

My Memoirs of Bantva, Part - I

By: Abdul Aziz Suleman Haji Ahmed Khanani, Karachi. Pakistan



My full name is Abdul Aziz Suleman Haji Ahmed Khanani (Machhiyara) and I was born in Bantva, India on Tuesday August 12th 1930.

I migrated after Indian invasion of Junagadh end of 1947 but unfortunately, we went to Hyderabad (south India) where my Mamoo was doing job. That time I was only 17 years old and only head of the family with five sisters and one younger brother and my Mother. I have to lead them because my father at that time was in service in Calcutta. Unfortunately, we have to migrate again in early 1948 after invasion of Hyderabad and arrived Karachi via Bombay in Junkyard Cargo ship overloaded with Migrants and we were afraid this ship will sink at any time. No food or water was served on this ship to passengers during the entire three days of journey and many migrants were sick or vomiting due to rough sea.

In Karachi, I joined Adam Ltd for four years (1950 - 1954) and worked with Japanese company Nichimen Corp for 32 years (1954 - 1986) and since then I am working with East Asian Textiles owned by Mr. M. Iqbal Mangrani.

I revisited Bantva in December of 1964 and took some pictures of old Bantva (inside Zapa) was almost destroyed and ruined but outside Zapa Talao, Hussain Pura, Madressah and Hussaini Yateem Khana etc were in good shape as you will be able to see from the pictures . Madressa-e-Islamia was a school where there were classes up

to 5th standard and after that we have to go to other cities such as Junagadh or Rajkot for further study up to Metric.

Bantva was exceptional in a way that it has no electricity, no phone, no public transport. We were using Kerosene Lanterns in our houses at night and on the streets there were Kerosene Lamps which were daily maintained, also, we have to use hand Fans during Summer.

It was a principal town of princely Junagadh state predominantly Hindu area but Bantva has 80-90% Memon population who were Sunni Muslims. Bantva became well known not only in Gujarat state but also throughout trading circles of India. Four to five rich families, who have cars, dominated Bantva and their head offices were in Bantva but they have branches all over India (Now Bharat, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar etc). In addition, they have offices in other countries as well such as Singapore, London and Hong Kong.

In Bantva, mainly families and children were living most of the time because their male members were doing job in Branches of rich families in other Indian cities but they were visiting Bantva on leave for 2-3 months (without pay), and enjoying with their families.

Women strictly observe Purdah (Burqa) and they were even hiding their faces from their in-laws and other male relatives. They were seldom going out and when going they put on Burqa (similar to one used by Afghan women) they were not going out even to purchase cloth and calling Kapadia salesman to visit their houses with samples.

It was customary for Married girl to return to her parents home each morning and go to her husband home after Dinner and they were escorted by father, brother or maid servant with a Torch or Oil lamp. Bridegrooms could not see the face of his Bride until after the Marriage.

On Eid day, we were hiring Bullock Carts, which were decorated and drive with children to Eidgah to offer Eid prayer. During Ramazan Sehri/Iftar was announced by firing small rocket like Cannon.

Lack of electricity meant use of car batteries for Radios, which were as big as small Television set, we used to listen Radio by gathering at night at my uncle Haji Mohammad Haji Saleh Muhammad Khanani (Machiara) home to listen World War II news on BBC and all India during 1939-45 and news about Pakistan movement.

There was no running water in houses so we have to take it from Dankis (hand pump) located in each building's ground floor. We have to pump by hand and then carry it our homes by Buckets which was very good exercise also water was clean mineral water which was coming from deep soil by hand pump.

I remember very well visit of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in 1940. He has come to collect donation for Pakistan movement and collected large amount from rich families of Bantva.

During the invasion of Junagadh by Indian army I was at a School in Junagadh and they gave us military training and handed over rifles to defend us but without bullets.

The same article and photos have been published in Mr. Abdur Razzaq Thaplawala book "Bantva Kal aur Aaj".

Photo Gallery of my Bantva visit in December 1964:

I recommend every Memon from Bantva to visit Bantva with their children to show, where they and their forefathers came from. Please pass the knowledge to your children and grand children and speak to them in Memoni at home.

My Memoirs of Bantva, Part - II



By: Abdul Aziz Suleman Haji Ahmed Khanani, Karachi. Pakistan

I would like to add some unpleasant memories, which I hope, will be interesting for the new generation of Memon families, especially in America.

In my memoirs part, I had said that we migrated from Bantva but I did not describe the circumstances, which forced us to migrate from our motherland. Here I would like to give a brief history of independence.

