

1952 – Gondal

So Ba was left in Gondal with Veenaben, Jyotika, Dinesh, Jayshree and Me. Motafaiba was there to guide Ba. Veenaben and Jyotika got enrolled in the local Monghiba girl's school. I started at the local primary school in Bhojrajapura.

For me, this was a new experience. The school did not have chairs or desks. One sat on the floor. It did not have toilets. There was a stream about 300 yards from school. One went there for a big job or at side of the school for a quick one.

We had Krishnakaka's family living in next street but one. Bapuji's other sister, Manuba (Nanafaiba) living with her son, Dhirukaka, at the end of our street.

Ba's job was difficult. She was surrounded by elders but still had to run the house, care for Motafaiba and raise us, the siblings.

One day, I had gone away to play with kids, in another street. When I returned, a few hours later, Ba hit the roof. She really told me off for playing away from home. I got really upset and after a while, left home. Having decided to make my fortune elsewhere, I crept out of the house. Turned left and at the end of the street turned right. I walked to end of Bhojrajapura until I Hit the defunct railway line. Followed the tracks, for seemed what seemed like hours, until I reached civilization. I had actually reached Gondal railway station. Now the confusion. What do I do. Do I take a train? Where would I go? No money in pocket. So I sat on a bench. I was getting hungry. Someone threw a bidi (cigarette rolled in tobacco leaf) he had just lit to board a train. I picked it up and had my first puff – and then second puff.

At home, all the relatives from around the area had gathered. Ba must have been really worried.

I had my first appearance on the silver screen of the only cinema, Central Talkies. Film was interrupted to show a slide.

"LOST: 10 year old boy. Wearing ***, height ***, etc"

(I recall that Jyotika had rescued that slide from Gondal. I cannot remember what happened to it? May be it's in the loft, somewhere.)

At the station, I saw Nanafaiba's son, Dhirukaka and somebody else approaching. I was, actually, relieved. This running-away lark, without positive plans, did not work like it did in novels.

Nothing was said. I was escorted to a police station, at werry Gate, located at the junction of Nani and Moti Bazar, to inform them that I had been found. The policeman tried his best to put the fear god into me by showing me assortment of handcuffs and other restraining implements to suggest what would happen if I was not a good and obedient child.

Nothing was said when I got home. Someone said she could smell cigarette smoke. They decided it must have been Dhirukaka.

1953 – Bapuji's Return

Raseshbhai was born on 17 August 1953, in Aden.

In autumn of 1953, Bapuji returned with Kanchanba and children. Ba returned to Aden with Jyotika, Dinesh and Jayshree.



I was settling down in my class. Motafaiba's grandchild, [Vipin Upadhyaya](#) was in my class. His father [Manishankerkaka](#) was talented in classical vocal. As Vipin and I were interested in music, at school, they asked if 2 of us would join some classes of music as this would help in a drama they were producing. Bapuji did not like the idea. He suggested that it would be a distraction. Anyway, music & drama was not really for us. Vipin joined. I did not.

(Note:- When did Jyotika come back from Aden? When did Jyotika have typhoid?)

1953 – Chowki School

Bapuji got a teaching position at a boarding school in [Chowki](#), Sorath, near Junagadh. I was quite pleased because there was a lot bullying going on at the primary school.

So I was enrolled in that school and Bapuji and I stayed in the staff accommodation for a while. In the evenings, Bapuji would go to the market to get vegetables. I would make the dough and roll rotlies, using a round bowl to cut them into circles.

Very soon after our move, Bapuji got himself a teaching position in Gondal, teaching in Garasia school for girls (set up by Bhagvatsinhji of Gondal).

I was enrolled into the boarding school to finish my year in Chowki Sorath, and Bapuji left for Gondal.

The boys' boarding school was situated in a former palace, for dogs, built by the then ruler (Nawab) of Junagadh. The [Nawab of Junagadh](#) was an eccentric character, famously obsessed with dogs. He was said to have owned 800 of them, each with its individual human attendant. When two of his favourite dogs mated, he is said to have spent Rs. 20-30 lakhs (200-300,000) in "wedding" celebrations, and proclaimed the day as State holiday. When India became independent, he declared that his state of Junagadh would join Pakistan rather than India. It did not matter that the border with Pakistan was 900 miles from his state boundary. Failing to get his wish, he emigrated to Pakistan, leaving his state to join independent India.

