

1957 - 1960 What Else

I can not be sure of the chronology of events, so I would list each event under its own paragraphs.

Once I started at RkC, Bapuji rented downstairs bit to a very nice family and moved upstairs. During my first vacation from RkC, I noticed that my status had gone up quite a few notches. Studying at the elite, prince's school, had brought new respect from family and friends, for this boy. Which was quite a change from feeling inferiority complex when at school.

Bapuji said to me that I should pick up the dictionary, once a day, open it at random, and choose a word to remember. That way I would increase my vocabulary. I made a start.

First 2 words were *Peruse* and *Meander*. Unfortunately that was it.

Bapuji decided that after 3 months at RkC, my English should be good and he would try and converse with me in English.

Bapuji also loved to recite this poem to me.

Chubby cheeks

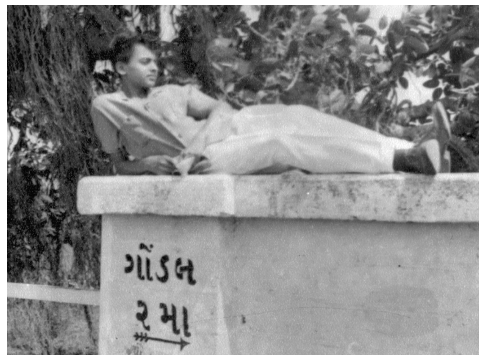
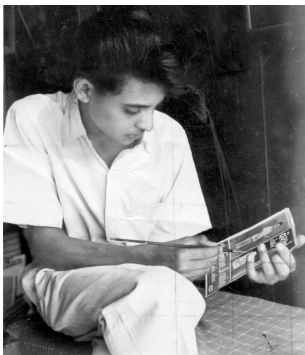
Dimple Chin

Curly hair

Very fair

Then He would ask me explain the meaning. After a while, I knew the poem and its meaning by heart.

When in Gondal, I would meet up with Hasmukh Shah. Hasmukh lived in a 2 room house, with his



mother, in one of the back alleys of Nani Bazar in Gondal. We had become friends when I had been to his house to see a *Cat's Whisker Radio*. He wanted to learn photography and I had the old rolleiflex camera. During my vacations, we used to go for long walks with camera. He would take

pictures. Invariably, I was the subject. Here are couple of examples.

One day Bapuji said we were going to Rajkot. We visited the family of [Vishvanath Vyas](#). We had actually come to see his daughter, Sudha. On our return journey Bapuji mentioned that [Sharadbhai](#) was to be engaged to Sudha Vyas. I am sure I attended the marriage but I do not recall details of the

marriage. (Some of you may remember, her brother, Harshad Vyas, who used to visit us in Keighley.)

I was very close to [Mota Faiba](#) (Maniba), Bapuji's younger sister. She stayed with Bapuji after her husband Valji Fuwa passed away. I helped her with all her religious rituals (tahevars). If she was supposed to fast and she did not feel very well, I would do the fast in her name and also do all the necessary puja – this is allowed in our culture.

Mota Faiba was also very fond of Dinesh. She used to call him Lap-lapio-Kachbo. The turtle who could not stop talking.

This is from an Indian fable about a turtle who wanted to cross a huge lake. His friend, the eagle, said he would help if he clung-on to eagle's beak with his mouth. Make sure you do not talk. So they set off. Unfortunately for the turtle, he could not help himself. He opened his mouth to say something and plunged into the lake....

At end of one of my vacations, I got into Ghoda Gadi (horse drawn carriage) to go to the station. This was the first time, Mota Faiba came out to say goodbye to me and I could see her standing there,

waving until the carriage turned the corner.

In early 1959, Motafaiba got very ill. She had diarrhea and soon got dehydrated. Krishnakaka suggested that Bapuji should ask me to come visit. Bapuji decided that as I was very near my exams, I should not be informed.

Few days later, Mota Faiba passed away.

I was quite saddened and wrote to Bapuji offering my condolences. In my next vacation, nothing was said. I went to see Krishna Kaka and Kaki who lived in next street but one. It was also



the first time I had conversation with Sudhakaki. She came to the door to say goodbye, tried her English on me and then said that how emotional and moving my letter was and that Bapuji had been reading my letter to everybody.

(Above is the only picture I have got of Mota Faiba, taken with my box camera, at Abu. It has been heavily Gamma corrected to show facial details. Left-to-Right: Mahesh, Veenaben, Bapuji, Madhuben, Rajubhai, Pushpakaki and Mota Faiba.)

