



*Rise and Glory
History
of
Halari Visa Oshwals*

*by
Rati Dodhia*

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Halari Visa Oshwals of America

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In memory of my parents and my wife Indu's parents:

Late Shri Lalji Khimji Shah and Shrimati Amratben Lalji Shah

Late Shri Fulchand Karamshi Shah and Shrimati Deviben Fulchand Shah

Who were part of the group of early pioneers who sacrificed so much for their families and the community.

FOREWORD

This book, " History of Halari Visa Oswals " in English by Dr. Ratilal Dodhia, provides information about our origin, hardships our ancestors faced and how they overcame them, migration to various places, entrepreneurship and traditions. Many people have written about our origin, settlement in Halar and migration to East Africa, United Kingdom, United States of America and Canada, but this is the first comprehensive document in English. It is divided in four parts: Part I deals with the origin of Oswals in Rajasthan, India; Part II deals with the migration of Oswals in Cutchh; Part III deals with the migration of Oswals from Cutchh to Halar region of Jamnagar District of State of Gujarat, India, and Part IV deals with rise and glory of Halari Oswals since the beginning of 20th century.

The Oswal community was founded 70 years after Lord Mahavir's nirvana (i.e. Vikram Savant 400 or 457 BC) in the city of Osiya (the name 'Oswal' is derived from the name of the city), which is located about 32 miles from Jodhpur in State of Rajasthan, when some people from a warrior caste (Kashtriya) were converted to Jainism. Because of religious and political persecutions, and difficult economic conditions, a large contingent of Oswals moved from Rajasthan to Sindh (which is now in Pakistan) around tenth century while some moved to Punjab and Cutchh. Again the conditions in Sindh became hostile for Oswals so a mass migration of Oswals from Sindh to Cutchh took place in sixteenth and seventeenth century. Some of them, after a stay of merely 25 years, moved to Halar with Jam Rawal. The families of Jam Rawal and Rao Khengarji who had Kingdoms in Cutchh were feuding and to avoid more blood shed, Jam Rawal moved to Kathiawad/Saurashtra in circa 1520 AD. Some Oswals joined him because they were afraid that Rao Khengarji would not treat them well. Because of very short stay in Cutchh, not much information about the Oswals who first settled in Cutchh and later moved to Halar is available.

The history of Halari Visa Oswals begins from the period when Jam Rawal conquered several small kingdoms in Kathiawad and formed a vast kingdom with Jam Khambhalia, and later Jamnagar, as its capital. He provided land for settlement of Oswals in 52 villages of Halar region. Once again, Oswals in Halar region faced adverse environment as the land and the weather conditions were not conducive for agriculture. Therefore some people went to other parts of India mainly Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Madhya Pradesh and Hyderabad. At the end of nineteenth century a few young men ventured and migrated to Madagascar and East Africa. Halari Oswals continued to migrate to East Africa until 1950's. When the three East African countries became independent in early 1960's, indigenous nationals of these countries were encouraged to take over small- and mid-sized businesses owned by Indians including Halari Oswals. Most of the Halari Oswals moved to the United Kingdom and a few re-settled in India. The number of Halari Oswals in the United Kingdom has continued to grow as migration from East Africa has continued for several reasons such as better opportunities both in business and professional fields and better education facilities. In early 1960's, a small number of professional Halari Oswals from India and East Africa started settling in the United States of America and Canada and the number of Halari Oswals in these countries is growing. Halari Oswals are also settling in Australia and other parts of the world for better opportunities.

The last century has been full of glory for the Halari Visa Oswal community. The community has prospered because of its tradition of hard work, diligence and caring for others. We have been fortunate to have several leaders and philanthropists with the vision to improve the quality of life for Oswals. They supported building of educational, social and medical institutions in India, Africa and the United Kingdom.

It has been not an easy task for Dr. Rati Dodhia to write the book while working full time in his profession because most of the background material for the book had to be obtained from India, East Africa and the United Kingdom. I sincerely hope that other Halari Oshwals will follow Dr. Rati Dodhia's example and make sure that they record all the information they have about their ancestors and their own accomplishments so that the future generations would have better appreciation of our culture and traditions, and take pride in our heritage.

Dr. Rati Dodhia was born on 15 March 1936 in Nairobi Kenya and did high school education in Nairobi. He studied medicine in India and after practicing a few years in Kenya he went to the United States of America for postgraduate studies in Pathology. He presently resides in Lincoln, Rhode Island with his wife, Indira (daughter of Fulchand Karamshi of Nairobi). He has two sons Rahul and Sanjay, one daughter, Anu, and four grand children.

He has been an active member of the Jain Center of Greater Boston and was President of the Center for two years. It was the first Jain Center to start the Jain Pathshala for the young people. And was the first Center to publish the Pathshala books on Jain Religion for children in English written by Dr. Rati Dodhia. During Jaina Convention in Toronto Canada in 1997, he received a recognition Award for leadership in promoting Jainism by Federation of Jain Associations in North America.

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PREFACE

In late 1970's Keshubhai Chandaria asked me to get the volume of postdoctoral thesis on Halari Visa Oshwals written by John Irwing Zarwal. It was very fascinating. First time I read the history of my community written in English by a foreigner.

I was born in Nairobi Kenya in 1936 AD. Reading the thesis made me realize that how ancient and rich culture my community represented. It made me proud to have such rich heritage and be part of the present evolution. Ever since it has become my passion to learn more about my roots. Over the years I have read many books, articles written in journals, the souvenirs published by my community on special occasions and stories told by elders. All these brought back to me my personal experiences while I was growing up in Kenya and while I was studying in India.

My community which in olden times exerted much influence and power in commerce and trade, occupied important administrative and military posts with many rulers and one time wrote authoritative books on grammar, mathematics and medicine had fallen down so low that often they did not have enough to eat and they were ridiculed by their own affluent brothers. Their contribution to the cultural heritage of India is immeasurable.

Most of the history of Halari Visa Oshwals, about their social structure, customs and religion in English is written by Western scholars, which are not easily available to a layperson.

Many people of my age are not aware of the true history. Most of the younger generation as they are not well versed in Gujarati or other Indian languages have very little or no knowledge of our history. I felt duty bound to write

this book to preserve the rich heritage and the saga of downfall and rise of my community not only for me but also for my generation and for future generation.

This has been a very rewarding project for me. I have come to know so much about my community. I am thankful to many people without their help I would not be able to finish the project.

I am very much thankful to Ratibhai Chandaria (My brother in law), Keshubhai and Sobhag Dodhia (My two brothers) for procuring various books and articles. I am very grateful to Hansrajbhai Gudhka of London who kindly made available all the 25 articles about Oshwal's history written in Gujarati by his father Somchand Ladha Gudhka, which were published in an Oshwal magazine of Mumbai.

My friend Satish P. Shah, without his inspiration, supervision and very valuable suggestions it would not have been possible for me to complete this project. There are not enough words to express my gratitude to him.

I am deeply indebted to Dr Paul Marett retired professor of History for editing the manuscript and offering many valuable suggestions and comments.

I am thankful to Mayur Gudka for creating the maps and Paresh Shah and Amitabh Sinha for preparing this manuscript ready for printing.

I must admit that by no means this is a complete history. I know there are many heroes, pioneers, community leader, torchbearers and philanthropists besides the people I have mentioned in this book who have done so much for my community. I am unable to mention their names in this book because of lack of information. If in future I am able to get information on these people and if I publish second edition of this book I will make sure that their biographies are included.

I would fail in my duty if I forget to offer my sincere thanks to all my good friends for giving me timely help in one form or the other in completion of this project.

I have done my best to eliminate the errors and have tried my best to make sure that everything written in book is authentic. If unknowingly I have overlooked any mistake or hurt any ones feelings please forgive me (michhami dukdum).

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PART I

Origin of Oshwal Community in Rajasthan



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The history is traditionally written about prominent individuals, royalty, ministers, and men of intellectual forces or power. This is a history about an Oshwal Community, a prominent Jain Institution.

The historicity of Jain Oshwals is difficult to prove from Jain sources alone because tradition of writing came very late. Nevertheless, the history of Oshwals is full of grace and bravery. This institution was founded about 2600 years ago. The history of Oshwals was first written by a foreign historian, the British political agent Colonel James Todd, in a book *Antiquities of Rajasthan*, published in V.S. 1821. The Oshwals originally come from *Kshtriya* (warrior) caste, but because they became a business community, they are now considered as part of merchant (*Vaishya*) caste.

This community has played a very impressive role in India's political, financial, religious and social life. Famous historical people have born in this community. What a cause of pride is to know that there is not a single other community in the history of India that has owned and controlled the financial institutions not just for hundreds but also for thousands of years! When country suffered from terrible famines the people like Jaga Shah, in V.S. 222, and Jagdu Shah in V.S. 1312, both Oshwal billionaires distributed food, clothing and other necessities free and earned the title of 'Saviors of the World'. In the eighteenth century during the great famine, none other than an Oshwal, Jagat Seth, came to the rescue. Bhamra Shah gave all his wealth to Maha Rana Pratap who was fighting against Mogul Empire and was instrumental in converting defeat to victory. For centuries Oshwals played major roles and commanded high positions as Prime Ministers,

Treasurers, Stewards, and Commanders of the Armies, in Indian Kingdoms. They occupied important administrative and military posts under rulers of many dynasties. There are instances of persons who showed great leadership on battlefields.

By greatly impressing the Mogul Emperors the commander Munot Nensi was able to bring many political and social reforms. Karamchand and Khivansi Bhandari were able soldiers belonging to the Oswal community. Shri Dayal Sinha, the Prime Minister and commander of Raja Sinhaji, Maharana of Mevad, fought against the forces of Emperor Aurangzeb. Sheth Khushalchand saved the city of Ahmedabad from Maratha raid.

The great literary Poet Magh (732 V.S.) author of epic poem Shishupalvadham, written in Sanskrit, was Shrimad. Shri Devilal, the protector and promoter of folk art, was born in the Oswal community. Seth Shantidas Zaveri ancestor of the distinguished Ahmedabad businessman Kasturbhai Lalbhai was jeweler to the Mughal Emperor Akbar and received grants of several Jain tirths (places of pilgrimage), Samet Sikhar, Palitana and others, from the Emperor. Rao Bahadur Seth Premchandbhai Himabhai established the well-known institute of Seth Anandji Kalyanji, which manages the affairs of many Jain tirths. (The title '*Seth*' ('*Sheth*') refers to a leader of business community.)

The Oswals of Gujarat maintained their fame in visual arts. Oswals constructed beautiful temples in Santruji, Girnar, Ranakpur, Abu, and other places of North India. The contribution of Jain Oswals to the social and cultural heritage of India has been, in proportion of their numbers, many times higher than that of the rest of the population of the country. The wealthiest community in India is the Oswal community. In nineteenth century one lakh (100,000) families of Oswals controlled and owned half the wealth of India.

Oshwals constitute a very small portion of the Indian population. How did such a small community exercise so much influence? The answer lies in religion. Jainism did not get much of royal support in the first few centuries after twenty-fourth Tirthankar, Mahavir passed away (in 527 B.C., according to Jain tradition). There was only one royal patron in those centuries, the Emperor Samprati, the great Emperor Ashoka's grandson, whose capital was Ujjain. However, people engaged in commerce and trades were drawn to Jainism from at least the early centuries of Christian era.

There have been many groups and sub groups within the community. But when one comes to analyze the differences among them, it is found that these relate to trifling matters of rituals, or to details of mythological stories.

At the present time Oshwal community is spread all over the World. Prominent Jains play innumerable roles in different spheres of activity. At the present time there are many eminent people in Oshwal families, industrial magnates, high court judges of states and provinces, heads of local government bodies such as regional corporations, municipalities, local district boards and so on. Many have distinguished themselves as scholars, research workers, writers, dramatists, poets, critics, actors, editors, orators, engineers, social workers, physicians, and in almost every field. The Internationally famous Atomic Scientist Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, who brought the atomic research up to the standard of western countries, was an illustrious son of this community. In the struggle for the political freedom of India Oshwals contributed manpower and financial support. The Oshwal community has contributed in recent years to political, social and economical progress of India and other countries in which they have settled.

Oshwal merchants have been well known for their wealth since ancient times and many have utilized their wealth well. They have donated money to the construction and maintenance of large number of social and charitable institutions, religious guesthouses, animal shelters, dispensaries, maternity homes, hospitals, schools, colleges, libraries, and the like.

The Oshwals are a tightly knit community and their religious and social lives are guided by Jain ethics. Jain *acharyas* (monastic leaders) are the role models for Oshwals. Whenever there was rise or decline in Jain religion it directly affected the Oshwal community. The religion and the community went hand in hand and were dependent on one another.

The Svetamber sect is one of the two main divisions of the Jain religion and most of the Svetamber *acharyas* come from the Oshwals. They are the founders of numerous sub sects supported by Oshwals. The influence of Jain principles is clear in day-to-day life of the Oshwal community so it will be right to consider in detail about the history of Jain religion to help us establish the roots of Oshwal community.

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORY OF JAINISM

The Jaina religion is one of the oldest religions on this earth. The exact time when it was founded is not known. In olden times it was popularly known as Religion of Austerity (*Shraman Dharma*), or the Religion of Vows and Penances (*Vratiya Dharma*) because the practice of religion is based on disowning worldly possessions by practicing various vows and penances.

In Jaina tradition Time (*Kala*) may be seen as wheel (*chakra*), ever rotating. One complete revolution of Time wheel (*Kala chakra*) is one Time Period (*kalpa*). Each period is divided in two equal half-cycles, which are (a) the Regressive (or Descending) Half-cycle (*avsarpini*) and (b) the Progressive or (Ascending) Half-cycle (*utsarpini*). Each half-cycle is further divided into six Ages or Eras (*kala, ara*). Each era is of a different length of time. The length goes on decreasing progressively. The First Age is the longest and the last two, fifth and sixth, are the shortest and are of equal length.

In the descending half-cycle the quality of life starts at high point but gradually deteriorates. The first three eras are periods of happiness. There is a surplus of every basic need for every living thing. The earth is full of celestial trees (*kalpa vraksha*) and celestial cows (*kamdhenu*), which provide all the basic needs. People live a very simple but happy life. This period is therefore known as the Realm of Happiness or Paradise (*bhog bhumi*).

At the beginning of the third era, there is a gradual decrease in the number of celestial trees and cows but there is still enough for everyone. Not till the latter half

of the third era do people start feeling a shortage of basic necessities. Fear starts prevailing in people's hearts, and there is a feeling of discontent. The hardship and unhappiness go on increasing until the end of the sixth era. People have to work hard for their living. There is hatred and greediness towards others among living beings. This period, made up of the last three Ages, is known therefore as the Realm of Action (*karma bhumi*).

The helplessness, discontentment, and fear become intolerable. People everywhere seek for a way to overcome all these miseries. According to Jaina Scriptures, to provide the much-needed guidance, 63 super-human beings (*salka purush*) are born from the end of the third era to the end of the fourth era of regressive half-cycle. Out of this group the most distinguished and the most auspicious are the 24 Tirthankaras. The Tirthankaras are the supreme gods among humans, the saviors of mankind. They are known as Tirthankaras because they have shown a ford (from the word tirtha meaning ford) of righteousness and of mercy across the ocean of sufferings. It must be remembered that the Tirthankaras are not the founders of Jaina religion they are the re-establishers, reformers and teachers of the ancient faith.

The present Age in which we live is the fifth age of the regressive half-cycle. The first Tirthankara of our time was Lord Adinath also known as Rishabhdev, who was born at the end of the third era, a very long time ago and lived to an incredibly old age. He was a king and during his reign he saw the hardship of his people and the grim future. To help people face up to the misery of the future he established an organized system of government with law and order taught the people many arts and crafts and developed language and mathematics. Since then every time there was a decline in morals and conduct a new Tirthankara has been born.

There is not much documented history for the Tirthankaras who followed Adinath from the second to the nineteenth Tirthankara. Bhagwan ('venerable') Munisuvrata, the twentieth Tirthankara, is said to have lived during the time of Lord Rama, the hero of the epic Ramayana, about 5000 B.C.

During the time of the twenty-first Tirthankara, Lord Naminath, the sacrificial cult of priestly Vedic religion had reached its peak. There was much violence and cruelty towards animals in the name of religion. People were misguided, selfish and immoral, living a life full of sin. A revival movement was started by Lord Naminath to provide proper guidance and the right path. This movement has continued until the present time.

The twenty-second Tirthankara, Lord Neminath was the first cousin of Lord Krishna, the hero of the epic saga Mahabharata. The story of his renunciation of the world before his wedding to Rajul (Rajimati) on seeing the animals to be slaughtered for the marriage feast is an inspiring story of love and sacrifice around 3000 years B.C.

The greatest leader of the revival movement was Lord Parshvanath, the twenty-third Tirthankara. He was born in 877 B.C. in a royal family in Banaras (now Varanasi) the holy city on the river Ganges. He took the vows as a monk when he was 30 years old. After penance he attained supreme knowledge (*kevalgnan*) and he lived on for further 70 years. He revised Jaina ethical doctrines, introducing four vows non-violence, truth, honesty and non-possession. In his time the Jainism became to known as the Religion of Four Vows (*chatu-dhama*). The popularity of the Jaina religion was then at its peak during that time and reports say that it spread as far as Greece.

The twenty-fourth and the last Tirthankara of our half-cycle of time, Lord Mahavira, is the best-known and most popular leader with devotees today who lived, according to the most widely accepted tradition, from 599 to 527 B.C. He was the elder contemporary of the Buddha and Buddhist texts give evidence of his life. He was the greatest reformer, introducing many new ideas, including the fifth vow of celibacy. As a great philosopher he laid the foundation of the Jaina Logic with concept of non-absolutism (*syad vada*), that a statement can have different meanings when approached from different directions.

The Holy Pentad is the central theme of faith in Jainism, enjoining veneration and adoration to five most auspicious beings; these are:

1. *Arihant* (enlightened one),
2. *Siddha* (liberated one),
3. *Acharya* (monastic leader),
4. *Upadhyaya* (monastic teacher) and
5. *Sadhu* (monk).

ARIHANT: Arihant means the conqueror of inner enemies, which are the passions and more. He is the most distinguished ultimate omniscient lord with a supernatural body, known for his pious life. He is the god among men. This state is reached after the four destructive psychic forces (*karmas*) are annihilated.

SIDDHA: Siddha is a perfect soul who is liberated from the cycle of transmigration of successions of births and deaths (*sansar*). He is the Perfect Godhead with absolute knowledge. He is pure soul, without a body. This state is reached by annihilating all the 8 karmas.

ACHARYA: An ordained monk of the highest order, a pontiff, a leader of congregation, a monk who possesses right faith, knowledge and conduct, the three spiritual

jewels (*ratna trey*). He spends most of his time in meditation and occasionally delivering sermons. He ordains the suitable householder as monks. He prays and asks for forgiveness for the people who confess their sins before him.

UPADHYAYA: A monk who has extensive learning and understands the scriptures. He is appointed as a head preceptor with the main duty of reading and teaching the scriptures to the monks of lower order and the householders. He is also second in command of the congregation of monks.

SADHU: A person who has renounced the materialistic world and has entered the order of mendicants is a monk (*sadhu*). He tries to acquire right knowledge of the inner-self by reading the scriptures and through meditation. He follows the codes and ethics of Jaina religion in their strictest sense. A woman who takes the vows of poverty is called a *sadhavi* (nun).

The last three members of the holy pentad, the *acharyas*, the *upadhyayas* and the *sadhus*, are directly involved in teaching religion to laities. They provide proper guidance to an aspirant seeking the path of salvation.

A common concept is that Jainism is an atheist religion that the Jainas do not believe in god. This is not at all true. In Jainism the God is the most supreme, the most auspicious and the most worshipful being. The *arihants* and *siddhas* are gods. They are the inspirations for the aspirants. Everyone should strive to achieve the state of absolute detachment and passionlessness (*vitrag*) that the gods have attained.

THE UNIVERSE (*Loka*): From the very beginning mankind has wondered how the Universe was created. In most religions, this has been explained on the basis of an outside divine power 'the God' (*Isvara*), the creator of the entire

galaxy. Science does not accept the theory of divine creation. There are many theories proposed by scientists out of which the most accepted one is the 'big bang' theory according to which a big explosion took place in the natural forces from which a hot mass of elements came into existence, eventually forming the universe.

According to Jaina scriptures the universe has always been here and always will remain as such, eternally. It has neither beginning nor end.

Why is God not considered to be the creator according to Jaina belief? God means an absolutely pure and perfect entity, a soul without any desire or hatred and creation points to desire. If God is not vengeful, then why should he create the world full of misery, sickness and death, and not a completely peaceful and happy world? God should not be demanding, punishing or cruel. A cruel, almighty is not only contrary to the beliefs of Jaina philosophy but many other religions too. This is why God is not considered to be the creator.

TRADITIONAL JAINA GEOGRAPHY: The Universe in Jainism is defined as a conglomeration of six substances (*dravya*). It has a shape, which resembles a man standing erect with the legs parted and the arms bent at the elbows and the hands tucked in at the waist. It consists of the following different worlds:

1. The supreme Abode (*siddhsilla*),
2. Upper world (*urdhavlok*),
3. Middle world (*madhyalok*),
4. Nether world (*adholok*) and
5. The Base (*nigoda*).

THE SUPREME ABODE: This is the place situated at the top of the Universe, shaped like an inverted umbrella. It is the resting place of all the liberated souls.

UPPER WORLD: In which all the heavens are included, which are living places for the celestial beings. There are 30 heavens. The upper 16 are for the superior celestial beings and the lower 14 for the ordinary celestial beings.

MIDDLE WORLD: This includes the earth and the galaxy. The earth is the living place for human beings, animals and the plant life. The middle world is made of many large islands surrounded by big oceans. The island in the center is known as Jambudvip. An ocean named Lawan surrounds it. In the middle of Jambudvip there is a very high mountain called Sumeru. Jambudvip is divided into seven land areas, Bharat Ksetra, the present sub-continent of India, is the southernmost land area. The galaxy includes the sun, the moon and the stars.

NETHER WORLD: The lower world includes all the hells, living places for the damned ones, the hellish beings. These places are full of wickedness and misery with continuous torture. There are seven hells situated one above the other, each worse than the other, the seventh one being the worst, the place for the damned ones who have committed the worst kinds of sins.

THE BASE: The base or the *Nigoda* is the place underneath the seventh hell inhabited only by sub-microscopic *nigodas*, the very lowest form of life. For practical purposes, there is hardly any activity in here. The *nigodas* are considered to be the storehouse of bonded souls.

SUBSTANCES (*Dravya*): According to Jainism, a substance is defined as an entity having Quality (*guna*) and Mode (*paryaya*). There are six basic substances each plays a very important role in the existence of the universe. Following are the six substances:

1. Soul (*atman*),
2. Matter (*pudgal*),
3. Medium of Motion (*dharma*),
4. Medium of Rest (*adharm*),

5. Space (*akasa*) and
6. Time (*kala*).

There are several different ways by which these substances are classified. These classifications are mainly based on certain distinguishing qualities of the substances. Following are the various classifications:

- I. Depending upon presence of life:
 1. Living (*jiva*) and
 2. Non-living (*ajiva*).
- II. Depending upon the presence of form:
 1. Formed (*rupi*) and
 2. Formless (*arupi*).
- III. Depending upon the presence of number of space-units:
 1. Constituent (*astikaya*) and
 2. Non-constituent (*nastikaya*).