The school was based on the teachings of [Swami Dayanand Saraswati](#). Swami Dayanand was one of the most renowned thinkers of India. He was the founder of a sect called Arya

Samaj. The followers of Arya Samaj consider the Vedas (Rig Ved, Sam Ved, Yajur Ved and Atharav Ved) to be the utmost scriptures which are indeed the most sacred of the Hindu Scriptures. At the time these Scriptures were written, there was no religion. So in essence these scriptures are not really specific to any particular religion or sect but are pertinent to the way of life for mankind. Arya Samaj teaches that there is only one super being who created the universe. It does not have a form. Aum (ॐ) encompasses all the universe. It is worth noting here that there is no comparable word for religion in Indian culture. Nearest one is "Dharma", meaning duty.

At school, the day started with prayers and Havan (fire) with explanations & meanings. There was study in Sanskrit. One of the senior boys, Murli, was an accomplished musician and portrait painter, in oil. He encouraged me to join these 2 classes and my name was put on the waiting list.

Life was fun for us 11 year olds. Main topic of conversation was "how many rotlies did you eat" I used to max out at twelve. In the afternoon break, we were still hungry. So it was off to the school farm and eat raw bhindi straight off the bushes.

The good-life did not last very long. At the end of the term I left Chowki and joined The Sagramji Middle school, in Gondal.

Dadaji had not returned to Aden after his visit to Gondal for the wedding. He passed away in 1953.

My great grandmother, Premba, was staying with Krishnakaka and had gone blind. I am glad I made copies of her photograph, at the time. Premba passed away, I guess, in 1953.

At some point, structural work was carried out in the house, at Gondal. I suppose, after Jitukaka's marriage, accomodation got difficult during their visits to Gondal. Upstairs, to get to the bathroom, one had to go either through the kitchen or the side room. So A passage was created from the varanda to the terrace, next to the bathroom. A room was added to the third floor.

Around this time, in Aden, there was a fire at the Daniel uncle's house. We lost all the furniture, belongings and all memorabilia, including all the photos.

(Note:- I can not date this because I do not know who was staying there at the time.
Was it, Bapuji and family or Bhai and family)

1954 – 1957 Gondal

After that very short, exciting period at Chowki, life at school seemed very very dull. Class was big. Pupils rowdy. There was, of course, bullying. There was no pocket money, apart from commandeering any loose change lying about.

So one had to find scams which would generate some pocket money.

First scam was to collect all sort of pictures, cut-out from magazines, empty cigarette packets and whatever else was available. Cooked rice with lot of starch made good glue. Stick it all together to make a roll. Make a cardbox with a cutout to fit a magnifying glass and one had a nice viewer. Jyotika was my first guinea pig. Unfortunately there was not much interest and kids would not pay to look at my pictures.

I thought I might try and use my acrobatic skills and join one of the street performers, by playing truant from school. Tried that but there was no monetary reward at the end of the day. The concept was to join them, live with them and share. I did not think that was a good idea.

I recall that once I had sneaked off, from school, to the river for a swim. I saw a guy with black bear. When the bear stood up on it's hind legs, it was taller than me. "would you like to hug him?" I did and somehow ended up going round the town with this performing bear, hugging him and collecting the coins. Earning few annas was not really worth whole day's work.

There was more money to be made doing "dares". One of this was to cross the road walking on hands, being paid for distance covered. Other was doing a Headstand on edge of a deep well. Jumping in to a deep well for a dare was a good earner. I had to make sure that there was a rope there so that I could climb out.

One morning, I joined a travelling acrobat team in the morning, skipping school. I travelled with them, performing on the streets and squares. They wanted me join, citing all sort of advantages. Fortunately at the end of the day, I decided it would not work and returned home.

Then I came across a book of magic. It was not really book about magic but a book with lot of science experiments.

So started my short career as magician. Easiest one was to go to many of the scattered, privately run, small preschool nurseries. One of the trick was to make bits disappear. Little kids would put paisas (pennies) in a bag to make it disappear. Half would be returned and rest would be mine.

(In 2015, when I met one of KrishnakKaka's sons, [Bhaskerbhai](#), he reminded me how I would rope him and his brother into selling tickets for some of my magic shows.)

Making Chana-Chor-Garam was another brilliant idea which did not work in practice.

These are cooked chick-peas that have been flattened, fried, and seasoned with spices. I got Jyotika involved in this. Boiling chana was not a problem. To flatten them, Jyotika would place each chick-pea on the floor and I would hit it with a hammer to flatten it. It was not a good venture. It took ages and we only made enough for two of us.

I was fascinated with images, projected images and use of magnifying glass.