As everybody knows, Pakistan and India got their independence from the British rule on 14th and 15th of August 1947 respectively. This decision of division of India was based on religion. Punjab, Sind, NWFP, Baluchistan and East Bengal where majority were Muslims became part of Pakistan and rest of the country where majority were Hindus became part of India. At that time British allowed Indian states to join either Pakistan or India.

Khans ruled our town Bantva that was part of Manavader State. Who was a Muslim and agreed to accede to Pakistan and announcement to that effect was made on September 25, 1947. However, no instrument of accession was signed. On October 3, 1947 Indian forces lead by Commander Himayat Singh took over Bantva and Khan of Manavader was arrested. Kutiyana was occupied by Aarzee Hukumat because it was part of Junagadh State. On the other hand Kashmir state was ruled by Maharaja Harrisingh who was Hindu and he decided to join India, although majority there were Muslims.

Other state Hyderabad Deccan in south India was ruled by Nizam of Hyderabad who was Muslim and he decided to remain independent (didn't join either India or Pakistan) but majority there were Hindus.

Indian leadership did not accept the inclusion of these States inclusion in Pakistan, attacked all three States, and took over Junagadh and Hyderabad, but in Kashmir Mujahideen and Pakistani troops retaliated and succeeded to take some part of Kashmir, which is now called Azad Kashmir and this state, is still disputed territory.

After this brief history of independence, I will describe how the Indian forces invaded Bantva, which was part of Manavadar and how all the Memon families of Bantva were forced to migrate.

Before independence, there were many communal riots all over India between Hindus and Muslims but on our part of India (Junagadh/Kathiawar) Hindus and Muslims were living peacefully until after independence.

After Nawab of Junagadh decided to join Pakistan, Indian forces invaded Junagadh State including Bantva and imposed curfew in the town (curfew means nobody can go out of their homes and if anybody was found in the street he would be shot dead) Even if we looked from the windows Sikh soldiers would be pointing guns at us.

Under the curfew although residents could not move out but Hindu villagers from outside Bantva were allowed to attack with the support of the Indian soldiers and started looting our houses. They were equipped with large axes to break open our wooden doors and take away whatever they could including cash and jewellery. They had come with bullock carts to carry heavy articles, furniture etc.

We prepared ourselves to fight with sticks, boiling water and red chili powder and all family members and children were shifted on the roof top of our building. Fortunately, our Cochinwala building was spared in which Siddiq Polani (famous social worker) was also living. However some other buildings were looted and set on fire and many people were injured but fortunately, no one was killed.

After this incident, all Memon families decided to leave Bantva. Even though, some Seth's such as Hussain Qasim Dada, Adam Haji Peer Muhammad, A. Rahman A. Ghani (ARAG) and A.Rahman Cochinwala etc. persuaded them not to leave Bantva and promised normalcy would return very soon but Indian forces and Hindu villagers continued looting and occupying other towns such as Manavader, Kutiyana, Dhoraji and Jetpur etc., so most of the families left for Karachi via Okha port, which was very near to Bantva. However, some families like us, left for other places in India but ultimately they had to re-migrate to Pakistan.

At the end all Seth's (heads of rich families) also had to leave Bantva, although they had sent their families much earlier. They had no problem at all to leave Bantva as they had Hindu servants, cars and vast resources all over India including Karachi. However, there were lot of problems for poor families like ours, such as when leaving Bantva in overcrowded trains we feared of looting on trains also fear of kidnapping of our young girls by Hindu Gundas and soldiers who were now and then stopping our train for searching.

In this way Bantva became a ghost town when all families left Bantva. I found all houses and streets empty when I visited Bantva in 1948 with my late uncle (Mamoo) A. Sattar Akhai to bring back some valuables from our house because earlier we had left Bantva in haste with our families and had taken only few clothes with us. Unfortunately at that time I did not have a camera with me but I did take pictures when I again visited Bantva in 1964 (see my Memoirs Part I)

Such were the nightmares of our migration from Bantva.

FOLLOWING PORTION OF MY MEMOIRS ADDED ON OCTOBER 1, 2009.

Now I want to talk a little bit about my Memoirs of Rajkot and Junagadh where I spent time as a student before the partition of 1947

In Bantva we had Madressah School where maximum of five classes were offered. So after 5th class if we wanted to continue to metric or 11th class or 11th standard we would have to go outside Bantva for further study.

Rich families of Bantva used to send their children to far away places such as Bombay (now Mumbai) or Calcutta (now Kolkata). Where as poor or middle class families like ours were going to nearby places like Junagadh or Rajkot where we could study in High School or Colleges.