A constituent substance is the one with more than one space units; it is an intimate component of the universe. Soul, matter, medium of motion, medium of rest and space are the constituent substances.

The non-constituent substance has only one space-unit and is not an intimate component of the universe. Time is the non-constituent substance.

SOUL (*atman*): Soul is a sentient substance, a substance that is life. It possesses four qualities, (1) Perception (*anant darshan*), (2) Knowledge (*anant gnan*), (3) Bliss (*anant sukh*) and (4) Energy (*anant virya*). One quality that is very special to the soul is its ability to change its size depending upon the size of the body it occupies. It can be compared to the light from a lamp that is able to brighten the room of any size, whichever place it occupies at that particular time.

MATTER (*pudgal*): The formed matters are two kinds, atoms (*parmanu*) and molecules (*skandha*). The atoms are the smallest possible particles and the molecules are the combination of two or more atoms. Earth, wind, water and fire all are the forms of matter resulting from various combinations of atom and molecules. Grosser forms of matters possess certain qualities like touch, smell, taste, color and shape. Subtle form of matters are not visible to the naked eye and do not possess qualities present in gross matters. Energy particles (*shakti*) that include natural forces like light, electromagnetic fields and the particles of psychic forces (*karmas*) are subtle type of matter.

Both gross and subtle particles play a very important role in the existence of an embodied life. The body, sense organs, and the vital organs are all made of inert matter. The karmic dust determines the type and characteristics peculiar to that life. Energy is essential for all the activities.

MEDIUM OF MOTION (*dharma*): Jaina scriptures consider that things can only move or come to rest if there is a special medium present. This concept of two media is a unique contribution of Jainism to the world. For example, a fish can move around by swimming only when water is present. The water is the medium of motion for a fish.

MEDIUM OF REST (*adharma*): A person traveling on foot will stop to take rest under the shade of a tree. The shade at that particular time becomes a medium of rest for that person.

SPACE (*akasa*): There are two kinds of space: (1) The Universe space (*lokakasa*), space within the boundaries of the universe which provides accommodation for all the substances of the universe. (2) The space beyond (*alokakasa*) lays out side the boundaries of the Universe. Practically nothing is known about it.

TIME (*kala*): The day, hour, minute and so on are the divisions of time.

Although new things constantly come into existence as a result of union or interaction between various substances, and old things ultimately decay or perish, however, the basic six substances never perish, they are eternal. The continuous change of the substance takes place all the time and this is known as mode (*paryaya*).

CHAPTER 3

THE GREAT SCHISM

Since the time of Lord Mahavira a total of eight schisms have arisen in Jaina community. The first seven divisions were either personal or else related to minor differences in the interpretation of the philosophy:

1. The first division took place while Lord Mahavira was alive, 14 years after he attained omniscience. His son-in-law Jamali led it.
2. Tisgutta (Tisyagupta) led the second breakaway in Rajagriha 16 years after Lord Mahavira's Nirvana. His followers who were called Jivapaesyas did not believe that the soul is permeated in all the atoms of the body.
3. Asadha led the third division at Seyaviya in 214 years after Lord Mahavira's Nirvana (214 years after Mahavira's nirvana). His followers, called Avatiyas, believed that there was no difference between gods, saints, kings and other beings, so they should all be treated without distinction.
4. Six years later (220 years after Lord Mahavira's Nirvana) Assamitta (Asvamitra), in Mihilla, led the fourth division. His followers were called Samuchchheiyas. They believed that since all the lives will perish one day the effects of good and bad deeds are immaterial.
5. Ganga led the fifth division at Kullakatiriya 228 years after Mahavira's nirvana. His followers were called Dokiriyas. They believed that two opposite feelings like cold and warmth could be experienced at the same time.
6. Sadulaya (Rohagutta), in Antaranjiya 554 years after Lord Mahavira's nirvana led the sixth division. He postulated a third state, No-life, between life (Jiva)

- and Non-life (Ajiva). His followers were called Terasiyas.
7. Gotthamahila led the seventh division at Dashapura in 584 Vir Nirvana. His followers were called Abaddhiyas. They believed *Jiva* was not bounded by karma.

None of these seven schisms have survived to the present time.

8. The eighth division split the Jaina community into the two major sects: Digambers and Svetambers, so called because the Digamber (space-clad or sky-clad) monks go naked, while the Svetamber (white-clad) monks wear simple clothing, which still exist at the present time.

Exact time when this division took place is not known. During Lord Mahivir's time there were ascetics of both kinds nude and clothed. It was an option in the beginning and the separation probably took place gradually. The two distinct monastic traditions date back over 2300 years. Acharya Bhadrabahu was probably the last patriarch of the united ascetic community. According to one account the origin of the split may be traced to about 300 B.C. during the reign of Emperor Chandragupta Mauriya. Acharya Bhadrabahu predicted a terrible twelve-year famine in state of Magadh (modern Bihar in eastern India) and in face of this he led a large group of his monastic followers south to the region now known as Karnataka where they stayed for 12 years. Bhadrabahu passed away in South. His followers returned to Patliputra (Modern Patna). Here they found some of the monks who had stayed behind were no longer practicing nudity, which was unacceptable to them. This may have marked the beginning of the split in the Jaina ascetic community. In fact complete separation probably developed gradually over several centuries.

In the early years there were no written scriptures. The head *acharya* memorized sacred texts and in due course passed them to the succeeding *acharya*. In time, inevitably knowledge of sacred texts was lost. Of the 12 scriptures known as *Agamas* only 11 remained, the twelfth *Agama* containing Purvas is gone and forgotten and is known today only from a few stray references in other texts. To save the remaining texts a council was held in mid-fifth century A.D., either 453 or 466 A.D. (980/983 Vir Samvat) at Vallabhi in Gujarat. Devardhi Kshmashtman, the head of the monastic order, presided over the conference. The sacred texts were critically reviewed and written down on palm leaves (the usual writing material in those days). However the Digambers completely denied the authenticity of the texts collected by this council. They claimed that the last person to know the 11 *Agamas* died 436 years after Mahavir's nirvana, and by 683 the knowledge of these works was completely lost. Thus the Vallabhi Council marked the final split between Svetambars and Digambers.

Digambers:

Digamber means space (or sky)-clad as the Digamber monks gave up virtually all possessions, including clothes. The history of Digambers can be divided into four Periods.

1. From the time of Mahavir till the beginning of Christian era. Not much is known, as there is no written history. There was no clear-cut division between the two sects.
2. For eight centuries from the beginning of the Christian era. The original community (*mul sangh*) branched out into several sub-sects. None of which survive to day. The complete split between Svetambars and Digambers took place in this period.
3. The period of domination by Bhattarakas, lasting up to the seventeenth/ eighteenth century A.D. was a most significant period, particularly in South. Bhattarakas

are a peculiarly Digamber institution, celibate but able to possess property. They officiate at religious and domestic occasions; manage the estates of the temples.

4. Period of reformation from eighteenth century to present. In seventeenth century Banarsidas Jain in Agra protested against the practices followed by Bispantha sub-sect. The movement became stronger and a new sub-sect was born called Terapantha (not to be confused with Svetamber sub-sect of the same name), in Sanganer, near Jaipur in eighteenth century.

The Digambers called their 'church' the Mul Sangh, the Original Community, from which all the subsequent sub sects branched out.

The early establishments:

1. Mul Sangh, which had four schools, Vira Sinha, Nandi, Sena and Deva;
2. Kashtra Sangh, established by Kumarsen Muni V.S. 753;
3. Mathura Sangh, in Mathura V.S. 900;
4. Dravid Sangh established by Vajra Suri.

The recent Sub sects:

1. **Bispanthi:** According to some this was the original sect of the Digambers. They worship nude images and to which they offer flowers, saffron, fruits, sweetmeats and other things. The majority of Jainas in Northern India followed these practices.
2. **Terapanthi:** This sect came into existence in 1663 V.S. because of a protest movement against the domination and lax conduct of Bhattaraks. They worship nude images but unlike Bispanthis they worship the image by offering *aksata* (sacred rice), cloves, sandal, almonds, coconuts, date and other

non-living (*asachita*) things. Pundit Amarchand of Sangenar and Pundit Banarsidas of Agra made it very popular among the people. It is more particularly strong in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

3. **Taranapanthi (Samaiyapanthi):** Founder Tarana Swami (1505-1552 V.S. 1448-1495 A.D.). They do not worship images but worship sacred books. Tarana Swami was looking for equanimity for all and even opened the doors to Muslims and lower castes. They give more importance to spiritual values and study of the sacred books. They are few in number mostly in Bandelkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.
4. **Mumuksu:** Followers of Kanji Swami. The main center is located in Songadh near Palitana in Saurashtra. Kanji Swami was a twentieth century Svetamber Sthanakvasi monk. He popularized the old texts of great Digamber Saint Acharya Kund Kund, interpreting them to give more importance to 'realistic' or 'definitive' point of view (*nischaya naya*) that is concerned with the pure, real or transcendental nature of reality, rather than 'practical' or empirical point of view (*vyavahara naya*).
5. **Gumanapanthi:** A strictly orthodox sub-sect started in the eighteenth century by Gumanmal son of learned Digamber scholar Todarmal named after its founder. He was very orthodox and wanted to restore practice according to original pristine Jaina principles. The sect never became popular.
6. **Totapanthi:** To create understanding between Terapanthi and Bispanthi this new society was founded in Nagour. They are also known as *Sadhe Sola Panthi*, Sixteen and Half, arrived by adding tera (13) and bis (20) and then dividing by two.

At present the last two sub-sects (5 and 6) have died away.

Svetambers:

Svetamber means 'white clad'. The Svetamber monks wear white clothes. The Svetamber sect as a distinctly 'church' developed after Valabhi Council (980/983 Vir Samvat, 5th century A.D.). One of the most important Jaina texts is the *Kalpasutra*, ascribed to Bhadrabahu, which was put into its final form at this period. In fifth and sixth century A.D. during rule of the Gupta dynasty an important development was the standardized of Jaina iconography.

Haribahdara Suri laid the foundation of the Svetamber intellectual movement. He lived in eighth century A.D. (A.D. 705-775). He was born in a Brahmin family of Chitrakuta (present day Chittorgarh).

Hemchandra Suri was born in 1088 A.D. in a place called Dhandhuka about 100 Kilometers south west of Ahmedabad in *vania* (merchant) community. He was one of the greatest Jaina monk and literary scholar of India. He wrote book of grammar called *Dwayashrya* in two volumes. The first volume is about the Sanskrit Grammar written in Sanskrit and the second volume is Prakrit Grammar written in Prakrit. He was a great poet and composed the devotional songs in praise of Tirthankaras. His famous works are books on biographies of 63 superheroes of Jaina mythology (*Trishatti Shalaka Purush Charitra*) and *Yoga Shastra*, a treatise describing aspects of Pantajali and Jaina Yoga system.

A gaccha is sub-division of the Svetambers community. Basically it is a grouping of monks formed by important monks with a following of lay adherents. At present time majority of Svetambers of Gujarat and Rajasthan belong to one of the following three gachhas:

1. Khartar,
2. Tappa and
3. Anchal.

Like the Digambar sect, the Svetambar sect has also been split into two main sub-sects:

1. Image worshipers (*murtipujak*) and,
2. Non-image worshipers:
 - (a) Sthanakvasi and
 - (b) Terapanthi.

Image Worshipers

Murtipujak Svetambers worship images (*murti*). They offer flowers, fruit, saffron and other things to their images and adorn them with rich clothes and jeweled ornaments. The Murtipujak sub-sect is also known by terms like:

- (i) *Pujera* (worshippers),
- (ii) *Deravasi* (temple residents),
- (iii) *Chaityavasi* (temple residents) and
- (iv) *Mandira-margi* (temple goers).

Non-Image Worshipers

Lonkagachha: In 1474 A.D. Lonka Shaha, concerned about the loose conducts of monks, formed a new group of non-image worshippers, Lonkapat. This was a most important protestant movement among Svetambers. At the same time as reformers like Kabir (1440-1558 A.D.) and Guru Nanak (1469-1538 A.D.) had established their sects or religions whose main principle was devotion to a God without attributes (*nirguna upasana*, worship of attribute-less one) with strong opposition to Hindu idolatry. This atmosphere of anti-image worship appears to have affected Jainism also. The movement incidentally coincided with Lutheran and Puritan movement in Europe. Lonka Shah lived in Ahmedabad. He was a government servant under Muslim rulers of Gujarat. One day he saw Muslim hunters killing birds with trap called *chida*. He was so hurt by this cruel act that he gave up his job and started

earning his livings by copying Jaina religious manuscripts. He became a keen student of Jaina scriptures. To his amazement he discovered that there was no mention of image worshipping in the scriptures, which prompted him to start the movement against image worshipping. Later movements of similar nature like Bijmata, Sthankvasi and Terapantha are off shoots of Lonkagachha.

Sthanakvasi: The Sthanakvasi or the Dhundhiya sect was founded in 1653 A.D. (V.S. 1709) by Yati Lavji, who abolished rituals and introduced wearing by monks and nuns of a mouthpiece (*mukhpati*), a strip of cloth over the mouth to protect small air creatures from harm. The origin of name Sthanakvasi is not clear. It might be due to fact that the Sthanakvasi monks reside in one place (*sthanak*). Once it was called Baistolla (from *baisi*, a collection of twenty-two), as there were 22 separate traditions with 22 acharyas.

Terapanthi (1817 V.S.): In eighteenth century A.D. Shraman Bhikhanji had dispute about some customs of Sthanakvasi Tradition therefore in 1760 A.D. (V.S.1817) he separated from Acharya Raghunathji and formed his own Terapanthi tradition, of which he became the first head. He laid stress on 13 (tera) religious principles; 5 mahavratas (great vows), 5 samitis (rules of conducts) and 3 gupties (restrains), therefore it is known as Terapanthi. It is known for disciplined organization with one Acharya (religious head), one code of conduct and one line of thought. Terapanthis have played a leading role in Oshwal Society.

YAPANIYAS SANGH (Gangya Sangh)

A Svetamber Monk founded this sect in 148 A.D., 70 years after the big split as a compromised tradition in North Karnataka. It survived until fifteenth century. Monks practiced nudity but they held peacock feathers to cover

their nudity. They worshipped nude images of Tirthankaras like Digambers but offered flowers, fruit and the like. Unlike Digambers they believed that women could achieve salvation and that a *kevalin* (omniscient) takes food. They read the scriptures of the Svetambers. By sixteenth century the sect died away and ultimately being absorbed in Digamber sect.

CHAPTER 4

JAINA SCRIPTURES

It is believed that originally, since the time of first Tirthankara there were two kinds of sacred books.

- (I) *Purvas*, which were 14 in numbers and
- (II) *Angas*, of which 11 remain.

The 14 Purvas collectively made the twelfth Anga, known as the *Dristivada*. In early times sacred texts were not written down but were preserved in the memory of senior monks and passed on to their successors. Knowledge of all 14 Purvas continued up to Acharya Sthulibhadra, the eighth leader of Lord Mahavira's congregation. Gradually knowledge of the texts decreased until by 980 years after the nirvana of Lord Mahavira (453 A.D.) all the Purvas had been forgotten.

According to Svetambers Lord Mahavira discourse was in Ardhamagadhi language, in which the oldest scriptures are preserved. This was Prakrit (colloquial tongue) of the Magadh region (modern Bihar). The *Gandhars* (chief disciples) interpreted his discourse. Lord Mahavira had eleven Gandhars of whom nine achieved salvation before their master, whilst Indrabhuti Gautam achieved salvation eight years after Lord Mahavira. The burden of leading the Mahavira's Order fell on Acharya Sudharma who became the vehicle of Lord's words. Thus he was effectively the creator of twelve fold Agam (scriptures) (*dwadshang*).

Digambers believe that the speech of Tirthankara is voiceless. They do not speak a word while giving a discourse but a divine voice is emitted from their whole body. In the Divine hall (*samovsaran*) this discourse is heard by every living being in their native language. According to Digambers knowledge of all the Angas was

gradually lost after nine more generation, and they therefore, reject as canonical the works claimed as the original texts by the Svetambers.

Canonical Literature of Svetambers

There are 45 texts namely 11 Angas (the oldest parts of the canon), 12 Upangas, 10 Prakirnas (Paina), 6 Chhedasutras, 2 independent texts and 4 Mulsutras, as follows:

Angas (Limbs):

1. Acharanga Sutra,
2. Sutrutanga,
3. Sthananga,
4. Samavayamga,
5. Bhagawati Vyakhya Pragnapti,
6. Gnatadharmakathah,
7. Upashakdashashah,
8. Antakruddasah,
9. Anuttaraupapatikadasah,
10. Prasna Vyakaranani,
11. Vipaka-Srutam and
12. Drishtivada.

Upangas (Secondary limbs)

These were written by sthvir acharyas (elder) for the understanding of the main Agamas:

1. Uvvaiya (Aupaptika),
2. Rayapasenaijja (Raj Prashniya),
3. Jivajivabhigama,
4. Pannavana (Pragnapna),
5. Suriyapannati,
6. Chandrapannati,
7. Jambuddivapannati,
8. Niravaliya,
9. Kappvandsiya,
10. Pupfiyao,

11. Pushpachuliya and
12. Vanhidasha (Vrushni Dasha).

Prakirnas (Painnas (Scattered pieces):

1. Chausharana,
2. Aturapratyakhana,
3. Bhakta-Parigna,
4. Sanstara,
5. Tandul avaitalika,
6. Chamdavijjhaya,
7. Devendrastava,
8. Gani-Vidya.
9. Maha-Pratyakhyana and
10. Virastava.

Chhedasuttras (Conduct of Ascetics):

Uttavarti (later) Acharyas wrote 6 Sutras on the subject of conduct of ascetic: Acharya Bhadrabahu is said to be the author.

1. Nishitha,
2. Mahanishitha,
3. Vyavahar,
4. dashshrutaskandha,
5. Vruhatkalpa and
6. Kalpa Sutra (Pancha-kalpa).

Individual Texts:

1. Nandi Sutra and
2. Anuyogadvara.

Mula-Suttras:

Over the years Lord's complete *Adhiyatma Darshan*

(spiritual discourse) was written in four main sutras by acharyas:

1. Uttaradhyyana,
2. Dashavaikalika (Acharya Shamyabhav wrote this sutra knowing death of his 8 year son close at hand),
3. Avashyak Niryukti and
4. Pind Niryukti or Odh Niryukti.

Sacred Books of the Digambers:

Digambers maintain that the Svetambers scriptures are not the true canonical texts, which they insist were totally lost as long ago as the second century A.D. However the Digambers do have a large body of texts, which they regard as sacred, in four collections called four Anuyogas (expositions):

- 1. Prathamanyoga (the First Exposition):** This includes biographies of 63 extraordinary people (*Shalka Purusho*) and the Wheel of Time (*Kal Chakra*). There are other legendary works (*Puranas*) on this subject, some of which are: Padma-Harivansha, Trishashtilakhana, Maha and Utara-purana.
- 2. Karananuyoga (exposition of technical matters):** This includes Jaina Geography (*cosmos triloka*) and four destinities (*gatis*) of rebirth, as a heavenly being, as a human being, as a hell being or as an animal or plant. Some of the other notable works on cosmological works are Surya-pragnapti, Chandra-pragnapti and Jayadhavala.
- 3. Charananuyoga (exposition on conduct):** It includes description of three spiritual jewels (faith, knowledge and conduct) and rules for conducts of ascetics and of laity. Vattakera's Mulachara and Trivarnachara, also Samantabhadra's Ratnakaranda-Shravakachar, are other works on these subjects.

4. Dravyanuyoga (exposition of substances or existents): It includes description of detailed discussion on *praman* (valid knowledge), *naya* (view point), six substances, seven truths, *pancastikaya* (five 'extended' substances) and other matters. It is sub classified into:

(I) Agam (scripture):

(a) Sidhant Shat Khandagma, Kashay, Pahud, etc.

(b) Nyaya, Asta Sahasri, Prameya, Kamal, Martand, etc., and

(II) Adhyatma (spirituality):

(a) Bhavna, Samaysaar, Pravachansaar etc.

(b) Dhyana, Gnanvarniya, Tutvanu Shashan etc.

Philosophical works: Kunda-kunda's Niyamsara (essence of conduct), Samaysara (essence of soul), Umaswami's Tattvarthadhigama-sutra (essence of reality), and Samantabhadra's Aptamimasa.

At present a further group of sacred texts are classified as:

1. Karamaprabhrita (Karman): Shatkhandagama composed by Pushpadanta and Bhutabali on the basis of lost Dristivada and commentary on the five books of Karmaprabhrita by Virasena.

2. Kashayaprabhrita (Passions): by Gunadhara also base on lost Dristivada and its commentary by Viresena and his pupil Jinsena.

In spite of rejections by Digambers it should be emphasized here that canonical and philosophical literature of Svetambers is also as authentic and of supreme quality.

CHAPTER 5

BIRTH OF SHRIMAL COMMUNITY

City of Bhinmal

City of Bhinmal is closely related to the origins of Shrimal and Oshwal community. The city is certainly ancient: there is a mention of Shrimal in ancient Hindu epic the *Skundh Puran*. Its original name was Shri Laxmi Mahasthan or Shrimal. In the second age it was known as Ratnamal, in the third age as Pushpamal and in the present age it is known as Bhinmal. The present city of Bhinmal is located in Jalor district in Rajasthan about 40 miles west of Abu Road Station.

Approximately 2600 years ago City of Shrimal, in the Maru Region, was very prosperous and famous business center. According to description in *Shrimal Puran* the city had area of 20 square miles (5 *yojans*). There were 84 gates leading into and out of the city. There were three different residential areas. Billionaires lived in one, millionaires in another and rest of the merchants in the third area. It is said that 84 billionaires (*kotiyadhish*) lived in the city. At that time the influence of Brahmins who were worshippers of a Goddess (*vam margi*) prevailed with the royal family. During the fire worshipping (*yagna*) hundreds of thousands of animals were sacrificed. People drank alcohol, ate meat and committed adultery. They worshipped gods and goddesses, believed in evil spirits, ghosts and demons. They were hypocrites and swindlers. Neither the Jain nor the Buddhist religion had any influence in this region. Corruption, lechery and coarse behavior prevailed.

However near the ruins of ancient Bhinmal there is lake where a stone monument dated 1333 V.S. (1277 A.D.) has been found in the ruins of a Jain temple with an inscription that Lord Mahavir personally visited Bhinmal.