One day I saw an advertisement for a film projector. It was Rs 35. I had more than enough in my secret stash to buy it but I could not openly order it because Bapuji would want to know where the money came from.

One of my friend, Kirit's family had a printing press at the end of our street, Bhagvat printing press. We used to spend a lot of time together, with his cousin, Anil, because our primary school used to be just behind their premises. We discussed the problem and it was decided that Kirit would order it for delivery to his house. So order was sent with a money order for Rs 35, to Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh.

I brought the projector home, saying it was a present from Kirit. Bapuji was not convinced that someone would give me a present. Nothing more was said.

The projector was little tin box with a place to put a light bulb, a lens, a cog wheel to pull the film and a handle to move the film.

Few days later, a guy turned up at the house to claim import duty as the item was imported from another state. He had gone to Kirit's house but was redirected to our house. Bapuji did pay the custom duty and I paid for my deed. Pankajbhai still likes to tell me that he still has Bapuji's walking stick which made contact with either my backside or back of my knees.

That day was one of them.

It still brought me some money. The 35mm film supplied was about a football match and lasted just under minute. Wandering round the local cinema often got me bits of film footage that had been cut and discarded.

Ushaben's husband, Natubhai, worked for the electricity board. I suppose, by this time I had decided that I was going to be an electrical engineer. I used to enjoy talking to him as he talked about generators and distribution systems in the electricity board. He talked about how carbon sticks were used to produce white light used to project films in cinemas. He managed to organize a trip to projection room of the local cinema to show me how the film was projected.

The then prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, was passing through the town and was going to address a rally in the grounds of Sagramji High School. I went along with my box camera and took couple of pictures - there were only eight to a roll of film. On the way back, I was accosted by the town's bully number one, Lalit Chakoo. He was feared. People would cross the street to avoid contact. He grabbed my camera and started clicking. I was in tears.

I decided that only way to avoid future confrontations was to be in his good books and I joined his gang. I was not really a bully but I got labeled as a bully.

I also developed an interest in photography. I started by making prints by exposing photo paper to sunlight. I wanted to learn to develop and fix these images. I approached our family photographer Rawalbhai of Rawal studio. He just laughed. He would not part with the information. He said “just take pictures and I will make prints for you”.



I started going round the local studios to see if I could learn more. Eventually I popped in to Haresh studio, run by a young photographer, Haresh Jadia. He was quite willing to show me the process. I was a bit dubious in going with him in his darkroom. I was 14 and he would have been 24. I learnt quite a lot from him. He was willing to teach. I watched him set up lights for portraiture. One day, I hesitantly

asked whether I could borrow his double lens reflex camera to go out and take some pictures. To my astonishment, he said yes. Double lens reflex camera was the tool of a professional, in those days. It was not the top-end Rolliflex but I did not know that.

Walking about taking pictures, I bumped into Lalit Chakoo. He wanted to look at the camera. I resisted but he took it anyway. In doing so he dropped it. There was a slight damage.

Sheepishly, I returned the camera and left. After that, I would not dare return to his studio. A few days later, I heard him calling me from outside the house. He wanted Rs 90 for the damage I had done to his camera. I hid in the house as there was no way I could pay him.

He never knocked on the door to demand money. After a while, he stopped.

(I met up with him in 2014, after 59 years. It never occurred to me that I should pay my debt)

Once, we all went to Junagadh and stayed with Ba's mama, Nandlalmama. Kanumama had got engaged to [Bakukadevi Harilal Vyas](#). Kanumama would write a letter to Bakulamami, shape it like an air letter, draw a stamp and it was my job to deliver the letter to her house and bring back a reply.

That year Kanumama married Bakulamami.

I enjoyed talking to Kanumama. He would explain to me how sound was recorded in the film. I had never thought about recording of sound in films.

We had a windup gramophone at home. There were about half a dozen records which would have been issued during the celebrations of golden jubilee of Bhagvasinhji and were all about him and the jubilee celebrations.

There were 2 records which probably belonged to Bhai.

One was [Aayi Diwali Aayi Diwali](#) and another was [Sawan ke Badlo](#)

I tried the gramophone and found it to be in working order. There were no styluses. I found that a very small nail would do the job.

I added [3rd record](#) to the collection from the new film, Nagin, that had just been released.

Bhai was on leave from Aden. Bapuji and Bhai were called to go to Krishnakaka's house. So Veenaben put the radio on to music station, Radio-Ceylon. The radio was at full blast.

