Consequently, there are more swearing words than actual content in our normal conversation.*

*Two Bharuchi Vahora Patels talking to each other, raising their voice and shamelessly using swear words, gives an onlooker the impression that here are two people about to come to blows. Because of such bad habits, we the Bharuchi Vahora Patels are losing our credibility and reputation and are perceived by other communities as indecent people, not worth mingling*

*with. This frequently puts us into troubles of all sorts and we stand to lose a lot because of such ill manners. Regrettably we, as a Bharuchi Vahora Patel community, have never tried to eliminate our munafiqin (hypocritical) habits / attitude.*

*Foul language has become part of our culture to such an extent that people don't hesitate to use indecent dirty words even in the presence of their mothers, sisters and daughters. This carries on in their homes, at public events and functions, such as weddings and meetings, and no one feels ashamed or embarrassed about it. Abusive language, coupled with four letter words, has become a trademark of the Bharuchi Vahora Patels."*

It should be noted, however, that in the last few years the situation appears to have improved and people are becoming more aware and sensible. Slowly, but surely, they are getting rid of their bad habits, with the result that, now, Bharuchi Vahora Patels do hesitate to use bad language in front of others in public places. In spite of such improvement, it is still observed in villages that if two individuals are having an argument or a fight, unimaginable swear words are used by both parties, as if it's raining filth from their dirty mouths.

Finally, it is hoped and also desired that honourable teachers and religious scholars continue to do all they can, through their guidance and lectures, to rectify the bad habits prevalent in the community.

## BHARUCHI VAHORA PATELS: PRESENT CONDITION

*Aziz Tankarvi - India*

### **Population:**

The population of Bharuchi Vahora Patels in the Kanam region is about one million. Bharuch, Jambusar, Amod, Vagra and Karjan towns have a sizable Vahora population.

The following villages of the region predominantly have a very large Bharuchi Vahora Patel population: Aachhod, AmbheTaa, Argama, Asuria, Bambusar, Bhadkodra, BheNsly, Bholav, ChaNchvel, Dahegam, Dayadara, Detrol, Devla, Divi, Eksaal, Ghodi, Haldarva, HiNgalla, HiNglot, Ikher, Islampur, Jolva, Kaasad, Kahan, Kamboli, Kantharia, Kargat, Karmad, Kavi, Khanpur, Khojbal, KhoThi VaNtarsa, Kiya, Kolavana, Luvara, Maatar, Machhasara, Mahudhla, MaNch, Mangrol, MaNkan, Manubar, Mesraad, Muler, Nabipur, Nandekar, NaveTha, Ochhan, Paguthan, Palej, Pariej, Parkhet, Pipalyaa, Rahadpor, Roza-Tankaria, Salaadra, SaNpa, SaNsrod, Sarod, Segva, Sherpura, Sitpon, Sudi-Samni, Sutrel, Tankaria, Tankari-Bandar, Thaam, Tralsa-KoThi, Umaraj, Uprali, Vadva, Vahalu, Valan, VaNtarsa, Varedia, Vasti-Khandali, Vedach, Vesadra, Vora-Samni, Zanghar and Zantor.

Bharuchi Vahora Patels have also settled in big cities like Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Surat and Vadodara.

### **Occupations:**

Bharuchi Vahora Patels are basically farmers. In the past, although the tools and methods they used for farming were very old fashioned, their forefathers were quite adept in their own farming techniques, producing abundant food grains and vegetables. They were also

well known cotton growers and that was one of the reasons that during the British Raj the first cotton mill was established in Bharuch.

It was in the middle of the twentieth century, when the desire and temptation to go abroad in search of a supposedly better life became so great among the Bharuchi Vahora Patels, that this ancestral farming occupation began to suffer to such an extent that farming has no longer remained as prosperous as it has been in the past.

As far as professional occupations are concerned, Bharuchi Vahora Patels in India do have Doctors, Engineers, College Lecturers, University Professors, and Administrative Officers in the Civil Service. But, compared to the total Vahora population of around one million, their number in the above professions is rather small.

Most of the employed people are in the third or fourth category menial lower paid jobs. There are a few skilled workers, such as plumbers, electricians and motor mechanics but again, compared to the Vahora population of the Kanam region, their number is also so small that you can count them on your fingertips.

In the not so distant past, there were many primary school trained teachers – male and female – but today their number is also on the downward slope.

Quite a few are in the construction and transport sector, but only at the local level. Some are self-employed, having their own business, and some own small factories.

There is no provision for career guidance and the young people are obsessed with the idea of going abroad.

**Education:**

The rate of primary and secondary education among Bharuchi Vahora Patels has increased after independence. Since 1950, many Vahora villages have opened high schools. There are also higher secondary schools under Vahora management.

In 1993, the **Munshi Manubarwala Memorial Charitable Trust** founded an **Educational Complex** in Bharuch. It provides facilities for education at primary, secondary and higher levels including ITI, Arts and Commerce colleges, PTC, BEd college and MBA. Attached to the Munshi complex are institutions for girls' education founded by the Vali Charitable Trust from the Bhodu family of Ikher. The Munshi trust also run schools in deprived areas. The total number of students is 8,000. There are hostel facilities for boys and girls as well.



There are Iqra education institutions run by Maulana Habiburrehman Matadar. These institutions target students from the poor sections of the society. Maulana

Matadar's vision, dedication and sincere efforts have created ample opportunities for the poor and needy children.

There is an excellent English Medium School in Bharuch run by the Matliwala Trust. This school tries to maintain very high standards of education.

There is an English Medium School with 700 students as part of the Welfare Hospital complex. Muhammad Fansiwala has ambitious plans to start a college of dentistry, medical college and a university.

The eminent Vahora educationalists recognised at the state level are Dr Adam Ghodiwala of Tankaria and Shabbir Musa Patel of Kavi.

There are no institutions of higher education. This is due to the fact that the present anti-Muslim state Government does not give permission to start such institutions under Muslim management. A large number of Vahora students join colleges in Maharashtra and Kanataka and quite a few go to Britain and Russia for higher education.

There are no hostel facilities for Vahora students in Mumbai or Vadodara. In Ahmedabad, Patel Muslim Society runs a hostel, a Musafirkhana (guest house) and computer coaching classes for Muslim students. The Bombay Patel Welfare Society gives scholarships to bright Vahora students and holds elocution competitions each year with prizes. The Munshi Manubarwala Trust runs a hostel in Rander, Surat and provides useful career training to students.

### **Islamic Education:**

Vahora villages have a network of *madrasas* (Islamic schools) for basic Islamic education for children. After independence, *Darul Uloom*s (Islamic Colleges) have been established in Amod, Bharuch, Dayadara, Jambusar, Kantharia, Sitpon, Thaam, Vagra, and Valan. There are special Darul Uloom for girls in Manubar and Tankaria.

### **Health:**

In 1991, Muhammad Ali Collector and the members of the Bombay Patel Welfare Society took the initiative to establish the **Welfare Hospital**.



Under the able and dynamic management of **Muhammad Fansiwala**, Ex MLA, this has developed into a fully-fledged hospital with over 200 beds. It is committed to the Islamic principle of *khidmat-e-khalq* that is the service of mankind, and apart from the Vahora community, it serves patients from all sections of the society.



The hospital operates a *Bait-ul-Mal* (Charity) Fund to provide free or subsidised treatment to all poor patients. It also runs nursing and medical laboratory technician courses. With financial assistance from the well-known banker Musa Dakri of the USA, the Welfare Hospital is in the process of establishing a well-equipped diagnosis centre. Muhammad Fansiwala also aspires to start a dentistry, medical and pharmacy college.

There are also small hospitals in Jambusar, Nabipur, Sarod and Valan. The Saliya family of Preston, UK are building a huge, state of the art hospital near Palej. Similarly a small hospital is taking shape in Ikher. The Rangoon family of Tankaria run a private hospital and a school near Bharuch.

### **Politics:**

Indulal Yagnik had started the Maha Gujarat movement to create a separate state of Gujarat from the then state of Bombay. Many Vahora leaders joined him. Among them was Vali Ahmad Paguthanwala who took a leading role in the Bharuch district.

Even after 60 years of independence, no Bharuchi Vahora Patel has become a member of parliament. In 2009, **Ahmad Patel** (pictured right), who is the political advisor to the All India Congress Party President, Sonia Ghandi, and a member of the *Rajya Sabha* (Upper House of Parliament), selected **Umarji Ahmad Ughradar alias Aziz Tankarvi** (pictured left), a former editor of the Gujarat Today Daily newspaper and a well-known poet, writer and journalist, as a congress party candidate for the *Lok Sabha* (Lower House of Parliament) election. He received 284,000 votes, which is some achievement indeed, but unfortunately lost by 27,000 votes to the rival BJP (Bharatiya Janta Party) candidate.



As mentioned before, no Vahora has ever reached the Parliament in Delhi as an MP. However, Muhammad Fansiwala of Karmad, Iqbal Patel and Rashida Iqbal Patel of Derol have been elected to the Legislative Assembly of Gujarat. The late Gulam Umarji Ghodiwala of Tankaria was president of the *Bharuch Taluka Panchayat* (Sub-District Council).

### **Sports:**

Cricket is a popular game among Bharuchi Vahora Patels. Tournaments are organised in Bharuch and Tankaria. Abdurrazak Bariwala runs a cricket club in Tankaria, where state level cricket tournaments are played. You need to see the excitement displayed by the cricket lovers of the village on such occasions.

Ahmad Ali Ghodiwala was a Ranji Trophy player before independence. (The Ranji Trophy is a domestic first class cricket championship played in India between different city and state sides, equivalent to the County championship in the UK). At present, Salim Veragi of Tankaria plays in the Ranji Trophy tournaments.



Bharuchi Vahora Patels have also produced international test cricketers. Rasheed Patel of Kamboli and **Munaf Patel** of Ikher are well known Vahora test cricket players acting as role models for the young cricket players of the district.

The Bharuchi Vahora Patels' participation in other games and athletics is negligible.

### **Social Organizations:**

The “Bombay Patel Welfare Society” is the most important Bharuchi Vahora Patel organization founded after Independence. Initially, the Bharuchi Vahora Patels of Bombay had formed the Bharuch Jilla Rahat Committee. In 1956, this was expanded as the Bombay Patel Welfare Society. The Patel Musafirkhana project was started by the then secretary Ahmed Patel Dasanwala (Advocate).

Today, the multi-storey Patel Musafirkhana building stands in the Nagpada area of Mumbai and provides good facilities to Hajj pilgrims, Bharuchi Vahora Patels visiting from abroad and numerous Bharuchi Vahora Patels visiting the city from Gujarat.

Many villages have their own societies and voluntary organizations for welfare activities. However, there is no umbrella organization for the Bharuchi Vahora community. There is a lack of co-ordination and long term planning, which is needed for the educational,

economic and social uplifting of the Bharuchi Vahora Patels in the 21st century.

### **Literature:**

The Bharuchi Vahora Patels' contribution to Gujarati literature and journalism is remarkable. Well known Vahora writers include Abhram Bhagat of Pariej, Ibrahim Dadabhai "Bekar" of Khanpur (District Bharuch), Vali Patel and Yusuf Ashraf of Vahalu, Vali Suleman Patel of Sarod and Majnu Dedka of Tankaria. Mustafabadi of Tankaria published an English magazine in South Africa.

The other magazines include Bekar's "Patel Mitra" and "Insaan", Aziz Tankarvi's Parvaaz and Isa Kaviwala's Paigaam and Kalam. The Bharuchi Vahora Patels' major contribution in the establishment of the **Gujarat Today Daily** newspaper, published from its offices in Ahmedabad for last two decades, has enabled the Muslims of Gujarat to realise their dream of having a "clean" and refined newspaper of their own.



Among the Vahora poets and writers of the generation after “Bekar” are Adam Tankarvi, Aziz Tankarvi, Babar Bambusari, Daud Khandhiya, Haroon Patel, Ibrahim Chhela, Iqbal Ughradar, Jigar Nabipuri, Kadam Tankarvi, M S Karbhari of Sarod, Mahek Tankarvi, Pathik Sitponvi, Premi Dayadarvi, Premi Zangharvi, Rafat Kaviwala, Siraj Patel “Paguthanvi”, Sufi Manubari, Yakub Mukardam of Tankaria, Zakir Tankarvi and others.

According to Bhagvatikumar Sharma (a writer, poet and ex-editor of the Gujarat Mitra daily newspaper of Surat, Gujarat), any historian of Gujarati ghazal will have to make note of the contribution made by the ghazal writers of Rander and Tankaria of Gujarat State. Gujarati ghazal owes a lot to these Muslim poets.

In 2010, a grand Gujarati mushaira was held in Tankaria, in memory of the late Ibrahim Nathalia. On this occasion, the chief guest Dr Rasheed Mir, a well-known ghazal writer and critic, pointed out that: “the history of Gujarati literature would remain incomplete without the mention of the contribution made by the poets and writers of Tankaria.” The Tankarvis have made a significant contribution to the development of Gujarati ghazal.

Ismail Ghadiali of Pariej and Fazal Patel of Bharuch bring out publications aimed to increase Islamic and social awareness among the Vahora community.

In addition to the publication of religious books, some periodicals are also published under the management of Bharuchi Vahora Patels. “Darul Uloom” is a monthly published by Darul Uloom Kantharia, “Anjuman Voice” is published by Anjuman-e-Imdadul Muslimeen, Bharuch (edited by Maulana Habiburrehman Matadar),

“Sachchai” is published by Majlis-e-Tahaffuz-e-Ahle Sunnat wal Jama’at from Tankaria (edited by Maulana Ismail Vali Bhuta), “Ruhani Paigaam” is also published from Tankaria (edited by Haji Muhammad Master Tankarvi), “Barakat-e-Khwaja” is published from Dayadara (edited by Shabbir Ali Patel Razvi) and “Al Mueen” is published from Thaam (edited by Ismail M Hafiz). “Mujahed” published by Daud Patel Kamboliwala and “Noorani Fayzan” published by Ali Ghantiwala of Dayadara are other monthly magazines. Ismail Hafezi of Nabipur acted as sub-editor of “Taybah” for some time.

### **Customs and Traditions:**

Until about the middle of the twentieth century, Bharuchi Vahora Patels observed many superstitious customs, rituals and traditions. For example, at the time of a wedding, when pitching the first pole of the *mandap* (marquee), they would put a *sopari* (areca nut) and a coin and tie a red and yellow woven cotton thread around the pole thinking it to be a good omen. The groom was not allowed to wear anything black, so as to stay away from black magic. These were rituals to protect oneself from the evil eye or a bad omen. Most of these un-Islamic customs have now disappeared to a very large extent, but in some places they still continue in different forms.

Before the 1950s, most Vahora women wore a *sari* and a *ghaghara* (long skirt), but that has more or less become out dated and now modest Islamic dress is common. Men no longer wear a *dhoti* (sarong) or a *bania* (turban).

When mourning a death, women used to beat their chest and sing *chhajiyaa* (elegies or melancholy songs expressing sorrow).

Weddings were marked by *pithee* (application of turmeric paste on hands and face), coconut, drums and *shehnai* (a quadruple reed wind instrument like a clarinet). Night time programmes of *qawwali* (a form of Sufi devotional music) and dancing girls performing in front of the wedding guests were common.

In villages like Karela and Tankaria, I remember ordinary folk artists performing *ramleela* (a dramatic folk re-enactment of the life of the Hindu god Ram) and *bhavai* (folk dramas) in the open air, where large crowds gathered from the surrounding villages to enjoy the show which was the only source of entertainment in those days. I recollect the well-known *bhavayas* (folk drama actors) of the time, Vali Manchwala and Gulam Sutariya, performing in a *bhavai* show in Tankaria. With the increase of education and Islamic knowledge, these superstitious customs, rituals, practices and **bhavai** shows have now become things of the past.



**Religious Beliefs:**

Bharuchi Vahora Patels are Sunni Muslims and they follow the Hanafi school of thought. But around 1950, they began to be divided into Deobandi and Bareilvi groups, with the latter now further divided into Ashrafi and Razvi. Due to these divisions within the community, these groups have now established their own separate *masjids* (mosques) and madrasas. In the early days of division, there were court cases against each other and disputes about the custody of the village masjid had to be resolved by the district judges. The bitterness of the early days has now disappeared and, although they follow their own school of thought and pray in different masjids, Bharuchi Vahora Patels now live side by side, their children go to the same schools, play cricket and other sports together and are friends. Social interaction is still strong, marrying someone from the other persuasion is not much of a problem and people gladly participate in each other's wedding and other functions.



BHARUCHI VAHORA PATELS: FUTURE DIRECTION  
*Aziz Tankarvi - India*

Whilst collecting as much information as possible to include in this book about our community, it was suggested to us by some well-wishers of the community that, along with our historical background and other information, we should also highlight the problems we are facing today and the possible solutions to overcome them.

In the light of such a worthwhile suggestion, I had numerous interviews and discussions with intellectuals and social workers from among the Bharuchi Vahora Patels to identify what problems we have in various fields and what can or should be done to alleviate them in the best possible way for the betterment of our community.

Readers are requested to keep a couple of points in mind whilst going through this chapter.

The issues and the views included here are of those people who have great concern for the welfare of the Vahora community and whom I have been able to contact. Similarly, the solutions suggested here are only their guidelines. Our purpose is not to create any uncertainty and futile controversy, but to provide a basis for a constructive forum for the healthy discussion of ideas, keeping in mind the welfare and benefit of our community.

If you feel that the problems mentioned here do not exist, then ignore them. If you feel that the nature of the problem is not as described here, but it is different, then you may examine the problem in your own manner and

come up with a solution that may be more effective than the one suggested here.

The issues raised here are not in the form of the last word, nor are they binding on the community. These points are intended to be a paradigm to start the process of consultation in the community. We need to study the state of affairs in each field, assess the present situation and make necessary changes for better results. To maintain a status quo may not be advisable. If we look closely at the existing condition of our society, identify the undesirable elements and try to resolve them, the society will remain progressive and healthy. If this process does not continue, the community becomes regressive and cannot cope with new developments and the fast changing world.

I do not expect each member of the community to participate in this process of consultation. But the people who are associated with a particular field and who are responsible for that field may come together, have discussions, identify the problems, determine the changes needed, prepare an action plan and implement it. If a few people take the initiative, more people will join them. I do hope that the leaders, social workers and people running public organizations and institutions will find these suggestions useful.