Among the well-known authors who wrote were Acharya Haribhadra and great poet Magh wrote his Sanskrit epic poem *Shishupalvadham* in Bhinmal. The mathematician Acharya Brahma Gupt was from Bhinmal. His *Brahma Siddhant* achieved international fame and from its Arabic translation, *Sindh Hind*, the concept of zero was introduced to western scientists. The Chinese traveler Heun Song wrote about City of Bhinmal in his account of travels. Mahuk's *Harmekhla* on ayurvedic medicine also was written here.

During Lord Mahavir's time King Shrimal ruled Shrimal Nagar. He was follower of Vedic religion and wanted to perform ceremonial fire worship where many animals were to be sacrificed. Knowing this Lord Mahavir sent his disciple Gautam to dissuade the king from performing the sacrificial ritual and king was so influenced by Gautam's sermon that he stopped the ceremony then and there and embraced the Jain religion with 125,000 Kshtriyas.

Soon after that King Bhimsen of Sirohi attacked the city of Shrimal. King Shrimal was old and he had no sons but he had a daughter, Laxmi. So to prevent the death of thousands of people and the destruction of the city he gave his daughter Laxmi in marriage to Bhimsen and made him the King of Shrimal city. King Bhimsen changed the name of city to Bhinmal. He was Shaivat and worshipped the Shiva *linga*. He had two sons Shri Punj and Uppaldev (Utpaldev).

According to Muni Gnan Sunderji Acharya Shri Swayam Prabh Suri, the fifth head of monastic order of Lord Parshvanath, in year Virat 30 persuaded the King Shrimal not to sacrifice animals during the ceremonial fire worship and at that time 90,000 people, including king, adopted Jainism. According to Udayratna, Acharya Ratnaprabh Suri, the sixth head of monastic order of Lord Parshvanath arrived in Shrimal Nagar and founded the Shrimal community there.

From V.S. 202 to 581 Bhinmal was ruled by Kings of Solanki dynasty. In V.S. 764 Bhan became king. He was a very honorable King and gave his royal protection to the Jain religion.

According to Pundit Hiralal Hansraj writer of *Jaina Gotra Sangraha* during the time of King Bhan in V.S. 764, 62 Brahmin merchants (*shreshthis*) of Bhinmal Nagar adopted Jain religion after hearing discourse by Acharya Udayprabh Suri who established Shrimal Gotra. Sixty-two sects were founded taking the names of these 62 families and in time these branched out in many more sub-sects. In Gujarat the Shrimals, like the Oshwals, are also divided into Dasa and Visa.

These are some of the many different versions of the origin of the Shrimals but there is no doubt that the Shrimals originated in Shrimal Nagar as a result of its citizens embracing Jain Religion. There are differences of opinion as to the date of the origin of Shrimal community. However, all the documents, historians and archeologists are unanimously in agreement regarding the intimate relationship of Shrimal community with Oshwal community as Upaldev, son of King Bhinmal, founded Osiya Nagri, the birthplace of Oshwal community.

CHAPTER 6

ORIGIN OF OSHWAL COMMUNITY

After the death of Bhimsen Shri Punj became King. His Chief Minister's name was Suhad, who was a billionaire and had younger brother called Uhad. Uhad needed 100,000 gold coins for a business deal so he went to his brother and asked to lend the money. His sister-in-law, Suhad's wife overheard the conversation and taunted Uhad. He felt insulted and hurt and, deciding to leave the city, he went to see his friend Prince Upaldev. Upaldev knew that he had very little chance to become king decided to leave the city with Uhad to find a new kingdom. They sought the permission of their families and left Bhinmal together. On the way they met King Sangram Singh of Vayrat who was impressed by their intention of founding a new kingdom. He promised his daughter in marriage to Upaldev and made the engagement official. Upaldev and Uhad proceeded further and on the way they bought some horses. They reached Delhi and gave horses to King Sadhu as a present. The king in return gave them a piece of barren land as a gift with permission to build a new city there. Taking leave of King Sadhu they arrived at Bhandore and on nearby barren land (*oes bhumi*) 32 miles north of city of Jodhpur they built a new city and named it Oespattan. They sent invitations to people of Bhinmal to come and settle down in the newly built city of Oespattan. In time the city became very prosperous. Oespattan has also been called as Ukeshpur in Prakrit or Upkeshpur in Sanskrit and by about eleventh or twelfth century V.S. the name had evolved into Osiya.

One well-known Western Historian Professor A.K. Hornell gives a different account. King Bhimsen had two sons, Shri Punj and Sur Sunder. Shri Punj had a son named

Utpal Kumar. King Bhimsen was follower of Saivat religion so he appointed his younger son, Sur Sunder as the crown prince because Shri Punj the elder son had adopted Jaina religion from Acharya Shri Swayamprabh Surishwar, fifth head of the Parshvanath monastic order. When Sur Sunder became King his ministers were two businessmen, brothers Udheran and Uhad. Udheran had property worth eighteen million gold coins while Uhad was owner of property worth 990,000 gold coins. Uhad asked his brother to lend him 100,000 gold coins for a business deal. The account then continues as above.

The legendary tales of Birth of Oshwals.

There are several different stories in folklores regarding the birth of Oshwal community.

The first head of the Lord Parshvanath's monastic Order was Shri Shubhdatt Gandhar, followed by second, Shri Haridatt Surishwar, third, Arya Samudra Surishwar, forth, Shri Keshi Shraman Surishwar who was contemporary of Lord Mahavir. The fifth Shri Swayamprabh Surishwar went to Maru Land. Here after giving a sermon converted hundreds of thousands people to Jainism. He is considered to be the founder of Shrimal sect. He ordained Vidyadhar Ratnakund as a monk who took the name Ratnaprabh Suri and became the sixth head of the Parshvanath monastic order 52 years after the salvation of Lord Mahavir.

Seventy years after the salvation of Lord Mahavir, that is 400 years before Vikram Samvat, Shri Ratnaprabh Suri went to Upkeshpur with his 500 disciples. King Upaldev and citizens of Upkeshpur were worshipers of Goddess Chamuda Devi. As the citizens of Upkeshpur were not familiar with the Jaina tradition of offering alms to ascetics, the Jaina monks were unable to get any food so Suriji decided to leave the city and ordered his disciples to prepare for the departure. But at the request of Goddess

Chamuda Devi he stayed with his 35 disciples to spend the rainy season (*chaturmas*) in the city while telling the rest of his disciples to proceed to Gujarat.

King Upaldev of Upkeshpur and his chief minister Uhad were very popular among the people. When the minister's son died due to bite by a poisonous snake one of the disciples fortunately came to know about it and told the minister to take his son's body to the acharya, who was staying near Lunadri hill. The body was laid down at the feet of acharya, who sprinkled it with holy water and revived, the minister's son. Everywhere people were very jubilant. They listened to acharya's discourse and were so impressed that about 184,000 kshtriyas embraced the Jaina religion. He called them Mahajans and founded the Upkesh Gacch (division of monastic orders with its followers). The community came in time to be known as Oshwals.

According to the account in *Mahajan Vansh Muktavali* authored by Yati Ramlalji the incidence of revival happened as follows. The acharya ordered one of his disciples to get the food. When the disciple could not get any alms, he obtained the food by curing gentleman's illness with herbs. When the acharya came to know about this he rebuked the disciple and started preparing to leave. At that very moment Goddess Chamuda Devi came before acharya in person and made a request "With the help sacred mantra of enlightenment, teach the people about the true religion." The acharya sent his disciple into the city and asked him to bring a ball of cotton wool. He rolled it into a wick and by using his spiritual power he converted the wick into a poisonous snake. He ordered the snake to bite the King's son. The snake went into the packed royal assembly hall bit the King's son who was sitting there. The king then ordered the physician, snake charmers, witch doctors, healers, ascetics, priests and others to treat his son. But none could cure him. Everywhere people were crying with grief. Thinking that he is dead. The body was being

transported on a royal carriage to the funeral place for cremation. On the way, by his guru's order, the disciple stopped the chariot and said "Take this chariot to my master, he will revive the prince." The king and all his subjects went to the place where the acharya was sitting and begged him to revive the prince. Then the acharya said "Oh King I will help you, I will revive the prince but in return you have to promise to accept Jaina religion." Everyone agreed. The acharya with the help of supernatural powers called the snake back and ordered the snake to suck the poison out of the prince's body. After sucking the poison out the snake disappeared. The prince shook himself, and got up as if he was getting up from a deep sleep. After listening to acharya's sermon 125,000 kshtriyas with the king, embraced Jaina religion.

What ever may be the real truth, such stories are found in the other texts also. One thing is sure, that kshtriya king Upaldev accepted the Jaina religion after hearing the sermon from Acharya Ratnaprabh Suriji, and along with him about 125,000 Kshtriya families of Upkeshpattan converted to Jainism.

Acharya Shri Ratnaprabh Suriji died in Virat 84 years. Having in 14 years converted many to Jaina faith, as many as 384,000 according to the official records.

Nobody can claim that this religious conversion took place in one day and in one place. Between fourteenth to sixteenth centuries many influential Jaina acharyas were able to persuade hundreds and thousands of people to accept Jaina religion.

The Communal Deity of Oshwals: Sachiya Mata.

In ancient time in the temple of Chamudadevi (or Mahishsurmardini, a terrifying form of the goddess Durga) located in Upkeshpur animals like buffaloes and goats were

sacrificed during the Navratri festivities to please the goddess. Acharya Ratnaprabh Suriji stopped the animal sacrifice and replaced them with offerings of sweets and savory dishes to the Devi. The goddess became disenchanted with the offerings, cursed the acharya and inflicted pain on him in the eyes. The acharya endured the sufferings calmly. The Devi was bewildered and asked forgiveness, and ordered that thenceforth there would be no animal sacrifices in temple and that in future she would be known as Sachiya Mata. Even today the temple of Chamudadevi in Osiya is popularly known as Sachiya Mata Temple. She is regarded as the communal deity of Oshwals and many Oshwal families come here from all over the world to worship Sachiya Mata.

Construction of Mahavir Temple in Osiya

After his conversion to the Jaina religion Upaldev's Chief Minister Uhad built the temple of Lord Mahavir in Upkeshpattan. In that temple he installed the image of Lord Mahavir specially made by Chamuda Devi. She made the image by mixing sand and milk, and buried it in the ground to give its proper form and to harden. She told the people to dig up the image after certain number of days. However people were impatient and dug up the image before the fixed time laid down by Devi and as result it still had knots on each thigh.

Another legend records the construction of Mahavir temple is as follows: In those days a rich person called Ahad was building a temple of Lord Shiva. Unfortunately whatever was built in the daytime was mysteriously demolished at night. In the end he went to the acharya who advised him to build temple of Lord Mahavir instead. After that the construction of the temple proceeded smoothly without any further mishap. Then question of the installation of holy image arose. For some time a cow had been spontaneously releasing milk from her udders in the

mound of sand in front of Lunadri hill. When people dug there a statue of Lord Mahavir was found. It was made of mixture of sand and milk, but there were knots on each thigh. According to the acharya the knots were present because the image was dug up prematurely. Ratnaprabh Suri performed the ceremony of installing image of Lord Mahavir in temple at Upkeshpattan.

Exodus: Flight of the Oshwals

Much later, 303 years after the construction of the Mahavir Temple in Osiya (97 years before Vikram Samvat, 154 B.C.), an attempt was made to remove the knots present on the image's thighs by some overzealous lay people who found the knots repellent. The goddess was furious and visited a calamitous epidemic on the entire population of Upkeshpattan. The community sought the help of Acharya Kakkad Suri, the thirteenth head of *upkesh gacch*. He came and conducted Snatra Puja (ritual bathing of the image). According to the account in *Upkesh Gacch Charitra* the representatives of 18 Oshwal *gotras* participated in the Puja. The epidemic was abated but because of Goddess' curse the Mahajans had to leave Upkeshpattan. Probably after this exodus the Upkeshiya name was used for people of *Mahajan vansh* (clan), which in time evolved into *Osvanshiya*. The prosperity of the city may have ended from that time. Where there were hundreds of thousands of Jaina mahajans, in time there was no one left to take care of the temples.

Present day Osiya

The village of Osiya is located 32 miles north west of Jodhpur in Rajasthan. The population is now around 4000 but in past it was the site of famous city of Upkeshpattan as can be seen by ruins all around, proof for archeologists. The village of Tivary 11 miles away was probably a suburb occupied by people involved in the production of oil. 5

miles away from here is a hill called Panditji ki Dhali, possibly a suburb where Brahmins (pandits) lived. A place 6 miles away now called Khetasar was probably Suburb of Kshtripura. The village of Lohavat 24 miles away was possibly a suburb occupied by blacksmiths. The main gate of ancient Osiya City is considered to have been Ghatiyali village 20 miles away. Many ancient symbols have been discovered here. At some time in past there were about 108 Jaina temples here out of which only the Mahavir temple remains, but ruins of ten to a dozen others are still visible. From all these ruins the approximate area of former city can be estimated. Some authors have stated that the city was 48 miles (12 yojans) long and 36 miles (9 yojans) wide.

Lord Mahavir temple has been restored many times. A fine arch and pillar built in V.S. 1035 are reminders of its former glory. The Temple was very large as can be seen from the presence of stairway under the houses located on the land opposite the temple main entrance and on the land now built over by houses. The main entrance to the temple is situated much higher than the old staircases possibly because much of this part of the old temple may have been buried under the earth. The beautiful image of Lord Adinath in the main temple is said in scriptures to date from the reign of King Samprati 2200 years ago. In a temple one kilometer south east of Osiya the carved footprints of Shri Kakkad, disciple of Acharya Ratna Suriiji may be seen.

From the ruins around this deserted village it appears that once there were many temples in this area. The carvings are similar to those of the very well known temples at Khajurao in Madhya Pradesh. The craftsmanship of the Osiya images is famous. Both Hindu and Jaina temples are present side-by-side, and they are much older than the Khajurao temples.

Sachiya Mata's temple is located on the hill in the center of the village. The temple has been restored many times as evidenced by the stone inscriptions. The image of Mata is almost a mirror image of Mahishasurmardini. Many stories are engraved on the outer walls of the temple. The temple is magnificent and is famous worldwide among the Oshwals; many Oshwal families come here to adore the communal deity. Of all the Jaina temples of Osia, Mahavir temple has a special significance. From the images and the scenes of social life inside and outside the temples it appears that it was under the control of Svetambers. Among the ruins an old Government billboard of 1864 A.D. is still to be seen on which there is a warning by a British Colonel that the killing of animals and birds is not allowed near the temple.

Even now the coins are discovered in the rainy season. They are made of silver weighing approximately 0.7 Grams, with a depiction of a donkey (*gardabh*) on one side. According to a folk story this region was ruled by King Gardabhil 17 years before Vikram Samvat. A Shak chieftain defeated King Gardabhil but his brave son Vikramaditya defeated the Shaks and became Emperor. To commemorate his victory he initiated the Vikram Samvat era. This proves that City of Osia was founded before time of Vikramaditya.

In sixth century this was a kingdom of Pratihara Dynasty. Many temples built at that time or possibly restored during the time of Pratihara Kings, are still in existence today, showing the high quality of craftsmanship of that period. The power, which Pratihara kings commanded is seen during the reign of Chauhan King Kumar Singh. In his time the city had grown huge. In V.S. 1252 a Turkey army passed through the region and destroyed the city. There are stories and poems of flight of the Oshwals residing in that area. It is said that due to the curse of Sachiya Devi no person of Oshwal sect can remain there. The *Upkesh Gacch*

relates that the Oshwals had to leave the city because of the attempt made to remove the knots on the image of Lord Mahavir.

Although modern Osiya is barren it still is capable of telling the stories of past many centuries. In the ruins of Osiya stories about many religions like Hindu, Jaina, Shaivat, Shak and others, are echoed.

Restoration of Osiya Pilgrimage

In Vikram Samvat 1936 due to hard work of Muni Mohanlalji Osiya became auspicious center for Jaina pilgrimage. Inspired by Muni Maharaj, the chief minister of Jodhpur, Kundanlalji, ordered the restoration of Mahavir's temple. From V.S. 1936 to 1950 he took care of the administration. The image of Lord Mahavir remains in perfect condition as it had been buried in grounds covered by a stone. Every year since V.S. 1951 a carnival takes place here. In V.S. 1972 due to inspiration of Ratnasinghji Maharaj, Shri Jaina Vidiyalay (educational institute) and hostel were built. At present 500 students study here.

In V.S. 2026 renovation of temple was under taken and this is continuing. The firm of Seth Anandji Kalayanji of Ahmedabad, who donated hundreds of thousands of rupees, sponsored this. At present the pilgrimage is taken care by Seth Shri Mangaldasji Ratansinghji dev Trust.

An *Updhan tapp* (fasting with meditation and rituals) was under taken In V.S. 2032 to get rid of the curse of Sachiya Mata. But even now there is not a single Oshwal house there, and it is said that no Oshwal has courage to spend a night in that place. However, this false belief is disappearing slowly and Oshwal pilgrims have started staying overnight.

In conclusion from the historical documents, manuscripts and poems of the bards and legends, it seems most logical that:

1. King Upaldev was the ancestral father of Oshwal sect,
2. Acharya Ratnaprabh Suri, the sixth head of monastic order of Lord Parshvanath, was the founder of *Upkeshvansh*, which evolved into *Oshwalvansh* probably around twelfth century V.S.,
3. The conversion took place 70 years after the nirvana of Lord Mahavir, and
4. The birth of Oshwal Sect took place in Upkeshpattan/Upkeshpur now known as city of Osiya.

CHAPTER 7

ORIGIN OF 18 SECTS OF OSHWALS

Acharya Ratnaprabh Suri, of Upkesh gaccha, who converted the Kshtryias of Upkesh nagar (city) 70 year after Mahavir's nirvana (i.e. 400 years before Vikram Samvat), assigned them to 18 separate groups (*gotras*). For readers who are not familiar with the term, gotras may be described as 'sects' and 'sub-sects' within the wider Oshwal community, family groups each having its own surname or last name. The names of these origin *gotras* are:

1. Tatehad (King's father who was called Tatji).
2. Karnat.
3. Bafna.
4. Balhra (Balaha).
5. Moraksh.
6. Kulhat.
7. Virhat.
8. Shrimal.
9. Shreshthi (King's).
10. Sahchinti or Sancheti (King's chief minister).
11. Aaichnag (Adityanag).
12. Bhuri (King's commander of army).
13. Bhadra.
14. Chinchat.
15. Kumbhat.
16. Didoo.
17. Katrij.
18. Laghu Shreshthi (King's brother).

As time went by many new branches sprang out from these original gotras. As the Oshwal community spread out to different places and lands, new gotras originated from the names of their ancestors, professions and places.

Following is a list showing the numbers of sub sects originating from gotras established by Ratnaprabh Suri:

1. 22 from 'Tatehad'.
2. 14 from 'Karnat'.
3. 52 from 'Bafna'.
4. 26 from 'Balhra'.
5. 17 from 'Moraksh'.
6. 18 from 'Kulhat'.
7. 17 from 'Virhat'.
8. 22 from 'Shrimal'.
9. 30 from 'Shreshthi'
10. 44 from 'Sahchinti or Sancheti'.
11. 86 from 'Aaichnag'.
12. 20 from 'Bhuri'.
13. 29 from 'Bhadra'.
14. 19 from 'Chinchat'.
15. 19 from 'Kumbhat'.
16. 21 from 'Didoo'.
17. 17 from 'Katrij'.
18. 16 from 'Laghu Shreshthi'.

The gotras Acharya Ratnaprabh Suri established in other places and their branches are:

1. 8 from 'Charad'.
2. 4 from 'Sughad'.
3. 3 from 'Lung'.
4. 3 from 'Gatiya'.

Newer divisions of the Jaina community into many sub sects took place over time. Many Jaina acharyas converted many non-Jainas and merged them in the main Jaina communities of Oshwals, Shrimal and Porwals and established many new sub-gotras of these communities. After Ratnaprabh Suri from seventh to twelfth centuries Vikram Samvat, the other Upkesh gachhiya acharyas founded 18 new gotras:

1. From original 'Arya' 3 more subdivisions.
2. From original 'Kaag' no more subdivisions.
3. From original 'Garud' 2 more subdivisions.
4. From original 'Salecha' 7 more subdivisions.
5. From original 'Bagrelcha' 3 more subdivisions.
6. From original 'Chopda' 7 more subdivisions.
7. From original 'Safila' 5 more subdivisions.
8. From original 'Nakshtra' 3 more subdivisions.
9. From original 'Aabhad' 6 more subdivisions.
10. From original 'Chhavat' 3 more subdivisions.
11. From original 'Tund' 5 more subdivisions.
12. From original 'Pachholia' 4 more subdivisions.
13. From original 'Hathudia' 4 more subdivisions.
14. From original 'Mandovara' 3 more subdivisions.
15. From original 'Mal' 4 more subdivisions.
16. From original 'Gudecha' 2 more subdivisions.
17. From original 'Chhajed' 3 more subdivisions.
18. From original 'Rakhecha' 3 more subdivisions.

The following table shows the ancestral father, previous dynasty, place, the acharya who founded the gotra and the dates in V.S.

	Gotra	Ancestral Father	Caste	Place	Ach. & V.S.
1.	Arya	Rao Gausal	Bhati	Adwad	Devgupt Suri (684)
2.	Chhajed	Rao Kaajal	Rathod	Shiv Gadh	Sidhh Suri (942)
3.	Rakhecha	Rav Rakhechi	Bhati	Kaler	Devgupt Suri (878)
4.	Kaag	Prithvidhar	Chauhan	Dhamagram	Kakk Suri (1011)
5.	Garud	Maharai	Chauhan	Satiyapur	Sidhh Suri (1043)
6.	Salecha	Salum Singh	Solanki	Pattan	Sidhh Suri (912)
7.	Vagrecha	Gaj Singh	Chauhan	Vagra	Kakk Suri (1009)

Gotra	Ancestral Father	Caste	Place	Ach. & V.S.
8. Kumkum	Adkamal	Rathod	Kanouj	Devgupt Suri (885)
9. Safla	Lakhansi	Chauhan	Jalor	Sidhh Suri (1224)
10. Nakshtra	Madanpal	Rathod	Vadvadagram	Kakk Suri (994)
11. Aabhad	Rao Abhhad	Chauhan	Sambhar	Kakk Suri (1079)
12. Chhavat	Rao Chhahad	Pamwar	Dharanagari	Sidhh Suri (1073)
13. Tund	Suryamal	Chauhan	Tundgram	Sidhh Suri (933)
14. Pachchholia		Vasudev	Gaud	Palahanpur Devgupt Suri (1204)
15. Hathudia	Rao Abhay	Rathod	Hathudi	Devgupt Suri (1191)
16. Mandovra	Devraj	Padihar	Mandor	Sidhh Suri (935)
17. Mal	Malavraj	Rathod	Khedgram	Sidhh Suri (949)
18. Gundecha	Rav Ladhi	Padihar	Pavagadh	Dev Suri (1026)

There are many other gotras, which were founded by acharyas of other Jaina traditions. In time they were made part of the Oshwal community. Following is the list according to the gachha's of acharyas who founded them:

Korant Gachha-34 different gotras

Vruhatapp Gachha-8 main and 37 sub sects.