Bhai returned. He looked very upset. He lashed out at the radio to turn it off, taking the knob off its spindle.

Krishnakaka's youngest daughter, Pratima (aged 3-5 years), had been playing on the first floor balcony. She fell and died.

I had malaria and I was in bed for 5 to 7 days. My bed was put in the main room, upstairs. One with the radio in room. Veenaben got permission to put radio on for me and radio-Ceylon was allowed. It must have been 1955 because I heard the song, [Mera juta hain Japani](#), for the first time.

At the end of our street, there was centre for workers and labourers, Majur Kalyan Kendra. I used to go there 2 or 3 times a month to read current magazines and newspapers. One day, I started talking to a boy there. We discussed that there were no local magazines. We decided to start a magazine. This was not going to be big venture. We were talking about a newsletter, with 4 to 6 pages. We both enjoyed writing short stories and poems. All we would do is produce a handwritten newsletter with our stories, poems and extracts from other children's magazines. He said we needed some capital. So off we went looking for a sponsor. We managed to convince an owner of a local peanut oil mill to give us some money. We bought some paper and produced our first magazine. I had already written couple of short stories so those went in. We copied this four times and distributed it to various centres. Trouble is I forgot to ask the guy, where he lived. After the first edition, I never saw him or our pool of funding again.

About this time, One of our relatives, Janardan who lived in Sankdi sheri near Darbar Chowk introduced me to taisokoto. I managed to acquire a second hand one at very reasonable price. Bapuji was not really pleased about this, so I had to practice out of his earshot which was not very often.

So, when did I get time to do all this.

I had loads of time because I played truant. For those 2 years, I hardly attended any classes. The lessons were boring and disorganized.. Sometimes I might just turn up and leave after registering my presence.

One of my classmates, Kishore, lived at the other end of Bhojrajapura. His father, Mahasukhbhai had an electronic and audio shop. It was fascinating shop and I spent lot of time there. One or 2 weeks before exams, I would look at his notes. He had a tutor coming in evenings. If allowed, I would sit at the back and listen to the tutor.

(Note: [Satishbhai Trivedi](#), Vinod's brother, used to manufacture radios, in early 1940's. He said he had visited Mahasukhbhai to supply him with his radios)

So I only spent 2 to 3 weeks in a year to go to school. Looking at my school report for 1955-56, I was surprised to see that actual attendance was 80%. That's probably because I would attend for registration and then play truant. So I came 31st out of 35, for class work. Fortunately for me, I came 3rd in the exam.

In Aden, one day, Kanumama, boarded a ship and left, without telling anybody, not even his wife, Bakulamami, to join an ashram run by [Vinoba Bhave](#) (Just as Dulerainana, before)

(Note:- I am debating whether I should include details of Ba's mother, Bhagerthiba and family)

In Gondal, a fair takes place, in College Chowk, for 2 days, to celebrate Lord Krishna's birth on Janmashtmi (*Satam Atham no Melo*).

Jitukaka, [Chamanbhai](#) and others decided to have a stall. Chamanbhai's family was living in [Mahuva](#) at the time. Mahuva is known for its wooden toys, especially wooden fruits. The stall was set up. We all mucked in to help in the stall.

After the fair, it transpired that some cash went missing. I was blamed. Jitukaka asked if I had taken the money. I said NO. I was told that they definitely knew that I had taken it because money was seen in my shirt pocket. I was devastated. I was locked in the small room, on the 3rd floor. No food - no water to be served until I owned up.

On 3rd day, my lovely Kanchanba took pity on me and sneaked some food and water.

On 7th day, I was released. nothing more was said.

Later, Kanchanba told me that quite a large chunk of the takings had gone missing. She also told me who had seen money in my pocket. So if I did not take it, it must be the person who saw money in my pocket.

At school, one day, a boy said his brother had got a cat's whisker receiver working. Translated in to Gujarati that sounded very odd piece of gear. He agreed to show it to me. The device was a simple crystal radio receiver. It needs no other power source but that received solely from the power of radio waves received by a wire antenna. So we went to this house in Nani Bazar and on the top floor the receiver was working. Sound was very faint but I was impressed. Another boy living there, was Hasmukh Shah. Hasmukh was developing a keen interest in photography and we became good friends. We used to spend a lot of time together, visiting studios and taking pictures.