### **1. Identifying the problems**

Problems are part of the process of development. We have to accept that the problem exists and then try to understand the nature of the problem. We need to identify the possible causes through discussions and find ways of removing these causes. In today's world, if a community does not have a problem solving ability, it remains

backward, becomes dependent on others and, in the course of time, its very existence is threatened.

First of all, we need to examine our attitude towards problems and our approach to them. If a problem remains unresolved, the community tends to live with it. They stop perceiving it as a problem. For example poverty. If most people keep living in poverty, they come to accept it as normal and natural. They think poverty is there and nothing can be done about it. They become victims of the poverty trap. There are many such problems in our community that are not perceived as problems by most people. No attempts are made to resolve them. This is an ostrich like attitude towards problems. The ostrich buries its head in the sand pretending that there is no storm. Similarly, many people ignore problems and live with an illusion that there aren't any problems. For the welfare of the community, the pre-condition is a change in this attitude.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

*Verily! Allah will not change the condition of a people as long as they do not change their own state (13:11).*

The great poet Iqbal says:

*Khuda ne aaj tak oos quaum ki haalat nahi badli,  
Na ho ehsaas jisko apni khud halat badalneke.*

*Allah has never changed the condition of the community, which does not have an awareness to change its condition itself.*

So, we must change our attitude and culture of ignoring problems and sweeping them under the carpet. The first stage is to admit that there is a problem and then make sincere efforts to resolve it.

## **2. Collecting Data**

In order to understand the nature of a problem, we need accurate information, facts and figures regarding the community. This requires a survey of the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community. Our population, percentage in jobs, occupations, per-capita income, rate of education, families living below the poverty line. Figures relating to all this can be collected and tabularized. This will give us a true picture of our community. It will help us prepare an effective action plan. In the absence of such accurate data, projects are undertaken haphazardly, which does not yield value for money. This leads to a huge waste of community resources – time, effort and money.

## **3. The problem of communal riots and our community**

We wish that there is always an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity in our district, state and country and that various communities live in harmony. But unfortunately, there are elements in society who spread hatred and create a divide amongst people. Anti-Muslim riots in Gujarat are a fact of life. This is obviously a major problem for us as a community.

Allah has given us permission to defend ourselves in case of an attack on our faith, our lives, our properties and honour.

We do not want to oppress others, but we must not let others oppress us.

Protecting our faith, life, property is our human right, recognized by the United Nations.

The Indian constitution also guarantees this right to us.

Communal riots in Gujarat are a social evil and we need to work with others who are equally concerned about this problem to take sensible and constructive steps to get rid of this deep rooted evil. It is a problem which affects us all, Hindus and Muslims alike, and we must make joint efforts to defeat the forces of evil. It is no use sitting with our arms crossed thinking that it does not affect us as a Bharuchi Vahora Patel community. We must all make whatever contribution we can to cleanse the society of this damaging and destructive evil.

- (a) First of all, let us collect accurate information regarding each riot so that we understand the pattern of anti-Muslim rioting. Since the creation of the Gujarat state in 1960, how many riots have taken place, which areas were affected, what caused these riots, the loss of life and property, how many court cases were filed, what was the outcome of these cases. This kind of information will help us understand the nature of the conspiracy, prepare a plan for self-defence and tackle this wicked design.
- (b) An anti-Muslim mind-set is the root cause of communal riots. Islamophobic organizations are active in Gujarat. We need to keep an eye on their ideologies and activities. Identify their activists and

their members. Collect information regarding their background. Be aware of their anti-Muslim conspiracies. Find out what they are up to.

- (c) Keep a watch on the media. Take note of anti-Muslim reports, editorials, articles, cartoons, comments, rumours and provocative writings. Prepare a file for media monitoring, study every attempt at demonizing Muslims. As soon as an anti-Muslim article is published, send a reply using strong but decent language.

Collect information regarding the background and present activities of anti-Muslim columnists and the authors of reader's letters. Publish articles exposing them as communal minded, anti-Muslim, backward, prejudicial and traitors. Destroy their credibility as writers and thinkers.

Do all this within the limits of the laws. If an article is intended to spread hatred and provoke people against Muslims or is likely to cause a riot by inciting people to resort to violence, seek legal advice and file a case against the writer and publishers.

- (d) Make a note of the role of the police during a riot. If possible, make a video of their handling of the incident. If a police officer is found to be partial, complain to their superior officer. Give petitions to the District Collector, make a representation to your MLA and MP.
- (e) In doing all this, do not break the law or take the law in your hands. Explore all legal avenues to seek justice against any harassment or violence against Muslims. Take offenders, including unjust

police officers, to court. To meet the legal expenses and lawyers' fees, raise a permanent fund. The victims of riots are poor people. They cannot afford legal costs. They may not know how to follow procedures. They are not in a position to make an application or hire a lawyer. They may be illiterate.

Create an organization of Muslim lawyers to handle cases relating to riots. Their fees must be reasonable and paid from the common fund.

Create a network in which every victim of a riot gets moral, legal and financial support from the community.

- (f) As soon as the riot is over and peace is restored, appoint a fact finding committee. This committee should visit the affected areas, take photographs, interview the victims and their families and prepare a detailed report based on facts. Make a file and send copies to the state Government, human rights section of the United Nations and to all human rights organizations in the country.

There was an anti-Christian riot in Dang, Gujarat, when churches were set on fire. Christian social workers took photographs of the damage caused, prepared a report including media coverage and sent files to human rights organizations all over the world. This had the desired effect on the authorities who were compelled to act.

- (g) Communal riots in Gujarat are not an exclusively Muslim problem. The other minorities, the poor and the backward classes of people are also affected.

All these groups should come together and prepare a common plan for self-defence.

- (h) Christians in Gujarat face a similar problem. The slogan used is "*pehle kassai, baad mai Isai*" (first butchers (Muslims), then Christians). Muslim leaders and Christian organizations should evolve a common approach to this problem.
- (i) Many non-Muslim people are secular minded and liberal. They condemn violence against minorities and undertake relief work. They even fight court cases on behalf of Muslim victims. Muslim leaders and social workers should appreciate their efforts and work in close co-operation with them. Unfortunately, this does not happen. Tista Setalvad, for example, has received very little support from the Muslim community.
- (j) After every riot, some individuals and organizations come out to collect funds and capitalize on the misery of Muslims. All that they do is distribute food and clothes among the victims and build a few houses. This is needed. But these organizations should be forced to stand by the victims during court cases, fight cases on their behalf and prepare and implement a long term plan to combat anti-Muslim violence. Piecemeal efforts made by many organizations do not produce any long lasting results.

#### **4. Economic structure**

History shows that Bharuchi Vahora Patels are hardworking, industrious and self-dependent. The Gazetteer published in 1877 notes:



*“Bharuchi Vahora are skilled, hardworking farmers. Their women are active, vocal and good-looking. They are skilled in embroidery and weaving and help their men in farming.”*

- (a) The terms skilled and hardworking indicate the work ethic of the community. Most Vahora were engaged in farming and women also worked on the farms and ran cottage industries. There was a culture of earning one’s livelihood through hard work.

Today we need to examine our attitude towards work. If we find laziness, unemployment or a desire to make easy money, we should treat this as a problem and try to create a work ethic in which every able-bodied person is inspired to work hard and be self-sufficient.

Maulana Hasan Bhadkodravi has discussed this problem of our community in his book entitled “Hard work: The key to economic progress” (1996). He shows an Islamic solution to the problem of poverty. He quotes a *hadith* (saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him)) and comments:

“The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) liked to see his *ummah* (community) hard working, industrious and skilled.”

Maulana Hasan gives examples to explain that *tawakkul* (trust in Allah) does not mean doing nothing or believing that Allah will provide a livelihood without any effort on our part. Along with *ibadah* (prayers), a pious Muslim must earn a *halal* (lawful) livelihood for himself and his family. The learned writer cites the following example:

Prophet Isa (Jesus) (peace be upon him) asked a man, “*What is your occupation?*” He replied “*I am engaged in prayers.*” He asked, “How do you make a living for yourself?” He said, “I have a brother who supports me.” Isa (peace be upon him) said, “Your brother is a better worshiper than you.”

Hakim Luqman advised his son: “*Dear son, always make a lawful earning because, if a person becomes dependent on others, his faith shrinks, intelligence dims and humanness disappears. People look down upon him.*”

In short, the society should create an environment in which everybody works hard, takes responsibility for oneself and leads a respectful life. People should feel ashamed of begging and living off others.

- (b) Allah has blessed Bharuchi Vahora Patels with agricultural land. Our ancestors were successful farmers. Today, our farming is ruined. People should seek expert advice to improve their farming and increase production. They should develop ancillary occupations such as poultry and animal husbandry. Farmers should form co-operative societies to get better prices for their products.
- (c) The Indian economy is growing fast. A lot of construction work is going on in our areas. There is a huge demand for bricklayers, joiners, electricians, plumbers and painters and decorators. Our young people should undergo training to become builders. They should not feel shame in doing honest work. At present, most of the construction work is done by workers brought from

outside. With people becoming affluent, more and more people are owning scooters and cars. There is a growing demand for motor mechanics.

We should open more technical institutions to train young people in various trades and skills. There should be co-ordination among the existing technical training centres.

- (d) Most people pay *Zakat* (Islamic donations) in our community. A committee of Muftis should be formed to create a well-organized system of collecting and distributing *Zakat* funds.

We can set up a central office where all *Zakat* is deposited. This office should have information regarding orphans, widows and other needy families who can be supported from the *Zakat* fund. At present, the receivers of *Zakat* do all their shopping at private shops. The profits go to private businessmen. Instead, shops owned and run by the community should be opened. Prices should be fair. This way the profit made can be pumped back into the poor fund.

Able-bodied poor persons can be given capital from the *Zakat* fund to start a business. They can also be given occupational training. This will make people self-sufficient and less dependent on *Zakat*.

The central *Zakat* fund can also provide money to Islamic institutions according to their budgetary needs and the number of poor students they have. This will obviously restrict their number of admissions and expenditure. A fair distribution of funding among Islamic institutions will be ensured. If this system is set up, there will be no need for

*safirs* (fund raisers) to go from place to place to collect money. This will save a lot of time and effort on the part of Islamic institutions. It is obviously a more dignified way of maintaining and monitoring our Islamic institutions.

- (e) We should also become self-sufficient in arranging *Qurbani* (Islamic sacrificial offerings). People can be given loans to buy and rear animals. These can then be bought from them for *Qurbani*. At present, the skins of *Qurbani* animals are donated to masjids or madrasas. They sell them to private agents. Instead, a tannery can be founded and run by the community at the district level where the production of leather goods can be undertaken. At present, Muslims are merely buyers and consumers of meat. They have no share in raising animals or in the industries associated with cattle-feed, leather or animal bones.
- (f) The community should have a network of co-operative societies. There were co-operative societies in the past but they were closed down due to corruption and mismanagement. A co-operative movement can be revived by honest, skilled, dynamic social workers.
- (g) Bharuchi Vahora Patels settled abroad provide considerable financial help to people at home. Instead of spending this money on food, clothes, entertainment etc, it must be wisely invested. If foreign-aid leads people to live lazy, easy lives, it does not help in the long run. Anyway, over dependence on such help is not advisable. The second or third generation of relatives abroad may not be so keen to support their poor relatives in

India. This being so, this source of income may soon dry up.

- (h) Most villages spend foreign aid on projects which are unplanned and ill-advised. A survey of the needs of the Vahora community must be made and priorities must be decided. Only the most essential and useful projects should be undertaken and completed.

## **5. Unemployment**

Farming has no longer remained a major source of livelihood in our community. Our young population is less likely to be engaged in farming. At the same time there is no provision for vocational training and acquisition of skills which can make them self-employed. Our work culture is such that people consider manual labour and certain type of skilled jobs as inferior and taboo. They remain jobless and become a burden on their families in particular and the society in general. Some families do receive financial help from their relatives who are settled in the UK, USA, Canada and the Middle East. This money is not properly utilised by the recipients. It is spent on building big houses, buying cars or motorbikes, clothes and expensive wedding celebrations. This money from abroad has promoted a culture of laziness and dependence on others. It is a common sight to see young people sitting idly in the streets, watching and talking about cricket matches, using latest mobile phones, roaming on motorbikes and throwing lavish parties.

Due to the lack of job opportunities at home and impressed by the life style of the NRIs visiting their homeland, the craze to go abroad has increased amongst the younger generation. There is nothing

wrong in trying to go abroad for better opportunities. But even that requires some education and training so that they will find suitable jobs as soon as they land in a foreign country.

UK, USA, and Canada have now adopted points systems to attract highly educated skilled workers. Very few Vahora young people qualify in this category.

Jobless young people become victims of bad habits. Smoking is common. The abuse of drugs, tobacco, Gutkha and gambling are found in some Vahora villages. The craze of fashion and Bollywood films is increasing day by day.

## **6. Islamic Education**

The *Ulemas* (Islamic scholars) of our community have created a network of Islamic institutions. There are a good number of madrasas and Darul Uloom. But there is a lack of co-ordination and the same standard of Islamic education is not maintained. I have received some suggestions regarding Islamic education. These can be considered and Ulemas can decide on them, keeping in mind the spiritual and temporal welfare of the community. These may not be the final solutions. I am presenting these views only for the consideration of Ulemas.

### **(a) Madrasa**

Madrasas form the basis of Islamic education. Madrasa education must be well organized and fully effective. We need to carry out a survey of all madrasas in our community and find out the total number of madrasas, children, Muddarris (Islamic teachers), their salaries, madrasa buildings,

facilities, source of income to run madrasas, expenditure, examinations etc. This type of comprehensive survey is needed for quality control.

The suggestions we have received to improve the madrasa education and make it more effective are as follows:

- (i) All the madrasas run by Bharuchi Vahora Patels should offer a common curriculum designed by the Darul Uloom. The course must be graded according to the age-level of the child. Assessments must be done following the standard prescribed by the Darul Uloom. This will ensure a uniform standard in all our madrasas.
- (ii) Darul Uloom should offer a training course for Muddarris. Such training can be pre-service and in-service. All madrasas should only appoint trained Muddarris.
- (iii) The madrasa curriculum must include the Arabic language. Children can easily learn basic Arabic in about five years, if a proper methodology is adopted. If Arabic is taught effectively, there is no need to teach Urdu. Children can learn about Islam through Arabic and Gujarati.
- (iv) The number of students receiving education at Darul Uloom should be limited. About 98% receive basic Islamic education at their local madrasa. Thus the madrasa is the most important institution. All efforts must be made to improve the quality of madrasa education.

(b) Darul Uloom

Ulemas have worked very hard to establish Darul Ulooms for our community. There are Darul Ulooms for girls as well. The curriculum of Islamic education is obviously designed by Ulemas. However, we have received suggestions regarding other aspects. These are practical suggestions and the people in charge of Darul Ulooms can consider them if they think these are appropriate from both an Islamic and worldly viewpoint. The intention is to increase the impact of Darul Ulooms in the society.

There should be an umbrella organization of all the Darul Ulooms run by Bharuchi Vahora Patels. This can form a central committee consisting of representatives from all Darul Ulooms. The organization can undertake the following activities:

- (i) If there is harassment from a Government department or anti-social elements to any Darul Uloom, the organization can deal with the problem and resolve it. Joint action can be taken.
  - (ii) Extend financial or any other help to a Darul Uloom in need of such help.
  - (iii) Exchange of good practices and experiences between the Darul Ulooms.
  - (iv) Exchange mutual visits of students and teachers to increase interaction.
- (c) There is a suggestion regarding the financial structure of Darul Ulooms. At present, the students buy their necessities such as soap, toothpaste,



hair-oil, perfume, towels, clothes, shoes etc from private shops.

Darul Ulooms can establish and run a co-operative store to sell such items. They can also undertake the manufacturing of these items. This can include the setting up of a bakery, dairy, soap factory, garment factory etc.

Every student needs *kafnis* (long shirts), trousers, caps, etc. For this they buy cloth from various shops and take it to private tailors. A Darul Uloom garments factory manufacturing Islamic dresses for men and women will save time and money.

For the kitchen, Darul Ulooms can produce grains, vegetables and fruits. It can have a poultry farm. It can also breed animals for meat. It can have a small oil-mill.

Skilled persons can be employed for farming and for running the factories. The idea is that Darul Ulooms have a huge purchasing power and if they become the producers and suppliers, they will keep the profits. This will make them self-sufficient. At present, a large chunk of each Darul Uloom's budget is pumped into the private sector and the Darul Ulooms remain as consumers.

It is not necessary to have production and supply facilities in each Darul Uloom. This can be centrally organized and individual Darul Ulooms can utilize it.

This arrangement should not disturb the teachers and students who are not directly involved in it. The organizers should appoint paid honest and

experienced managers and workers for this purpose.

Regarding this suggestion, some people may argue that this will turn Darul Uloom into a factory or shop. This is not the case, because the Darul Uloom is not directly involved in production or sale. It is creating facilities for Halal businesses, which is an act of *deen* (religion). In his book "Self-help: The key to economic development" the learned writer Maulana Hasan Bhadkodravi explains the importance of doing business by quoting this saying of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him): Undertake trade or business, because livelihood has ten portions out of which nine are trade.

If Allah wills, in this age of ruthless capitalism, Darul Uloom can become instrumental in creating a fair, halal production and sale network. This will make the society free from the clutches of black-marketeers, profiteers, hoarders, adulterators and exploiters.

- (d) There is a suggestion regarding the role of the Darul Uloom. A Darul Uloom is a university. In addition to imparting Islamic education, it can undertake the following additional activities of providing useful services to the madrasa sector:
  - (i) Design courses for madrasas, prepare textbooks, charts, posters and other teaching aids to teach *aqaid* (beliefs) and *ibadah* (worship) to madrasa children.
  - (ii) Undertake inspections of madrasas and provide guidance to improve the quality of education.

- (iii) Conduct examinations in madrasas, to ensure a uniform system of teaching and assessment in all madrasas.
- (iv) Run pre-service training courses for Muddarris. This can include methods of teaching, child psychology, classroom interaction etc.
- (v) *Deeni taleem* (Islamic education) is absolutely essential for one's salvation. But the student will have to lead a worldly life after he leaves a Darul Uloom. Not all will find jobs as Imams or Muddarris. These jobs are based on demand and supply trends. So, it is the responsibility of Darul Ulooms to prepare their students for a Halal livelihood. This requires training in job-oriented courses.