Anchal Gachha-23 principal. The subclasses are:

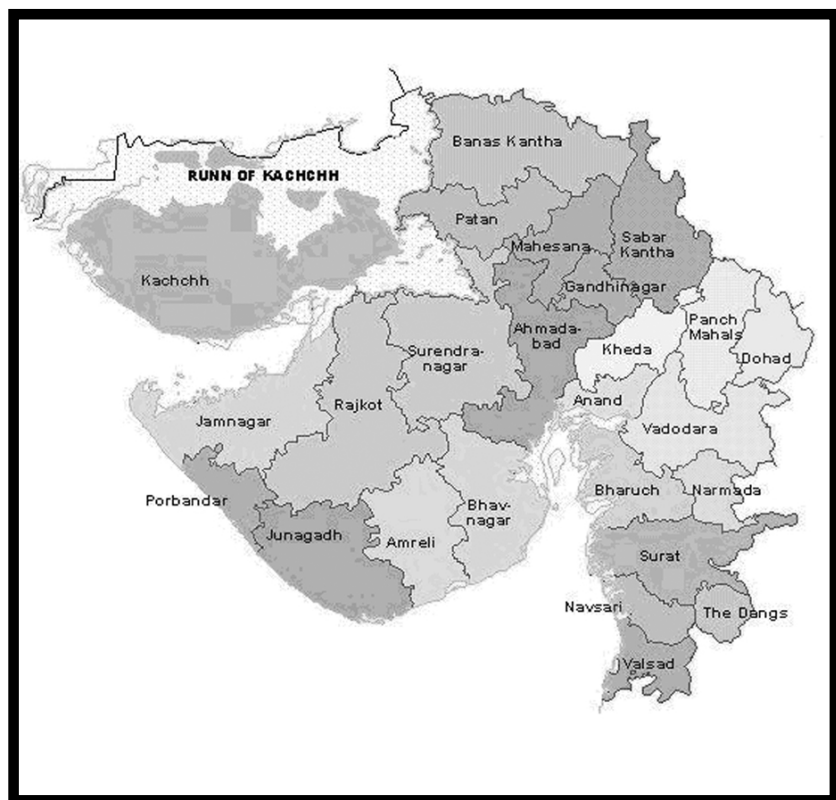
- a. Maldhar Gachha-8
- b. Punmiyag-4
- c. Nanavala-6
- d. Surana-7

- e. Mavahdag-3
- f. Pallival-3
- g. Kandarsa5
- h. Sanderav-8
- i. Chitraval-3
- j. Chaityavasi-6
- k. Pipal-3

There are many surnames derived from animals-e.g. Sandh, Siyal, from the places-e.g. Khinvasra, Dedhia, according to professions or titles-e.g. Mehta, Kamdar, Kapadia, from type of trading- Kesaria and from ancestors, fathers or forefathers: e.g. Lalani, Raja, etc.

PART II

Migration to Cutch



CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION

History of Cutchh: The State of Cutchh is located in the western part of India, bordered by the Arabian Sea on the west, Rajasthan on the east, Saurashtra/Gujarat on the south and Sindh on the north. The spoken language is Cutchhi, which is a mixture of Sindhi, Gujarati, Punjabi and Rajasthani. The written script is Devanagiri/Gujarati.

Modern Cutchh is divided into several provinces: Lakhpat, Abadasa, Mandvi, Mundra, Anjar, Bhagau, Rapar, Paccham and Banni. Bhuj is the ancient capital city. There are approximately one thousand villages in Cutchh.

The land of Cutchh means character, adventure and sacrifice. The history of Cutchh goes back to an early age. Three thousand years ago the land of Cutchh was not what it is today. It was a very rich land. In a Jaina agam (scripture) the *Bhagwati Sutra* there is a shining description of this region:

'Cutchhamsi Cutchhe nadi jal pariveshthite vrikshadi mati pradeshe'.

(There are many rivers and lakes in Cutchh with the land covered with trees).

At some time part of the land must have been covered by an ocean, from which it emerged as a permanent desert. Over the centuries from time to time it faced great calamities, floods, earthquakes, and natural disasters, which have changed the geographical face of the land. Beside the natural disasters, repeated invasions by the Muslims also added to the destruction of the region. At some time it was connected with Sindh (now in Pakistan). However, as a result of the natural disasters and human

depredations this region became separated from Sindh. Today Cutchh is barren, sandy and treeless, a desert.

A poet writes about Cutchh:

*'Sant suta bhala, Bhakto je bhom ma, Pir podhya jyan dhame dham,
Dungare dungaree deriyo, Khambhiyo Khodanti game gam.*

Desh shangar datar Jagdu tani, bhaviya Bhadravati bhar harni,

Bharti Mat ne kholale khelti, dhanya ho! dhanya ho! Cutchh ni dharni .'

Translation:

Land full of seers, devotees and saints (*pirs*).

Temples on the top of mountains, shrines in the villages.

The motherland of the philanthropist Jagdu Shah,

Land of the most auspicious pilgrimage like Bhadravati.

Playing in the lap of Mother India much salutation to you
O! Land of Cutchh.

The City of Bhadravati

Near the seacoast 2500 years ago there was a city called Bhadravati, which was ruled by King Siddhsen of the Hari dynasty. In that city lived two Jaina couples, Shresthi (merchant) Shri Devendra and his wife, and Vijay Seth and Vijay Sethani.

Shreshthi Devendra and his wife practiced celibacy for the whole of their life and earned respect as an ideal, pious couple. On one occasion they had the opportunity to listen to a discourse by a Jaina monk and they were so impressed that they wanted to build a temple and to install an image of Lord Parshvanath. Twenty-three years after the nirvana of Lord Mahavir the temple was built and Kapil Kevli performed the ceremony of installing the image. After that Bhadravati became an important Jaina place of pilgrimage (*tirth dham*) in Cutchh. As it was near the coast it also became a busy harbor and a business center.

Later the original ancient city was completely destroyed. Only ruins are to be found on the east side of the present city of Bhadreshwar.

Jagdu Shah

Shrimal Shreshthi (businessman) and world-renowned philanthropist Jagdu Shah lived in Bhadravati. The ancestors of Jagdu Shah lived in a historically famous place Kanthkor but his father Soma Shah moved to Bhadravati. Jagdu Shah was a very rich man. There are several folk stories about how he became rich.

First Version: One day Jagdu Shah was working in his farm when a group of hungry monks were passing by and asked for food. Jagdu Shah felt pity and gave them all the seeds he had bought to sow. Instead he threw pebbles on the field and returned home. He did not go back to the farm again to check. Some neighbors who had passed by his farm came and told him about what a rich crop was growing on his farm. Jagdu Shah thought that they were just making fun. But he could not wait; one night when no one was watching he went to the farm to see himself. He was amazed to see the crop. Instead of millet, the crop was made of pearls.

Second Version: Jagdu Shah bought a ship filled with bricks, which no one else was buying. When he went to see and rubbed the bricks, to his surprise the bricks were made of solid gold coated with red clay.

Third Version: Jagdhu Shah owned many ships. One of his fleet of five ships sailed to Hormus harbor in Iran filled with condiments and spices for trading under the captaincy of Jayantak, his trusted accountant. While the ships were anchored in the harbor Jayantak wandered around the city and saw a very attractive slab of stone in front of a house of an Arab merchant and decided to buy it for his master. There was another person from Khambhat who

also wanted to buy that stone. The Arab merchant decided to sell the stone to the highest bidder. Jayantak won the bid he bought the stone at the cost of three hundred thousand gold coins. He brought the stone back to Bhadaravati and gave it to Jagdu Shah, who laid it in front of his house.

One day a monk was passing by Jagdu Shah's house. He saw the stone and called Jagdu Shah. Jagdu Shah came out immediately and asked the monk respectfully, "Your holiness what do you wish." The monk told him, "Keep the stone in a safe place in the house. There is a crack in the stone, take a sharp instrument, break the stone along the crack. You will find a garland made of expensive magical pearls." He told Jagdu Shah that he was the deity of city of Bhadravati and had deliberately passed by to tell him about his good fortune. He also told him to help every needy person and to make good use of the wealth.

Jagdu Shah was not only wealthy but a very brave man and a great philanthropist. Once a Jaina monk predicted that there was going to be a great famine in the near future. He advised Jagdu Shah to buy as much food as he could to store in his warehouses and at the time of famine to distribute it to needy people.

The prophecy of the Jaina monk came true. There was no rainfall for three years from Vikram Samvat 1313 to 1315. People were dying, as they did not have enough food. Jagdu Shah opened his warehouses and distributed food free to the needy. He also built big dining hall and gave food to anyone who came there. For this act of generosity he earned the title 'Savior of the world'.

He went to the pilgrimage site of Shatrunjay three times with a big *sangh* (body of pilgrims). He commissioned the restoration of Bhadreshwar Temple and donated money to built 108 new Jaina temples. His generosity did not stop there. For his close Hindu friend Chokanda he

built a temple to Lord Shiva near the shore of the sea by Bhadreshwar. In memory of his friend Dudo he built a well. And for his Muslim friend Khimli Pinjaro he built a mosque.

CHAPTER 9

JAINAS IN CUTCHH

Settlement of the Jaina community in Cutchh can be traced back to early times. In the northern regions of India, the attacks by foreign invaders had started by sixth century Vikram Samvat. From that time mass migration began. As the most auspicious Jaina pilgrimage centers like Shatrunjay and Girnar were located in Saurashtra (western Gujarat), these places were regularly visited by large contingent from far away places. Migration on a small scale may already have started from fifth century Vikram Samvat. The history of settlements of Jainas in Cutchh in ancient times is mentioned in *Vir Vanshavali Pattavali*. In this book an account is given of a debate between followers of Shiva and Jina, which took place in Suthari, a place of pilgrimage in Cutchh.

There is mention of the existence of a settlement of the Oshwal community in ancient times in the book *Kuvalmala* written by Shri Udyotan Suri. It is believed Udyotan Suri lived in the ninth century Vikram Samvat. According to the account in that book, because of cruelty inflicted by Mihir Gul son of Toranmal Hun, the people of the Upkesh community fled to Gujarat. The Huns, who were invaders from Central Asia, ruled in sixth century Vikram Samvat.

In Vikram Samvat 802 at the time when Pattan was founded, many business people and statesmen of the Upkesh community from the cities of Chandravati and Bhinmal were invited to come and settle down in Pattan.

In the twelfth century Vikram Samvat, after the Anchal Gachh (monastic lineage) was founded, many Oshwal traders and statesmen made their homes in Cutchh, Saurashtra, and Gujarat and commanded great respect and

influence in society. Based on an account in Jivan Charitra written by Jin Chandra Suri, in Vikram Samvat 1167 Shri Devchand Suri after he became an acharya he went to Vagad District of Cutchh and converted thousands of Hindus to Jainism. An account in Anchal Gacch Digdarshan says that Shri Jaysinha Suri in Vikram Samvat 1221 went to Vagad and Vadhian districts of Cutchh and stayed there for several years traveling from village to village and giving religious discourses. A Jaina settlement in Cutchh existed even before Bhadreswar Tirth was built. In the sixteenth century Vikram Samvat the Oshwal community migrated to Cutchh from Parker (Sindh) and bordering villages of Marward and Mevad, to Vagad District. Some even came from Kathiawad (Saurashtra) and Gujarat and the population of Jainas went on increasing.

From the stories passed from mouth to mouth and other sources the mass migration of Oshwals took place from 1550 to 1700 Vikram Samvat. According to Yati Ramlalji, the author of *Mahajan Vansh Muktavali*, the Mahajans of the city of Pali in the region of Parker, on invitation of Rao Khengar, Ruler of Cutchh, around Vikram Samvat 1700, came and settled down in Suthari, Naliya, Jakhru and other regions. Those who migrated from Sindh are known as Cutchhi Mahajans. Those who came from Northern Gujarat are known as Gurjars. The majority of those who came from Sindh were farmers.

The exact dates are not known. But from Sindh migration to the Parker region started some time in Vikram Samvat 1465. From the Parker region migration to Kanthkot in Vagad region started in Vikram Samvat 1513. In 1550 larger numbers of Oshwals migrated from border villages of Sindh, Parker Marward and Mevad.

In time both communities, Cutchhi and Gurjar Oshwals, were further split into Dasa, Visa and so on. The divisions in society of Dasa and Visa took place because those who adhered to old traditions called themselves Visa and those

who adopted reforms were demoted and were called Dasa. The split did not just stop there but extended further to Pancha or Adhiya. The explanation given is true, but to adhere and promote the worthless old customs is not a sign of progress. In Cutchh most of the Visa and Dasa Oshwals are Svetamber image worshippers. Though some Visa and Dasa Oshwals also belong to the Sthanakvasi (non-image worshippers) tradition. The Jaina community, which includes merchants, shippers, statesmen, monks, nuns and others, played a major role in the political, social and religious progress of Cutchh.

In the eighteenth century Vikram Samvat, the Oshwal community residing in Cutchh and Saurashtra again ran into difficult times. According to Yati Ramlalji the Oshwals living in Cutchh were persuaded to seek other vocations by acharyas of Anchal gachh because farming was considered a sinful vocation for Jainas (as digging the soil destroys the living creatures). At that time the British Government was preparing plans to expand the city of Mumbai (Bombay). Attracted by this scheme many Oshwals left farming and went to Mumbai with the intention of starting new businesses. Many became millionaires in a short time.

The other reason many Oshwals left Cutchh was foreign invasion. The ruler of Sindh, Gulam Shah, attacked Cutchh in 1810 Vikram Samvat. The ruler of Cutchh, Maharav Godji, successfully defended the attack without any casualties. Gulam Shah was very upset at the defeat; in retaliation he built a dam across one of the branches of the river Sindhu in Lakhpat State, which stopped the water from flowing to Cutchh, resulting in the complete destruction of the land of Cutchh. Suffering from this hardship the Oshwals were forced to move again. They not only migrated to Mumbai and the southern part of India but also to Africa settling down in Zanzibar, Madagascar, Kenya and elsewhere. But they never broke the ties with Cutchh, Saurashtra or Gujarat.

CHAPTER 10

MIGRATION TO CUTCHH

Sindh to Cutchh: The settlement of Oshwals in Sindh started as early as the tenth century. Political disorders and religious antagonism were the prime factors of migration to Cutchh.

In 712 A.D. Arabs invaded and conquered Sindh. Ahmed Mirkasim became the ruler of Sindh. He made Islam the principal religion. After a time Hamir became Sultan of Sindh. He was very cruel. He forced the Hindu traders to sell alcohol and meat. The Jainas being mostly traders were affected most. In spite of many appeals the order remained in effect. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the Muslim rulers Allaudin Khilji and Ahmad Shah started religious persecution. Mohammad Begdo invaded Sindh three times in 1527, 1528 and 1562 A.D. without success.

During the reigns of Allaudin Khilji and Ahmad Shah Hindus, Jainas and Buddhists were not allowed to wear expensive clothes, gold ornaments or ride horses. They had to cover their heads with a turban (*paghri*).

Between A.D. 1570 and 1575 Emperor Firozshah Tughlakh of Delhi invaded Sindh three times. He failed twice but succeeded in conquering Sindh on the third attempt. Sindh came totally under the power of Muslim rulers. He appointed a Muslim cleric as Governor (*Suba*) to govern the province of Sindh, who declared Islam to be the official religion. He was very cruel towards the Buddhists, Hindus and Jainas. They were either forced to accept Islam or face severe penalties. Even the life of people living in villages of the Parker, Thali and Marward regions bordering Sindh became intolerable. Many people of different Hindu

communities including Bhatiyas, Lohanas, Rajputs, Hindus started moving into Cutchh for safety.

Because of religious persecution and atrocities in order to protect their religion, customs, and honor, and to seek a safer place, the Oshwal community made a decision to leave Sindh. A committee was formed. The members included the leaders of Jaina monks, householders and the bards (who preserved the history of the family lineages). As there were already close contacts and business relations with the ruling family of Cutchh it was decided to migrate to Cutchh. Appointed Oshwal leaders went to see Jam Dedaji the ruler of Vaghad province of Cutchh (Jam is a title of rulers in Cutchh). They described to him the adverse conditions they were facing from the Governor of Sindh and asked his protection and permission to settle down in his kingdom. The king gladly agreed to give them shelter. He even agreed to put guards on the border so that they could cross the border safely. Many Jaina Oshwal families from Thali, Pali, Parker, Sanchi, Ider and border villages of Marward left their homeland in the dark of night secretly with few personal possessions and crossed the scorching desert. Because of the presence of the border patrols they were able to cross the border safely and moved into Vagad district of Cutchh for a better and safer life.

Jam Dedaji gave them plots to build houses and parcels of land to cultivate. He even gave them power to form local councils (*panchayat*) to carry on the administrative activities of the community. Many Oshwals were appointed heads (*patels*) of their local village or town council.

The migration continued for a long period of time. From 1550 to 1700 V.S. at different times large numbers of people came from Gujarat, Saurashtra, Sindh (Parker) and border villages of Marward. The ones who came from Gujarat spoke Gujarati. The groups who came from Marward and Sindh spoke Cutchhi. The majority of them

settled down in villages and became farmers. As the population of Oshwals increased new villages were built.

The new Oshwal migrants were mostly farmers and farmhands. Some became landlords and moneylenders. They settled down in their new homeland, built the new villages and cultivated the land. As time passed people started settling down in Abadasa and Bhuj (Kanthi) districts in Cutchh as the rulers of those districts gave permission. The weather was extreme. The summers were too hot, the winters were bitterly cold and the annual rainfall in good years amounted to only ten inches. The adverse conditions made them disciplined and hardworking. The Oshwals lived very simple lives. Because of their hard work they were very strong and fearless. Even a youth of eight to ten years of age would walk eight to ten miles with just a stick or an axe in his hand without any fear. As time passed some went into business.

Over time the Oshwals moved to other parts of Cutchh and formed councils. Each village has its own council called *panchayat* made up of five members with the head of the council called the *patel*. There were four regional councils (*moti panchayat*) also made up of five members. The head of the regional council was called the *mota patel*. The respective regional council governs the village councils. For the community of Abadasa District the center for the regional council was Kothara, for Vagad District it was in Lakadiya for Kanthi District in Bhorash and for the District of Halar, regional council was in Kalsumbra. A regional council was also called a *manji*, and the head of the regional council was also called the *surpanch*.

The Jaina acharyas living in Cutchh mostly belong to the Khartar, Tappa, Anchal and Lonka gacchas. The family deities are Osiya, Satiya, Sachiya, Amba, Mamal, Ashaspuri, Vishal Devi, Laaxmata, Mahakali, as well as others.

The gotras of Halari and Cutchhi Oshwals are the same with few exceptions. Their ancestral dynasties were Solanki, Parmar, Rathod, Bhatti, Chauhan, Chavda and others of the Rajput caste.

Gotras and their subgotras

The gotras and subgotras derived from the Rajput dynasties are:

1. **Parmar:** Gada, Rambhia, Maru, Mota, Visaria, Vikram, Kapuria, Satia, Vira, Lalan, Kenia, Haria, Pasad, Gosar, Shat, Chasnia, Baua, Khokhia, Buhand, Patni and others-35 in total.
2. **Rathod:** Furia, Sangoi, Gangar, Lapasia, Chavda, Poladia and others-35 in total.
3. **Chauhan:** Nisar, Bheda, Gurvar, Bherau, Khimsaria, Maldev, Nagda, Makda and Karani-9 in total.
4. **Chavda:** Chedda, Dedhia, Nandu, and Savla-4 in total.
5. **Bhatti:** Gala, Gogri, Soni, Gasia, Shethia, and others-9 in total.
6. **Solanki:** Satra, Madha, Oswal, Gorjar, Vovara, Vora, Bhagad, Vadhi, Chandaria, and others-16 in total.

The Oshwal settlement in Cutchh is made up of 24 villages in Vagad, 52 villages in Abadasa and 52 in Mandvi, Mundra and Khanthi Districts. In total 128 villages.

In Cutchh 450 to 500 years ago there were two kingdoms, Bara and Lakhiya, which were ruled by two Rajput families of the Jadeja dynasty. Even though they were related to each other a feud had existed between them for many generations. Jam Hamir king of Lakhiya, arranged the assassination of the king of Bara, Jam Lakhiyaji, father of Jam Rawal. To take the revenge for his father's murder Jam Rawal arranged a feast, invited his uncle Jam Hamir, murdered him and took over his kingdom.

Rao Khengarji son of Jam Hamirji was living in Charvada village near Dharmydhha during this incident. With the help of the army of Mohamed Begdo, Sultan of Ahmedabad, he marched towards Cutchh to re-conquer his father's kingdom. When Jam Rawal came to hear about this from his spies, instead of fighting he gave both the kingdoms to his cousin Rao Khengarji and left the land of Cutchh. (For details see the chapter 12 of Migration to Halar in part 3 of this book).

The family priest Shri Manek Merji by his spiritual powers predicted that Rao Khengarji would have a bright future and gave him a magical spear, which brought political stability in Cutchh. Maharav Shri Khengarji invited the family priest to Bhuj, established a trust and built a house for him to live in.

In the Seventeenth century V.S. Rao Shri Pragmalji was the ruler who introduced many reforms for the welfare of the people with the inspiration and blessings of Tappa gacchiya Acharya Shri Vivek Harsh and Anchal gacchiya Acharya Shri Kalayan Saagar Suriiji. And for a few days every year during the great festival of spiritual awareness (*pariushana maha parva*) the slaughter of animals was banned.

In the eighteenth century Rao Shri Lakh Patji also introduced many reforms for the welfare of the people. They liked him so much that they called him *Desgrai Parmeshwara*. Maharao Shri Lakh Patiji was very much interested in education. He himself was a poet. Due to the inspiration of the Jaina Bhattakarji Shri Kanak Kushalji he founded an institute of learning and the art of writing poems, *Vraj Bhavan*, in Bhuj.

At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century Desalji Bapa the Second had deep feelings for the pilgrimage center *Bhadreshwar Vasahi Tirth*. He took a very active part in development of the tirth. His wishes

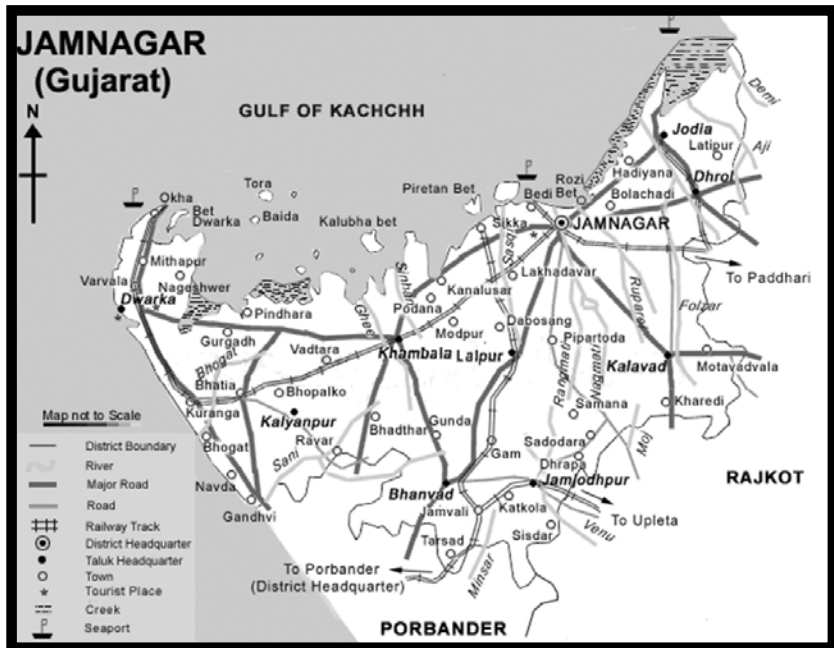
were to restore the tirth as soon as possible as it was the glory and the jewel of the land of Cutchh. He had promised tappagacchiya Yati Shri Kanti Vijayji to get the restoration done in proper order. He even reprimanded the leaders of the Jaina Community for their indifferent attitude. The restoration could not be completed while he was alive. His successor, Maharao Shri Pragmalji the Second completed the restoration.