Jaiminibhai was born ??? 1955. I enjoyed playing with him. One day I got a piece of wood and painted a name for the house, Jaimini Kunj. I was quite pleased with my artwork. So stuck the sign on the front of the house. Bapuji got really upset. "Who gave you permission to name the house". His walking stick found my backside and I took the sign down

In 1956, I moved to the Sagramji High School. It is an imposing building, built by Bhagvatsinhji, architecture based on Eaton school. My form teacher was Dhirukaka, son of Nanafaiba. Bapuji and others had got wise to the fact that I only went to school for registration and then left. So a book was prepared for me, with every lesson marked. I had to get each teacher to sign my book to confirm I had been in the class.

There was a community gathering. A man with a full growth beard approached me. "Do you recognize me?" I looked at him. Did not recognize him but thought of Kanumama who had run away from home. I wondered if he was Kanumama and if he was, he had changed a lot and looked terrible. I hugged him, tears streaming down my face. Guy was flabbergasted. He was not Kanumama but Hansaben's brother-in-law.



One day, I noticed a group of boys exercising in a park. I was curious. I stood there and watched. A boy approached me and asked me if I would like to join. His name was Sunder Rawrana. The group was from RSS. (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Today, it's political wing is BJP, prime minister Narendra Modi). It is normally referred to as Shakha where teenagers were encouraged to exercise and do voluntary work. So I joined. Next day, a complaint was made to Bapuji, from Krishnakaka's house. "Mahesh was seen at Shakha". Krishnakaka was a member of the local council. Political colour was Congress who blamed RSS for the assassination of Mahatma

Gandhi. It was not politically correct for one of his grand nephews to be seen in their company. I was banned not only because of this but also that Sunder Rawrana was a barber's son!

Sunder got me interested in going to the Gym regularly which happened to be a small room, next to my classroom. He also got me interested in athletics. He introduced me to a well known Gujarati writer and poet, Manwantra Dave. I took up writing short stories, poetry, I started going back to school regularly. With Sunder's help, I trained and represented Gondal in All-Saurashtra Olympics, in high jump.

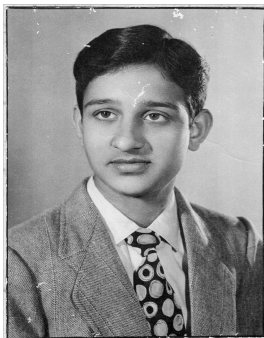
I met up with Sunder, in 2014, after 58 years, thanks to Jaiminibhai.

I do not recall how but about this time I met [Girish Ravishanker Upadhyaya](#). Their family lived about 6 streets away from us. His grandfather, Pranshanker had gone to Rangoon with Dadaji and later settled in Amritsar.

Girish's father, his elder brother and grandfather were in Amritsar. Girish lived in Gondal with his mother, 2 brothers and five sisters.

I cannot recall what brought us together. but as there was no pressure from elders at his house, I started spending lot of time at his house.

I wanted to keep homing pigeons. One day we cycled to nearby village of Kotda Sanghani, 6 to 7 miles from Gondal. I purchased 2 pigeons, at Rs 7 each. No way I could keep them at our house so they were kept at his house. 2 more were added.



Now Girish was definitely not a bully but people thought he was a bully. He was hot tempered but not a bully.

My association with Lalit Chakoo and Girish meant that I had a label of bully tagged on me.

In 1957, on Bhai's visit to Gondal, it was decided that Bapuji had enough of me and so I was enrolled in a boarding school, Rajkumar College (RkC) Rajkot, a public school.

I am not sure why RkC was chosen for me as the fees were quite steep. Only reason I can think of, was that I was out of control and constantly playing truant. As I was quite friendly with Girish, at this time, It was decided that he was a bad influence and I had to be taken away from that. RkC would, probably, instil some discipline in me.



At the same time, Veenaben, aged 19, had just completed her SSC and was enrolled in Mahila college, Porbandar. Jyotika, aged 13, started in 7th standard and Jayshree, aged 6, were enrolled in Arya Kanya Gurukul, a girl's boarding school. Both establishments were in Porbander, Gujarat. They were in different residences but shared the same campus

Footnote: After I joined RkC, Girish went to Amritsar. Later, he would marry Ba's youngest sister, Bhagwatiben. His younger brother, Janardan would marry Ba's niece, [Tarulatta Ratilal Pandya](#).

I never met him again. He passed away in July 1999.

What else:-

[Chamanbhai](#) emigrated to Aden and started work as civil engineer

Bhai helped to get Krishnakaka's son, [Harshadbhai](#), to go to Aden for a spell.

Kamlesh was born on 31 August 1956, in Aden

What's missing:-

I do not have details of what was happening in Aden, during this period.