

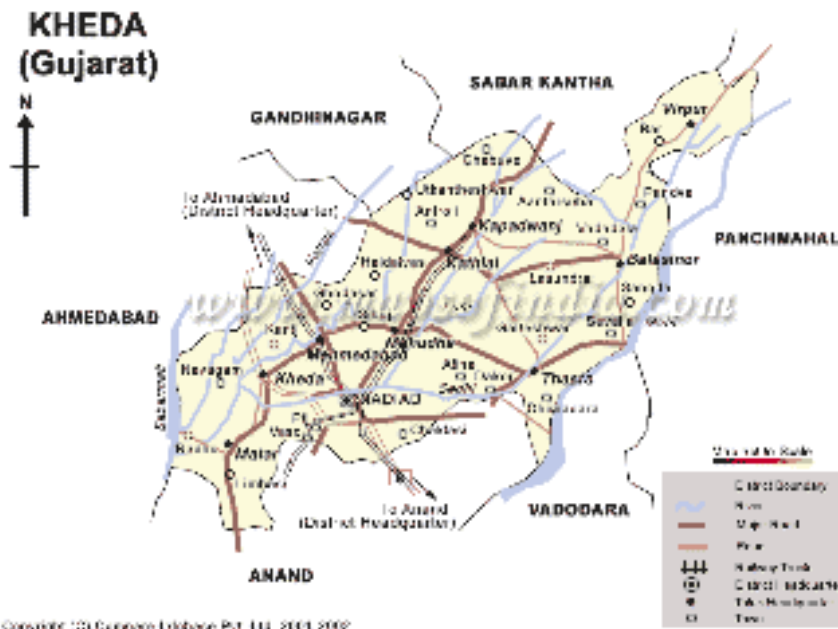
The Patidars : A Golden Page in History

(This article is published here : courtsey Mr. Kirit Patel and Mr. Yogesh D. Patel of malataj.org __Thanks.)

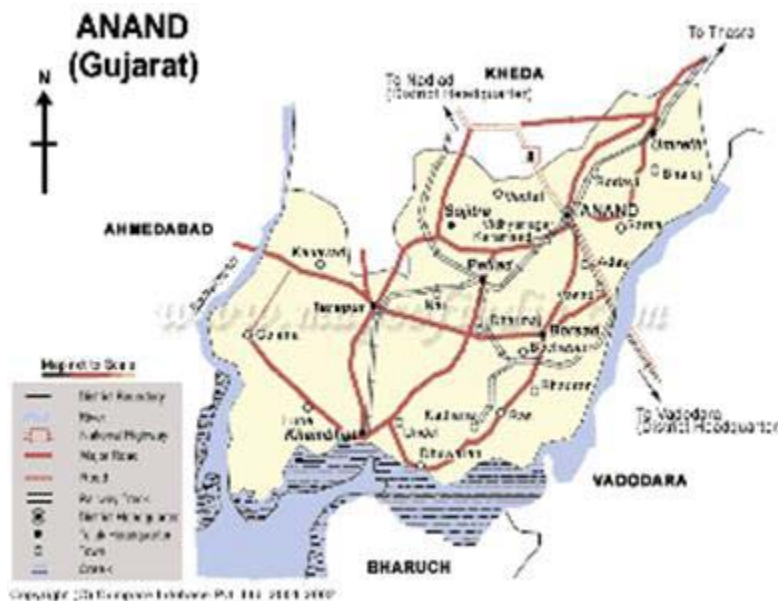
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Place we are from : Charotar, Gujarat, India





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Gujarat is a state in west India and North east of the Gulf of Cambay. West and southwestern part of the state touches the Arabian sea. To the northwest is the country of Pakistan. Northeast of the state borders with Rajasthan. Madhya Pradesh state. To the southeast is the state of Maharashtra.

It is concluded from the books kept by the "BAROTHS" and the "VAHIVANCHAS" that the PATIDAR are originally from PUNJAB. From Punjab they moved to MARVAD and then to GUJARAT.

Around AD 1000, the Badhshah of Afghanistan attacked and conquered Punjab. He and his soldiers committed great atrocities on the people of Punjab. The Hindus were forcefully converted to the Islam religion. They kidnapped and raped many of our women which forced them to commit suicide. Some of the women were converted to Islam and some soldiers married them in their traditional Islam style. Our forefathers left Punjab to

escape from the atrocities of the Afghan king and his soldiers and to save the women. The people who left Punjab were KANBI from Leava and KARAD villages of the GUJARANWALA district (presently in Pakistan). Even today there is a group of people of the KANBI caste in the villages of Punjab.