When the late Maharao Shri Vijay Rajji, father of the present retired Maharao Shri Madan Sinhji visited Bhadreshwar Tirth he issued a proclamation to ban the slaughtering of animals. The present Maharao Madan Sinhji has close relationship with the Jaina community. Whenever he gets opportunity he participates in religious activities.

There are about 200 Jaina temples in Cutchh. The libraries in Mandvi and Kothara contain ancient handwritten books on palm leaves and paper. In the library in Bidda Ashram there are many valuable books.

PART III

Settlement in Halar



CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION

The history of Halari Oshwals is approximately 450 to 500 years old. The colorful and inspiring history of the migration of Halaris was not only due to adverse financial conditions but also social and religious reasons. Our ancestors, who came from Rajasthan, embraced the path of non-violence and renunciation. While following this path they had to face many obstacles. In the early and medieval age India was not one united country, but was divided into many small kingdoms. There were feuds between the kingdoms, invasions by foreign rulers and frequent drought. Because of political and economic insecurity, Oshwals began to look for new opportunities elsewhere and fled Punjab and Sindh around tenth and eleventh centuries Vikram Samvat. This resulted into a great population drift out of Rajasthan.

While Hindu kings ruled Sindh, life was peaceful. In the early part of the fifteenth century V.S. Sindh came under the power of Muslim rulers who either killed the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains or forced them to adopt Islam. So the people fled again, this time to Cutchh for safety.

In Cutchh they settled down and established 48 villages in Kanthi District and 24 in Kanthkot. Due to internal conflicts and feuds part of the royal family left Cutchh and went to Saurashtra to establish a new kingdom accompanied by loyal subjects which included many Oshwal families.

According to folklore some Oshwal families left Cutchh because of the incident at a feast given by one Oshwal family marking the end of the ceremonies after the death

of a relative in Kanthkot. A large quantity of *ghee* (clarified butter) was made to make sweet meats (*ladus*) and the residue was thrown away. Just then a prince was passing through that area riding on a horse. The horse slipped as the ground was covered with the residue from the *ghee*. The prince was very angry and complained to his father, the ruler. Oshwals afraid of retaliation thought it better to leave. As they were leaving the ruler requested that they return, which they did. But with the prince antagonized they still wanted to leave and slipped away at night, leaving lamps burning to assure the ruler that they were still there. All but 24 families left the village.

Halar was a princely state, primarily a rural area with a small-scattered agricultural population. Jamnagar the capital is a fairly large prosperous city. Halari Visa Oshwals settled down in villages located between two cities Jamnagar and Khambhalia. At one time there were as many as 65 villages, but at present only 52 villages remain. In some villages Oshwals are dominant, while in others they make up only a small proportion the village population and exert very little power or influence.

During Muslim rule in Navanagar (1664-1673 A.D.), a group of Oshwals apparently returned to Cutchh and settled down in 42 villages in Abadasa District. They are known as Visa Oshwals of Abadasa and are not affiliated with those of Kanthi or Halar.

Settlement in Halar was certainly not easy, despite grants of lands and favorable revenues arranged by the new rulers. Natural disasters started occurring. The rainfall every two to three years was not enough to cultivate land and grow crops. Famine was the result. People and most of the domestic animals would perish owing to lack of food. This resulted in people migrating to other parts of India.

CHAPTER 12

MIGRATION TO HALAR

Two Rajput (warrior caste) families of the Jadeja dynasty ruled the kingdoms of the Bara and Lakhiya in Cutchh. Even though they were related to each other animosity existed between the two families, which was passed down from generation to generation.

Around 450 to 500 years ago, Jam Hamirji, father of Rao Khengarji, ruled the kingdom of Lakhiya and Jam Lahkhyaji, father of Jam Rawal ruled the kingdom of Bara. Jam Hamirji assassinated Jam Lakhyaji. To take revenge for the assassination Jam Rawal held a party. He invited his uncle Jam Hamirji and murdered him and took over his Kingdom.

Rao Khengarji son of Jam Hamirji asked Mohamed Begdo, Sultan of Ahmedabad for help. The sultan was more than happy to do that. Khengarji with the backing of Sultan's army marched toward Cutchh to regain his father's Kingdom.

Jam Rawal was remorseful about what he had done to his uncle. And when his spies told him that Rao Khengarji was marching towards Cutchh with the army of Sultan Begdo to attack him, he became alarmed and did not have any desire to fight. He was a staunch devotee of the family deity the goddess Ashapura. He prayed to the goddess Ashapura, asking her to forgive him for killing his uncle and promised that he will not kill any more of his relatives. The goddess Ashapura came to him in a dream and told him to give both kingdoms to Rao Khengarji, leave Cutchh and go to Kathiawad (Saurashtra) and build a new Kingdom.

Jam Rawal accepted the advice of the goddess Ashapura. Next morning he told all his relatives, army commanders and leaders of his subjects about his decision of leaving Cutchh and gave them a choice either to join him in building a new kingdom in a new land or to stay behind.

For people who decided to go with Jam Rawal it was a very difficult and emotional decision to leave motherland, relatives, and friends behind and to settle down in a completely strange land. And on the other side if they stayed they were afraid of all the death and destruction, which could happen if Rao Khengarji decided to take revenge. People had faith and confidence in Jam Rawal and in his strength and power to protect them.

In Vikram Samvat 1575 on the fixed day of the departure Jam Rawal left with eighty thousand people including his relatives, army commanders, lords, statesmen and ordinary subjects. Among them there were approximately five thousand members of the Oshwals. An army of one hundred thousand soldiers accompanied him. There were also many horses, elephants, cattle and bullock carts.

The legend is that after passing through a different region of Cutchh, they came to the sea (Strait of Cutchh). The sea was rough and with such a big contingent the king became concerned for their safety and stopped there and started praying to the family deity the goddess Ashapura for guidance. The goddess Ashapura realized the problem the king was facing. She took the form of a black sparrow and sat on the top of king's spear. Immediately due to the divine power of the goddess the sea parted and the king and his whole contingent crossed the sea safely. From there they went to the temple of Lord Shiva (Jadeshvar temple) near the city of Vankaner. There the king paid homage to Lord Shiva. With the Lord's blessings the king entered the land of Halar.

On the way to new land he camped near Vavania Harbor. He attacked and conquered the kingdom of Merana and killed the ruler Deda Shaka. He then conquered the kingdom of Dhamanpur located eighteen miles away and killed the ruler Hardhman of the Chavda dynasty. He changed the name of both kingdoms to Dhrol and appointed his brother Rao Hardholji as the new ruler. From there he marched onwards. On his way he conquered the kingdoms of Khilosh, Nagna Harbor and Bakota. There he established his new kingdom. He imported toolmakers and built a factory to manufacture guns capable of firing bullets to a considerable distance. These guns in time became famous as Jamnagari Guns.

After staying in Bakota for five years he decided to move. He marched westwards and conquered the village of Bed and land around it. Here he increased the number of cavalry in his army. He built a factory and manufactured canons, guns and explosives in large quantities, which he stored in a safe place.

In span of eleven years after leaving Cutchh, he conquered the kingdoms of Merana, Amaran, Dhamanpur, Khilosh, Nagna, Bakota and Bed. Jam Rawal named this new kingdom Halar from the name of one of his ancestor, Jam Halaji. As the kingdom had expanded he decided to look for a better place to build a new capital. He chose the village of Khambhalia as it was close to Bakota and Okha. He completely changed the look of the village. He built new houses, a royal assembly hall, and widened the streets and roads. And in Vikram Samvat 1585 after a religious fire ceremony he proclaimed and crowned himself as the ruler of Halar followed by grand celebration and splendor.

After he had settled down in his new capital city he issued standing orders for the army commanders to safeguard the boundaries of the Kingdom. Soldiers would go on regular patrols to make sure the borders were safe. During

one of these rounds one patrol of guards witnessed an unusual phenomenon. They saw a wild dog ready to chase and attack to kill a rabbit. The rabbit instead of trying to run away faced the dog and fought back to protect itself. The wild dog out of fear of its life ran away. The guards related the entire incident to Jam Rawal. Jam Rawal called the royal priests and asked for the reason for this strange phenomenon. The priests explained that this was due to special power possessed by that parcel of land. They further said that if a city was built on this land the people who would live there would be fearless, brave and adventurous.

After consulting his ministers he decided to build a new city on that land. On an auspicious day and time and place as determined by the royal priests a dowel rod/iron pin (*khambhi*) was driven into the earth and the foundation was laid. Construction was begun. Thus in this powerful land in the year V.S. 1596 and the month of Shravan, on Wednesday, the seventh day of rising moon (bright half of the month) (A.D. 1550) the city of Navanagar was founded.

Once the city became prosperous, he moved his capital from Khambhalia to Navanagar and changed the name of the capital city to Jamnagar from his name. As he was follower of Lord Shiva, at the auspicious time he built a temple for Nageshwar Mahadev and another for his family deity the goddess Ashapura. Close to the temple he built the palace, fort and royal chambers.

The city progressed rapidly. People from neighboring villages moved in the city and started businesses. Its fame spread all around. After the founding of the city of Jamnagar, Jam Rawal slowly consolidated his rule over the area, and his successors expanded the principality and established several other states, which included Dhrol, Rajkot and Gondal.

As the power and the area of the Navanagar kingdom increased the rulers of neighboring kingdoms became fearful and jealous and started plotting to get rid of Jam Rawal. They all got together and decided to attack and defeat Jam Rawal. When they were ready they marched towards Halar and camped on the outskirts of Mithoi village and challenged Jam Rawal to war.

Jam Rawal was not ignorant of all these schemes. He knew ahead of time, therefore he was ready for them. He accepted the challenge, ordered his army to march towards Mithoi. He attacked the enemies' army. Even though the enemies' army was larger, because it had too many commanders controlling the different divisions, they were defeated as they were unable to face the brave, orderly and patriotic army of Jam Rawal. Jam Rawal was victorious. His kingdom remained safe and stable while he was alive.

After the victory of Mithoi, Jam Rawal started spreading his kingdom still wider. He took over the kingdoms of Bhavad, Vagher and Mandana. He passed away in Vikram Samvat 1618.

CHAPTER 13

THE RULERS OF NAVANAGAR STATE

From the time Navanagar State was founded twenty-one Rajput kings of the Jadeja Dynasty ruled it for 419 years. In many battles against the enemies only twice were they defeated.

1. Jam Rawal (V.S. 1575-1618): Jam Rawal founded the kingdom of Halar in Vikram Samvat 1575. He ruled for 43 years till he passed away in 1618.

2. Jam Vibhaji (V.S. 1618-1625): He succeeded Jam Rawal and ruled for eight years and passed away in 1625.

3. Jam Sataji (V.S. 1625-1664): During his reign some time in 1648 Jam Sataji gave shelter to the sultan of Ahmedabad, Mukhtar the Third, who was an enemy of the Emperor Akbar. The Emperor asked Jam Sataji to surrender the sultan to him. The Rajput kings would never surrender any person under their protection; Jam Sataji following the age-old custom refused to surrender the sultan. The army of the Emperor Akbar marched towards Halar to capture the sultan and camped on the outskirts of Bhuchar Maini near Dhrol. Celebrations for the wedding of crown prince Ajaji were going on when Akbar's army attacked. Jam Sataji had an army of one hundred and fifty thousand soldiers with brave commanders like Daya Ladak, Jeso Vajir, Bharaj Dal, Togaji, Meharamanji and Jasaji. The newly wed crown prince marched with the army to fight against the Mogul Emperor's army. They all fought valiantly. The army of the Nawab of Junagadh and Loga Khumar who had promised to be on the side of Jam Sataji, at the last minute turned against Sataji's army and went on the side of Emperor's army. Jam Sataji was defeated. Emperor Akbar appointed a Governor to run

the Kingdom of Jamnagar. Rao Jasaji, son of Jam Sataji, went to Delhi and begged the Emperor to return the kingdom to his father. The Emperor was a considerate man. As he realized that Jam Sataji had sacrificed every thing just to protect a Muslim, he agreed to return the Kingdom but with a condition that Jam Sataji would have to pay tax to him. Jam Sataji passed away in 1664.

4. Jam Jasaji (V.S. 1664-1680): Rao Jasaji came to the throne and ruled for 16 years.

5. Jam Lakhaji (V.S. 1680-1701): Some time after Jam Lakhaji became the ruler he stopped the payment of tax to the Emperor. Therefore in 1696 by order of the Emperor, the Governor of Gujarat Azizkhan attacked and seized the kingdom. A treaty was drawn up that Jam Lakhaji would start paying the tax again and also catches the outlaws who were fighting against the Emperor. Jam Lakhaji did not abide by the conditions of the treaty.

6. Jam Ranmalji (V.S. 1701-1717): Even though he was on the throne, Goverdhan Rathod, brother of the queen of Ider controlled power in the State. To keep power Rathod falsely claimed that his sister had given birth to a baby boy and named him Prince Sataji. Jam Ranmalji knew that this was a lie. To safeguard the throne he named his brother Rao Raisinhji as the successor to the throne after his death.

7. Jam Raisinhji (V.S. 1717-1720): Jam Raisinhji's rule lasted only three years. Prince Sataji, pretender to the throne, went to Kutubkhan, governor (*sultan*) of Ahmedabad and claimed that he was the rightful heir to kingdom of Jamnagar. He asked the Sultan for help to get it back. Kutubkhan was more than happy to oblige him. He marched with his army towards Jamnagar. Jam Raisinhji prepared his army for defense. Both the armies met at the outskirts of Rokhpat village near Jamnagar. A fierce battle ensued. In spite of a valiant fight Jam Raisinhji lost

and was killed during the battle. His two sons Tamachi and Falji escaped safely from Jamnagar to Okha Mandal.

8. Jam Sataji the Pretender (V.S. 1720-1729):

Victorious Kutubkhan entered Jamnagar and changed the name of the city of Jamnagar to Islamnagar. He proclaimed the pretender Prince Sataji as the king. But he appointed a Muslim cleric (*mullah*) as the true administrator of the Kingdom.

9. Jam Tamachi Tagad the First (V.S. 1729-1746):

As mentioned before both sons of Jam Raisinhji escaped. They went to Okha Mandal and took shelter under Vaghers. When they came of age they declared war against Jam Sataji and attacked Jamnagar. While the fight was going on in the streets of Jamnagar, Sataji left the palace secretly and escaped to Ahmedabad and took refuge there. Rao Tamachi ascended the throne. In 1729 the Emperor Aurangzeb appointed Jaswantsinhji of Jodhpur as the governor of Gujarat and accepted Jam Tamachi as the king of Navanagar.

10. Jam Lakhaji the Second (V.S. 1746-1768): He was a very religious person. He brought peace and stability. During his reign of 22 years not a single war took place.

11. Jam Raisinhji (V.S. 1768): His rule lasted for seven months only. He was a playboy and ended up spending almost the entire wealth of the royal treasury for his pleasures. He had to borrow money from a businessman Moti Mehta, to whom he had to assign the revenues of the Village of Mota-Vadala in Halavad District. Anarchy prevailed all over the Kingdom. His brother Hargholji came from Hadiana to Jamnagar, assassinated his brother and took over the Kingdom.

12. Jam Hargholji (V.S. 1768-1781): Ruled for thirteen years.

13. Jam Tamachi the Second (V.S. 1781-1799): Ruled for eighteen years.

14. Jam Lakhaji the Third (V.S. 1799-1824): He was married to Princess Dipala of Halavad. In the dowry along with jewelry he also received three Khavas brothers Mehraman (Meru), Ajani and Nanji as servants. The trio was cunning and took over power from the King.

To regain power the queen plotted to assassinate the trio. One night Meru Khavas was ordered to come to the royal palace. Meru Khavas instead of going himself sent his brother Nanji. The king's men assassinated Nanji. When Meru came to know about this he and his brother Ajani went to the palace. In spite of its being heavily guarded they were able to gain entry into the palace. They attacked and killed many soldiers and escaped. Jam Lakhaji died in 1824 due to smallpox.

15. Jam Jashaji the Second (V.S. 1824-1870): Amarji, Prime Minister of Junagadh, Hakem (provincial governor) Takhi Singh of Bhavnagar, Gohel Thakore (Rajput chief) of Kumbhaji and commander (*jamadar*) Fateh Mohammed of Cutchh were all his contemporaries.

Rao Godaji the ruler of Cutchh with his army marched towards Jamnagar with the intention of attacking it. When the news reached Jam Jashaji, he marched with his army to defend it and reached Fort Balambha. He took over the fort. When Rao Godaji heard this he retreated and returned to Cutchh.

In 1869 there was a great famine in Saurashtra. Jam Jashaji opened centers in various areas and distributed free food to the needy.

During his reign commander (*jamadar*) Fateh Mohammed of Cutchh attacked Jamnagar six times and was defeated every time.

16. Jam Sataji the Second. (V.S. 1871-1876): After the death of Jam Jashaji his younger brother ascended to throne. His health was poor as he was addicted to opium. As he did not have any children, queen Achuba adopted Ranmalji son of Jasaji Jadeja of Bhanward (a cousin of king) and made him the crown prince.

Jasaji on his deathbed recommended Kamdar Jagjivan Devshi to be the chief Minister. Queen Achuba selected Motiram Shyamji Butch. As his selection was not accepted, he incited the Arabs living in Kandorna and Paddhany Forts to riot against the kingdom. There was disorder all over. The Queen asked the help of the king of Gaikwad who defeated the Arabs and forced them to leave the forts.

The Arabs went to Jodiya and took shelter under *Jamindar* (landlord) Sangram Singh, nephew of Meru Khavas. Queen Achuba was angry and seized all the lands (Jodiya, Balambha and others), which he was given during the time of Meru Khavas. Sangram Singh left Jodiya and took shelter with the king of Morbi. From there with the help of the king of Gaikwad and Sunderji Sodagar he opened negotiations. He was pardoned and given one village back but with the condition that he would be under the authority of the king.

17. Jam Ranmalji (V.S. 1876-1908): He succeeded to the throne at the age of 17 years. As he was young an administrator, Shri Hansraj Seth, nephew of Sunderji Sodagar, was appointed by British Government to run the kingdom for ten years with yearly payment of 1,730,000 Jamshahi Rupees. Jam Ranmalji was not happy with this arrangement. He dismissed Hansraj Seth, took over Jodiya and Balambha districts. Seeing such a bold step the British commanders Wilson and Blen kept quiet. In 1880 he attacked and took over the Balarab region. In 1885, he married princess Rajba, daughter of king Vajesinhji of Bhavnagar.

From 1900-1902 famine struck the country. He opened the shelters and distributed food free to the needy people. Water was provided from Lakhota Lake. After the famine was over, in 1903 Jam Ranmalji went on pilgrimage to Dwarka. When he returned he built wells and rest houses at different places. He was a visionary person always ready to do good for his subjects. His youngest son Vibhaji became crown prince as his other sons passed away.

18. Jam Vibhaji the Second (V.S. 1908-1951): During his reign he made many changes. In 1911 he built a huge fort near Rozi Harbor and restored the temple of Rozi Mata. In 1916 he suppressed the rebellion of Vaghers of Okha Mandal. In 1920 he established the Justice Department. In 1922 he abolished the royal tax imposed on districts. In 1935 the plant to supply water to the city of Jamnagar was completed and the foundation for Irving Hospital and food market were laid. In the same year a municipality system was established. He performed the opening ceremonies of Vibhaji School and Navanagar High School.

Cement and tarmac roads were built between Jamnagar, Dhrol, Jodiya, Khambhalia and Salaya. Lighthouses were built at Bedi Bandar, Salaya and Gingadh. Guesthouses were built at Navanagar, Rozi, Bedi and Balachadi for vacationers. Towers were built at Rajkot, Mandvi and Pancheshwar. Victoria Bridge, as well as many temples, was also built.

Crown Prince Kaluba was deposed and put under surveillance (house arrest) by the British Government, as he and his friends were harassing women.

Jam Vibhaji passed away in 1951 on his birthday.

19. Jam Jasvantji (V.S. 1959-1963): At the time of the death of Jam Vibhaji. Jam Jasvantaji was only four years old. He was crowned when he was 12 years old,

until then an agent of the British Government handled the administration of the state. However he was struck with typhoid fever and passed away.

20. Jam Ranjitji (V.S. 1963-1989): At the death of Jam Jasvantji there were four likely candidates to succeed the throne, 1. Prince Kaluba, son by the Muslim queen Dhanbai, but he was deposed, 2. Raisinhji of Sadodar, 3. Jashvantsinhji (Jasaji), son by the king's mistress Janbai, and 4. Ranjitsinhji son of Jivansinhji. The person selected was Ranjitsinhji who ascended throne in 1963. He was well educated and had studied in England. He brought many new changes and increased the glory of the Kingdom. The rundown densely populated areas were destroyed and well planned new houses and roads were built. Bedi Bandar was modernized. A grain market was built. He had helped the British Government during the First World War. He was knighted and thus had the title of 'Sir', and he was made a lieutenant Colonel. He never married. He was also famous as a cricketer.

21. Jam DigVijayji (V.S. 1995-2010)(A.D. 1933-1948): He was an unexpected choice to become the king. He was son of the Juvansinhji, the younger brother of Jam Ranjitsinhji. He was an officer in the Indian Army. He was married in 1991 (on March 7, 1935) to Princess Kanchan Kunvarba daughter of the king Sir Sarup Ramsinhji of Shirohi in the state of Rajasthan. They had a son Satrushalyasinhji (Savaji) in 1995. When India became independent in 1947 A.D., like all the other kingdoms, Navanagar State was dissolved and made part of the Republic of India.

CHAPTER 14

LIFE IN HALAR

The Oshwal families who came with Jam Rawal from Cutchh separated into two groups. Most of the Oshwals who were farmers at first settled in and around Khambhalia, the original capital, later spreading eastwards towards Jamnagar. The majority of them settled down in villages located between the two cities Khambhalia and Jamnagar. In the beginning they were in few villages but as time passed the number of villages increased to 52. Most of the people, who lived in villages, as they had done in Cutchh, were landowners who farmed their own family properties. Some worked as hired hands or laborers and continued speaking the Cutchhi language as their mother tongue. The farmers lived in villages. A few settled down in towns and cities and started businesses. They stopped speaking the Cutchhi language and instead adopted Gujarati as their mother tongue.