Next marriage during this period was of [Harshad Krishnashanker Upadhyaya](#) to Vanleela Vanmali pandya. The marriage took place in Rajkot.

Whilst I was standing outside, I saw the Gondal thug and my old friend, Lalit Chakoo. I wondered what he was doing out of his comfort zone of Gondal. I tried to hide in case he was looking for me. Then I saw one of the Gondal girls from our gathering sneaking out to meet him. I was relieved. There was an imminent danger of an incident (I am not telling) flaring up during the wedding ceremony but fortunately things were brought under control without wedding guests becoming aware of it.

One day, Veenaben and I were talking in the side room, upstairs. A gentleman walked into the room. Veenaben seemed to be expecting him. He introduced himself and they started talking. I stood there trying to find out why he was there. Veenaben glared at me. Signaled me to leave the room.



How was I to know that [Jasubhai](#) had come to see Veenaben. Soon after that meet, Veenaben got engaged to Jasubhai. At the time Jasubhai lived with his sisters Nirmalaben and Bhartiben. Jasubhai worked in Rajkot.

I went to Rajkot with naliar (coconut) to conclude the engagement ceremony. I used to wonder why Jasubhai worked in Rajkot. Jasubhai was good looking. I thought he looked like [Dev Anand](#), Indian film star. His father, Manibhai Vyas, was in film industry and directed and / or edited many [films](#).

Madhuben's engagement to [Girish Pandya](#) took place at about the same time. I have no recollection of ceremony, probably because there was not a big ceremony. To the best of my knowledge, Rajubhai went to their house to exchange naliar (coconut).

Rajubhai loves to tell how [Girish Pandya](#) saw this girl at a community gathering and said that if he is to marry, he will only marry that beautiful girl in black sari. How sad the way things would turn out. Of Course, what I do remember, vividly, is the first meet of Madhuben with Girishbhai. (I think I will say Girishbhai because that's how I addressed him).

One evening, Girishbhai came with his sister, Nina. I ushered Girishbhai and Madhuben in the room on the 3rd floor. As Nina and I were chaperons, we sat on the steps, outside the room. It was dark. We sort of talked. Suddenly, Nina held my hand and this boy was smitten. Although that was the only physical contact we would have, my brain was swimming in a romantic novels, poems and shayaris.

Madhuben was very pleased about our friendship and volunteered to carry messages. (there were no telephones and One was not allowed to write).

Veenaben hit the roof. "She is old enough to be my mother" She said. Nina was a year younger than Veenaben.

To celebrate Madhuben's engagement, Madhuben and Girishbhai went to see a film. Nina and I accompanied them, as chaperons, to see *Gunj Uthi Shehnai*. It is amazing how memory plays tricks. Although nothing happened between two of us, songs from that film (especially [tere sur aur mere geet](#)) evokes such imaginary nostalgia.



Our extended family, was very very orthodox. Madhuben wanted to go to Virpur to offer her prayers because both us believed in Jalaram. Nina also had faith. So she came along. I took my camera. At Virpur we took some pictures. Madhuben took my picture with Nina.

I thought it would be nice to have that picture enlarged so I went to the studio (Rawal Studio) that did all our family work. Next time I visited Nina's household, she was very angry with me. It seemed that everybody seem to know that I had a picture taken with her. One can not get a picture taken with a

girl unless you are related. I had to stand there and destroy that picture in front her. Here's the other picture I took.

In my Diwali vacation, I was invited to spend one Navratri evening with them. Nina and I did get time to talk. By then I had already decided that I will be leaving RkC. I told her and she started planning our future.

Actually it was very comforting to think of Nina when times at the school became rough. I rattled of few poems and poetries. I think 3 of them got published in some obscure local magazine under the pseudonym of *Nishiv* (Ni(na) shiv=mahesh).

What else was there?

Manishankerkaka was Bhai's first cousin on maternal side. They lived in Vijay plot, Rajkot which was about one mile from RkC.

I would visit them during Balev to change Janoi (sacred thread). Sometimes Bapuji would ask me to go there to borrow my bus fare.

Bapuji used to teach Shivrajsinh who was the brother of the ruling king of Gondal, Vikramsinh.

Shivrajsinh's son was at RkC. He was 2 years junior to me. Sometimes Bapuji would say, why don't you get a lift from them. This was really embarrassing for me because I did not know the son that well so I tried to avoid that, if I could.

I attended the marriage of Jasubhai' sister, Nirmalaben to Narendrabhai Bhatt, in Rajkot.

After her engagement, Veenaben returned to Porbander but was not keeping well. So she went to Aden (Not sure when)