These KANBI people left Punjab for MARVAD with what little belongings they could fit on their bullock carts. At that time, Marvad was ruled by PARMAR kings and the fame of Rajah Bhoj was widely known. This was the reason our forefathers were attracted to that region. At that time Marvad was very densely populated and it was not possible to acquire enough land. After staying for a short period in Marvad, they left for Khambhat (Kheda District) on hearing that there was uncultivated land available and this brought them to Gujarat. At this time the SOLANKIS were ruling GUJARAT.

The land in the Taluka of PATLAD which was uncultivated was granted to us when our forefathers made a request for it to the SOLANKI king. Land equivalent to about one GAM (village) was granted to each family and the Kanbi people settled on this land. The Kanbis being hard workers managed to cultivate the land with great benefits. It was decided that a twelfth portion of the crop would be given to the King in return for the land. But the cost of collecting this twelfth part from each farmer was very high so the king drew up an agreement and appointed a headman for each village.

These headmen controlled the farmers and collected crops from them for the king. The agreement of the land was kept in the custody of the elders in the family of the headman. The records of the kingdom and of the crops were kept on the PAT (record or log book) and the person who entered and kept these records was known as "PATLIKH". Patlikh was shortened to PATAL and then became PATEL.

The people that came from the village Leava became known as LEAVA KANBI and those that came from the village KARAD became KARADVA KANBI. The Karadva was shortened to KADVA KANBI. The Kadva Kanbi settled in the Northern part of Gujarat and the Leava Kanbi settled around Khambhat. The people who settled in Gujarat were very industrious and intelligent and became farmers and in a short period of time, Gujarat started to prosper.

As time went by, the kings and the kingdoms changed and so did the portions of the crops given to the kings. The main industry and income of the kingdoms was agriculture and the kingdoms were sustained on the income from the farms and so the payments were increased to one sixth part of all crops cultivated.

Then Khambhat became the kingdom of the Mauryavansi and the crops collected from the farmers was different each year. It was high at times and low at the other times and was dictated as per the need of the kingdom and hence this part of the kingdom became known as CHAROTAR (from Chad climb up and Utar - climb down).

Between A.D. 1300 -1400, the king of Delhi Allaudin Khilji and his soldiers captured this part of Gujarat and ended the rule of Hindu kings. Allaudin Khilji told his SUBAS (clerks) that the strength of the farmers was in their wealth and so squeeze as much wealth as possible from the farmers without making them completely destitute. Leave only enough for the farmers to sow the following year's crops. Fifty percent of the crops

were collected in payment from each farmer leaving them extremely poor. Allaudin Khilji ruled Gujarat for 15 to 20 years.

Mohammed Bagdo became the next ruler of Gujarat and took a third of all crops and outlawed any stealing. To improve farming, he chose the best farmer from each village and handed those farmers the land. In return he asked the chosen farmers to improve the farming, provide security for that village and make the village prosperous and pay the kingdom on fixed cash base (BANDHI AVAK).

This way the tradition of giving part of the crop to the kingdom was abolished and a permanent propriety of the land was granted. Whoever had the propriety of the land were called PATEDAR which changed to KANBI PATIDAR and then became PATEL PATIDAR. This way once again the PATEL PATIDAR became the owners of each village. From then on the Patel Patidar have maintained themselves as Patidar and have cultivated land by hiring farm labour. Thus the villages of Gujarat started to prosper once again.

Around A.D. 1600 Akbar conquered Gujarat. Akbar had the land measured by the "TODARMAL" and established the "VINDHOTI" system (land tax). This is today's "MAYSHUL" system.

When the Kanbis first came to Kheda from one of the first villages to be established in the Petlad taluka, Bhadran taluka and others were SAUJITRA, NAAR BHADRAN, KARAMSAD, VIRSAD, DHARMAJ, etc. They slowly became over populated and this brought shortage of houses and agricultural land. In the beginning each family had about 5000 "VIGA" land but when that land was passed on to the successive generations, the share to each family became smaller and smaller which in turn made the families poorer.

Between A.D. 1820 and 1830 some of the poor Patidar families decided to move towards SOUTH GUJARAT and were joined by Leava Patidars from other densely populated villages. They settled around SURAT. The surrounding areas of Surat were dense forests which the Leava Patidars cleared and cultivated the land. Houses were built from the timber of the same jungles and then villages were established.