As it was the custom in Cutchh, a village council (*panchayat*) of five members was formed in villages with a sizeable population. One was appointed a headman (*patel*) who represented the village to the government and also acted as government representative. In addition there were three regional councils (*moti panchayat*) with their seats in village of Kansumara, Danta and Dabasang headed by a nat patel (*mota patel*). The regional council was also made up of five members, one appointed as the senior head (*mota patel*) and the remaining four as the advisers. The ruler of Navanagar periodically met with the representatives of villagers, which were patels at which time they would air their grievances. The patel was responsible for revenue collection. The councils acted as the courts of law and made decisions on any social, personal or religious problems, taking opinions from the

leaders and the elders before passing judgment. People respected and abided by their decisions. There was mutual respect between the community and the councils. As time passed the councils became power hungry and started taking decisions on their own without getting opinions from elders or community leaders. The position initially was either appointed or purchased; it often became hereditary within a family or group of families. When India became independent, the village councils were abolished.

A Typical Village in Halar

This is how a typical village used to look before independence. The main village will have several streets paved with dirt. The main street will start from the main entrance of the village. It will then branch out in several smaller streets. At the junction there will be a public hall (*choro*), which will be used for meetings, entertainments and the likes. There will be a shop or two on the main street and a religious shrine. On either side of the streets will be rows of houses. Most of the houses were made with mud walls. Some were built with bricks, stones or concrete. A typical house had a small kitchen and dining area in the front and a large room at the back. There will be a small courtyard in front and a big back yard as a storage place and shelter for domestic animals. The cooking was done on stoves made of mud either by burning wood, dried cow dung or coal. Kerosene and earthen lamps were used as the source of light as there was no electricity. There was no sewer system. For all natural calls people went out in the fields or in the back yards. The villages were generally located close to a river. In a larger village there might be a school, a temple or a religious guesthouse for visiting ascetics.

For entertainment women would get together at dusk after dinner and chitchat. Men would get together generally at the public hall (*choro*) for general discussion, which could

range over social, political or religious topics. Boys played various games on the open grounds outside the villages or on the streets. People went to bed early as their day's work started very early. Men went to the farms and women generally ground the millet with a small stone hand mill (*ghanti*).

Women would cover their faces if they came across an elderly person. Once in a while a traveling troupe would visit the village and give performances doing small social or religious skits, dancing folk dances and singing folk songs (*bhava*). For public announcements a designated person would go from one street to another and make the announcements at the top of his voice. Village fairs were common, consisting of vendors, hawkers and small ferris wheels operated manually.

The cowherd would take the cows and buffalos out for pasture in the early morning and bring them back before sunset, charging a small fee. The women of the house milked the cows and the buffalos. The milk was boiled which separated out most of the cream. Part of the milk was used to make yogurt (*dahin*). When there was enough cream accumulated, the women churned it and made into butter, which was boiled to make clarified butter (*ghee*).

The source of water was a public well on the outskirts of the village. The women fetched the water in earthen pots bringing it back home carrying them on their heads. Most of them would carry two or even three water jars on their heads. The young girls helped in the house chores. The young boys helped in the farms or went to school if available.

The out skirts of the village close to the well generally have a banyan tree with an earthen or cement platform built around it. Visitors and older people would sit there and play or watch all the activities.

At the present time most villages have been modernized. There is electricity, a better water supply and radios and televisions for news as well as entertainment.

Halari Oshwals and Gurjar Oshwals

It was a peaceful life in Halar in the beginning. But as time passed natural disasters like floods and famines every few years started taking a toll on the people. The lack of food and poverty plagued the village community. The village people lived simple lives, dressed in simple clothes, spoke Cutchhi as their mother tongue and called themselves Halari Oshwals, while the city dwellers lived and dressed more fashionably, spoke Gujarati and called themselves Gurjar Oshwals.

As time passed the city dwellers started feeling ashamed of their village brethren and looked down upon them. Thus well-educated, wealthy, influential city dwellers separated themselves from less affluent, uneducated village dwellers. Instead of using their wealth and influence to improve the conditions of their village brethren the city dwellers acted as barriers and obstructed their progress. They were ashamed to recognize village dwellers as Oshwals. The Halari Visa Oshwals were given title mahajans, meaning 'great people', by the Royal family because of their honesty and patriotism. The city Oshwals instead of calling them *mahajans* use to call them *majans* as an insult. The villagers were illiterate, unsophisticated, not well dressed. Therefore whenever they went to Jamnagar they would be treated as inferiors. Even on days of religious festivals they were not invited. If some came to participate they were seated separately away from the main crowd during the celebrations and were given only two *ladus* (balls of sweetmeat) and a handful of *ganthiya* (chick pea chips) per person. Instead of being handed to them this would be dropped in their hands from a distance so that the other person would not touch the villagers.

To enter the city villagers had to leave personal property as a bond. At the time of leaving they had to pay a tax.

Even in the schools there was segregation. For drinking water three glasses were kept. One was for Baniyas, members of merchant caste (*vaniks*), one for Brahmins and one for Rajputs (of the warrior caste). The rest of the students had to drink out of their hands. The city people used to make fun and laugh at the villagers. The villagers after a time got tired of these insults and some decided to go to better places to become financially better off.

As the village dwellers were uneducated they did not have a contact or influence with the rulers. They had many difficulties when faced with political problems. During bad years they would not get any food relief or exemption from paying taxes. There were no provisions to control the water supply to the farms, or schools to educate the children.

Halari Oshwals and Cutchhi Oshwals:

The movement from Cutchh to Halar and Halar to Cutchh continued for decades. The relationship with Cutchhi Oshwals remained close for a long period of time. Social visits and marriages continued. The relationship between Cutchhi and Halari Oshwals as time passed became less and less and eventually it completely stopped around the turn of the century (1910-1920), when the Cutchhi Oshwals became wealthier and like the Gurjar Oshwals were ashamed to associate with their less affluent brethren the Halari Oshwals.

Thus this closely related community split into three separate divisions, the Gurjar, the Cutchhi and the Halari Oshwals. The Halari Oshwal community went through lot of suffering due to both natural disasters and man-made obstacles and lack of help. But because of past experience it survived. The community became united. The people

developed affection for each other. In spite of poverty, because the people were proud of their heritage, compassionate and kind hearted, they helped each other in time of need.

The people were very content. For 250 years in spite of battles and internal conflicts in royal families, the Oshwals lived happily with what they had. Their needs were few. Life went on. But due to the uncertainties of rainfall every two or three years there would be famine, sometimes severe, and people had difficulty in making ends meet. Young people therefore would go to big towns and cities to find work. When they had made enough money they would return.

CHAPTER 15

THE GOTRAS OF HALARI VISA OSHWALS

Why were gotras created? Initially they were created to identify the followers of different acharyas. As time passed they became independent congregations. Depending upon which acharya they followed the lay people identified themselves with that particular gotra. The gotra's name became their surname (last name).

Jaina acharya Jaisinh Suriiji founded many gotras like Lalan, Gala, Dedhia, Karania, Polandia, Sandhoy, Hathudia, Loladia, Mithodia, Padahalia, Nishai, and Chhajod and others.

List of last names (surnames) of Halari Visa Oshwals:

Bavaria*	Gala	Karania	Patani
Bid	Galaiya	Khimasia	Pethod
Chandaria	Gangar*	Malde	Savla
Chheda	Gosrani	Mamania*	Sumaria Shah
Dedhia	Gudka	Maru	Virpuria Shah
Dodhia	Haraniya	Nagaria Shah	Visaria
Dhanani	Haria	Nagda	Vora
Gada	Jhakharia Shah	Parekh	Zakharia

*Not a major subgroup

Chandaria: Many Rajput families of the Parmar dynasty from the city of Chandravati moved and settled down in City of Osiya and called themselves Chandavalia. They built a town and named it also Chandavalia. This in time evolved to Chandalia. When they embraced the Jaina

religion the Chandalia gotra was established and was made part of the Oshwal community. Later on due to adverse conditions they moved to Cutchh and Halar and the name changed to Chandaria.

Dedhia: A Rajput named Devad of the Chavda dynasty lived in Jesalmar. In Vikram Samvat 1255 he adopted the Jaina religion with the conversion ceremony performed by Acharya Jaisinh Suri. His son Jhayar built a temple to Lord Adinath in Jhalore at the cost of 170,000 gold coins. In celebration he released many prisoners. He had a son named Dedhia, which became the gotra of his descendants. Jetha Anad Seth, a descendant, was very rich man. He took a large caravan on pilgrimage to Shatrunjay. Parties from fifty-two other cities joined his group. He was appointed the leader of all 52 parties.

The alternate story is that: Solankis took over Dedaji's kingdom. Dedaji went to Abu. He forced the local people away and built a town there called Dedva. He then went towards Mandovar and took over land from Pidihars. There close to Osiya Nagari he built a town and called it Dedhia. The residents of that town took Dedhia as their gotra. In Vikram Samvat 1100 the king of Osiya Nagari who belonged to the Parmar dynasty of the Rajput caste conquered the town of Dedhia. In Vikram Samvat 1255 Acharya Jaisinh Suri converted the residents of Dedhia town to Jainism and admitted them to the Oshwal Community. The family deity of Dedhias is Mamal Mata (see in Haria below for details). When the Dedhia family migrated to Halar in time the name evolved to Dodhia.

Haria: In the village of Lakhan Bhalani there lived a rich Rajput called Ranmal of the Parmar dynasty. A poisonous snake bit his newly married son whose name was Haria. He became semi-comatose. His relatives took him for a dead and were taking his body to be cremated. Jaina acharya Shri Dharmaghose Suriiji was in the village. He heard people crying and went to see what was happening.

People told him what had happened. He asked to see the body. Realizing that Haria was not dead but in a coma due to the effect of the poison he revived Haria by sucking out the poison and reciting the sacred mantra. People were overjoyed to see Haria alive. After listening to a sermon and a religious discourse by Suriiji, Ranmal and his family embraced Jainism and became part of the Oshwal community. From his name Haria his descendants were given gotra name Haria.

Haria had a daughter named Mamal who was married into the Dedhia family. When she became a widow, she started practicing severe penances. One day while she was in deep meditation she passed away. Since then both the Haria and Dedhia families consider her as their family deity.

Gala: The ancestral father of Gala gotra belonged to the Yadu dynasty of Lord Krishna. Based on an account from an ancient document, when the city of Dwarka was destroyed, the ninth generation of Shri Krishna, Rai Bhatt moved to Marward and founded a city called Bhatner. One of his descendants, Jesal, founded Jesalmar. One of Jesal's descendants, Shivraj, founded the city called Kotda. One of his descendants, Somachand, became king of Kotda. With the help of his army he started looting the neighboring places. Once Jaina acharya Jaisinh and his disciples were visiting a town called Umarkot where his follower Nenshi Shah, by the wishes of the acharya, had built a temple to Lord Ajitnath. From there they were proceeding to Jesalmar. On the way Somachand attempted to rob them. The acharya stopped the attack by his spiritual powers and took Somachand under his custody. Somachand's mother Sarupdevi begged the acharya to forgive her son. The acharya agreed to release him on condition that he stopped robbing people and adopt Jainism. Somachand agreed, with his mother and King Chandarana as his witnesses. Somachand was released. The acharya and his disciples proceeded to Jesalmar.

Somachand and his whole family became Jains in Vikram Samvat 1211 and were made part of the Oshwal Community. He built two domed temples, one for Lord Parshvanath and other for family deity Visul Mata. He also got Lord Shantinath's image made of gold weighing 50 pounds (*savaman*) studded with precious stones and a parasol on the top also made of gold.

Somchand had a son named Gala and his descendants adopted the name Gala as the name of their gotra. After some time the Muslims invaded Kotda and destroyed it. Gala escaped to Sindh.

Gudhka: A Rajput named Ajitsinh of the Parmar dynasty lived in Parkar City. He was addicted to opium. He would get together with his friends and grind (*ghumtwa*) opium to a paste; therefore people started calling him Ghutko. One-day Jaina acharya Shri Ratna Prabh Suriiji stopped in the city and gave a religious discourse. After listening to the discourse Ajitsinh was very much moved and became a Jain. Due to the encouragement of Suriiji he built a magnificent temple in Parkar city in Vikram Samvat 1228. His descendants were called Gutka, which in time evolved to Gudhka and Gudka.

Lalan: Kanhade of the Solanki dynasty was king of Jhalor. Rawji was the fifteenth generation descendant. He became the owner of Piluda village in 1173 V.S. near the bank of the river Sindhu in the Parker region. One of his sons named Lalan suffered from leucoderma (*kodh*). At the request of Rawji, the Jaina acharya Jaisinh cured his son. The whole family was overjoyed with happiness and decided to convert to Jainism. Thus the Lalan gotra was established. Vardhaman, Padmashi and Champshi Shah were descendants of this family. By invitation of Jam Jaswantsinh they came to Jamnagar, settled down there and played a major role in the development of the kingdom.

Malde: King Rawat Hamirji Parmar ruler of Ratanpur in Rajasthan near Bhinmal had a son named Jesangde who disappeared without any trace, possibly kidnapped. Jaina acharya Rakshit Suri was visiting Ranakpur at that time. The king came to pay his respects to Suri and begged him to find his missing son. Through his mystical power the acharya found the king's son Jesangde and bestowed on him special powers with which he could cure a sick person just by touching that person. Because of these powers he was called Maldev. His descendants became Maldevs, which in time evolved to Malde. They migrated to Cutch and settled down in Nani Khakhar. Some of them accompanied Jam Rawal to Saurashtra and settled down in the village of Motatoda. Later on their descendants moved to Rafudad. Their names were: Asho, Karamshi, Hemo, Natho, Gosar, Hirji, Suro and Adho. Adho remarried in 1789 V.S. and moved to Daltungi. Because he remarried, which was against the rules of community, he was thrown out of the community and demoted from Visa to Dasa.

Nagda: Rawal Mohansinh was king of Umarmkot in Thar Parkar region. Jaina acharya Jaisinh Suri converted him to Jainism. He had five sons; the fifth son's name was Nag from his name the Nagda gotra was established. The descendants of Nagda gotra Dhandat Seth of Bhinmal came and settled down in Halar. They were known as Laghu Nagda. Their descendants lived in Jaspur, Jakkhau, Sandhan, Niliya, Sanya, Punjar and other villages of Cutchh. Bhoja Shah, a great philanthropist was a descendant of Mohansinh. In 1595 on the invitation of Jam Rawal he moved to Jamnagar and settled down there. He was well respected by Jam Rawal. His son Tejshi Shah built a magnificent temple to Lord Shantinath. Raishi and Narshi Shah, sons of Tejshi, added fifty-two shrines around the temple. Later on they built three more temples with quadruple images (*chaumukha*) facing the four directions installed in them. Many other famous people have born in this Nagda family.

Nagaria, Jhankharia (Zankharia), Sumaria and Virpuria Shahs

This account was published in a weekly newsletter *Maha Sata* from Jamnagar:

There were two Oswal brothers, Muhadchand and Suhadchand Bholani, who came to Halar with Jam Rawal. They became close friends of Jam Rawal. He gave them a plot to build their house where at present Chandi Bazar is located.

Suhadchand Bholani had four sons, Udeychand, Nonghabhai, Anandbhai and Ashvir. Udeychand stayed in Jamnagar. He and his descendants called themselves Nagaria Shah. Nonghabhai went to live in village called Jhakhar in 1619 V.S.; his descendants are called Jhankharia (Zankharia).

Hirji son of Muhadchand went to live in Kansumara. He married a girl from Vagad Cutchh in Vikram Samvat 1616. He and his descendants called themselves Sumaria Shah.

A descendant of the Bholani family, Lakhamshi founded the village of Virpur in Vikram Samvat 1621. He and his descendants called themselves Virpuria Shah.

CHAPTER 16

DISTIGUISHED PEOPLE OF HALAR

During the foundation ceremony of the city of Jamnagar three iron pins (dowel rods) were inserted in the ground. At the site of the first pin the royal fort was built. At the site of the second pin the house for the mayor was built and at the site of the third pin house for the Mukim family was built. The Mukim family was appointed as the royal tax collectors.

The mayors were mostly from Visa Shrimal, Visa Oshwal or other rich merchants. The Bhansali brothers Anand and Abaji Seth were among the first mayors of the city. The most glorious period of Halar was during seventeenth century. The credit goes to three people.

Rajshi Tejshi Shah: Rajshi Shah was of the Nagda gotra. He was descendant of Udill son of King Mohan Singh and grandson of Bhoja Shah. Bhoja Shah moved from Cutchh to Jamnagar in Vikram Samvat 1596 and started a business.

His father Tejshi Shah in 1624 built the Jaina Temple for Lord Shantinath at the cost of two hundred thousand gold coins. This is the oldest Jaina Temple in Jamnagar. In 1645 the Sultan of Ahmedabad attacked Jamnagar and destroyed this temple. Tejshi Shah with his family moved back to Cutchh. In 1648 when battle was over and there was peace, they returned to Jamnagar restored the temple and installed a new image of Lord Shantinath. Soon after that Tejshi Shah passed away.

During the battle of 1648 the ruler Jam Sataji ended up spending almost all his money and Rajshi Shah, like Bhama Shah came to his aid and gave money to the ruler.

Raishi Shah went on pilgrimage to *Shatrunjay tirth* in 1660. On returning to Jamnagar he decided to build a temple. The temple was completed either in 1668 or 1672 and the image of Lord Shantinath was installed by Acharya Shri Kalyansuriji of Anchal gacch in 1675. Five hundred-fifty more images were installed. The expenses totaled to three hundred thousand gold coins. He also built many more Jaina temples in Saurashtra and Cutchh, a temple to Lord Krishna in Rajkot and many shrines including one to Hanumanji.

He was a great philanthropist and built fountains for drinking water, rest houses and dining halls for the convenience of travelers. During the famine of 1687 he distributed food free to needy people. All his life he did many beneficial things for the people.

Brothers Vardhman and Padamshi Shah: They were born in the village of Arikhana, Cutchh of Lalan gotra family. Their father's name was Amarshi. Vardhman, the elder, was born in V.S. 1606. Padamshi the youngest son was born in V.S. 1617. They had a middle brother Champshi.

There is a folk tale about how they became rich. One morning a monk came to their house and asked for alms. Both brothers with great respect fed the monk. The monk was very satisfied and left a gourd hanging on their doorframe. After some time the gourd fell on a copper vessel left on the floor under it. The gourd was filled with a magical potion (siddh ras). When the potion touched the vessel it turned into gold. Both the brothers were surprised to see this miracle. They took all the metal vessels they had and rubbed the potion on them. All of them turned into gold. They took the gold vessels to Bhadravati Nagari and sold them at the price of 100,000 gold coins. They settled down in Bhadravati and started a business and soon became very rich.

Padamshi was more adventurous. He bought a big ship, filled it with grain, spices and condiments and sailed to China. He sold all the merchandise he had brought in Canton harbor. He bought silk, sugar and other merchandise. There he came in contact with a rich Chinese merchant Yuan Chang, who had a great desire to see India. Yuan Chang accompanied Padamshi on the return journey to Bhadravati and stayed for four months in India. He made a business agreement with the Lalan brothers. It turned out to be very profitable for both parties.

In 1650 they went on pilgrimage to *Shatrunjay tirth*. They stopped in Jamnagar on their way to Shatrunjay. Jam Sataji, the ruler gave them a royal welcome. He sent guards for the protection of the pilgrims on the way. On the return trip they again stopped at Jamnagar. Jam Sataji invited them to stay in Jamnagar and asked them to open a business there, which they did. They became close friends of the king and very popular with the people. After some time Jam appointed Padamshi Shah as his Chief Minister.

Mohansinh Shah: He was of Mithodia gotra, lived in Jamnagar and ran a shipping business. A folk story is that during one of his trips a statue of Lord Shantinath was caught in the anchor of his ship while they were in Dwarka. He built a magnificent temple in Jamnagar and installed that image.

During the reign of Jam Sataji there lived a Mahajan, Patobhai Shah (V.S. 1625-1662) of Khimasia gotra in the village of Dhuniya. He was a very generous man. Jam Sataji respected him very much. People use to say that *Nagar ma Jam Sato ane Dhuniya gam ma Shah Pato* (In the city Jam Sato rules but in the village of Dhuniya Shah Pato rules). He was rich. Once he feasted the whole Mahajan community. He even ceremoniously married the mountains Tungo and Tungi. During that ceremony he used five hundred thirty five metal containers of ghee.

During the reign of Jam Lakhaji in V.S. 1665, a rich Mahajan by the name of Somchand Abheychand Shah feasted the entire Mahajan community of Jhakhar village.

During the reign of Jam Sataji the Second, there were two brave brothers Pancha and Dharamshi Pethod who helped Rao Tamachi regain his throne.

Tejshi and Khera Shah were given complete power to run the kingdom for three and half days, during which time they made many beneficial changes. Because of that Jam Tamachi gave them the village of Monda Toda, now known as Nani Haripar.

In 1883 V.S. Dahyabhai Shah a descendant of Raishi Tejshi Shah was appointed as the Mayor. Every one respected him very much. In 1938 the banks of the river Nagamati were flooded and most of the properties near the banks were destroyed. Dahyabhai came to the aid. He gave food and clothes, and built temporary shelters until the new houses he had ordered were built. In 1951 he laid the foundation stone for a Jaina temple in the village of Chela. Soon afterwards he passed away.

During the reign of Jam Jasaji the Second (1824-1870 V.S.) Sojpal Shah and his three sons Ugam, Manek and Vaja feasted the entire community and gave away seven hundred-fifty saris.

Many other Oshwals were appointed as patels of local village councils and brought honor to the Halari community.

CHAPTER 17

SAINTS OF HALAR

As there were not many Jain monks visiting the villages where Halari Oswals had settled down the people were not well versed in religion. In some areas they were even influenced by the other religions. In two villages, Targhari and Devaria many Oswal families came under influence of the *Swaminarain Panth* (sect) and around one hundred years ago adopted religion.

Acharya Ajramarji (1809-1870 V.S.): Born in the village of Padana in the Maru family in Vikram Samvat 1809, his father's name was Manekchand and his mother's name Kankubai. His father passed away when he was five years old. Mother and son moved to Limbdi or Gondal in 1818. They studied religion under Guru Maharaj Devraj Swami and Kanji Swami. In 1819 both took vows of poverty (*diksha*). The son was given the religious name Ajramar Swami and his mother Kankubai Mahasati. Ajramarji studied the scriptures in depth from the Svetamber Yati Shri Gulabchandji of Kharthar gaccha. He was a good orator, simple, straightforward and impressive. In 1845 he was appointed acharya and given title of Savior of Religion (*Shashanodharak*). He traveled extensively in Halar, Sorath, Jhalawad, Cutchh, Gujarat, Marward and Mevad, spreading message of Lord Mahavir. He died in 1870 in Limbdi at the age of sixty years.