Similarly, *Alimas* (female Islamic scholars) will become wives and mothers in the future. They should be educated and trained for that role. In addition to their Alima course, the curriculum must include literacy, numeracy, child care, home economics and handicraft.

In short, the student who spends seven or more years at a Darul Uloom must be trained for an occupation which will enable them to earn a Halal decent livelihood. They should not become a parasite or a burden on others. In the past our religious leaders had introduced book-binding, watch repairing, cap making as vocational training in Darul Ulooms. There is no demand for these services today. So Darul Ulooms should offer training in the trades which are useful in our time. This will make the Darul Uloom education more

balanced, make the student a good Alim and at the same time prepare them for a career.

- (vi) Darul Ulooms should run vacation classes for high school and college students. This will strengthen the education they have received at their local madrasa, and they will experience the Islamic environment of a Darul Uloom.
- (vii) Darul Ulooms offer a Fatwa service to the community. In addition, it can also offer a mediation service. People can bring their family or property disputes to Darul Ulooms where they can be resolved in an Islamic way. This will save people from expensive court cases and litigation.

The point is that Darul Ulooms must re-think their role and broaden it to have a greater impact on the community.

## 7. ***Firqabandi* (Religious factions)**

Bharuchi Vahora Patels are Sunni Muslims and they practice the Hanafi School of thought. Although they are all Sunnis, they are divided into various religious groups and over the years this division has caused many conflicts and problems for the community.

The differences started in the 1950s. Initially, there were only two *firqas* (factions), namely Bareilvi and Deobandi. But in the course of time, people have divided into further minor *firqas*, thus breaking the community into small groups. Bharuchi Vahora Patels should seriously think about these divisions and the forces responsible for creating and promoting such divisions and conflicts. If some people are dividing the community in the name of

religion for their selfish motives or to satisfy their ego, they must be exposed and put right.

*Firqabandi* causes a rift in the community and even among the members of the same family. It creates an atmosphere of hatred and suspicion. It adversely affects matrimonial ties in the community. If this problem remains unresolved, it will destroy the whole fabric of the society.

## 8. **Secular Education**

Secular education is essential for the development of the individual and society. Certain branches of knowledge are inevitable to sustain the community. Imam Ghazali (1058-1111), one of the greatest Islamic Jurists of Sunni Islam, emphasises the importance of these sciences in his *Ihya-i-Ulumu'd-Din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences) in the following words:

*“Those sciences which are essential for the progress of the society are praiseworthy, such as medical science, arithmetic etc. It is a Farz-e-Qifayah (joint obligation) for the community to learn this. Similarly agriculture, administration or management, industries, horticulture and the ancillary sciences are Farz-e-Qifayah. If no member of the society learns this, the sin is on the whole community.”*

I have received the following suggestions regarding secular education in our community.

- (i) The Bharuchi Vahora Patel community needs a centre for educational and vocational guidance and counselling at the district level. This centre should undertake an educational survey of the community

to collect data relating to the rate of literacy, dropouts and higher education and the quality of education in our schools etc.

The centre can also offer additional services to provide information relating to the courses available, institutions, fees and preparation for careers.

- (ii) There should be an organization composed of primary / secondary / higher secondary schools / colleges run by our community. These schools should tackle their problems jointly and exchange good practices in teaching and administration for mutual benefit. Together they can plan and implement school improvement programmes.
- (iii) At present, our community does not have institutions of higher education. We can prepare plans to create this facility. Meanwhile, the centre mentioned above can collect information regarding the courses available at Indian and foreign universities. The Centre can also help students get admission to the institutions of their choice.

The high achievers in the community must be honoured. Scholarships must be provided. A survey should be undertaken to find out how many professionals are needed in the community and suitable plans should be drawn to meet the need of the community in those identified fields.

- (iv) For those who cannot go for higher education, technical courses must be provided. A special institution must be set up at the district level for this purpose. It must be fully resourced and a high standard must be maintained. At present, there are

isolated institutions for technical training. These can be amalgamated to form a central institution.

- (v) The progress of our children in education depends on the achievement culture in the community. We should create an environment in which the child feels motivated and is set high expectations. It is observed that our children have low self-esteem and they lack self-confidence. Through workshops, meetings and proper guidance we need to raise their achievement motive.

## **9. Health Care**

Private hospitals in India are very expensive and the treatment is unaffordable for most people. In these circumstances, the Welfare Hospital in Bharuch is a boon for our community. Instead of duplicating such hospitals in other towns, we need to strengthen the Welfare Hospital and fully resource it for treatment of serious diseases.

We are a small community. If we establish too many hospitals, they cannot be maintained in the long run. There must be dispensaries in Vahora Villages to treat common illnesses. For major illnesses, we must create ambulance facilities to move patients to the Welfare Hospital.

Before creating facilities for health care, we need to make a survey of our needs and plan health centres accordingly.

In addition to the Welfare Hospital, there are other hospitals in our community. If we do not want to close down these existing hospitals, they can be converted into specialized hospitals – one for maternity, another for paediatrics, yet another for

orthopaedics etc. This will be cost effective and more efficient.

## **10. Social Workers**

We need sincere, efficient social workers in the community. Our society is becoming more and more individualistic. There are very few people committed to community service. We need to create an atmosphere to inspire more people to volunteer for community work.

There are large number of retired people in our community. These pensioners should be requested to undertake social work during their free time and give the benefit of their knowledge and experience to the community.

## **11. Leadership**

The community needs selfless and efficient people who can provide leadership in various fields. The leader should not be imposed from the top nor should he be a self-appointed leader. People should accept only those individuals as leaders who have a clean record of social work and community services. We have received a comment that in our community sincere, honest, educated people do not come forward to take up leadership. There are lots of good people in our community who have been marginalised. We need to find out why good people are not willing to take up leadership roles. We must create an atmosphere in which efficient people will be encouraged to lead the community.

Leadership requires training. We must organize leadership training programmes for young people.



This can include the study of the personalities of great leaders and their styles and practices.

The present leaders should also train young people to prepare the second line of leadership.

People should be encouraged to assess and judge their own leaders not on the basis of how much power they enjoyed but how much welfare work they did for the community. True leadership is not about pomp or power. It is about social service and constructive work.

## **12. Role Models**

In our community there are people who have made remarkable achievements in their respective fields. They should be brought before the young people as role models. Unfortunately, the tendency in our community today is to ignore talented people or belittle their achievements.

Deepak Bardoliar, a prominent poet and writer now living in Manchester, UK has rightly pointed out “The community that does not acknowledge and honour its own talented people ceases to produce any more outstanding people amongst them.”

## **13. Community organizations**

There are many social organizations and institutions in our community. Most of them are without any significant impact on the society. We have received the following suggestions regarding community organizations:

Organizations must be transparent and run in a democratic manner. The community must assess

and evaluate each organization and decide whether it is in the interest of the community to support it or not.

The criteria for the evaluation of an organization are:

- (i) It must be set up only if it is needed and is relevant to the present situation. No organization should be formulated at the whim of an individual.
- (ii) It should have a written constitution that must be available to any member of the community.
- (iii) It must be run according to its constitution.
- (iv) Its structure must be democratic and encourage wider participation.
- (v) Its office bearers must be elected and not self-appointed.
- (vi) It must not be authoritarian or autocratic with a concentration of power in one individual or a family.
- (vii) It must be free from misappropriation and corruption.
- (viii) It must be free from nepotism and cronyism.
- (ix) The positions of the office bearers should not be hereditary.

Only those organizations that meet the above criteria should be supported by the community.

#### **14. Vahora Bulletin**

We need a bulletin to make people aware of the affairs related to our community. This can publish relevant news items, reports of community events, social issues, creative writings, views etc. Negative and destructive viewpoints must be kept out. The bulletin must be serious, constructive and balanced.

#### **15. Bharuchi Vahora Patel Development Centre**

A Bharuchi Vahora Patel Development Centre is needed for the planning, co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation of our social activities. This centre must have qualified paid staff and resourced with computers, books, a seminar room etc.

The centre can conduct surveys to collect information, analyse it and prepare appropriate action plans for implementation.

It may not be possible to involve every member of the community in this process. But the centre can identify some people to form a think-tank and provide indicators for the uplifting of the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community.

## BHARUCHI VAHORA PATELS IN BRITAIN

After the end of Second World War of 1939, economic growth started accelerating in Britain. In the early 1950s, various manufacturing sectors, including textile, woollen and allied industries started installing modern machinery. This created new opportunities for the indigenous population who were working in morning and afternoon shifts in the textile and woollen sector to move to the day time jobs created by the economic boom in various fields like aerospace, electronics, motor manufacturing etc. The indigenous population preferred the day time jobs because it did not involve working unsocial hours, which would give them plenty of time to enjoy a social life with their families and friends, such as going to the pubs in the evening or dancing halls or spending time watching television with the family.

This movement of the indigenous workers into new fields to take up the day time jobs created a vacuum of labour especially in the textile and woollen mills. The industrialists wanted the mills to run continuously for 24 hours a day to meet the huge international demand for their products and for that they required workers to work morning, afternoon and night shifts.

Because of the shortage of labour to fill these vacancies, the British Government showed flexibility in the immigration rules and made Britain a free port for anyone from Commonwealth countries to come to the UK and take up employment. No visa was required at the port of entry. An identification as to who he or she was, the date and place of birth and the country he or she came from was the only requirement until about the time when the first Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962 was passed by the British Parliament.

## **Migration from Indo-Pak Sub-Continent to Britain**

As Britain faced a shortage of mill workers around the late 1950s and early 1960s, semi-literate economic migrants from India and Pakistan started coming to Britain to fill the vacancies in cotton mills and factories in various parts of the country.

Some adventurous Bharuchi Vahora Patels seized this opportunity and migrated to Britain during this period. Dawood Pai, a Bharuchi Vahora Patel of Tankaria living in Mumbai migrated to Britain in 1951 and settled in Coventry (West Midlands). He was followed by his relative Ismail Vadhriwala and Isa Tailor of Hinglot in 1956. They settled in Dewsbury (West Yorkshire). A little later, Ali Muhammad Delawala of Sitpon, Umarji Modhu of Hinglot and Muhammad Karkun of Paguthan followed the trend. From the available information we gathered from our elders in their 70s and 80s, it appears that only a handful of Bharuchi Vahora Patels came to Britain before 1960.

Although a small number of Bharuchi Vahora Patels migrated to Britain during this period, it made a great impact back home in India where the news was spreading thick and fast through friends and relatives amongst the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community, of the people who had migrated and settled in Britain. How to go to Britain became the talk of the town amongst the community throughout the Bharuch District.

During our random survey, we interviewed a well-known Ghazal singer, the late Isa Ughradar, originally of Dahegam who settled in Bolton. Recalling his past, he said that in 1956 he met Abdullah Dhanbhai of Karmad at Saraswati Cinema House in Bharuch when Abdullah

told him that he was planning to go to Britain. Soon after, Isa came to know that Abdul Dhanbhai had already reached London.

Isa belonged to a very prosperous farming family who owned over a hundred acres of fertile agricultural land in and around his village Dahegam. But as the curiosity and eagerness to go to Britain was prevalent among the Bharuchi Vahora Patels of the day, Isa was also inspired to try his luck in a foreign land. The word Britain was ringing in his ears all the time as if it was the land full of roses. Therefore, he could not resist the temptation and thus, leaving aside the easy life he was enjoying in Dahegam, he joined the band wagon and came to Britain.

Isa Ughradar's and other well-to-do Bharuchi Vahora Patel's migration to Britain substantiate the point made by Dr Makrand Mehta and Dr Shirin Mehta (retired historians of the Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, India) in their book "The Gujarati Diaspora in Britain" (published in 2009): *"It is a misconception that Bharuchi Vahora Patels migrated to Britain to escape poverty at home. Not all of them came from a poor background. Most of them were well off in India and came to Britain in search of better opportunities or fantasized about what life was like in Britain."*

As the trend continued, besides Isa, a number of other Bharuchi Vahora Patels with little education arrived in Britain from various villages of the Bharuch District before the first Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962 came into force. Until then, with Britain being a free port, all one needed was a passport and plane ticket which would cost them 1,800 Rupees (approximately £135) in those days. On arrival, entry would be stamped in their passport by the immigration officials without any

questioning, because no visa or any other entry clearance was required. Haji Usman originally of Ikher who now lives in Bolton arrived at Heathrow on 16 March 1962, which was the last day of free entry. With the introduction of the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962, Britain ceased to be a free port.

According to that Act, a person from the Commonwealth countries who wanted to come to the UK was required to apply for an entry permit (**voucher**) through the British High Commission of the country of their abode. Here is a specimen copy of a voucher issued by the Ministry of Labour in London through its High Commission Office in Bombay (Mumbai) on 10 September 1962.

MINISTRY OF LABOUR	Ref. No.....
<b>VOUCHER</b>	
Issued for the purposes of Section 2 of the COMMONWEALTH IMMIGRANTS ACT, 1962	
Voucher <b>Nº 022736</b>	Date of Expiry..... <b>9th MARCH, 1963</b> ..
Full Name .....	
Address.....	
Date of Birth .....	Sex M/F Country of Birth .....
Occupation.....	Country of Issue
Passport No. ....	of passport.....
NOTES	
1. This voucher must be produced together with a valid passport to the Immigration Officer at the port of arrival in the United Kingdom. Failure to produce it may result in refusal of admission.	
2. This voucher may be presented only by the person described therein.	
3. This voucher cannot be used for entry to the United Kingdom after the date of expiry shown above, unless an extension has been granted. It does not entitle the holder to take work in Northern Ireland.	
Signed on behalf of the Minister of Labour	
<i>H. R. Jones</i> .....	
E.D. 413	Date <b>10th SEPTEMBER, 1962</b> .....

The Act did not fully stop the immigration of people from the Commonwealth countries, it only introduced various categories in the immigration system through which people could come to the UK provided they satisfied the authorities through their applications.

This encouraged well educated, highly qualified and skilled people from India to apply for an entry permit. Educated Bharuchi Vahora Patels were no exception in this respect and therefore, after 1962, a considerable number of them arrived in the UK by obtaining an entry permit (voucher). To mention a few names among them were U M Mastan, A U Patel, Yacoob Mank, Ismail Khunawala and Bashir Khoda of Tankaria. Abdullah Patel Azad (Palia) of Sitpon, Siraj Patel "Paguthanvi" and Abdullah Munshi of Paguthan, Ismail Master of Hinglot, Mohamed Bhuria of Sansrod, Adam Patel Fansiwala of Karmad, Abdul Musa of Janghar, Ismail Vakil of Kantharia and Ismail Kaduji of Nabipur.

Those who came to the UK legally from the Commonwealth countries were given the same rights from day one as the indigenous population.

India was and is a member of the Commonwealth and thus all those Bharuchi Vahora Patels who had settled in Britain became entitled to all those rights. They were given the right of indefinite stay. They could acquire British Nationality if they wished. If they were married, their wives and children under the age of 21 years could join them here. An unmarried man or woman could bring their fiancé / fiancée from overseas and, upon solemnization of the marriage, could get the right of permanent settlement in the UK.

Nearly 99 per cent of the Bharuchi Vahora Patels who



had come to the UK by this time and had settled here were already married, but their wives and children were left behind in India. They then decided to call them over to join them. This accelerated the process of migration of families and children to the UK on a large scale. It led to a number of travel agencies appearing unexpectedly in and around Bharuch providing passport services, visas, plane tickets, etc.

Ahmed Bajibhai Sarnarwala, who arrived in 1960, describes the living conditions existing in those days in Britain. This sounds unbelievable but it is very true. He remembers that, when he landed at Heathrow Airport, the airport looked like a deserted Nabipur (a village near Bharuch) railway station. Bajibhai, a newcomer from India landed there with some bedding on his shoulder and three pounds sterling of foreign exchange in his pocket. He did not have a proper knowledge of either spoken or written English, which started creating problems right from the moment he set foot on this foreign land. He had in his pocket the address of a Bharuchi Vahora Patel living in Preston, Lancashire, given to him in India by someone, but he did not know how to proceed there from Heathrow Airport. Before he departed from India, he was advised to hire a taxi from the airport to Euston main line railway station to catch a train to Preston. Since Bajibhai did not have enough knowledge of the English language to communicate, he was feeling very nervous. He did not know how to hire a taxi and had no idea about either Euston railway station or the departure time of a train to Preston or how far Euston was from Heathrow. To add to his misery, the weather on that day was very cold and awful, which he had never experienced in India.

In spite of these problems and difficulties, Bajibhai, just like a number of other adventurous Bharuchi Vahora

Patels, braved the situation and somehow managed to find his way to Euston and from there to Preston.

### **Standard of living, work and life style of Bharuchi Vahora Patels settled in the UK in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s:**

Musa Hasan, originally of Umaraj, who migrated to Britain in 1960 and at present lives in Bolton, relates his experience of those early years, which give us a very good picture of the conditions that existed then and the enormous difficulties and hardships the first settlers from the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community went through.

Musa Hasan tells us that during the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, the life in Britain was not that easy as was visualised from five thousand miles away in India. The new comers were faced with numerous difficulties relating to:

- a) Accommodation;
- b) Food, as they were not accustomed to eating English food;
- c) Communication difficulties, due to the lack of knowledge of the English language;
- d) Arduous working conditions;
- e) Severe weather, i.e. several inches of snow, ice, hail stones, freezing cold spells and biting northerly winds.

Initially, people had come without their families. Only a handful of Bharuchi Vahora Patels owned their houses by getting a mortgage from either the Local Authorities or the Building Societies. They were required to pay cumulative interest on the loan, which was very high. Those Bharuchi Vahora Patels who owned their house were repaying their mortgage by charging rent to those

who were living in that house. Normally, the weekly rent charged by the landlord was £1. The houses owned by Bharuchi Vahora Patels were over-crowded because, apart from a few exceptions, the majority of them wanted to live together for obvious reasons.

During our survey, Usman Haji who lives in Bolton, recalling his memories said that at one time 25 people lived in one old terraced house in Bolton that was owned by a Vahora nick named Little Patel of Ikher. Imagine 25 people living in a 2 bedroom house! It shows the difficulties that the first batch of Vahora migrants had to put up with in those early days of settlement. It would be unthinkable for our present young generation to live in the conditions in which their fathers, grandfathers or great grandfathers lived.