In the beginning there was a link between the Patidars of the Kheda district and that of the Surat district but as transportation was difficult, the link started to weaken. The main means of transport at that time were bullock carts, horses and camels. It took 10 to 12 days to travel between Charotar and Surat. (The railway first came to India in 1860 and the first rail route was between Bombay and Thane.) Relatives from Surat and Charotar visited each other but the contact gradually decreased over the generations and in the end all links were cut off. Right from the beginning, marriages between the Patidar of Surat and that of Charotar had ceased as this could take over 20 to 25 days of travel.

Between 50 and 60 villages were established by the Patidars who came to Surat and as the population of this group was small, they established between 50 to 60 houses in each village. They built big houses as there was plenty of land. The "KHACHO" (empty land at the back of the house) known as "VAADO", in Surat, were big and so each house had their own well for water. They also had stables built with their houses for the cattle

and had an "UKARDO" for the cattle manure. They also kept a "KHARI" (plain clear space) in the "vaado" for bringing in the crops. All these facilities were incorporated in each house. In Charotar, they had faced the difficulties of not having all these conveniences. The Kanbi Patidar were hard workers and so in a short time started to live comfortably and happily.

Between 1840 and 1850, some Leava Patidar thought of going on a pilgrimage to KASHI to see KASHI VISHVANATH, so they started on their journey by bullock carts. There was a group of about 75 to 100 people. On the way they camped at various villages. After four to five weeks they reached a village called PIRANA near Ahmadabad. In Pirana there was a pious man called IMAMSHAH. Imamshah heard of this group of pilgrims and went to meet them. He invited them to dine with him that night. Imamshah himself was a vegetarian and so he always offered vegetarian food to all visitors who came to his village, be they Hindus or Muslims.

They talked till late in the night. Then Imamshah asked, if he could give the "darshan" of Kashi Visvanath here, would the group go back. Some people from the group agreed though others objected to this idea. The group that did not agree continued their journey to Kashi. The others had the "darshan" of Kashi Vishvanath at Pirana as shown by Imamshah and returned to their villages. The other group, after completing the entire pilgrimage, returned about one year later.

Another reason for parting from the Leava Patidar was that many people were tired of following the extreme traditions of the Leava Patidar Samaj. The parting gave them an opportunity to change the traditions to their own view of life.

One of the improvements was the abolishing of "DAHAIJ" or "DAIYAJA" (dowry) system because the poorer Leava Patidars found it extremely difficult to get their daughters married. At times, when they could not come up with the dowry, the girls remained spinsters and had to spend the rest of their life with their brothers and sisters-in-law (bhabhi).

Thus the dowry system was totally abolished and a ruling was passed which said that nobody should give any dowry nor should anybody receive any.

The second improvement was that any women who were widowed or divorced were allowed to remarry and enjoy family life as this was considered their natural right. Many other improvements were also made which are not listed here.

Are "Patel's" like the "Smiths". It made one wonder..... here's what I found:

1. Translation in Sanskrit: Patel – farmer.
2. In Hindi: Patel - village leader
3. Patel : Chief of village. Surname originated from province of Gujarat India.
4. Patel surname is the most widely used name today. Originally the Kurmis of Punjab, after having settled in Gujarat around 1400 A.D. were allocated the uncultivated land in Petlad Taluka by the Solankis, the rulers of Gujarat at the time.

5. The Solanki ruler allocated land equivalent to one village to each family for cultivation. The Kanbi family being highly motivated and hard working to succeed, cultivated the land and prospered.

6. The King had an agreement with Kanbis who appointed a headman, whose responsibility was to keep the records of the crops on a PAT. The person keeping the record was known as PATLIK, shortened to PATAL, and eventually to PATEL.

7. Prior to the introduction of the name Patel in Gujarat, they were known as Kanbis. The people known today as Patels or Patidars are descendants of people known in the last century as KANBI, which is derived from the word "Kutumbin", meaning family.

8. This large and influential caste has its home in Kutch, Saurashtra, North Gujarat, Central and South Gujarat. They have now spread all over the world.

9. The Patel's started as a family clearing and cultivating Land. Patel's employed craftsmen and workers to work on the farm and maintain their farms.

10. Other tradesmen and workers eventually settled around and small towns took shapes. Patel's eventually became the head of the town, known as the Kanbi. They were responsible for keeping all the documentation of land ownership. The documents were written on PATTA and the person keeping the records were known as PATTALIK, which eventually led to the people who managed these records as PATEL.

11. During the old days, people were classified in villages based on the work they performed... Some were doctors, some were carpenters, some were blacksmiths, some were wine shopkeepers, etc, etc.... The chief of each village had a PATEL surname.

12. Now in some places, it would mean that PATEL is a chief of 5 villages, and in some places, a chief of 1 village.