Shrimad Acharya Vijay Kund Kund Suri Swami: He was born in Mota Mandha and named Keshu. His parents sent him to Mumbai (Bombay) to live with his brother to pursue higher education. After studying up to the ninth grade he joined in business with his brother. As the fight for independence was going on he joined the freedom movement and became very popular, One day he heard a

religious discourse by a Jain monk Pujya Panyas Shree Bhadrakar Vijayji Ganivar, and became his disciple. He took vows of poverty in Vikram Samvat 1998 in Vanigam (Nasik District state of Maharashtra) from Pujya Panyas Shri Bhadrakar Vijayji Ganivar at the age of 23 years, and was given the religious name Shri Kund Kund Vijayji. The first person to take vows of poverty (*diksha*) from him was Hansraj Punjabhai Sawla of Jamnagar in Vikram Samvat 2005 and he was named as Pujya Shri Heer Vijayji Maharaj.

He traveled in all the villages of Halar giving religious discourses. He became very popular and people called him the Savior of Halar (*Halar Deshodharak*). He was appointed to the position (*pad*) of paniyas in 2037 (1980 A.D.) and to acharya pad in V.S. 2038. He passed away in V.S. 2039 in Jam Khambhalia.

Acharya Vijay Jinendra Suriji: Born in the village of Lakhabawal, his birth name was Khetshi and his father's name *Vaghji Sura Gudhka*. He came in contact with Acharya Vijay Amrat Suriji and took *diksha* from him in Vikram Samvat 2010. In 2023 he was appointed as paniyas and in 2035 appointed as acharya at Jamnagar by Vijay Somchandra Suriji. He was instrumental in getting Jain temples, libraries, schools and the like, built in many villages of Halar.

Acharya Shri Vijay Lalit Shekhar Suriji: Born in the village of Rasangpar in 1995 V.S. his birth name was Laljibhai and his father's Meghajibhai. Both he and his younger brother Raishibhai took *diksha* in Mumbai from Shri Hemant Vijay Suri Maharaj. Laljibhai was named Muni Lalit Shekhar Vijayji as monk and Raishibhai, Muni Shri Raj Shekhar Vijayji.

Acharya Vijay Shekhar Suriji: Born in the village of Navagam in 1994 V.S. his birth name was Virchand. He took *diksha* at age of 17 years in 2011 and was appointed paniyas in 2045 and acharya in 2046.

CHAPTER 18

THE HOLY PLACES OF HALAR

Jamnagar: Jamnagar is a city of temples. It is known as Satrunjay of Halar. There are twenty-five small and large Jaina temples. Out of which the most famous are temples of Lord Adinath, Lord Shantinath, Shri Bhabha Parshvanath Bhagwan and temples known by name as Shethji and Choriwala.

Other important temples are:

Lord Vimalnath temple of Digvijay Plot: It is popularly known as *Hathiwala Derasar* (elephant temple) was built by Zaviben Nathoobhai Khetshi Dhanani due to inspiration of Revered Muniraj Shri Kundkund Vijayji. Acharya Shrimad Vijay Amrutsurishvarji Maharaj performed the installation ceremony. Many religious activities take place here every year.

The Oshwal Colony Jaina temple: This temple was built on the inspiration of Most Revered Acharya Shrimad Vijay Jinendrasurishvraji Maharaj. Many religious activities take place here every year.

The Kamdar Colony Jaina temple: Oshwals have been living in this section of the town from A.D. 1968. In 1971 Karamshi Khimji of village of Gagva built a shrine in his home. In 1985 Shantibhai Jhinabhai built a shrine in his home. People were longing for a large temple and dream came true. The foundation stone laying ceremony for the temple was done in 1993 A.D. and within one and half year the construction of the temple was completed. Devji Bhimji Gosrani and Govindji Nathalal Malde donated the money for construction. The installation ceremony (*pratistha mahotsav*) of the Images was conducted under

the supervision of Revered Panayas Vajrasen Vijayji Maharaj on December 7, 1994. The principal Deity (*Mulnayak*) is Lord Neminath. The Visa Oshwal Boys Boarding and Oshwal center are located in this area.

Villages

(For geographical location see map at the end of the book)

Arablus: It is approximately 200 (1798 A.D.) years old.

Arikhana: It is approximately 450 (1548 A.D.) years old and is located on the banks of the river Sassoi. There is a domed Jaina temple with the principal deity Lord Vasupujya built in Vikram Samvat 2047.

Bharudiya: Also known as Sevak Bharudiya, a village of Dasa Oshwals. There is a shrine (ghar derasar).

Champa Beraja: It is approximately 650 (1348 A.D.) years old. There is a prayer hall around 75 years old (1928 A.D.). It is the home village of the industrialists and the philanthropists of the Chandaria family.

Changa: It is approximately 400 (1598 A.D.) years old. There is a domed temple of Lord Mahavir Swami built in Vikram Samvat 2040. It is the home village of Kanji Meghji the hero of Halar, as well as of the author of this book.

Chela: It is approximately 300 (1698 A.D.) years old. There is a hundred year old Jaina temple of Lord Ajitnath built in Vikram Samvat 1952 (1898 A.D.) by Parvatiben wife of Nathoobhai Champshi Doshi of Jamnagar. There are four *cholas* (public meeting place), a high school, a hospital, a bank, a *mahajanwadi* (community place), two prayer halls and the home office of Rangmati Education Organization.

Dabasang: It is approximately 450 (1548 A.D.) years old. Halari Oshwals built the first domed Jaina temple,

around 100 years ago (1903 A.D.). Raishibhai, Virparbhai and Ranmalbhai the sons of Shah Lakha Rajpal and Virparbhai son of Shah Hira Rajpal built this temple. The principal deity is Lord Parshvanath. The installation ceremony took place in Vikram Samvat 1961. It is the birthplace of Muni Shri Mahasen Vijayji and the philanthropist Meghji Pethraj Shah. There is a high school, a bank and a hospital.

Daltungi: There is a domed temple of Lord Ajitnath built in Vikram Samvat 1960. The village is located in the foothills of the Tungo and Tungi Hills. It is a village of Dasa Oswals.

Danta: Halaris settled here around 200 (1798 A.D.) years ago. In Vikram Samvat 2019 almost the entire population both Jainas and non-Jainas took vows and gave up seven habit-forming substances. There is a 52-year-old Jaina temple of Lord Mahavir.

Dhinchada: It is close to Jamnagar. There are salt fields, a military sport arena and airport. There is a domed Jaina temple of Lord Adinath built in Vikram Samvat 2021.

Gagva: It is approximately 150 (1848 A.D.) years old. There is a domed Jaina temple of Lord Parshvanath built in Vikram Samvat 2036. There are salt fields. One person from here took vows of poverty (*diksha*).

Gajna: It is approximately 200 (1798 A.D.) years old.

Goinj: It is the last village of Halar located on the seashore. It is approximately 400 (1598 A.D.) years old. There are large plantations of *chiku* (sapota) and coconuts. There is a Jaina temple of Lord Neminath. The installation ceremony of the image took place on April 25, 1958 (Vikram Samvat 2014). Shah Ottamchand Harakhchand and Lakhtir Nathoobhai Khimasia donated the cost of construction. They also led a pilgrimage to Girnar.

Jakhar: It is approximately 450 (1548 A.D.) years old. There is a shrine (*ghar derasar*).

Jam Khambhalia It is located on the banks of the Ghee River. It is approximately 475 (1523 A.D.) years old. There are two Jaina temples. One in the center of the town is 400 (1598 A.D.) years old and is made of glass. There is a community center (*mahajanwadi*) near the railroad station. The second temple is of Adinath. There is a shrine with an image of Acharya Shrimad Vijaykunkund Surishwarji popularly known as *Halar na Hirla* (the Jewel of Halar). This was the first Capital of Jam Rawal. It is famous for clarified butter (*ghee*).

Jivapur, Nanduri & Lothiya: There is one Oshwal family each live in Jivapur and Nanduri. Lothiya is completely deserted now. Lothiya was the home village of the ancestors of the author of this book.

Jogwad: It is approximately 400 (1598 A.D.) years old. There is an old and famous temple of Ashapura Mata. There is a prayer hall. It is the home of a wealthy person who willingly let his only son take vows of poverty.

Juni Haripar: It is approximately 250 (1748 A.D.) Years old. There is a Jaina temple with the images of Lord Shantinath, Malinath and Dharmanath built in Vikram Samvat 2026. Shah Mohanlal Devraj was the major donor. It is famous for *Penda* (savory pieces made from milk).

Kajurda: It is approximately 400 (1598 A.D.) years old. It is the home of Muniraj Shri Kamasen Vijayji Maharaj and Lakhamshi Govindji Haria family. Lakhamshi Govindji Haria family donated money to build an education institute in Jamnagar.

Kakabhai Sinhan: It is the oldest village of Halar state. It is approximately 1000 (998 A.D.) years old. There is a Jaina temple of Lord Neminath built in Vikram Samvat

2043. Shah Khetshibhai Punjabhai, Shah Vaja Ladhahbai and Hemraj Ladhahbai donated the land for the temple. The money to build the temple was donated by Shah Govindji Meghji and Premchand Govindji.

Kanalus: It is approximately 400 (1598 A.D.) years old. It is located along the banks of the river Amravati. Panna Dam and three other check dams are located here. It was the birthplace of a financially well-to-do person who took vows of poverty.

Kansumara: It is approximately 400 (1598 A.D.) years old. There is a domed Jaina temple built in Vikram Samvat 2041 by Meghji Virji Dodhia, Velji Virji Dodhia and their sister Gangaben Hirjibhai. It was the seat of the regional council (*moti panchayat*). Place of the infamous nattedu (a feast celebrating death of a relative where whole community is invited).

Khara Beraja: It is approximately 450 (1548 A.D.) years old. It is home of the first Halari Oshwal Jetha Anand to go overseas. Bharat Petroleum Company adopted this village.

Khatiar: It is located along the banks of the river Fulzar. Maya Vira and Lakhtir Vira Gada laid the foundation of the village around 140 (1858 A.D.) years ago. Maya Vira Gada built the arch (*Toran*). There is small domed Jaina temple built in 1982 (Vikram Samvat 2038). Where the image of Lord Naminath as principal deity along with the images of Lord Shitalnath and Lord Mahavir were installed.

Khirasara: It is approximately 200 (1798 A.D.) years old. There is a domed Jaina temple of Lord Neminath built in Vikram Samvat 2047.

Lakhabaval: It is approximately 400 (1598 A.D.) years old. There is a domed Jaina temple of Lord Shantinath built in Vikram Samvat 2011. It is the birthplace of the

respected Acharya Jinendrasurishvarji Maharaj. There is a Jaina library called Harsh *Pushpamrut Jain Granthmala*. The village is also known as *Shantipuri* (Peaceful town).

Lalpur: There is a Jaina temple of Lord Dharmanarh built in Vikram Samvat 1960 by Shah Mulchand Hemraj and Shah Kachra Hemshi. It is famous for eye ointment (*anjan*). There is also a temple of Bhalar Dada. Pilgrims from all over world visit the place. Gope Hill is close by.

Machhu Beraja: It is approximately 200 (1798 A.D.) years old. There is a temple of Machhu Mata from which the name of village is derived. There is a domed Jaina temple of Lord Sumatinath built in Vikram Samvat 2043.

Mithoi: It is approximately 450 (1548 A.D.) years old. There is prayer hall (*upashray*). There are memorials of Bhuchar Mori, Halaji Darbar and a Mare named Pati. Battles between Jam Rawal and other rulers took place on the outskirts of this village.

Modpar: There is a 455 (1543 A.D.) years old Jaina Temple of Lord Suparshvanath built by Sheth Vardhman Shah and Padamshi Shah in Vikram Samvat 1676. It is considered a place of pilgrimage. There is no Jaina population in this place at present. It is located on the banks of the river Fulzar, and is the home of a folding Samavsaran (representation of the holy assembly hearing of the Jina's discourse). In Vikram Samvat 2051 Shah Veghji Kachra took a *sangh* (pilgrim group) from Jam Khambhalia to Modpar. There used to be a religious guesthouse. Shah Premchand Panachand took a *sangh* from Jamnagar to Modpar. There is a magnificent temple of Navanu Shyamvarna Lord Adinath (black marble image), and a rest house.

Moti Khavdi: There are two Jaina temples here. There is a 95 (1903 A.D.) year old domed Jaina temple of Lord

Chandraprabhswami built by Shrimati Diwalibai daughter of Virpar Pasu of the village of Jakhho in Cutchh. The installation ceremony of image was performed in Vikram Samvat 1963. The second temple is a shrine of Lord Parshvanath (*ghar derasar*) built by Keshavji Nayak in Vikram Samvat 1934. There is a large fertilizer manufacturing plant here.

Moti Rafudal: It is approximately 200 (1798 A.D.) years old.

Motta Ambla: It is approximately 300 (1698 A.D.) years old. There is a domed temple of Lord Vasupujiya built in Vikram Samvat 2044. The land where the temple stands belonged to Shah Dharamshi Karabhai and was birthplace of Paniyas Vajrasen Vijayji Maharaj.

Motta Lakhiya: It is located along the banks of the river Fulzar. It is approximately 150 (2848 A.D.) years old. There is a domed Jaina temple of Lord Shantinath built in Vikram Samvat 2023. The major donation to build the temple was given by Shah Nathoobhai Surabhai Gada.

Motta Mandha: It is approximately 400 (1598 A.D.) years old. It is birthplace of the first Halari Oshwal to take vows of poverty Shri Kund Kund Surishwarji. Shri Kund Kund Surishwarji, the Revered Shri Mahasen Vijayji Maharaj and Paniyas Shri Vajrasen Maharaj are the three shining stars of this village. Raishi Shah built a Jaina temple of Lord Vasupujya approximately in year 1943 A.D. There are gardens of mango trees here.

Mungani: It is approximately 400 (1598 A.D.) years old. There is a domed Jaina temple with two levels built in Vikram Samvat 2024. The principal deity in upper level is Lord Parshvanath; the principal deity in lower level is Lord Vasupujiya. The main donors were Kanji Narshi Nagaria and his family.

Naghedi: It is approximately 500 (1498 A.D.) years old. It is close to the city of Jamnagar. There is a Jaina temple of Lord Munishruvatswami built in Vikram Samvat 2035. There are many factories on the outskirts of the village. Installation of the images of Lord Parshvanath and Neminath took place in 2000 A.D. by Muktaben Premchand Narshi Maru.

Nagda: It is approximately 450 years old. There is a prayer hall with picture of Shankhesvar Parshvanath.

Nani Khavadi: It is approximately 400 (1598 A.D.) years old. There is a Jaina temple of Lord Parshvanath *Chintamani* (jewel) built in A.D. 1993. The widow Khimiben Devchand Shah took a *sangh* to Shiddhgiri Tirth from here.

Nani Rafudad: Is approximately 500 (1498 A.D.) years old. There is Jaina temple and a prayer hall, both around 105 years old (1899 A.D.). There was a metal image around 380 years old in the temple once.

Nanna Mandha: It is approximately 450 (1548 A.D.) years old. There is a domed Jaina temple of Lord Suvidhinath built in Vikram Samvat 2014. Shri Munirajshri Mahabhadra Vijayji and Shri Kund Kund Vijayji performed the installation ceremony (*pratistha mahotsav*).

Navagam: Located along the banks of the river Panna, it is approximately 140 years old and is known as *Jainpuri* (Jaina town). A domed Jaina temple of Lord Chandrasprabhuji was built in Vikram Samvat 1976 (A.D. 1922). There are also two images of Lord Parshvanath. The temple was renovated in 1955 A.D. There is an upashray (prayer hall), high schools for girls and boys, mahanjanwadi (community center), animal shelter and other facilities. Several people have taken vows of poverty to become monks and nuns (*sadhu/sadhvi*). It was the birthplace of Hemraj Nathoo Gudhka, a well-known philanthropist and Somchand Ladhbai Gudhka, the

author of 27 articles concerning the history of the Oshwals published in *Oshwal Bandhu*.

Navi Haripar: It is approximately 82 (1916 A.D.) years old. There is a domed Jaina temple of Lord Adinath built in Vikram Samvat 2025.

Padana: It is approximately 100 (1898 A.D.) years old. A Jaina temple of Lord Sambhavnath was built in Vikram Samvat 2013. There are two prayer halls, one is 100 (1898 A.D.) years old and the other 20 years old built in A.D. 1983. It was the birthplace of the philanthropist Premchand Vrajpal Shah. Compared to other villages it is a modern village. There is a high school, hospital, veterinary hospital, bank and *mahajanwadi* (community center).

Rawalsar: It is approximately 100 (1898 A.D.) years old. There is a domed temple of Lord Shantinath built in Vikram Samvat 2032 by Manilal Dharmashi Pancha Haria of Sagpar. On the outskirts of the village there are offices of the Chandaria Trust Foundation. Eight people of this village have taken vows of poverty, of whom three were from one family.

Rangpur: A domed Jaina temple of two levels was built in Vikram Samvat 2046. Lower level principal deity is Lord Parshvanath bhiddhanjan. The upper level principal deity is Lord Mahavir Swami. There is a mahajanwadi. It is a village of Dasa Oshwals.

Rasangpar: It is approximately 400 (1598 A.D.) years old. There is a domed temple with two levels built in V.S. 2009. The principal deity in the lower level is Lord Suparshvanath. The principal deity in the upper level is Lord Dharmanath. Six people took vows of poverty from one family. In the past there was a hospital and a religious guesthouse.

Sakhpar (Sagpar): It is an old settlement of Mahajans. There is hardly any Mahajan family living there now. It was the home of Manilal Dharamshi Pancha Haria. There used to be rest houses and school.

Setalus: It is approximately 400 (1598 A.D.) years old located along the banks of the river Panna. There is a domed Jaina temple of Lord Adinath built in Vikram Samvat 2038. There is a memorial of Kantilal Hirji Devraj who was accidentally killed by stray bullet in Nairobi. It is the home of Vivekanand College.

Shingach: It is approximately 450 (1548 A.D.) years old and was the home village of Muniraj Shri Virsen Vijayji Maharaj. It is close to Vadinar Harbor. There are salt fields and a chemical plant.

Sikka: It is located near the seacoast and is approximately 100 (1898 A.D.) years old. There are many industries here, a cement factory, thermal power station, electric powerhouse and other facilities. There is a domed Jaina temple of Lord Sumatinath built in Vikram Samvat 2028 by Manilal Dharamshi Haria of the village of Sagpar.

Solsala: It is approximately 450 (1548 A.D.) years old. There is a prayer hall about 35 (1964 A.D.) years old with a picture of Lord Shankheshvar Parshvanath.

Sumara Taraghari: It is approximately 400 (1598 A.D.) years old. Halaris from Nagda village settled down here around 95 years ago (1910 A.D.).

Taraghadi Devariya: It is approximately 300 (1698 A.D.) years old. The majority of the population follows the Swaminarayan tradition.

Timbdi: Is approximately 400 (1598 A.D.) years old. There is a prayer hall built about 25 (1976 A.D.) years ago.

Vadaliya Sinhan: It is approximately 450 (1548 A.D.) years old, located along the banks of the river Sinhan. A Jaina temple of Lord Sambhavnath was built in Vikram Samvat 2043. Aradhna Tirth Dham (a place of pilgrimage) is located here. There is an animal shelter, Sinhan dam, the palace of Jam Saheb, the ruler of the state, and Ashapura Mata temple, the temple of the family deity of the rulers. It is the home village of Lalbhai (donor of Jam Khambhalia mahajanwadi) and Vaghji Nangpar (builder of *Aradhna Tirth Dham*). Prafulaben who took vows of poverty was from this village.

Vasai: It is approximately 400 (1598 A.D.) years old. There is a domed Jaina temple of Lord Sambhavnath built in Vikram Samvat 2023. On digging the grounds a throne of Lord Parshvanath of around seventh century old was found. There is a mahajanwadi, nursery school and sewing school.

Vav Beraja: It is approximately 200 (1798 A.D.) years old. There is a prayer hall built 35 years ago. (1980 A.D.).

CHAPTER 19

MIGRATION WITHIN INDIA

For 250 years in spite of battles and internal conflicts in royal families, the Halari Oswals lived happily with what they had. But then natural disasters started occurring. The Navanagar state area is on the periphery of the monsoon belt and receives irregular rainfall, which often drops below normal. There will be a drought every two or three years. There will not be enough water to cultivate and grow crops and famine will set in. Because of that people and mostly domestic animals will perish due to lack of food. People started looking for opportunities outside Halar as early as 1860 A.D.

Minor movements between villages for economic or political reasons were common. Migration from villages to Jamnagar began in the second half of the nineteenth century, mostly as small traders (provision stores) and produce brokers. Because of their agricultural experience Halari Oswals played an important part in Jamnagar's wholesale grain market. Later on many started small-scale cottage industries such as button factories and manufacturing brass parts in Jamnagar.

The condition in Halar was becoming bad. The period between 1880 A.D. and 1940 A.D. was worst. A number of calamities fell on Navanagar state.

In 1880-1890 A.D. the British government started developing the city of Bombay (Mumbai). There was a lot of construction going on because of the rapid expansion of commerce and industry and there was a need for laborers. Many Cutchhi Oswals had already moved to Mumbai. Many had become wealthy. Because there were still relationships maintained between Halari and Cutchhi

Oshwals people came to know about the opportunities. Healthy and adventurous young men of 15 to 18 years old moved to Mumbai. As they were strong, healthy and hard working they found jobs very easily. They started working as laborers in the construction industry, hired hands in shops or any work they could get.

Life in Mumbai was hard. A young man of 15 to 18 years old with hardly any education comes from a small village and leaves home to go to a strange place far away from home. That itself is frightening. There were no relatives and hardly any friends. They had no place of their own to live.

Some found jobs with a Cutchhi Oshwal owning a shop selling spices, grains and provisions. They worked twelve or more hours a day. They had to carry heavy bags of grain weighing 200 or more pounds on their backs. The pay was meager, about 1 to 2 Rupees a month. They were provided with meals but the food for the owner and for the servants used to be different. For people who worked in shops, owners were kind enough to let them sleep in the shops. The shops were dusty. There were rats and cockroaches all over and in summer it was very hot. So most of the time they preferred to sleep on the footpaths.

For other workers life was even harder. They had to find a place to sleep. They had to cook and clean personal things themselves. Because of all these hardships after they had made enough money most of the people would return home.

As time passed some people started settling down in Mumbai. They saved enough money and bought small shops and started their own businesses. They even got the family members to come and live with them. Not all Oshwals began as laborers. Devraj Devshi Gudhka, the first immigrant from Navagam, was a cotton broker. Now

large numbers are involved in export, import and manufacturing industries. The more educated are in government services and professional vocations such as medicine, engineering, and other professions. Migration to Mumbai has continued throughout the twentieth century from Halar as well as from East Africa.