Overcrowding was not the only problem. Nearly 95 per cent of the houses where Bharuchi Vahora Patels were living had no bathroom and the toilets were outside in the back yard. During the winter, due to several inches of snow and freezing temperatures, the water in the pipe connecting to the toilet cistern would freeze and people had to leave a kerosene lamp on overnight inside the water closet to prevent this from happening.

Having no bathrooms in the houses, they had to go to the town centre to a Public Bath and this would mostly be on Saturday afternoon, as people were working from Monday to Friday. Everybody was required to pay a Half Crown (two and a half shillings) and had to wait their turn in a queue. None of the Bharuchi Vahora Patels had any transport, i.e. a car or a van of their own, so they had to walk nearly three quarters of a mile to go to the Public Bath in all sorts of weather conditions.

Some resourceful Bharuchi Vahora Patels were looking

for a solution to this weekly problem. Although nearly 90 per cent of them were semi-literate or did not have an education further than the boundaries of their village school, they were neither daft nor unintelligent. Very soon, they started converting the coal bunker in the backyard of their house into a bathroom and, with a gas geyser installed, the problem was soon solved. This make believe bunker bathroom not only served the purpose but also saved them the payment of a Half Crown, which was a considerable amount in those days compared to their very low weekly earnings.

Because of the damp overcrowded houses and malnutrition coupled with working in cotton mills, many people became victims of TB (tuberculosis). According to the information provided by Bashir Chhadat of Bolton, the Blair's Hospital in Bromley Cross and Wilkinson Sanatorium on Belmont Road were full of TB patients who were Asians.



*Blair's Hospital*



*Wilkinson's Sanatorium*

Very few houses had black and white television sets (colour televisions were not yet marketed). In fact people did not have much spare time to sit in front of the box and watch any programmes. There were no landline telephones where Asians were living, so Bharuchi Vahora Patels got news from their homeland through either letters received from their relatives or in some

cases old newspapers sent by someone from India. Urgent messages of serious illness or death in the family back home were received by telegram. Such telegrams were in English, so they had to be translated by an English knowing person.

There were no masjids in existence, so those who wanted to offer prayers did so in the houses that they lived in. In the early days, people were hardly aware of Ramadan or Eid. Later on, as the migrant Muslim population of Bharuchi Vahora Patels, Surti Sunni Vahoras and Pakistanis increased, Town Halls were booked for Eid prayers. During the summer time, if the weather was good, Eid prayers were held in public parks as well.

Elderly Bharuchi Vahora Patels who came to Britain in the 1960s tell us that, in those days, there was a strong sense of brotherhood among the Bharuchi Vahora Patels who always supported each other. They provided accommodation and food free of charge to the newcomers (whether he was a relative or from the same village or not) until he found a job and started earning some money. They even lent him money to send home to pay off debts or if his family were in dire need. They even took him to various factories to find a job. Thus, the first generation of Bharuchi Vahora Patels in Britain survived and settled through wonderful comradeship and mutual help. They toiled in factories during the weekdays, but put on a suit and necktie at the weekends and partied at friends' houses.

**Food:**

Nearly 99 per cent of Bharuchi Vahora Patels did not know how to cook. This was because they were never required to prepare a meal back at home in India. There, everything connected with cooking and other household

chores was done by women. Here in Britain they were in a different situation. Bharuchi Vahora Patels were on their own, as their families were still in India and they were required to cook food themselves. It was a problem. Some did not even know how to use a gas cooker or its oven because the village they had come from did not have gas cookers. For them it was an unknown entity. To add to their misery, the items for the type of food they were habituated to eat like *Bhinda*, *Daal*, *Khichadi* and *Kadhee*, *Mung*, *Tuver*, etc were not available and neither was the halal meat. So these earlier migrants had to make do with simple bread, butter, beans, eggs and potatoes.

Chickens were available but, because they were not halal, they were not acceptable to Bharuchi Vahora Patels. Soon, they found a way to overcome this difficulty. In those days, milk was delivered to the door step by a milkman. They used the services of the milkman to find out where the poultry farm was, where they could go to buy some live chickens and do the halal slaughter. This was arranged and soon they were all enjoying the soft, juicy hens and baby chickens of Britain.

Buying chicken was no problem. But buying a *margho* (cock) posed a problem, as they did not know the English word for it. Trying to explain this to the poultry farm owner, one Bharuchi Vahora Patel came up with the magic term “chicken husband”, which made the owner burst into laughter but the message got through and they ended up buying what they wanted – a *margho!*

### **Shopping:**

Not knowing the English names for the items they wanted to buy did not pose much of a problem for these

early settlers because, when out shopping, they would normally point at the items displayed in the shop or the market. The only difficulty would arise if the item was not on display when sign language would be used to get the message through to the shopkeeper.

**Work and working conditions:**

During the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s the weather, especially in winter, was atrocious. People had to go to work in freezing temperatures. Most of them worked night shifts in mills. It was hard work – doffing, spinning, weaving, winding, cleaning, packing etc. No Vahora owned a car, so people used buses to go to work.

The wages in the mills and factories were very low. Normally it was in the region of £7 to £10 gross per week. Therefore, after the compulsory deduction of National Insurance Contributions and Income Tax, the net earning was only around £6 to £8 per week.

Musa Hasan of Umaraj recalls those difficult days and tells us that he came to Britain in January 1960, took up work in a carpet factory in Kendal in the Lake District and worked seven days a week. While working there, he lived with an English family as a paying guest.

The well-known Courtaulds Limited of Preston in Lancashire, which produced man-made fibres, was the only mill paying around £12 to £14 a week to its workers, but this was because there they had to work with acid, which used to cause blisters in their hands. To improve the poor working conditions and wages, in 1964, the first workers strike in the history of Courtaulds Mill was led by Abdullah Patel Azad, a graduate from the University of Bombay, residing in Preston and originally from Sitpon.



*Courtaulds Rayon Spinning Factory*

When Courtaulds could not compete with the man-made fibre producing foreign countries, it closed its production line in Preston in 1979. Around 2,600 workers lost their jobs, of which a large number of workers were Asians, including very many Bharuchi Vahora Patels.

**Arrivals of Bharuchi Vahora Patel families in Britain:**

By the late 1970s, quite a few Bharuchi Vahora Patels had bought cheaper houses in mostly run-down areas. In such areas, the houses would cost between £200 to £500 depending upon their condition and the amenities they had, like inside toilets or bathrooms.

It was around this period when families started arriving from India. The first generation of Vahora women also faced immense difficulties in those days. As mentioned before, there was no bathroom or toilet inside the house, no washing machine, no instant hot water. Disposable nappies did not exist then, which meant that the cotton



towel nappies they used had to be washed by hand, using cold water. In addition to the tedious household chores, they had to work in a mill or factory to add to the family income.

### **Establishment of masjids**

As soon as Bharuchi Vahora Patels became self-sufficient, their first concern was to establish masjids to pray and madrasas to provide Islamic education for their children. They called Islamic teachers from India. Gradually the first generation of enthusiastic and religious-minded Bharuchi Vahora Patels through their own hard earned money founded an excellent network of Islamic institutions in Britain. It is Bharuchi Vahora Patels who made a major contribution, financial and otherwise, in the establishment of the very first Darul Uloom of Lancashire in Ramsbottom, Bury.

### **Education:**

Bharuchi Vahora Patels also started thinking in terms of the secular education of their children in an Islamic environment. The first movement for Muslim faith schools was started by Abdullah Patel Azad of Sitpon who lived in Bradford, Yorkshire. Inspired by this, Bharuchi Vahora Patels took the lead and started single sex high schools for girls only in Blackburn and Bolton with little knowledge of school management and extremely meagre resources. Both of these schools have now become Government grant aided schools.

This semi-literate but sincere and practical first generation of Bharuchi Vahora Patels in Britain worked extremely hard and showed great insight in paving the path for our future generations in this country. They sacrificed their time and hard earned money to found institutions that are needed to preserve our faith and our identity. What they have achieved with little education

and very limited resources in a foreign land is simply amazing and awe-inspiring. It must be acknowledged by the younger generation who should strive to build on it and take it further.

In the 1970s, when the families came, they were accompanied by children of a very young age. These children went to schools where the medium of instruction was English. Because of this language problem, they could not make much progress in their studies. The young Bharuchi Vahora Patels of the second generation normally completed their high school education and took up jobs.

During the premiership of Margret Thatcher, the cotton mills closed down and many Bharuchi Vahora Patels lost their jobs. This compelled them to look for other avenues. Some of them started their own businesses. Quite a few became owners of corner shops and more enterprising Bharuchi Vahora Patels started curtain, garment and shoe manufacturing factories. Sufi Manubari was the first Bharuchi Vahora Patel to open an Asian Take Away, selling hot samosas and pakoras, on Halliwell Road in Bolton.

Bharuchi Vahora Patels had come to Britain for a better standard of living. This was achieved by the second generation through hard work. The women also contributed by working at home, mostly as sewing machinists. Sewing garments at home became like a cottage industry and increased their household income, which made it possible for them to buy their own houses and furnish them with carpets, fridge-freezer, sofa sets, television, vacuum cleaner, washing machine, etc.

Instead of becoming selfish with the increased prosperity, they extended a helping hand to their poor

relatives in India. Not only that, they donated money to charities to help widows and orphans in the community and those others who were in desperate need. They also supported a number of educational and welfare projects like hospitals, masjids, madrasas, *musafirkhanas* (guest houses), schools, water works, etc. The incessant flow of their generous donations has changed the condition of the villages back home in more than one respect.

The British Bharuchi Vahora Patels prospered in many ways. The third generation born and brought up in Britain inherited the wealth and prosperity which was the result of the hard work of their parents and grandparents.

Bharuchi Vahora Patels have been in Britain for over half a century now. It is important to know how the first migrants came to this country, what hardships they faced and how they achieved prosperity through their hard work, frugal living and wise money management. It is essential for the younger generation to know about our past and to appreciate the sacrifices and the endeavours made by the previous generations to reach where we are today.

The aim of this book is to make our younger generation aware of our roots and enable them to:

- see and understand where we stand today in terms of educational, economic, political, social, religious and cultural progress;
- become familiar with our social values;
- identify our social problems and become active for their solution;
- identify themselves with the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community and become part of it;
- internalise our values and traditions;

- adjust themselves with the social structure and make their own contribution to the well-being and development of our people;
- and finally, to ensure that our identity as Bharuchi Vahora Patels is well preserved and not lost in the years to come as has happened in the case of other communities settled in various countries of Europe.

Bharuchi Vahora Patels are mainly populated in the textile towns such as Blackburn, Dewsbury, Bolton, Lancaster, Manchester and Preston in the north of England. Considerable number of Bharuchi Vahora Patels resides in Birmingham, Leicester and London, with a small number in Chorley, Coventry and Nuneaton. With the help of our friends and social workers, we have collected some useful information in respect of the past and present status of our people in these **towns and cities**.



Because of the limited resources and the lack of a network, the information presented here may be incomplete or may appear to be not accurate.

In addition to the facts related to our past and present, we have also attempted a study of the problems facing our community in Britain. Through a questionnaire, we tried to find out how the youngsters of our community perceive our problems and how they think these can be resolved. We had sent a questionnaire to a large number of young people, but very few responded. Because of the small sample, we do not consider that this is a representative survey of our problems. Nevertheless, we feel that this will give Bharuchi Vahora Patels some indication as to the nature of our problems and the ways of solving them.

Our friends and social workers have painstakingly collected the information regarding the Bharuchi Vahora Patels settled in various places. This information is presented in the chapters that now follow.

## 5.1

### BHARUCHI VAHORA PATELS IN LONDON

*Ismail M Khunawala*

#### **Early Settlers:**

According to the information available from the reliable sources, Ahmed Patel alias Belshi of Vansi arrived in Preston, Lancashire in 1957 and later on, from there, he moved to London. Soon after, in the beginning of 1958 Mastan Bangalawala of Tankaria followed the same trend. He also initially came to Preston and at a later stage settled in London. Vali Bhoorawala was the next arrival in mid-1958.

In the 1950s and 1960s most of Bharuchi Vahora Patels who migrated to Britain from India initially settled in various towns of either Lancashire or West Yorkshire i.e. Blackburn, Bolton, Dewsbury, Preston, etc.

After staying in these counties for a short while, around the late 1960s many Bharuchi Vahora Patels, whose families were still in India, moved to London. By 1965, some families joined their husbands and settled in various areas of London such as Aldgate East, London West, Paddington and White Chapel. At this stage, almost all of the Bharuchi Vahora Patels were living in rented properties as tenants thinking that, if they had better opportunities of progress or if they felt that life was better in London compared to the north, they will settle down, otherwise go back to Lancashire or Yorkshire.

As their financial status improved, they started buying their own houses in the Eastham, Forest Gate, Ilford, Leytonstone, Manor Park, Seven Kings and Stamford Hill areas of London. Today, Bharuchi Vahora Patels are

found in almost all parts of Britain's capital and nicely settled there with their businesses and families.

### **Employment and Business Ventures:**

During the period mentioned above London had an acute shortage of man-power in various sectors and, therefore, Bharuchi Vahora Patels who had moved to the Capital had no difficulty in getting jobs in the British Rail Main Line, Dagenham Car Factory, London Underground, Royal Mail, etc.

Those Bharuchi Vahora Patels with qualifications in higher education found employment in Banks as well as in Government Department's like the Inland Revenue and Social Services Departments.

Some enterprising Bharuchi Vahora Patels soon started their own garment manufacturing factories. Others initially started their own businesses with small shops and market stalls. Today, in 2011, if we look at the picture, it appears bright in the sense that Bharuchi Vahora Patels are now the owners of big stores, restaurants and warehouses supplying various commodities and services. They have grown economically stronger themselves and are also making important contribution to the overall economy of Britain.

Among the big businessmen of the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community in London are: Chamadia brothers, Chunia brothers, Salim Chamadia and Saleh brothers of Manubar; Saeed Gafoor of Vadva; Abdul Samad Meza family, Yakub Dalal, Seth brothers and Kothia brothers of Kantharia; Nekiwala and Khota families of Karmad; Ghogha brothers, Lola family, Akuji brothers, and Chhabu family of Nabipur; Ibrahim Desai, Dasu brothers, Mamuji brothers, Inayat Delawala, Janab family and Rangooni Brothers of Tankaria; Gulam

Bajibhai of Dayadara; Amin Umarji Patel of Achhod; Ayyub and Ali families of Argama; Saleh and Udat families of Zanghar; Bhad and Bhaiji families of Umaraj; Dakri family of Valan; and Sadiq Bootwala and Mukardam Patel brothers of Palej.

### **Education:**

Bharuchi Vahora Patels of London have made remarkable progress in education due to the valuable guidance of the educated people who had migrated to Britain from India. A U Patel of Tankaria is one of them who moved to London from Lancaster to take up a job in one of the Government Departments in line with his educational qualifications. Later on, he served as a teacher and guided numerous youngsters of the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community living in London to professional careers. His daughters Bilkis and Kulsum are the first Bharuchi Vahora Patel female graduates and fully qualified trained teachers in Britain. They have both been teaching in primary schools in London for a number of years now. The honour of becoming the first female Bharuchi Vahora Patel teacher in the mainstream educational system in Britain goes to Bilkis.

The rate of higher education is greater among the young people of today. There are professionals occupying high positions in London. **Dr Alimuddin Zumla**, whose parents were from Haldarva, is a professor in the Communicable Diseases Department of the Medical School of the University College London. He has earned great reputation as a researcher. In September 2011, he was presented with the prestigious India International Foundation Award for Medicine of 2010 by the High Commissioner of India, Mr Rajesh Prasad, for his outstanding contribution and the research he carried out in collaboration with the World Health Organization in the field of communicable diseases like TB and HIV.





Shamim Ismail Khunawala is the first Bharuchi Vahora Patel woman to obtain a Degree in Medicine from the prestigious Oxford University of London. Shabana Inayat Delawala and Shahzad Inayat Delawala, Junaid Tilu, the daughter of Shafi Pavadia, the daughter of Khushi Poshi and Bapuji (all from Tankaria) are also qualified doctors. The other doctors are Yusuf Patel Vadwawala, Irfan Abdul Chhabu, Anis Daud Booth, Shoeb Mohsin Bhad and Nizamuddin Gheesa. According to the current available information, there are at least 15 Bharuchi Vahora Patel medical doctors in London.

### **Institutions:**

In every locality where Bharuchi Vahora Patels live, there are masjids and madrasas. There are a few *Hafiz* (people who have memorized the Holy Qur'an).

Mufti Mustufa Patel of Tankaria runs a **Darul Uloom** with an attached secondary school. Mr Hanif Khankhara runs a primary school in Forest Gate. Ilford Islamic Centre is also managed by Bharuchi Vahora Patels.



Bharuch Muslim Medical and Welfare Trust, UK was founded in 1993. Through its network of Trustees, they raise funds every year for the treatment of poor patients at the Welfare Hospital in Bharuch. Currently Mr Yakub Dalal of Kantharia is the President, Yacoob Mank of Tankaria is the Secretary and Ali Sitponwala is the Treasurer of this Trust.

There are about 700 Bharuchi Vahora Patel families in London. The total Bharuchi Vahora Patel population is about 5,000. There are numerous organizations here. Well known amongst them is the Indian Muslim Federation, which was originally formed as the **Indian Muslim Organization, Great Britain** back in 1969 with the inspiration of Yakub Patel Sarodi (Advocate). At a meeting held under his chairmanship in Hyde Park's Speakers Corner on 5 October 1969, it was decided to organize a protest march and hand over a petition to the Indian High Commissioner to stop anti-Muslim riots in India. This event was reported by many British newspapers and also on BBC radio with echoes in the

Indian Parliament. Since then, this organization has been making slow but steady progress and fighting for Muslim causes whenever the need arises. Most of the members of the Indian Muslim Federation are Bharuchi Vahora Patels. Ahmed Nekiwala and Saeed Chunya hold prominent positions in the organization.



The young people form their own clubs and take an active part in the games of football and cricket. Cricket tournaments are held and trophies are given to the winning teams and individual players. League cricket club activities were first started by **Haroon Chamadia**, Sadiq Bootwala, Late Idris Chunya and Abdullah Chabu. There are some well-known league cricketers in our community.

Bashir Khoda, Dilawar Khoda, Yusuf Bapuji, Sadik Banglawala, Yakub Karim, Iqbal Kayam, Majeed Kagdi, all from Tankaria, Ayub Valli of Vadva, Mustaq Chamadiya of Manubar, Babu and Bhana of Umraj have created history by becoming members of **Plashet Park Bowling Club**. They are the first Bharuchi Vahora Patels and Asians to become members of this club in its history of over 100 years.