In Rajkot there was a Memon Boarding House which was run by Memon Philanthropists from Jetpur, Kutiyana, Bantva etc. and about 500 students mainly Memons were living there and I was one of them (you can see pictures of Memon Boarding House shown below)

Although donations were given to this Boarding House but that was not enough. So they were collecting some monthly fees from the students even then we were not provided enough food and other facilities such as Beds etc. we would sleep on the floors. Only limited quantity of food such as Daal or Vegetables with one or two Chapattis were served each time and most of the time we remained hungry. Rich students could afford to eat out side but poor and middle class students like us had no money to eat outside so most of the time we remained hungry.

Then I went to Junagadh to join High School, there 8 or 10 students from Bantva hired two rooms and were living there jointly and sharing the charge of rent and food etc. Also we were cooking in the same rooms.

Rajkot and Junagadh were beautiful and clean cities of Kathiawar and there were many Gates and Makbaras in the city of Junagadh which were Masterpieces of Architecture. I took pictures of these Gates and Makbaras during my visit to Bantva in 1964, which you can see below. The buildings in Junagadh in 1964 were in the same condition as were in 1947 and were very well maintained.

There was another specialty of Junagadh, where one of the tallest mountain "Girnar" was and the city of Junagadh was at the base of this mountain. On top of the mountain there was a Dargah of a Muslim Saint called "Datar" and to climb this mountain special stairs were built which were about one thousand steps and it took many hours to climb to the top of the mountain. Only able-bodied persons could climb this mountain. I was fortunate to climb this mountain when I was young and offered Fateha on this Dargah. Also forests of this mountain were housing many wild animals such as Lions, Monkeys etc.

Unfortunately, as I have explained in my previous memoirs Junagadh was invaded by Indian troops after Nawab of Junagadh decided to join Pakistan, after that I left Junagadh to join my family in Bantva and from there our family migrated to Pakistan.

In conclusion, I am thankful to Brother Abdul Ghaffar Variend of Memon Point for posting my memoirs on his website www.memonpoint.com

Comments from the Host, Ghaffar Variend

I came to know Mr. Abdul Aziz Suleman Khanani through the email that I received from his son in law Shahid Yusuf, Oak Brook, IL USA on April 10, 2008. I met him twice in Chicago, IL at his grand daughter's wedding and was fascinated by his memory of Bantva. Following is an unedited version and account of his memoirs of Bantva in his own words:

Memon families Migrated to Pakistan after partition in 1947, following data were published in January 1964 of Memon Samaj edition as follows:

Place	Families	Members
Kathiawar	20,127	119,276
Okhai	3,503	31,536
Katchi	2,250	13,750
Halar	1,708	13,526
Mumbai	778	4,422
Gujarat	104	611
TOTAL	28,470	183,121

ICHARAWAR AREA



SCHOOL OF
LULIYA MASTER



MARCH 18/1944
BLOG IN
TRALAO



MADRASA
OFFICE



MAKBARA



MEMOR BOARDING HOUSE
RATKOT



MEQELAZA



MOHAMMAD LIBRARY
FRONG BUKHARI GARDEN



WORK
MASTED





HOCK NASTED

MEDICAL
OFFICE



OLD KATVA
HOUSES DESTROYED



RAILWAY STATION



SCHOOL OF
LULIYA MASTER



TRIAO
STREET







A view of Junagadh



Abdul Aziz Suleman Haji Ahmed Khanani in Bukhari Garden, Bantva



Abdul Aziz in Noor Masjid, Bantva



Bharamchari Building in Talao area, Bantva



A view of Memon Boarding House at Rajkot



Back side of Machiara Building seen from Bukhari Garden



Fully covered Bukhari Durgah (Shrine) in Bukhari Garden



Bukhar Garden facing Maqbara



An inside beautiful view of Bukhari Garden



**Cochinwala Building, Abdul Aziz
resided there on First Floor**



A view of Talao street, Cochinwala building is seen at the end of street



Inside view of Zapa area in Bantva showing destroyed houses



Abdul Aziz Suleman Khanani in front of Destroyed Houses of Bantva



Inside view of Madressa-e-Islamia School seen behind gate



Government offices in Bantva



**Tower of Hussan Kasam Dada
Mosque in Bantva**



A view of Hussaini Yateem Khana, Bantva

JUNAGADH



A beautiful view of Junagadh City



Front view of Bantva Jamat Khana near Mithupir Dargah (Shrine)

JUMB MOSQUE



JUMA
MOSQUE





JUNAGADH





JUFGADH



JUNAGADH



JUNAGADH