In a recent bowling competition, **Bashir Khoda** of Tankaria became the winner of the trophy.



### **Public Life**

Bharuchi Vahora Patels of London are actively involved in politics. Among the councillors elected in the Newham Borough of London are Rustam Talati of Vorasamni, Firoza, the daughter of Ahmad Nekiwala of Karmad, Saleem Patel of Dahegam and Soyeb Patel of Mahudhala. Our younger generation has thus made inroads in the political life of this country and we hope and pray that one day they will find their way to the British Parliament as our MPs.



**Inayat Yusuf Banglawala** of Valan is a prominent member and media secretary of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). He represents the MCB in talk shows and TV interviews and writes well researched and informative articles about Islam and Muslims in The Times, The Guardian and other national newspapers of Britain.

He is also the founder President of Muslim4UK, which aims to encourage Muslims to take advantage of the democratic traditions of Britain and become more involved in the public life of this country.

Riaz Siraj Patel “Paguthanvi” occupies a high position in the International Directorate of the Justice Department of the Home Office.

Jigar Nabipuri has been associated with C B Patel’s “Gujarat Samachar” and Vipool Kalyani’s “The Opinion”, both published from London.

### **Achievements**

Apart from individual achievements, the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community of London has also implemented collective projects. An example of this is the first Bharuchi Vahora Patel *kabarastan* (cemetery) in Romford, Forest Gate. This is managed voluntarily by Ahmed Kidiya, Ibrahim Namazi, Dawood Kamboliwala, Dawood Thava and Gulam Thakor Nabipuri who have been giving their services for quite some time. May Allah reward them for that.

In this brief write-up, I have not been able to mention all the prominent Bharuchi Vahora Patels of London. I apologise for this. I am grateful to my respected teacher A U Patel, my local friends Babu Kakuji and Yakub Karim for their valuable guidance, help and suggestions.

I thank the editors Dr Adam Ghodiwala, Yacoob Mank and Siraj Patel “Paguthanvi” for encouraging me to carry out this survey of Bharuchi Vahora Patels in London and prepare this brief article for their book.

## 5.2 BHARUCHI VAHORA PATELS IN LEICESTER *Yusuf Sidat*

### **Early settlers**

In 1955, Isa Adam Patel of Hinglot first came to Coventry and later on settled in Leicester. In 1956, Ismail Patel Khandali of Vagra and Ismail Muhammad Vali of Zaghadia had also come to Coventry. In 1957, Abdullah Buma of Karmad first arrived in Dewsbury and then moved to Leicester. Isa Debar of Karmad and Hafiz Abdus-Salam of Ikher also arrived in 1957. Valli Taylor, Musa Karmada and Adam Mallu came in 1960. In 1961, Dawood Master Kapadia of Tankaria came to Preston and later moved to Leicester. Ibrahim Nathalia of Tankaria came from the Congo via Belgium in 1968. Adam Karmada came to Leicester from Tanzania in the same year. At present, approximately 400 Bharuchi Vahora Patel families reside in Leicester.

### **Occupations**

Bharuchi Vahora Patels in Leicester are mainly engaged in fabrics, garments and textile manufacturing. Some are in the import and export business and others own retail shops. There are Bharuchi Vahora Patels who run restaurants, takeaways and wholesale cash and carry stores.

Among the big manufacturers are Ismail Dakri and family of Valan, Ahmed Adam and Co. of Kahan, Abdurrehman Adam, Ibrahim Mallu and the Nathalia family.

There are eight doctors, six dentists, four opticians, 12 pharmacists, eight accountants, nine teachers, 35 Aalims and 15 other Bharuchi Vahora Patels are in other professions such as solicitors, computer technicians etc.

## **Organizations**

There are 35 masjids, 70 madrasas, five Darul Ulooms and five Muslim schools in Leicester. These are not exclusively managed by Bharuchi Vahora Patels, but they are associated with most of these institutions.

Aysha Desai, daughter of Ibrahim Thakor of Kantharia, was head teacher of the Muslim Girls School of Leicester.

Sheikh Ashraf Mukadam of Sitpon obtained degrees from Darul Uloom, Bury and the Al-Azhar University of Cairo. He is a university lecturer and trustee of Madni High School and Islamic Academy in Leicester.

## **Public Life**

Iqbal Desai of Kavi and Hussein Ismail of Rahadpor are councillors. Late Ibrahim Nathalia was the first secretary of the Bharuch Muslim Medical and Welfare Trust, UK. He was also a founder member of the well-known purpose built Masjid-e-Umar on Evington Road which was completed in 2000 and took 18 months to build. It is a wonderful piece of architecture. Yakub Dassu held various positions in the Leicester Asian Business Association. Maulana Ibrahim Mogra is actively involved in the activities of the Muslim Council of Britain and Leicester Interfaith. He is an advisor to the Government on matters related to the Muslim community in Britain.

### 5.3

## BHARUCHI VAHORA PATELS IN BIRMINGHAM

*Azmat Khandhiya*

### **Early settlers**

Birmingham is the second largest city of the UK. Maulana Muhammad Munawwari, Ismail Suleman and Ahmad Suleman of Rahadpor arrived here in 1962. They were followed by Hafiz Ismail of Tankaria. Today about 45 Bharuchi Vahora Patel families live in Birmingham.

Masjid-e-Ayesha and the attached madrasa are managed by Bharuchi Vahora Patels. Maulana Faruq Khepi is the Imam of the Jame Masjid in Aston, formerly known as the Saddam Hussein Mosque and Hafiz Ahmed of Manubar has been giving his services as an Imam at the **Birmingham Central Masjid**.





Maulana Muhammad Ismail Munawaree is a learned scholar of Islam and very well known amongst all the communities in Birmingham. He has been regularly giving Friday *bayaans* (lectures) at Washwood Heath Road Masjid for a number of years now and delivering the *Juma khutba* (Friday sermon), conducting Juma prayer and giving Qur'an *tafsir* (interpretation) lessons on Saturdays in the same masjid.

### **Occupations**

Azmat Khandhiya of Tankaria and his son are in the design and printing business. Haroon Bhuta and brothers of Tankaria are garment manufacturers and suppliers.

There is one Bharuchi Vahora Patel accountant, two estate agents, one pharmacist and some Bharuchi Vahora Patels are taxi firm owners and drivers.

### **Education**

Two daughters of the Bhuta family of Tankaria are graduates and one is about to complete a degree in dentistry.

The Bharuchi Vahora Patel population in Birmingham is very small. There are no community centres or old people's homes belonging to the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community in Birmingham.

5.4  
BHARUCHI VAHORA PATELS IN  
MANCHESTER / STOCKPORT  
*Ayyub Nabipuri*

**Early settlers**

The most prominent Bharuchi Vahora Patel in Manchester is 78 years old Ismail Kaduji of Nabipur. He was the first in our community to obtain a degree in pharmacy (B. Pharm). A drug inspector in India, he was sent to London in 1960 by the Indian Government to study forensic science. The following year he came to Manchester and was offered a job as a research chemist at Irlam Soap factory. During 1964-65, he found jobs for Vali Hafezi of Kothi-Vantarsa and Ali Aya of Valan and invited them from Bolton to Manchester. Saeed Patel of Nabipur and Yakub Sodawala of Palej came in 1966. Slowly, the number of Bharuchi Vahora Patels increased in Manchester.

Today there are around 40 Bharuchi Vahora Patel families living in Manchester.

**Occupation**

Ismail Kaduji owned for some time a manufacturing plant that produced Dettol soap, cosmetics, toiletries and other beauty products. The first generation Bharuchi Vahora Patels worked in mills and factories. As they settled and progressed, they started their own businesses such as grocery shops, market stalls, newsagents, petrol stations, etc. Known as the King of Pound Stores, Dawood Fozdar of Dayadara and the Sodawala family of Palej own a series of pound shops, which sell all items for just £1 each.

Manchester is well known for its Rusholme Curry Mile. Here on the one mile stretch of Wilmslow Road, there

are no less than 70 restaurants, take aways and kebab houses serving delicious Asian food. This place is always crowded, especially at weekends, by lovers of spicy Asian dishes.

According to one estimate, 65,000 curry lovers frequent this **curry mile**, including university students and young people from the surrounding towns. Some Bharuchi Vahora Patels are also in this business and make a good living out of it.



The young Bharuchi Vahora Patels born in the UK are well educated. There are architects, dentists, pharmacists, solicitors and IT engineers in the community.

### **Organizations**

There is no masjid or madrasa exclusively managed by Bharuchi Vahora Patels. However, they are associated with their local masjids playing active roles. Hafiz (Suba) Ismail Malatagar of Tankaria is in the service of

Cheetham Hill Masjid. There are no facilities or centres started by Bharuchi Vahora Patels for the youth or the elderly people of the community.

There are no Bharuchi Vahora Patels actively involved in politics in Manchester and, therefore, there are no councillors representing the community like in other towns. This is a vacuum that need filling.

## STOCKPORT

### **Early settlers:**

Vali Hafezi of Kothi-Vantarsa moved from Bolton to Stockport. According to the information available, 10 Bharuchi Vahora Patel families are thought to be settled in Stockport.

### **Occupations:**

The first generation of Bharuchi Vahora Patels were mainly factory workers. Then they started their own small businesses and later became wholesale traders. Today in Stockport, among the Bharuchi Vahora Patels, there are two pharmacists, one electrical engineer and three solicitors.

### **Organizations:**

There is one masjid and a madrasa and a community centre as well.

The Asian Heritage Centre in Stockport is managed by Bharuchi Vahora Patels. Keeping in mind the needs of Asian elders, provision has been made for various services that include advice, information, interpreting, light exercises, Asian cookery, dress making, card games, trips and day outs.

5.5  
BHARUCHI VAHORA PATELS IN BOLTON  
*Sufi Manubari*

*Bolton is like a village of Gujarat  
Bolton is a town of mills*

*There is no respite in Bolton  
It's work, work and work all the time*

*In Bolton, there is Isap Abhram  
In Bolton, you find Gangaram*

*Here they screen cowboy movies  
And also Bollywood Ram and Shyam*

*Sufi will never leave Bolton  
He has made it his home*

**Early settlers:**

The above couplets written in the early days of our settlement in Bolton, which started in 1956, describe the life as it was in those days.

Ibrahim Lincon of Sherpura came in 1956 as a student. In 1960, came Ibrahim Little Patel, Musa Vali Patel and Haji Usman Adam of Ikher. Ahmed Musa Bajibhai of Sarnar, Isa Sarpanch of Vahalu and Yakub Bhatia of Sarod also came in 1960. In 1961 came Suleman Jiva and Yakub Natha of Dayadara and Ahmed Khoda-Dilip of Ikher. Musa Hasan of Umraj, Haji Vali Muhammad and Dawood Chandia of Zanghar, Ismail Khenkha and Ali Chhadat of Ikher, Ali Thagia and Ahmed Hakim of Kantharia arrived in 1962. Muhammad Sufi of Manubar and Yakub Bhutawala of Tankaria came in 1963.

In 1962 only three houses were owned by Bharuchi Vahora Patels. These belonged to Little Patel, Yakub Natha and Yusuf Bharuchi. Many newly arrived Bharuchi Vahora Patels stayed with Ismail Jamal of Dahegham as paying guests or lodgers. As their families started to come from India, they settled in Grasmere, Hibbert, Latham and Lena Streets off Blackburn Road and in Harold, Hennon, Horace and Ralph Streets off Halliwell Road. By 1980, Blackburn Road had turned into a Bharuchi Vahora Patel majority area.

### **Religious needs:**

With the arrival of families, the need for a madrasa was felt. In 1962 the Islamic Cultural Centre was founded. A house in Walter Street, which was then occupied by Ali Seth and Yakub Dalal, was bought for a madrasa in 1965. This was closed down, as there was no planning permission to use it as a madrasa.

The first Juma prayer, which was attended by 20 to 25 people, was held in a house at 13 Derby Street. The first Eid prayer was offered in 1964 in the Spinners Hall on St Georges Road, led by Hafiz Adam Matadar of Valan.

The first masjid in the Blackburn Road area was started in 1967 in a terraced house in Latham Street. The pioneers were Yakub Natha, Ahmed Hakim, Vali Mohammad, Ali Thagiya, Hafiz Matadar, Ahmed Jamala, Isap Dada and Bashir Chhadat. This was closed down as there was no planning permission. Thereafter, a building in Canning Street, which was used as the Hesketh Mill offices, was bought and adapted for use as a masjid and madrasa. As the population increased, even this was found too small. This led to the purchase of a huge church building situated in Draycott Street, which at present houses the Taiyabah Masjid and Islamic Education Centre. In 1968,

the building for Zakaria Masjid was bought in Peace Street, off Derby Street. In the course of time, other masjids were founded in the Halliwell and Deane Road areas. Today there are about 15 masjids in Bolton.

The foundation of Islamic education was laid by the early settlers who worked day and night in the cotton mills and donated money from their hard earned weekly wages to establish masjids and madrasas. The Islamic environment we find today is due to their sacrifices and also due to the low-paid services of the Imams and the madrasa teachers, most of whom were sponsored from India by these masjids. The hard work they put in as Imams and teachers-preachers is now paying handsome dividends. They paved the way for our present day young Ulemas and teachers, who after qualifying from the local Darul Uloom, are now looking after the religious needs of our community in towns and cities throughout the UK.

Among the prominent home-grown young Alims are Maulana Dr Mehmood Chandia, who was a lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University and at present head of Islamic Studies at the University of Central Lancashire. Maulana Rashid Ali Sheth is the Imam at Zakaria Masjid and undertakes activities to increase the awareness of Islam among the non-Muslims in Bolton. Mufti Fayyaz Ismail Dayrava has been rendering remarkable services as the Imam of Taiyabah Masjid.

**Maulana Farooq Ismail Samniwala** is actively involved in Islamic activities in Bolton. He has been a governor of the Valley Primary school for 22 years and a Muslim Chaplain at the Royal Bolton Hospital for 21 years. In recognition of his community services, he was honoured with an invitation to meet the Queen when she visited Bolton in 2009.



### **Occupations:**

Initially, Bharuchi Vahora Patels of Bolton were textile mill workers. Usman Haji of Ikher opened the first grocery shop in Charles Rupert Street. Slowly Bharuchi Vahora Patels started their own businesses. Dilaver Vali of Dasan, Jiva Brothers of Dayadara, Abdur Razzak Munshi of Nabipur, Fazal Bhutawala of Tankaria, Munshi Brothers of Sarod and German Brothers of Valan started their own garment and curtain manufacturing factories.

Yakub Accountant and his brother Anwar Ibrahim originally from Maakan, near Palej, own the Cohens chain of Chemists in Lancashire. They are the most successful Bharuchi Vahora Patel businessmen in the North West of England. They have generously contributed to such local community projects as the



Bolton Muslim Girls School and the building of the new Zakaria Masjid. Iqbal Bhutawala runs Asif Iqbal Pharmacy Ltd on St Helens Road. Riaz Vali runs an on-line pharmacy called NATCOL.

Dilaver Vali and Mustak Vali of Dasan have their own factories making garments and nan-bread. Dilaver Vali is a committed person who loves community work and wants to see his community becoming more educated and prosperous. He is a founder member of Bolton Muslim Girls High School and one of the founders of the well-known Munshi Manubarwala Educational Complex in Bharuch.

Ahmed Patel of Kamboli runs the Aleef chain of newsagent's shops and petrol stations. Ibrahim Dalal of Kantharia has a large poultry business. Adam Dawda of Zanghar runs a wholesale business of motor spare parts. He too is involved in social welfare activities. Hanifbhai and sons of Kantharia run Barakat Cash and Carry on Derby Street and in Preston. Yakub Zangharwala and Sons run Draycott Street Cash and Carry, mainly selling Asian grocery.

Apart from these, many Bharuchi Vahora Patels own chemist, grocery, newsagent and optician shops. Some are running garages, petrol stations and taxi firms. Some others are working as postal officers and drivers in the Royal Mail, while others run their own sub Post Offices.

Considering the population, very few Bharuchi Vahora Patels have found jobs in the Town Hall or Government departments. Of the few who have, Anees Mank is a Chartered Environmental Health Practitioner at Wigan Council.

**Muhammad Iqbal Essa** is HM Principal Specialist Inspector at the Health and Safety Executive in Manchester. Being a JP, he also performs his duties as a Magistrate.



Yasmin Umarji was honoured with the Bolton Diversity Award in 2005. She was Chairperson of the Asian Resource Centre for ten years. At present she is Senior Area Achievement Officer in the Education Department at Bradford. Yasmin Ali, daughter of Yakub Bapuji of Tankaria is a Commercial Relationship Manager at Lloyds TSB Bank.

There are highly qualified Bharuchi Vahora Patel professionals working as accountants; chemical, civil and computer engineers; dentists; doctors; pharmacists; solicitors; and teachers.



**Imran Ismail Hakim** of Kantharia has earned a nationwide reputation as a star of the BBC's *Dragon's Den*, *Innovator* and *Young Entrepreneur* and also as an Ambassador for Enterprise and Innovation for his invention of the iTeddy.

There are many Bharuchi Vahora Patel doctors in Bolton. Among them are Farzana Sharif Thagia of Tankaria; Salim Ibrahim Natha (ophthalmic surgeon), Liyaqat Ibrahim Natha and Maqsood Ibrahim Natha of Dayadara; Abdur-Rauf Munshi, Sarfaraz Munshi, Arif Munshi, Ismail Gulam Vadiwala and Surayya Gulam Vadiwala of Nabipur; Javed Buksh of Kamboli; Farhana and Sumayya (paediatric registrar) Dilaver Vali of Dasan; Nargis and Zainulabedin Siraj Patel of Paguthan; Noorjahan Vali Sagir, Rehana Ali (gynaecologist), Zaheda A Gafoor of Kothi-Vantarsa and Talha Ilyas Patel. Shamim Adam of Tankaria is a registered homeopath. Firoza Ismail Jiva is a well-known dentist.

Ismail Tailor of Achhod, Salim Bangalawala of Tankaria, Anis and Arif Abdul Khoda of Ikher are pharmacists.

Hasan Jiva of Dayadara, Hazra Yakub Khoda of Tankaria, Atiqa Dilaver Vali of Dasan, Yusuf Hafiz Yakub Maka of Sitpon and Tazim Iqbal Amdavadi are solicitors. Habibunnisa Gulam Nabipuri obtained a Degree in Law from the Cambridge University and practises as a corporate lawyer in London. Ishaq Hafiz Yakub Maka is a barrister in London.

Some young Bharuchi Vahora Patels run their own design and printing, website design and estate agency businesses, while some others own grocery shops, take aways and taxi firms.

### **Organizations:**

The Bharuchi Vahora Patels of Bolton have created many Islamic and social institutions. There are a total of nine masjids and madrasas under Bharuchi Vahora Patel management. Bharuchi Vahora Patels took the lead and made huge contributions, both physical and financial, in the establishment of the first Darul Uloom in Ramsbottom, Bury. In the forefront were Ismail Taylor, Yakub and Adam Mogra, Yakub Bhatia, Dilaver Vali, Bashir Chhadat, Ismail Khenkha and others.

Darul Uloom Bolton was founded with the inspiration and *duaa* (prayers) of Mufti Saeed Ahmed Palanpuri, Shaikh-ul-Hadith, at the world renowned Darul Uloom Deoband. Initially, the pioneers were Qari Ismail Samniwala, Qari Yakub Nanji, Dilaver Vali and Adam Rokad who were joined by Muhammad Munshi, Yusuf Bhailok, Arif Vaza and Ayyub Matliwala. This Darul Uloom campus is now located in Willows Lane and includes a High School and Sixth Form College.

Bolton Muslim Girls' High School was founded in 1987. The founders, to name a few, were Dilaver Vali of Dasan, Adam Rokad of Valan, Yakub Musa of Karmad, Ibrahim Natha of Dayadara, Ahmed Kamboliwala, Vali Diveli of Valan, Yakub Bhutawala of Tankaria, Gulam Nabipuri and others. The School started with only 23 girls paying just a nominal tuition fee. It is now state funded with a strength of over 450 girls. In its early days, Yacoob Mank gave his services as an administrator while Hasan Issat was the first head teacher, followed

by Dr Adam Ghodiwala and Idris Patel. At present Mubarak Patel is the head teacher of the school.

Yakub Patel of Cohens Chemists and Adam Dawda efficiently run Essa Academy in Bolton.

There are some Community Centres managed by Bharuchi Vahora Patels, but apart from wedding ceremonies and wedding dinners, regrettably no other social or cultural activities are taking place at these centres on a regular basis. There are some private wedding halls also serving the need of the community.

Bharuchi Vahora Patels were in the forefront of the creation of the Bolton Council of Mosques (BCoM). Maulana Muhammad Adam Rokad gave his services as the Chairman and Secretary of BCom for almost nine years. The organization made remarkable progress during his tenure. His efforts resulted in an MRI scan facility for Muslim dead bodies, which can be used instead of a post-mortem. He also made a remarkable contribution to community cohesion in Bolton. He is now teaching at Darul Uloom, Bolton.

Another organization is the Asian Elders Resource Centre which is a specialized service provider for older Asian people living within Bolton Borough. Bharuchi Vahora Patels have been actively involved in its activities since its inception. Anis Haroon Patel is the present Chairman of this organization.

Inayat Umarji (Buchya) has been doing excellent work as Children and Young People Project Manager at BCoM. Muhammad Hanif Ali runs Hibbert Street Community Centre, organizing various training programmes, social events and activities for the women and young people of the area.

### **Public Life:**

Political awareness is increasing among Bharuchi Vahora Patels in Bolton. Muhammad Hanif Ali of Ikher, Vali Bux of Pariej and Iqbal Patel were local councillors.



At present, **Safrana Bashir-Ismail**, Hanif Darvesh and Ismail Theba are Labour Councillors. Idris Ali Sheth is an active member of the Labour party. He played a major role in obtaining state funding for Bolton Muslim Girls School.

### **Art and Literature:**

Bolton is the main hub of Gujarati literary activities in Britain. The very first Gujarati Mushaira (poetry reading) in the history of the UK was held in the Spinners Hall, Bolton in 1966 in honour of the internationally renowned visiting poet “Bekar” of the Bharuch District. Other poets who were present and took part in this historical Gujarati Mushaira were Kadam Tankarvi, Mahek Tankarvi, Sufi Manubari and Anjum Valodi.

In 1970 the Gujarati *Sahitya Mandal* (Literary Organization) was founded at Kadam Tankarvi’s residence in Preston. Mahek Tankarvi and Sufi Manubari were its founder members. In 1973 the famous Gujarati poet Shekhadam Abuwala visited Britain from Germany and he renamed the Gujarati Sahitya Mandal to the Gujarati Writers Guild, UK. At present, Mahek Tankarvi of Bolton is its President and Siraj Patel “Paguthanvi” is its Secretary. The other Gujarati poets in Bolton are Dr Adam Tankarvi, Sufi Manubari, Haroon Kothikar and Pathik Sitponvi. These poets organise annual mushairas and also take part in the mushaira events held in other parts of Britain.

**Adam Tankarvi** is a well-known poet and writer. Besides some books, he has also published eight collections of ghazals and poems. In August 2011, he was honoured with the very prestigious Kalapi Award by the Indian National Theatre in Mumbai, India. He is the first and only Bharuchi Vahora Patel to receive such a honour in the field of Gujarati poetry and literature. He has been invited to participate in international Mushairas in Canada, Muscat, Sharjah and the USA and his poetic creations have always been acclaimed.



In the words of the historian Makrand Maheta, the Bharuchi Vahora Patels' contribution in the preservation and development of the Gujarati language and literature here in Britain is very remarkable indeed!

Farook Ughradar, son of Aziz Tankarvi, has established his own printing enterprise, Hot Print Design, and publishes an ethnic minority community news magazine called "BritAsian".

In 1995, when Radio Bolton was launched, Siraj Patel "Paguthanvi", having 20 years' experience working for

the BBC, was appointed to be the presenter and producer of the Asian programme.

Besides literature, Sufi Manubari and Yakub Zangharvi have an interest in art and paintings. As amateur painters, they have produced some landscape and modern art paintings. Sufi Manubari has produced some 20 landscape paintings whereas Yakub Zangharvi has produced about 40 such paintings. During a visit to India in 2011, he visited Delhi where he presented one of these paintings to the All India Congress President Sonia Gandhi and the other, with an artistic portrayal of the map of India, to the President of India Pratibha Patil.

### **Sports:**

The favourite games of the Bharuchi Vahora Patel youth in Bolton are cricket and football. There are quite a few Bharuchi Vahora Patel **cricket teams** and, every year, tournaments are organised during the summer time. The winning teams and individual players are awarded trophies in the annual programmes held specially for this purpose. Many of our teams play in the Bolton Association. However, these teams have not yet found a place in the well-known Deane and Derby Cricket Club due to one reason or the other. Inayat Pirbhai of Karmad acts as an umpire in the Bolton League cricket matches.





## 5.6

### BHARUCHI VAHORA PATELS IN BLACKBURN

*Imtiaz Patel • Babar Bambusari*

#### **Early Settlers:**

Bharuchi Vahora Patels who came to Blackburn before 1960 include Adam Isap, Adam Karbhari of Segva, Ali Umarji of Varedia, Ibrahim Isa of Manubar and Mohamed Bagas of Paguthan.

Bharuchi Vahora Patels who came during 1961 and 1962 include Abdullah Adam Patel and Vali Chand of Tham; Gulam Natha of Segva; Ahmed Biradar and Gani of Manubar; Abdul Bhikha (Chanchad) of Varedia; Ismail Ola of Manch; Ahmed Khonat, Ismail Ghela, Adam Many, Gafoor Many, Muhammad Musa and Vali Dhudhwala of Sitpon; Muhammad of Hinglot; Ibrahim Muhammad of Bambusar; Musa Ibrahim of Zanghar; Ahmed Vanka of Karmad; Ismail Jaliwala of Nabipur; Vali Isap of Dahegam; Adam Ibrahim and Ahmed Sarodia of Pariej; Abdul Master of Paguthan; Ahmed Unchikunchi of Valan; and Muhammad of Chanchvel.

#### **Occupations:**

Among the Bharuchi Vahora Patel doctors are Muhammad Ibrahim Bux Patel of Ikher and his son Dr Zuber Bux; Muhammad Iqbal Bux and Usman Musa Bux of Bambusar; and Dr Afinwala of Nabipur. Naeemunnisa Babar Bambusari is an optician; Altaf Haji Musa Natha of Segva and Khandaliwala are dentists. Mufti Abdul Hamid is the head teacher and Iqbal Bux of Bambusar is the deputy head teacher of the state funded Tauheedul Islam Girls' School. There are also accountants, police officers and solicitors among Bharuchi Vahora Patels.

Many Bharuchi Vahora Patels have their own businesses. Yakub Khanjara of Manubar runs a

wholesale and retail grocery business. Gulam Sheth (Bhikhi) of Sherpura has a cash and carry of building materials. Yakub Golita is a supplier of building and heating materials. There are other cash and carry stores such as Barakat and Raja and sons. Rizwan food store in Altom Street is the oldest Asian grocery store. There are a number of corner shops of Asian and English grocery. There are travel agents and newsagents. Musa Natha and Bashir Segwawala are major building contractors. Some Bharuchi Vahora Patels own chemists and petrol stations. Some are in the catering business. There are rows and rows of ladies fabric shops here like the Uzma Boutique. Some of these are owned by Bharuchi Vahora Patels. These shops are always crowded with local shoppers and fashion lovers from the surrounding towns.

Many Bharuchi Vahora Patels are electricians, joiners and plumbers.

### **Organizations:**

There are about ten masjids and madrasas under Bharuchi Vahora Patel management. There is a Markaz off London Road which is the Tablighi Dawah Centre for Lancashire. Raza Masjid in Balaclava Street and the Mohaddis-e-Azam Mission run by Dawood Premi of Dayadara also carry out religious services and activities for their members.

Darul Uloom Jamiatul-Ilm Wal-Huda of Blackburn provides Islamic education along with GCSE and A-levels under the leadership and guidance of Abdus Samad Manubari, a Bharuchi Vahora Patel Mufti. In 2009, the Darul Uloom achieved 98.3% GCSE results with Maths and English as main subjects, which is well above the national average. The credit for this goes to

the Mufti *Sahib* and his colleagues who have been working very hard with sincerity and devotion.

Inspired by Siraj Patel “Paguthanvi”, Late Ibrahim Master Sitponvi and Abdulaziz Zumla, the Tauheedul Islam Girls’ High School was established in Blackburn in 1983. Its founders were Vali Bux of Dayadara, Ismail Master Hingloti, Ibrahim Gisa and Abdul Master of Paguthan. In 2006, it became the first state funded Muslim Girls School of Lancashire. With its excellent GCSE results, Tauheedul Islam Girls’ High School of Blackburn is one of the first 10 outstanding schools in Britain. Misbah Inayat Vali, a student of this school, earned a name for herself and the school in the whole country by obtaining 10 A\* grades in her GCSE examination.

Bharuchi Vahora Patels are actively involved in Bangor and West Brook House Community Centres. There are various activities for young people. Gujarati and Urdu mushairas are also held there regularly.

Shear Brow Community Association was founded in 2010 by Shafi Patel and his colleagues to meet the political and social needs of the community.

Muslim Welfare Institute, founded by Maulana Hanif Doodhwala and friends, serves the victims of man-made and natural disasters through relief and rehabilitation work. They implement projects in Albania, Bangladesh and India to improve the overall condition of the people in those countries by utilising the funds collected in the most constructive and wise manner.

Musa Patel of Haldarva is a social worker who takes an active interest in numerous charitable activities. He is the President of the Raza Masjid. He does a lot of work

in disaster stricken areas by personally going there and distributing goods to the affected people.

Saeed Vali Dahegamwala runs a gymnasium and boxing classes for young people.

### **Public Life:**

**Lord Patel of Blackburn (Adam Ismail Fansiwala)** is the most prominent figure in public life. Born in Karmad, Adam Patel graduated from the M S University of Baroda, India. He migrated to Britain in 1965.



He founded the Indian Workers' Association and became an active member of the Labour Party. He worked with Barbara Castle and Jack Straw for a number of years. In recognition of his faithful services to the Labour Party, he was made a peer in 2000 when he took his place in the House of Lords as Lord Patel of Blackburn. He also led the British Hajj Delegation from 2001 to 2010, successfully providing medical and other

services to British pilgrims. This remarkable achievement is a matter of great pride for our community.

Many Bharuchi Vahora Patels were local councillors in the past, including Arif Vaghat and Imtiaz Patel. At present Suleman Khonat of Sitpon and Muntazir Patel are councillors.

### **Achievements:**

Bharuchi Vahora Patels of Blackburn have also made a considerable contribution to Gujarati literature in Britain. Mohammad Dalal “Sagar” Manubari, Dawood “Premi” Dayadarvi and Naheed Randeri have been more or less connected with the Gujarati Writers’ Guild, UK ever since it was formed in 1973 and have taken part in its mushairas and other literary activities.

In 1973, as part of the Blackburn Brook House Summer Festival, the first, the biggest and very successful Gujarati mushaira was organised in Troy Street Theatre in association with the Community Relations Council, Blackburn. The theatre was full to its capacity and the event was thoroughly enjoyed by the audience. Later on, when the Troy Street Theatre was closed down by the council, the Blackburn Muslim community, under the leadership of Bharuchi Vahora Patels, bought the building and converted it into a masjid.

Babar Bambusari (BA Hons) is the chairman of the Gujarati Writers’ Association, Blackburn and has been single-handedly organising annual Gujarati and Urdu mushairas under its auspices since 1990. He is an executive member of EMDA (Ethnic Minorities Development Association) and has been connected with local mosques and also with Radio Ramadan ever since its inception.

In 1971 **Siraj Patel “Paguthanvi”** was the first Bharuchi Vahora Patel to hold the post of Assistant Community Relations Officer in Blackburn. He and Abdulaziz Zumla, on behalf of Blackburn Borough Council, won the Granada TV Award for an innovative idea to grow Asian vegetables in Britain. During this period, Siraj Patel also served as presenter and producer of the BBC Radio Lancashire programme *Mehfil*.



*Siraj Patel and Fletcher Richardson*

Imtiaz Patel of Varedia was the first Bharuchi Vahora Patel to be employed by the Blackburn Museum and Library Service. He founded the South Asian Gallery in the Blackburn Museum, which was the very first gallery of Asian exhibits in Britain. Imtiaz is actively involved in politics. In 2002 he contested the parliamentary election in the Blackburn constituency as a Lib-Dem party candidate against Jack Straw, the then Home Secretary.

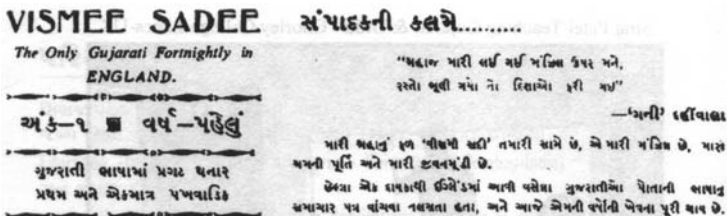
Imtiaz Patel also represents British institutions in India. In 2004, he met the then President of India Dr A P J Abdul Kalam and discussed with him the potential educational links between Britain and India. In 2003, he made a forceful presentation about the anti-Muslim riots of 2002 in Modi's Gujarat before the United Nations'

Ethnic Minorities Human Rights Commission in Geneva. He is the officer in charge of the HIV section of NHS Blackburn with Darwen. He regularly tours Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan to increase the awareness of this deadly disease amongst the people of those countries.

Solicitor Hasan Jiva of Dayadara, Arif Valanwala, son of Babar Bambusari Muhammad Raihan and Saeed Doodha of Pariej run the Ummah television channel, which is viewed in 169 countries. Besides religious programmes, the channel also broadcasts some interesting programmes covering the health, political and social issues affecting the Muslim community.

Salim Sabri of Segva is a well-known qawwali singer. His Zum Zum album of Sufi songs, which he composed with Ustad Zohar Ali Khan of Patiyala, *Gharana* has become very popular. Siraj Ahmed Segvawala is a prominent barrister working with the reputed legal firm Forbes and Partners.

Gujarati journalism in Britain started from Blackburn. In March 1968, Siraj Patel “Paguthanvi” and Abdullah Munshi published a fortnightly magazine called **Vismee Sadee** (Twentieth Century). It was composed in Surat, India and its 1,000 copies were printed in Darwen near Blackburn. They brought out six issues of the magazine under difficult circumstances and, as they did not have Gujarati composition and printing facilities of their own here in Britain, the enterprise had soon to be wound up.



## 5.7

### BHARUCHI VAHORA PATELS IN PRESTON

*Kadam Tankarvi*

#### **Early Settlers:**

In 1957, Muhammad Hasan Patel of Kahan arrived in Preston. Hasan Master of Sansrod, Isa Mirawala of Karmad and Ahmed Veragi of Rajpardi settled in 1958. In 1959, Mastan Bangalawala of Tankaria, Vali Munshi of Pariej and Muhammad Karkun of Paguthan came to settle in Preston. Bharuchi Vahora Patels who came in 1960 included Ahmed Voraji and Ayub Karim of Tankaria, Ibrahim Bhailok and Muhammad Mirawala of Karmad and Ibrahim Badin of Manubar. Today, the Deepdale area in Preston has a majority Bharuchi Vahora Patel population.

#### **Occupations:**

The early migrants worked in factories and mills. Later they started their own factories. The Matliwala brothers and the Vaza brothers of Vahalu started garment factories. The Bhailok family of Karmad are in property development. Usman Salia of Kamboli also deals in properties and has an export-import business. Many Bharuchi Vahora Patels are owners of grocery and newsagent shops.

Among the young generation, there are accountants, dentists, doctors, pharmacists and solicitors. Mohammad Vadiwala's Mohammad and Co; Babar and Co and Bhailok Fielding are reputed solicitors firms.

#### **Organizations:**

There are three masjids and six madrasas managed by Bharuchi Vahora Patels. Bharuchi Vahora Patels are also associated with three community centres.



Masjid-e-Raza is the first purpose built masjid of Preston. Jamia Masjid and Quwwatul Islam Masjid are the two oldest masjids. Masjid-e-Noor and the attached community hall are managed by the Gujarat Sunni Muslim Society. Mubarak Ghantiwala of Nabipur is the President and Hafiz Ismail Khandu of Tankaria is the Secretary. The Noorani Education Centre in the Fulwood area is also under Bharuchi Vahora Patel management. Ismail Vali (Bhagat) of Pariej is its President. Bharuchi Vahora Patels also manage the Madni Centre, which is a part of the Mohaddis-e-Azam mission. Preston Muslim Girls School, which has now become a state funded school, was also established by Bharuchi Vahora Patels.

The Gujarat Muslim Welfare Society, Preston organizes cultural and social events. Muhammad Amirat is the President of this organization and Ibrahim Member of Kothi-Vanterisa is its founder Secretary. Between them, they successfully organise an annual mushaira and community cohesion programme to promote understanding and good community relations. The presence at these events of the local MP, the Mayor, the Councillors, the Chief Executive of the Council and the Police Officers shows how significant they are.

### **Public Life:**

Vali Patel of Ikher was the Leader of Lancashire County Council. Ahmed Saeed of Nabipur was the Manager of the State Bank of India. Yusuf Bhailok, who is known as a millionaire businessman, is a prominent public figure with 25 years' experience of community work. He was the General Secretary of the Muslim Council of Britain for a two year term. Musa Sansrodwala is a social worker and the Vice President of the Bharuch Muslim Medical and Welfare Trust, UK.

## Literature:

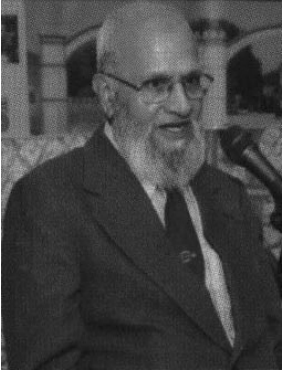
Gujarati literary activity in Britain first started in Preston. In 1970, the Gujarati Sahitya Mandal was formed at the residence of the writer (Kadam Tankarvi).



In 1973, the famous Gujarati poet **Shekhadam Abuwala**, who lived in Germany, happened to visit Preston. He was invited as a guest poet to a monthly meeting and ghazal mehfil of the poet members of the newly formed Gujarati Sahitya Mandal. At his suggestion, the Gujarati Sahitya Mandal was renamed the Gujarati Writers' Guild, UK.

The writer (Kadam Tankarvi) had been its Secretary until 2004. So far, this organization has held over seventy five **mushairas** and other literary events.





In the words of Adam Tankarvi: "I admire **Kadam Tankarvi's** contribution to British Gujarati literature. Since 1961, when he settled in Britain, he has made incessant efforts to keep the Gujarati language alive in Britain. The history of Gujarati literature in Britain cannot be recorded without the mention of Kadam Tankarvi. He has written

ghazals, satires, short stories and provided useful guidance to budding poets." In recognition of his services, he was awarded the *Vishva Manvi Paritoshik* by the Guild Mayor of Preston and was also honoured by the Muslim Society of Preston and the "BritAsian News" magazine.

Kadam Tankarvi's collection of poems *Aavaran* (The Veil) and *Vedna-Sarvedna* (Agony-Anguish) were unveiled in the House of Lords in June 2003. This historical event, organised by Lord Patel of Blackburn, was the very first time that at a Gujarati poetry book was launched in the House of Lords.

Kadam Tankarvi is also a pioneer in the field of publication of Gujarati magazines in Britain. He brought out *Awaaz* (The Voice) in 1970 and when Yakub Patel of Segva started publishing a monthly magazine called *Navayug* (New Era) from Preston, he became its editor with Imtiaz Patel of Blackburn its sub-editor.

Recognizing the contribution made by the Muslim Gujarati writers of Lancashire, Dahyabhai Mistry (a well-known writer and historian) rightly describes them as "the guardians of Gujarati language and heritage in Britain."

## BHARUCHI VAHORA PATELS IN LANCASTER

*Babu Ghodiwala***Early Settlers:**

Bharuchi Vahora Patels first settled in Lancaster in 1962. Amongst the first arrivals from the Bharuch District were Ali Master and Umarji Master of Paguthan; Abdul Thagia and Yakub Dola of Kantharia; Abdullah Munshi of Manubar; Ibrahim Chandia of Sansrod; Vali Vahaluwala, Musa Dalal and Yusuf Master Lala of Ikher; Vali Ismail of Zanghar; Ismail Gajra of Valan; Isa of Dahegam; Abdul Maje of Dayadara; and Ismail Garigapoti of Valan. In 1964, Musa Ahmed Khoda, Ismail Ahmed Khoda, A U Patel and Ibrahim Master Khoda of Tankaria joined those Bharuchi Vahora Patels who were already there. Today, in 2011, there are 70 Bharuchi Vahora Patel families who have made Lancaster their permanent place of residence.

**Occupations:**

The Bharuchi Vahora Patels who came to Lancaster during the period 1962 to 1964 were all working in Bath Mill, Lancil Mill and Storey of Lancaster Mill. It was in the 1980s, when the mills started to close down and the Bharuchi Vahora Patels became unemployed, that they started thinking in terms of exploring other avenues. They started their own small businesses in various sectors.

At present, in 2011, Abdullah Munshi, originally from Manubar, owns a posh restaurant known as the **Sultan of Lancaster**, with nice decor and modern seating arrangements.



Yakub Mister of Dahegam is also in the restaurant business. Some Bharuchi Vahora Patels have opened take aways and some have started corner convenience shops and newsagents. Quite a number of Bharuchi Vahora Patels in Lancaster are now landlords and they rent their houses mostly to the students of the Lancaster University.

Among the professionals, there are two accountants, two pharmacists, four solicitors and some IT specialists.

**Organizations:**

There are two masjids and madrasas under Bharuchi Vahora Patel management in Lancaster. Bharuchi Vahora Patels have also contributed in the establishment of a Darul Uloom for girls. There is no community centre or youth centre for use by the elderly or the youth.

## 5.9

### BHARUCHI VAHORA PATELS IN DEWSBURY

*Iqbal Dhoriwala • Adam Davi*

#### **Early settlers:**

Among the first to arrive in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire was Ismail Vadhriwala of Hinglot, who settled there in 1956. In 1957, came Ibrahim Davi and Abdul Darvan of Karmad, Muhammad Gajra of Mahudhala, Usman Chimta of Manubar, Muhammad Karkun of Paguthan and Hasan Master of Sansrod. Ahmed Munshi and Ahmed Master of Hinglot arrived in 1959. Vali Bapu of Dasan and social worker Adam Davi came in 1961. Vali Munshi, Indian brothers and the Baisal family members of Varedia also joined the Bharuchi Vahora Patels in Dewsbury.

#### **Occupations:**

Like other textile towns, almost all the Bharuchi Vahora Patels who came in the late 1960s and the 1970s were working in woollen and textile mills. A number of mills in Dewsbury and the surrounding towns had 12 hour shift work i.e. from 6 am to 6 pm (day shift) and 6 pm to 6 am (night shift).

In the late 1980s, with the manufacturing sector going down and the closure of the mills, unemployment started rising, which naturally affected the Bharuchi Vahora Patels along with other workers. This situation led Bharuchi Vahora Patels to explore other avenues, resulting in them prospering in various businesses.

At the moment, in 2011, approximately 60 petrol stations in and around Dewsbury are owned by Bharuchi Vahora Patels. Three Bharuchi Vahora Patels have marketing businesses, one owns a Cash and Carry store, one owns an Indian and Continental grocery shop and four

are involved in a cargo shipment and delivery business. One of the Bharuchi Vahora Patels is in the catering business supplying food for parties and weddings, not only in Dewsbury, but also in various other towns and cities. There are three sub Post Offices owned and run by Bharuchi Vahora Patels. Apart from this, four have fabric and ready-made garment shops, six have mobile phone outlets, five have newsagent's shops and one has a travel agency. 15 of the Bharuchi Vahora Patels are decorators, electricians and plumbers.

Among the Bharuchi Vahora Patel professionals are: two barristers, one dentist, three doctors, one optician, six pharmacists and one solicitor.

**Organizations:**

Bharuchi Vahora Patels have established four masjids and madrasas in Dewsbury and they have made a significant contribution in the establishment of the **Tablighi Markaz**, which is now the headquarters of the Tablighi Jama'ts in Europe.





Initially, **Maulana Yaqub Qasmi** of Kavi, was the leading figure in this project, providing guidance and direction to the Tablighi activities.

Maulana Yaqub Qasmi is a learned scholar, well known and well respected among the Muslim community of Britain. The people in Yorkshire and Muslims in general have benefited immensely from his religious lectures, *tafsir* (explanation and interpretation) of the Holy Qur'an, discourses on *Hayatus Sahaba* or Lives of Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and well researched writings about the sighting of the new moon and the times of prayers. He is the co-author of "Prayer Times for United Kingdom and Ireland" published by the Islamic Research Institute of Britain, Dewsbury. He has founded the Islamic Shariah Council and, with his experienced team of other learned Islamic scholars, provides useful guidance in matters of separation, *talak* (divorce) and other marital and social issues to Muslims throughout Britain.

### **Public Life:**

Bharuchi Vahora Patels take an active interest in the local council and national elections. Some contest elections as Labour candidates, while some others as Tory and Lib-Dem candidates. Currently Salim Abdul Majid of Paguthan is a Conservative councillor and is engaged in various social activities.



## 5.10 BHARUCHI VAHORA PATELS IN CHORLEY, COVENTRY AND NUNEATON

Apart from the towns and cities mentioned in this book where large number of Bharuchi Vahora Patels have settled since the early 1960s, towns like Chorley, Coventry and Nuneaton have very few Bharuchi Vahora Patels living there.

Muhammad Munshi Manubarwala, who is highly respected in our community for his philanthropic activities, lives with his family in Chorley. The other notable family is that of Ibrahim Saleh Khansaheb of Vora Samni who has lived there for a number of years now. Maulana Mehboob is a well-known religious scholar of this town.



**Dawatul Islam** is the purpose built masjid situated in Charnock Street / Brook Street and is big enough to accommodate 550 worshipers.

It was built at a cost of £400,000 with a handsome contribution from Muhammad Munshi and family and donations from other Muslims of the town. It was officially opened in March 2006.

The family of late Dawood Pai has lived in Coventry since 1954. Arif Ismail Pai, his son-in-law, has made a name in the wholesale utensil business.

There are about 15 Bharuchi Vahora Patel families in Nuneaton, including the family of late Yakub Amdavadi, Vali Bo of Karmad and families from Hinglot and Pariej.

PROBLEMS OF THE BHARUCHI VAHORA PATEL  
COMMUNITY IN BRITAIN  
The Old Generation

Nearly six decades have passed since the arrival of the Bharuchi Vahora Patels in Britain and, in spite of such a long period of our settlement in this country, we, as a community, are still facing quite a few problems. Some of these we have brought with us from India as cultural baggage. These problems have become more serious with the lapse of time.

Most of us could not adjust with the British society. We have continued to live with the Indian mind-set, which has created problems in relation to the mainstream.

There is a generation gap between our elders who were born in India and our young people born here. There is little dialogue and interaction between the two. The problem of communication remains.

To identify the problems, we have had discussions with some elders in our community. A summary of their views and perceptions is outlined below:

**1. *Firqabandi* (Religious factions)**

We had religious differences and *firqabandi* even before we came to Britain. But these differences have increased and become more serious in this country. It has created an atmosphere of mistrust and hatred amongst the believers of the same religion. Some people even avoid greeting each other. We are so hopelessly divided that it has not remained possible to meet, have consultations and resolve our common social problems from the same platform.

Due to such division and narrow mindedness, our social structure is breaking up. People are keeping away from each other. The love, respect and friendship we used to see in the community before is no longer there. The circle of matrimonial alliances is also narrowing down. People now marry, or insist that their sons and daughters marry, within their own *firqa* (faction) and now, even this has been narrowed down to their own sub-division within the same *firqa*. In most cases this is done against the will of their sons and daughters. Such narrowing of the circles limits the choice for a suitable partner and the difficulties one faces in finding a suitable match within their own small sub-division will in the long run lead to young people marrying outside the community, that is marrying in to other Muslim or even non-Muslim communities. This is happening already.

## **2. Masjid and Madrasa Management**

We are facing numerous problems related to the management of masjids. There are quarrels over the formation of masjid committees and sometimes the matter goes to the charity commission or ends up in court. To avoid this happening, it is important for everyone to follow the constitution and seek mediation.

It is the prime duty of the local Council of Mosques to play the role of the mediator rather than remain disinterested and detached and help resolve the problem in an Islamic way. Our Ulemas should also come forward and offer their services of mediation and help to establish unity and brotherhood within the community.

Young people must be encouraged to participate in the management of masjids. Masjids and madrasas must be run according to Islamic tenets and within English law. Problems arise due to the ignorance of health and safety rules and child protection laws. Disagreements between the Imam, madrasa teachers and the masjid committee remain unresolved, which frequently leads to bitterness and prolonged disputes, resulting in partisan groups being formed within the masjid, the resignation of the Imam and the teachers or the collapse of the whole masjid administration. This initiates an atmosphere of on-going disputes and turns the masjid into a battleground, ruining the peace, tranquillity and sanctity of the house of Allah!

Some sensible people we talked with have suggested that every masjid must have a complaint procedure. Any member having a problem must follow the procedures laid down by the committee. There are civilised ways of resolving problems other than shouting at each other, using offensive language or rolling up the sleeves and coming to blows.

### **3. The opportunists**

Mischief makers and opportunist people with selfish motives create divisions within the community to serve their own interest. They form their own groups, become self-appointed leaders and exploit people. Before inviting a guest speaker from India or Pakistan, we need to find out about their background and check their credentials. We need to ask what social and spiritual benefits this visit will bring to us. The visiting Aalims should not

be allowed to bring the disputes and problems of India and Pakistan to this country.

Maulana Abdullah Kapodravi has pointed out that if the *bayaans* (lectures) do not reform and transform the individual or the society, it is merely a *zehni-ayyashi* meaning an intellectual luxury.

#### **4. Extravagance**

Engagements, weddings and birthday celebrations are becoming occasions to show off in our community. Many expensive and time consuming customs have been introduced. It has become normal practice for people to go to Dubai or India to buy jewellery or clothes and spend a fortune on honeymoons. Allah does not like those who are wasteful and our respected Ulemas should warn people in clear terms against such prodigality and wastefulness.

#### **5. Generation gap**

The gap between the old and the new generation is widening and no attempts are made to bridge it. There is no dialogue between elders and the youth. We have not created any platform or forum where they can meet and try to understand each other. The old and the new generation of Bharuchi Vahora Patels are poles apart, with each living in their own insular world. They think they have nothing to do with each other's problems. They have almost discarded each other to the extent that "dustbin" has become another name for the elderly used by some young people. Somehow we have not been able to bring the new generation into the fold of the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community. We have not helped them to develop a sense of belonging or to feel part of the

community. If this continues, we will lose our future generations and our identity as a community will also be lost. In the course of time, the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community may disintegrate and even disappear.

## **6. Exclusivist**

Most people in our community are becoming more and more insular and cocooned. They do not have much interaction with the members of their own community, let alone the other communities.

During the course of our discussions, Iqbal Essa (Justice of Peace) of Bolton, rightly pointed out that: “our people have become exclusive and cut off from the mainstream of the British society. This lack of interaction has prevented us from learning about the British values and good practices, such as consultations, negotiations, consensus, respecting the viewpoints of others and the democratic approach.”

This does not mean that we should embrace the vices of other communities and cultures. It only means that we must have healthy interactions with other communities so that we are not marginalised or altogether excluded from the wider society.

The old generation facing the above mentioned problems is passing away. But we should not leave a legacy of these problems for our younger generation.

How the future generations of Bharuchi Vahora Patels will cope with life in Britain depends on how we prepare them for it and what legacy we leave for them.

PROBLEMS OF THE BHARUCHI VAHORA PATEL  
COMMUNITY IN BRITAIN  
The New Generation

How do the young Bharuchi Vahora Patels feel about their problems in the UK? What are their perceptions? What are their main concerns? To find the answers to these questions, we prepared a questionnaire and e-mailed or posted it to some of our young people (aged 14-30) in Blackburn, Bolton, Leicester, London and Preston.

We present a summary of the responses, which include both positive and negative viewpoints.

1. Some young people agree that they are living a good life as a result of the sacrifices of their forefathers who migrated from India and faced many hardships in a foreign land.

For instance, we reproduce a comment made by the sons, daughters and daughters-in-law of Abdul Aziz Dawood Manubari of Bolton:

*“In our opinion, what our forefathers have achieved is simply remarkable. They came to a strange country 5,000 miles from home. They came alone leaving their families behind. They came empty handed. They were un-skilled and could not speak Yes or No. They did not know where they will eat or sleep. All these incredible sacrifices were given by our elders so that we, the third and fourth generations can have an easy life. Today’s Bharuchi Vahora Patel youth are ever in debt to our grandparents and great grandparents for their sacrifices and achievements.”*

2. The old generation preserved their faith and Islamic way of life in spite of living in a European land. They established masjids, madrasas and Darul Uloom. Though not highly educated themselves, they even founded Muslim schools. We the young Bharuchi Vahora Patels have got “all this ready on our plate.”
3. Our forefathers were hard working. We have heard that during 1970s and 1980s, both men and women went to work in factories. After the mills closed, many of our people started their own businesses. We are proud of their achievements. We, as a community, have come a long way.
4. Ours is a close knit community. We feel assured they are there when we need them.
5. I am proud of my roots. I want to know more about our community.
6. We feel that our people are not united. They are so divided. We have different *firqa* (factions). There are Surti and Bharuchi differences. We also think in terms of this or that village. Bharuchis are so narrow-minded. We do not accept other Muslims.
7. We do not mix with other communities. We do not participate in welfare activities or social projects with other communities. We do not engage.
8. Our community is static. We are not dynamic enough to adjust to the changing society.
9. We are so disorganised. We do not have a common approach. We have not created social institutions for communal activities.



10. We feel that most people in our community are more concerned with bank balances and properties than with moral values.

The above mentioned 10 points indicate how the young people in our community perceive the older generation. We also asked the respondents about their problems and concerns. We give below a summary of what they have said:

1. There is no discussion of our (young generation's) problems. No one has ever asked us what our problems are. We find it difficult to speak to anyone about our problems. Who do we share our problems with? Our voice is not heard and no attention is paid to our opinion. We also have language problems when talking with our elders, so we find it difficult to make them understand us.
2. Drug abuse has become a big problem. Many boys and even girls drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes.
3. The young generation is alienated from their families. They are keeping themselves to themselves.
4. The rate of higher education, particularly among the boys, is low. They believe that there is no encouragement and guidance from their elders.
5. Respect for elders is diminishing. Our youngsters born here have no interest in our language and cultural heritage.
6. Since we are born and educated in Britain, English is our first language. We do not understand the

*bayaans* (lectures) in Urdu. Because of the language problem, our understanding of Islam is very little. Friday *bayaans* (in masjids) should be in English.

7. We perceive the Bharuchi Vahora Patel society as divided. We have too many religious and social controversies and differences.
8. There is no effective leadership in our community. There are no talented people among the so-called leaders who can provide guidance in various fields. There are no role-models to follow for the young Bharuchi Vahora Patels in Britain.
9. The Bharuchi Vahora Patel youth in Britain experiences an identity crisis. They are confused as to who they are! They want to be British Muslims, i.e. retaining the good aspects of the cultural and religious values inherited from their parents and leaving aside the petty differences. The youngsters would like to be identified as Muslims born in Britain.
10. The media portrayal of British Muslims is negative. We do not know how to portray ourselves in a positive way.
11. Some young people in our community get involved in anti-social activities and face police investigation.
12. The unemployment rate among our youngsters is high. There is a complete lack of career guidance.
13. Young people do not receive any leadership training or political grooming. There are no

seminars or workshops organised by our community.

14. There are no celebrations, meetings or social events. There is nowhere to go.
15. Family disputes are on the increase. Joint families appear to be causing problems. The divorce rate is rising and, consequently, there is an increase in the number of single parents in the community. Relationships breakdown quite easily. Our family values are fast eroding.
16. There is a craze about football, mobile phones and music.
17. There is a mad rush for easy money, fast cars and posh living.
18. The community does not have the work ethic that would inspire us to work hard and achieve.
19. There is too much mixing of boys and girls, particularly at weddings.
20. The elders take part in religious activities but not in social events. They do not engage in public life at all.
21. The self-esteem among young Bharuchi Vahora Patels is low.
22. Our Bharuchi Vahora Patel culture is totally different from the British culture. We are confused. We do not know how to strike a balance.

23. Under the influence of peer pressure, some young people go astray. There is no agency to guide and support them. There are no efforts to bring them back on the track.

## CONCLUSION

Our purpose in raising the above mentioned issues is to increase the awareness of our community about the situation in which we find ourselves today and plan for the future.

We are living in a fast changing world. Globalization has posed many challenges to the communities and their lifestyles. If a community is not aware and informed, these forces can erase its identity. Mass media are changing peoples' attitudes, perceptions and thought processes. The free market economy is reducing the individual to a mere consumer or customer. Communities are becoming the victims of disintegration.

We have to remain alert all the time. Doing nothing is not an option. The process of adjustment must go on in order for our community to survive, grow and find our rightful place in the contemporary world.

For the community to preserve its identity, it must be aware of its own state, the changes which are taking place in the wider world and how we are going to cope with these changes.

We must take stock of what we have gained so far and what we have lost; where we stand and where we want to go.

If we fail to look at our problems and make sincere organised efforts to resolve them, our future and that of our present and future generations remains bleak.

## BHARUCHI VAHORA PATELS IN AFRICA

*Nazir Patel*

During the British Raj, most Bharuchi Vahora Patels were landowners and farmers. They were economically well-off. However, they were ambitious and ready to go abroad in search of better life. According to Akbarali Sayyad (researcher and writer of the four volumes of the Informative Sketches of Leading Muslims of Gujarat), Bharuchi Vahora Patels are full of adventure. They have settled in remote parts of the world and prospered through hard work and perseverance.

During British rule, workers were needed for the railways and other projects in Africa. Many Bharuchi Vahora Patels seized this opportunity and migrated to African countries. According to the information obtained from our elders, a crier would go round the villages inviting anyone wanting to migrate to Africa to report to Mumbai port on the date that a **boat** was due to leave.



Thus many Bharuchi Vahora Patels migrated to Africa. Initially they went with the idea that they would make some money and come back to India. Some did return but most stayed on and called their families whom they had left behind in India. Some married local women and raised their families there. They started as labourers, but soon established their own businesses and prospered.

When Gandhiji went to South Africa as a lawyer, Nathalia Seth, originally of Tankaria, was a prominent businessman and social worker there. Gandhiji represented Nathalia Seth in a court case. There was correspondence between the two in Gujarati. Here we reproduce a letter from Gandhiji in his own handwriting.

શિથેશ્વરજી  
 નમસ્કાર કરીને મારા અભિપ્રાયો કહીએ  
 તમારો જોડાણ બેદરકારી બતાવે છે એ  
 આપણે સહન કરી શકીએ છીએ કે નહીં  
 તેમાં મને આગેવાનોને દોષ નથી  
 આગેવાનો બેદરકારી છે એ આગે-  
 વાનો જોડાણ રી રી છે - આપણે  
 એમ છું કે આપણે પોતાના  
 દુર ન બનેલા નથી તેમ તેમનામ  
 અને આગેવાનો કે જે આગેવાનો  
 ને જેને આગેવાનો હોય તેને

૨  
 રજીસ્ટર કરીને પડતો મુકીને કોઈના  
 નામ લીકરો બહુ જોઈને મુકીને  
 ન રહેવું જોઈ. કુંડરી પાછા પુસ્તકોમાં  
 નથી બતાવેલો જે બહુ ઘણું. તેમ કુલેશ  
 માયાને મળી રહેશે. કુંડરી સાથે  
 બંધારણમાં કુંડરી રહેવા પણ  
 વખત થયા ઉપર જઈએ. કુંડરીને  
 પર્ષિ રહેશે. તેમ જોઈને આગેવાનો  
 જો તેમાં ગમે તેટલા નીરો આપીને  
 તેમણે આગેવાનો પાસે પડશે.  
 શિથેશ્વરજી  
 શિથેશ્વરજી

Sheth Nathalia,  
 Received your letter. We have to tolerate the negligence  
 of Congressmen. It is not the fault of the traders alone.  
 The common men themselves are negligent, therefore,  
 the leaders do not care. But as isolated individuals will  
 continue to do their duties, the leaders too will come

*round. Has the Government abandoned the case? I need to know the latest developments. I am writing again to Husainmiya and others. You may also continue to see Husainmiya. There has been a proposal to change the constitution of the Congress. Eventually it will happen. Do not back out from the task you have started, whatever the setbacks.*

According to Ibrahim Dadabhai “Bekar”, the editor of “Patel Mitra” Gujarati magazine, the first Bharuchi Vahora Patels who migrated to Africa were from Dayadara. They travelled in small boats. This was about 250 years ago. Ismail Yusuf Patel of Dayadara went to Java in 1921 and from there to Congo in 1929. Musa Adam Chand of Tham migrated to Cape Town in 1898.

Musa Umarji Patel of Tankaria went in 1908. Musa Isa Patel of Pariej went to South Africa in 1916. Muhammad Dakri of Valan went to Nyasaland in 1916.

Vali Bux Safri of Tankaria went to Johannesburg in 1920. He was a prominent hotelier there. Ismail Muhammad Patel of Sitpon went to Beira port in East Africa in 1920. Ibrahim Dudhia of Sitpon went to Beira in 1930 and then to Fort Jameson now known as Chipata, Zambia in 1946 where he became a prominent wholesaler.

Ibrahim Patel of Haldarva went to Nyasaland in 1927. He opened a shop where every item would cost six pennies. So he came to be known as Ibrahim Six Penny!

Umarji Isa Adam of Dayadara was a social worker in Johannesburg. He was Secretary of Transvaal Kanamiya Association.





*Kanamiya Masjid, Cape Town, South Africa*

Dula Umar of Dayadara was a close associate of Nelson Mandela and later became a cabinet minister in South Africa.

After independence, the trend continued. Many educated Bharuchi Vahora Patels migrated to Africa.

Abdurrahim Munshi of Manubar graduated from Mumbai and went to Mombasa, Kenya in 1950.

Apart from businesses, Bharuchi Vahora Patels occupied high positions in various departments. Muhammad Musa Patel of Sitpon was the Principal of the Aga Khan High School in Zanzibar. Ismail Patel of Vahalu and Vali Patel of Pariej were High School teachers. Yusufji of Khojbar, Ibrahim Kabir and Ismail Muramunshi were also teachers in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania.

Gradually, the Bharuchi Vahora Patels settled in African countries like the Congo, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe etc and engaged themselves in businesses big and small. At present, Muhammad Zangharia-Munshi and his sons of Tankaria, settled in Lusaka for a number of years now, are in the wholesale business of fashion fabrics. Abdul Chand of Dayadara is a man of vision and a dedicated educationist who has been running his own private secondary school in Lusaka.



*Lusaka Masjid, Zambia*

Maulana Musa Ibrahim Menk of Vantersa, settled in Harare for well over half a century now, is a renowned scholar of Islam, dedicated to the cause of teaching and preaching Islam particularly amongst the native population. Together with his two illustrious sons, Maulana Shabbir Musa Menk and Mufti Ismail Musa Menk, he has been running a Darul Uloom in Harare where they teach the local Muslim students to become qualified Alims and Imams to carry on the noble work of teaching and preserving true Islam amongst the Muslims living in the remote villages.

Their work does not end there. It extends to other surrounding countries like South Africa and Maulana Shabbir is a regular visitor to a masjid in London, especially during the holy month of Ramadan, from where he undertakes a lecture tour of other towns and cities of Britain, delivering educating and inspiring lectures in English, especially for the benefit of the younger generation.



*Darul Ilm, Zimbabwe*

Even today, in 2011, young Bharuchi Vahora Patels migrate to African countries, especially to South Africa. Although it is not a safe place at present, because of law and order problems, and about 20 Bharuchi Vahora Patel youths have lost their lives in the past five years in suspicious circumstances, a number of youths still take the route to African countries due to the lack of job and other opportunities back home, thinking it is better to take the risk than remain jobless and idle at home.

**Note:** This chapter on Bharuchi Vahora Patels in Africa is rather sketchy and does not contain detailed information. If any member of our community living in Africa could collect information through a proper survey and pass it on to us, we will include it in the second edition of this book.

## BHARUCHI VAHORA PATELS IN PAKISTAN

In 1947, India became independent but, at the same time, the country was divided into three parts i.e. India, West Pakistan and East Pakistan, which is now Bangladesh. With the partition, there was a cross border wave of migration of Hindus and Muslims who wanted to change their country of residence. Some Bharuchi Vahora Patel families left India to settle in Pakistan. Those who migrated, settled in Karachi. The information obtained from the directory of The Muslim Patel Welfare Association, Karachi indicates that there were 80 Bharuchi Vahora Patel families. They were from Tankaria, Kantharia, Sarod, Nabipur, Zanghar, Karmad and Manubar. Today the number of Bharuchi Vahora Patel families has increased to around 200.

Dr Ali Dadabhai Patel of Tankaria was the President of the Bharuch District Muslim League. In 1947, he migrated to Karachi, where he started a pharmacy called Pakistan Drug House Ltd. He was the leader of the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community in Karachi. Ahmed Umarji Rokad of Nabipur, who had a milk dairy business in Mumbai and had migrated to Karachi, owned Dil Pazeer Hotel on the main Muhammad Ali Jinnah Road in Karachi. Later on, the Rokad family developed a milk supply business in Karachi.

Yusuf Matliwala of Karmad owned the Yusuf Brothers store in Sadar Bazar. Adam Gaurwala of Palej too had a shop in this area. Adam Ibrahim Patel of Ikher was a lawyer and was appointed as a trade mark advocate. He was associated with the Muslim Commercial Bank of Pakistan and Muslim Sunni Jamat.

Some Bharuchi Vahora Patels held high positions in the Government departments. Yakub Patel of Sarod was Chief Engineer in Karachi. Ibrahim M Munshi of Manubar and Ismail Patel of Varedia were teachers at the Pakistan National High School. Ahmed Y Munshi of Kavi was a sorting inspector at the General Post Office in Karachi.

Muhammad Yusuf Patel of Khanpurdeh was a wholesaler of hosiery. Munshi Ibrahim Israr of Kavi also owned a hosiery shop in Karachi.

In 1960, when there was a shortage of textile workers in Britain, many Bharuchi Vahora families from Karachi migrated to the UK and settled there.

**Note:** This chapter on Bharuchi Vahora Patels in Pakistan is rather sketchy and does not contain detailed information. If any member of our community living in Pakistan could collect information through a proper survey and pass it on to us, we will include it in the second edition of this book.

## BHARUCHI VAHORA PATELS IN AMERICA

*Ali Adam Bhim*

Bharuchi Vahora Patel families are mainly concentrated in Chicago, Houston and New York. Elsewhere, there are a few isolated Vahora families.

The first immigrants came in 1965. These included Vali Patel of Dahegam, who came as a student. In 1967, Abdus Samad of Devla came as a student. Dawood Patel of Karmad and Abbas Patel of Devla arrived in 1968. In 1969, Ali Bhim of Tankaria came as a green card holder. Muhammad Nanlawala of Nabipur and Rashid Patel of Paguthan came in 1970. In 1972 Ahmed Vakil of Dasan came as a green card holder.

Iqbal Ali Musa, originally from Kolavana, lives in New Jersey. According to the information given by him, there are about 100 Bharuchi Vahora Patel families living in New Jersey, New York, which include Mehboob Bangalawala of Nabipur and Ibrahim Patel of Ikher.

There are about 14 families in Houston, Texas with a total Bharuchi Vahora Patel population of 125. There are some accountants, doctors, pharmacists and teachers among the Bharuchi Vahora Patels.

Some Bharuchi Vahora Patels have flourishing businesses. Musa Dakri of Valan is a prominent banker. He owns 11 branches of the Wallis State Bank of Houston. Ali Adam Bhim is a well-known self-employed business consultant and tax advisor, preparing paperwork relating to income tax for his numerous clients. He also helps the local mosques in the preparation and presentation of their annual accounts.



In Lafayette, Colorado, Dr Naseem Abdurrahim Munshi of Manubar runs a worldwide business in Composite Technology Development. She has received an award for her contribution in this field. She has been associated with the NASA space research organization for well over twenty years.

Yusuf Patel of Vesadara is a chemist. Yusuf Patel and Ali Adam Bhim are both community workers who are associated with the masjids and other social projects in Houston.

There are no community centres or old peoples' homes managed by Bharuchi Vahora Patels. Bharuchi Vahora Patels in America are not actively involved in politics.

We find a generation gap between the elders and youth. The young people find the family norms too restrictive. They do not accept arranged marriages. The divorce rate is also rising. Some of them abuse Facebook and mobile phones.

The Bharuchi Vahora Patels of America are normally hard working, doing their own work and not interfering in each other's business. They are making steady progress in various fields. On social occasions, people come together and help one another, but unplanned visits are not encouraged here. If you want to visit friends or relatives, you have to inform them in advance and make an appointment.

Despite all this, as far as family values, life style and self-reliance are concerned, Bharuchi Vahora Patels are ahead of other communities settled here from India and other parts of the world. They not only work hard to earn a better living and improve their standard of life, but at the same time devote considerable time to preserve and promote their own religion and culture and improve their *akhirah* (hereafter).

Advocate Ahmed Patel of Dasan lives in **Chicago** and is active in the social life of that town. He went to America as a green card holder in 1972 and even now runs his advocacy business there.



During his short visit to this country, we had the opportunity to see him at the residence of Dr Muhammad Patel of Ikher in Blackburn and discuss with him the condition of the Bharuchi Vahora Patels in America. He made a couple of observations which are interesting. First, he said that the Bharuchi Vahora Patels living in America are hardworking and are busy in



their own businesses or employment. The number of people sitting at home and doing nothing is far less in comparison. The other observation he made was about the social structure, which he said is getting disintegrated due to the powerful influence of the mainstream culture and life style. Inter-caste marriages are on the increase and family values are fast disappearing.

## BHARUCHI VAHORA PATELS IN CANADA

*Ayyub Miyanji*

In Canada, Bharuchi Vahora Patels are settled in Edmonton, Hamilton, Montreal, Oshawa, Scarborough, **Toronto** and Vancouver. Most of the families in Canada are from India, but some have migrated from Africa where their forefathers were settled years ago.



The first Bharuchi Vahora Patel to come to Toronto was Yakub Patel of Dahegam. His migration to Canada was facilitated by a local passport and travel agent, but when he arrived in Toronto, he did not know anyone there. However, like other adventurous Bharuchi Vahora Patels, Yakub Patel faced the situation with courage and determination and managed to settle down.

In 1974, Ahmed Nathalia and Ayyub Miyanji of Tankaria arrived from Congo. About 200 families followed them. These include the Bala, Hira, Lalan, Madhi and Popat

families of Tankaria; Nekiwala of Karmad; Desai, Haji Kidiwala and Masoom of Dayadara; and Rokad of Manubar; etc.

Some highly educated Bharuchi Vahora Patels have come to Canada from India. Ismail Patel of Manubar held a high position as a researcher in the Government leather department. His research work in this field is significant. This retired and experienced Government officer now lives in Toronto and does a lot of social work for the benefit of his local community. It is a pleasure to meet and talk with this very lively and hospitable gentleman.



Young people born in Canada have made remarkable progress in various fields. Notable amongst them is Dr Firoz Ayyub Miyanji, who is a renowned paediatric surgeon in Vancouver.



## Editorial Team



From left: Yacoob Mank (Mahek Tankarvi), Siraj Patel (Paguthanvi), Imtiaz Patel, Dr Adam Ghodiwala (Adam Tankarvi), Muhammad Sufi (Manubari)

# BHARUCHI VAHORA PATEL

## A BRIEF HISTORY

Bharuchi Vahora Patels are densely populated in the region north of the river Narmada in the Bharuch and Vadodara districts of Gujarat, India. This fertile belt, suitable for growing cotton, is called "Kanam". Hence in some circles the Vahora Patels of this region are known either as Bharuchi or Kanamiya Vahora.

Bharuchi Vahora Patels are an ambitious and adventurous community. They have migrated to various parts of the world and are now settled in Africa, America, Britain, Canada, etc.

Bharuchi Vahora Patels are a very close knit community. They have their own unique identity, a distinct culture and their own customs, norms and traditions.

Unfortunately, there was no comprehensive, authentic record of the history of this vibrant and dynamic community.

This book is a modest attempt to fill that gap and give the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community and its younger generation their first book of their history.

*This book is published with the financial help of a Bharuchi Vahora Patel donor from the UK who wishes to remain anonymous and:*