Some people though small in numbers went, to Arbi, to Pandhurna in Madhya Pradesh, or to Sindh and Hyderabad and settled down there. Many of them became quite wealthy.

PART IV

Rise and Glory



CHAPTER 20

INTRODUCTION

There are many reasons people leave their homeland to go to places of better opportunities. The main reason is the economy, which may be man made or due to natural disasters.

Halar is on the periphery of the monsoon belt and receives irregular rainfall, which often drops below normal. A number of disasters fell on the land of Halar. In addition to a succession of famines between the years 1880 and 1940 A.D., the land was struck with major epidemics and natural disasters such as cyclones, locusts and floods, causing considerable hardship. Due to lack of rain there were no harvests. People were without jobs.

There was a lack of economic opportunities. Even Jam Ranjit Sinhji, the ruler of Navanagar State in 1910 A.D. said, "Subjects of this state are noted for a spirit of commercial enterprise which makes them seek their fortunes elsewhere as they find only a limited scope within my own territory." In 1924 A.D. he told British officers, "The people leave for want of occupation in the land of their birth."

Because of these natural calamities, declining prices of farm produces, rise in the cost of living, increase in population, limited opportunities, constant harassment by marauding band of robbers and bandits, the drought of 1895-1896 A.D. and the great killer famine of 1899-1901 A.D., all played a part in the decision to migrate.

It was a common practice to move from one village to other for economic and political reasons. Migration from villages to Jamnagar became more common in the second

half of nineteenth century, primarily to become small traders.

During the drought of 1895-1896 A.D. and famine of 1899-1901 A.D., many went to Bombay (Mumbai) because of the rapid expansion of commerce and industry which had started in the eighteen eighties A.D. Other cities where some went as temporary unskilled labor were Karachi and Ahmedabad.

Indians traveled to Zanzibar around 1500 A.D. During the construction of Uganda Railway British Government brought around three hundred thousand laborers from India. Two thousand and fifty laborers were killed and six thousand and fifty became invalid while building the railroad. Nearly six thousand of those chose to stay in Kenya. Many others followed later. The number of immigrants and traders in East Africa increased with the growth of economic opportunity, also protection and stability following the developing interest of the British Government. Businesses expanded and the growth of the colonial administration required increasing numbers of support staff.

CHAPTER 21

Migration across the Ocean

In spite of the opportunities, which were available in various places in India, the financial condition of most of the people did not improve much. As the situation was getting desperate some people started thinking of migrating to foreign lands across the ocean.

Africa was considered a Dark Continent, unexplored, unknown. Zanzibar, an island close to East Africa, was ruled by an Arab sultan. There were a few Indian families, mostly from Cutchh, who had settled down there.

Kenya was a part of East Africa under British rule. The British wanted to develop it. Mombasa was the main harbor. In 1895 A.D. when the construction of Kilindini Harbor was started Indian laborers were imported. The British Government also decided to build a railroad from Mombasa to Uganda to explore the interior for settlement. To build the railroad they had to import laborers as the local natives did not have the skill and would not work. In 1896 A.D. the government therefore imported thousands of laborers from India. Along with laborers there was need for technical and clerical staff. Most of them were Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims. The Gujarati Hindus mostly came from Saurashtra, Gujarat and Cutchh. The laborers' daily needs had to be met. The government therefore encouraged people to come and settle down and open small businesses.

Most of the Indians who were in business came from Cutchh, Saurashtra and Mumbai. They were Hindus (Bhatiyas and Lohanas), Jains and Muslims (Khojas, Memons and Bohras). Non-trading communities were made up of potters, tailors, silver and goldsmiths, masons and other craftsmen.

Many people from Cutchh and Saurashtra specially the Khojas, Lohanas and Bhatias migrated and opened small businesses to meet the needs of the Indian laborers. They would write or send the news back home about how rich and fertile the country was and about all the opportunities available.

To go to a new and especially an unknown and unexplored country one needs information and guidance about the journey across the ocean and the place of destination. Are there any facilities for a stranger? Who will be the contact? And the most important factor was the money for the travel expenses. Most of the people did not have enough money to travel by steamers therefore they had to travel by sailing ships and dhows. The latter were small sailing vessels of the East African and Indian coasts. The seas were rough and the trip would take months to reach the destination.

Traveling by dhow was an experience. As it depended on the winds the journey was totally at the mercy of nature and often hazardous. The dhows generally sailed along the coastline for safety. On the route, they would stop in the ports of Karachi, Muscat, Aden and Mogadishu for fresh water and food as well as to trade. Passengers were allowed to carry only one piece of baggage and a bedroll. The members of the crew were generally non-vegetarians. Therefore the passengers had to bring their own food. Fresh water was used for drinking and cooking only. For everything else one had to use seawater. The latrine was a piece of wood with a big hole in the center nailed on the out side edge of the ship's hull. The Indian Ocean is rough and most passengers would be seasick during the voyage. Everyone, regardless of religion or caste, helped one another. It would take between six to eight weeks to reach Mombasa.

The first Halari Oshwal who undertook the journey across the sea was an eighteen-year-old young man Jetha Anand

from the village of Kharaberaja, in year 1896 A.D. He sailed on an Arab dhow from Jamnagar. After an arduous journey of two to three months he landed in Madagascar. The dhow did stop at Mombasa and Zanzibar. Why he did not get off in Mombasa or Zanzibar and instead proceeded to Madagascar is a mystery.

However according to folklore a well respected wise old man by name of Karamshi Bhagat (holy man) lived in village of Kharaberaja. He persuaded Jetha Anand, and three other young men Gokalji also from village of Kharaberaja and two Sacchani brothers from village of Dhinchada to go across the sea and instructed them to settle down in country whose name started with 'M'. The four young men boarded an Arab dhow in year 1896. The dhow stopped at Mombasa. They went around the town but they did not like the town and proceeded onwards with their journey. The dhow finally stopped at island of Madagascar. They got down and decided to settle down there as the country's name started with 'M'. It is said that French Government gave a parcel of land to Jetha Anand and Gokalji who started farming. The two Sachhani brothers opened a small shop. Some of their descendants are still living in Madagascar.

Madagascar is an island located on the east coast of southern part of Africa. In those days Madagascar was known as the Land of Gold. Madagascar had settlements of Indians by the eighteenth century. The majority of these early settlers were Bohras from Jamnagar. The contacts between Madagascar and Jamnagar provided the knowledge, inducement and opportunity for Oshwals to leave for that far-away island. Most Oshwals in Madagascar were traders from the start, a few engaged in agriculture.

After hearing about the success of Jetha Anand who used to send news and write letters back home to his relatives giving detailed accounts of the land and the opportunities, more people thought of going abroad. The early pioneers

had heard about Africa from members of other communities in Navanagar especially Khojas, Bhatiyas, Memons, and seafaring castes. However they preferred to go to Kenya. As Kenya, like India was also part of the British Empire people thought that they would receive favorable treatment there.

Four courageous sons of the Halari Oshwal community, Hirji Kara from Moti Rafudal, Popat Vershi from Ambla, Devji Hirji and Nathoo Devji from Dhunia in 1899 A.D. left their homeland took the arduous journey by Arab dhow from Porbunder to East Africa to escape poverty. They landed in Mombasa after several weeks of sea voyage. As there were no hotels they probably either stayed in rest houses (Hindu dharamshala) or some kind person's house.

Hirj Kara came from a relatively wealthy family. His father Kara Nathoo Malde ran a business in Moti Rafudal and owned a farm, which he ran by employing hired hands. Kara Nathoo and his wife Panchiben were well respected by people and they addressed them as Kara Seth and Panchi Sethani. Kara Seth was kind and caring person and was concerned about the poverty that prevailed in Halari Visa Oshwal community. He heard about the great opportunities and good prospects available in Africa from the people of other communities who had migrated there. He felt that migration to East Africa could be a way to alleviate the poverty and better lead to a better life for his community. He invited and held a meeting of the leaders of Oshwal community at his home. He told them about the opportunities available in Africa and at the same told them about his decision to send his eldest son Hirji to East Africa. The people who attended the meeting thought that this was an excellent suggestion and promised him that they would seriously consider about it. This apparently prompted the four youths from Halari Visa Oshwal community to go to East Africa. It is also said that Khojas from the village of Hirji Kara who had already settled down in East Africa persuaded him to come.

Hirji Kara's mother Panchi Sethani was a very strong woman. Even men were afraid of her. She preferred men's company rather than women. She would keep a handful of hand made cigarettes (bidis), smoke and share them with the men. Even bandits use to come to her house for dinner and pay her for the food. Panchi Sethani was very smart. She would extract information about the place and time they were planning to raid. She would then pass that information on to that particular village and foil their attack. That is the kind of courage Hirji inherited.

Hirji Kara decided to stay in Mombasa. In the beginning he worked as a hired person in a shop owned by a Lohana. In 1900 A.D. his wife Kankuben joined him in Mombasa. She was the first Halari Visa Oshwal woman to go to Kenya. After saving enough money he opened his own business firm of Hirji Kara & Co. in 1901 in Mombasa. Same year later he was instrumental in forming the Mombasa Indian Association. In 1902 Ratilal their son was born the first Halari Visa Oshwal baby boy to be born in East Africa.

Devji Hirji and Popat Vershi, the other two, decided to go to Nairobi. Nairobi is around three hundred miles in the interior, the British Government wanted to make it the capital of the colony. At that time, even though there were railroad tracks, there were no regular trains going to Nairobi. They decided to hitch hike to Nairobi. They would hitch a ride on a railroad trolley during daylight and at dusk spend the night in the tents or in the trolley in the company of railroad workers. In this way they reached Nairobi after about a month. Popatlal Vershi passed away six months latter of an unknown illness.

Devji Hirji took a job in a provision shop run by a Hindu Punjabi Mr. Lala Prasad. He worked there for six months. As soon as he had saved enough money he opened his own provision shop. This was the first private business started by a Halari Oshwal in Nairobi. He was very actively involved in the community. He was elected as the first

president of the Oshwal Association of Nairobi in 1916 A.D.

Keshavji Ramji of the village of Kansumara did not like working on a farm back in his village. He wanted to be a businessman. He ran away from home and went to Mumbai. He did not like it there so he boarded a ship going to Madagascar. The ship stopped at Mombasa and there he met Hirji Kara who persuaded him to stay in Mombasa. After a short while he went to Nairobi where he worked as a clerk in the firm of Ismaili Jivanji's Nairobi branch for wages of twenty-five shillings a month. In 1905 AD he opened his own business firm and named it Meghji Ladha & Co. Keshavji Ramji was a very kind person and a leader of not only of the Halari Oshwal community but also of the whole Gujarati community.

He was the first person to provide Oshwals living in East Africa a community status. In 1910 A.D. he laid the foundation of the Cutchhi Gujarati Hindu Union. In 1916 A.D. he was the President of the Mombasa Oshwal Rest House Fund. Kanji Meghji Shah, Keshavji Parbat and other leaders were involved in setting up the Rest House Fund. In 1905 A.D., Keshavji Parbat was probably the first person to travel on foot from Nairobi to Fort Hall (Muranga) in two and half days as there were no transport facilities such as a railway, motorcar or oxcarts.

Both the firms of Hirji Kara and Meghji Ladha & Co. flourished and expanded very fast, opening branches in other parts of Kenya. Both of these firms gained an international reputation as being honest and reliable.

CHAPTER 22

EARLY SETTLEMENT IN EAST AFRICA

In Kenya the foreign migration started from the eleventh century A.D. and was limited to the coastal area. Arabs came first in the eleventh century, followed by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century and the English in the nineteenth century.

The news of the first four pioneers' success spread fast all over Halar and more people decided to follow their path. In the beginning only a handful came. The numbers then went on increasing. Thus the honor of opening the doors of East Africa to Halari Visa Oshwal community goes to these four pioneers. The single most important source of information about the opportunities in Africa was word of mouth; also regular visits home, letters written home and encouragement to others to come.

The early settlers were either illiterate or had very little education. Most of them had worked as farm hands back home. They were used to hard work and long hours. Most of them chose to work as laborers. Since a lot of development was going on and there was need of more housing many worked in the construction industry as either masons or bricklayers. As the catering business was booming many opened the restaurants. Some opened small shops selling groceries and clothing. They took jobs in any type of work and were not ashamed of it.

Many even came with a contract of three years of employment with the government. The wages were usually 150-225 rupees for the entire period of stay. This amounted to 50-75 rupees a year. As they lived frugally and had no or very little time for entertainment, expenses

were few. They were able to save enough to send money back home to the family.

From Mombasa the railway line had reached Nairobi. The central offices of the government were moved to Nairobi, which was made the capital. A lot of construction had begun in Nairobi. From Mombasa many moved to Nairobi, as the opportunities were even better. The population in Nairobi was increasing much more rapidly than in other places.

The news of similar opportunities in Mwanza, Tanganyika was received, therefore many people moved there.

The Oshwals in the early period mainly settled down in Mombasa, Mwanza and Nairobi. The largest numbers settled in Nairobi, then Mombasa and some in Mwanza. After opening small private businesses, many called for their family members and permanent settlement thus began in East Africa.

As time passed better educated people started coming. With good references and contacts they were able to procure better jobs as clerks and accountants in bigger and wealthier firms run by Indian Muslims. Because of clean, hard and honest work they were given more and more responsibilities and received better salaries. But most desired to be independent, therefore after acquiring enough experience they started their own small businesses.

Many people followed their example. Soon there were quite a few businesses flourishing in Mombasa and Nairobi. The community started gaining a foothold in small businesses. More and more people started coming to East Africa. They were given jobs, helped financially and were encouraged to open their own businesses.

The Oshwal flow increased during the 1920s A.D. and especially 1930s A.D. The big firms would recruit people as the need arose. Meghji Ladha & Co., with branches in Mombasa, Nairobi and fifteen other places in East Africa by 1920 A.D., willingly accommodated free of charge anyone coming from India and provided food and lodging free of charge until employment was found. Almost every Oshwal family had a close relative overseas. Some who migrated were very young 12 or 13 years old.

The main businesses of Oshwals were provision and clothing shops. The main industries owned by non-Oshwals were soda and ice factories, timber sawmills, and flourmills. Indians played a pivot role in opening the continent of Africa to the rest of the world.

CHAPTER 23

MOMBASA

There was a demand for skillful workers all the time. New smaller settlements were opening. Conditions in Halar were getting worse. The famine had created havoc (*Chapanio Dukad*). More people were fleeing the homeland. Many went to Mumbai, Karachi, and Ahmedabad to find work, because they were closer and it was less expensive to travel. But this did not completely alleviate the problems.

More and more people therefore started going across the ocean. Meanwhile the First World War had started (1914 A.D.). The businesses in East Africa were booming. There was an increased need of help in the businesses. Because of all these factors the population of Halari Oshwals was increasing day by day in East Africa. People started sponsoring their friends and relatives to come and join their businesses.

In those days even going to Mumbai was not easy. Imagine going to Africa, a strange land across the ocean. How difficult it must have been.

Sea Voyage: The early settlers traveled by Arab dhows. The journey was very arduous and took months to reach the destination. Later on most traveled by steamships. The journey was not a pleasure cruise either. Most people took their own cooking utensils; spices, grains and fresh food items as food on the steamer were too expensive for them. People would form small groups to cook. Some would bring cooked food, mostly dry, and share it with others. The sea was generally rough. Seasickness was very common. Fresh water was scant and was only used for drinking and cooking. For washing, bathing and

cleaning seawater was used. Very few personal items were allowed. If traveling by deck class one had to bring one's own bedding. The journey usually lasted ten to fifteen days.

Mombasa is an island, the gateway to Kenya. The original name of which was Kisiwa cha Mvita, which means 'Island of War'. The old port of Mombasa was a big square. Anchored in the harbor were mostly European sailing ships, Arab dhows and a few steamers. Mombasa was more like a town in India. Indian law was in effect. Indian currency and Indian postal stamps were in use. It was the center of business. The population was mostly Bohras, Khojas, Memons, Hindus, Jain Oshwals, Lohanas, Goans, Arabs, Omanis and Europeans. Hindus and Arabs mostly controlled the business. The houses were either made of mud or corrugated galvanized iron sheets. The streets were made of dirt, narrow and unpaved. There were no cement or tarmac roads.

The number of people traveling started increasing considerably. The population of Halari Oshwals was comparatively small in number. It was becoming difficult to host all the new comers. There was a rest house run by the Hindu Union. It was open to all. Many Halari Oshwals started taking advantage of the rest house for temporary shelter. But it was not sufficient.

In 1915 A.D., the first Oshwal gathering was held under the leadership of Keshavji Ramji in Nairobi and Hirji Kara in Mombasa. This was the beginning of an organized Oshwal community.

In 1916 A.D. the community leaders got together and made a decision to have an Oshwal guesthouse (*dharamshala*). A trust fund was created called the Dharamshala Trust Fund. A committee with Ramji Keshavji as chairman was formed to supervise the fund. People donated money all round. Four thousand rupees were

collected which was put into the trust fund. The amount was not enough to either buy or built a new facility. Therefore a house was rented and renovated to provide the facilities for the travelers.

After the war came to an end (1919 A.D.) the monetary system changed from the rupee to the florin and soon to the shilling. People made a lot of profit in the money exchange. The balance in the trust fund increased due to currency fluctuations to 22,000 shillings after deducting all the expenses. As Nairobi had become the center of the community, the trust fund was transferred to Nairobi and a new committee was formed.

Mahajanwadi: The rented rest house had to be vacated as the owner had some other plans. There was also the need for a bigger place as more and more travelers were coming through Mombasa. In July 1927 A.D., the Mombasa community bought an empty lot of two acres for 50,000 shillings. The amount was withdrawn from the trust fund without the knowledge of the Nairobi committee. Relations between two committees became tense. As a result of mediation a compromise was reached with the conditions that the money for the remaining expenses would have to be paid by the Mombasa committee and that the entire Oshwal community of Kenya should retain the ownership of the property. A new committee of three trustees was formed. It consisted of one member from Mombasa, one from Nairobi and one from Thika. The collection of the funds for the *mahajanwadi* (community center) did not go well in the immediate phases because of the arrogant attitude of the Mombasa committee who refused to abide by the conditions imposed on them. Many businesses in Mombasa, which were branches of Nairobi businesses, refused to donate money. In 1930 A.D. Mombasa community had planned to make improvements to an old building built of galvanized iron sheet and build a perimeter wall around the premises. To facilitate social functions and community feasts, plans were prepared to

build a kitchen, dining hall and stores and a sixteen room residential block. In spite of the strained relations, in 1935 A.D. the Mombasa committee started the construction of the project. However they did not have enough money to go further and the construction was halted. The majority of the community people on both sides were interested in reconciliation. Some prominent community leaders worked as mediators. After hard work and continuous negotiations the dispute was settled. There was peace and harmony between the two groups. It was one united community again. After three years of standstill, the first phase consisting of the kitchen, dining hall and stores and the first nine rooms in the residential block was completed with an interest-free loan and funds from community members and officially opened in August 1938. After the loan and funds borrowed from the community members in 1935 A.D. were repaid, there was a surplus to carry out more development activities including completion of the residential block. In December 1946 seven additional rooms in the residential block, a three-room basement and a front veranda (porch) encompassing the whole 16-room block were completed and opened for community use.

The 16-room residential block was not enough to meet the need of the community. It was decided to build a five-story building (Oshwal Mansion). In August 1952 the construction was started and the work was finished by January 1954.

To meet the need for additional social facilities, a new dining hall and an out-house was added. The construction was started in August 1955 and was finished by March 1956. Soon after completion of the new facilities, an extension on the old dining hall was started and completed by February 1957.

The Golden Jubilee of the *mahajanwadi* was celebrated on September 29, 1978. At that time, the community

honored the following three people for their long selfless service to the community: Govindji Velji Shah, Velji Gosar Shah, and Pethraj Dharamshi Shah. The Platinum Jubilee of the *mahajanwadi* was celebrated in 2002 A.D.

The Mombasa Oshwal community provided 200,000 shillings to the Mumbai Oshwal community for the *mahanjawadi* and 66,000 shillings for the Halar Disaster Relief Fund in 1962 A.D.

The community invested surplus funds in an income generating property on Moi Avenue. The Oshwal House was purchased for 760,000 shillings.

Young Oshwals wanted changes more in tune with the time. They formed an association called Oshwal *Yuvak Mandal* (youth association) in 1934 A.D. They even published a hand written newsletter titled *Oshwal Prakash*, which contained revolutionary articles. *Oshwal Yuvak Mandal* started its activities in mahajanwadi together with a library and an exercise room.

Mombasa Oshwal Academy: The Oshwal Education and Relief Board in collaboration with the leaders of the Mombasa Oshwal community formed a committee under the chairmanship of Somchand Ladha Gudhka to find a site for a secondary school and staff for it. A plot of land on the Narok was purchased and the foundation stone for the school was laid on October 15, 1967 and the construction was completed in 1969.

Since the government could not cope with the increasing demand for schools, the Mombasa Oshwal community asked for the Board's support to build a primary school. The Board passed the proposal. In 1984 construction of the Mombasa primary school was begun and it was completed in January 26, 1986.

Both the primary school and the secondary school were merged with the approval of Ministry of Education and the two schools became part of Oshwal Academy. The school progressed gradually under the wise leadership of several Oshwal school committees.

To meet the increasing demand for the classrooms, the Board is presently constructing a new school in the Nyali area of Mombasa at a cost of 250 million Kenya shillings (US \$ 3.3 million). Construction of the boundary wall was begun on April 28, 1996. The project is to build: primary wing, 34 classrooms, computer, biology, physics and chemistry laboratories, lecture theatre, music center, domestic science, humanities and audio visual workshops, library, multi-purpose hall, a nursery wing, a secondary wing, playing grounds and swimming pool. Approximately 32 million Kenya shillings have already been pledged for various projects by 2003.

Mombasa Oshwal Sports Complex: The young people of the Mombasa Oshwal community were asking for better sports facilities. After a long search to find a suitable place, the site of the old dining hall located in *mahajanwadi* was selected to build a two-story sports complex. The *Oshwal Yuvak Sangh* arranged the funding for the complex. The committee members of the OYS worked tirelessly to raise funds. In addition to organizing raffles, they arranged a charity cycle race from Mombasa to Nairobi.

The lots were drawn to select a person to perform the opening ceremony. Jivraj Dharamshi of Meru was the lucky winner. The opening ceremony took place on April 5, 1985. A one-week sports festival was arranged in conjunction with the opening ceremony. People from overseas and East Africa attended the festival. The cultural programs performed during the opening ceremony were so impressive that they were performed again in Nairobi on May 4, 1985 in the presence of Kenya's Vice-President at the time, Mr. Mwai Kibaki.

Oshwal Yuvak Sangh and *Mahila Mandal* (women's organization) are very active organizations and participate fully in all activities of the community.

The community started publication of a quarterly magazine *Oshwal Darshan* on March 29, 1983. Vaghji Velji Gudka has edited it since its inception.

The community had acquired a parcel of land off Nyerere Avenue in January 1992. In 1996 construction of swimming pool was started on this land, which was completed by 1997.

Health Services: In 1946 A.D., the monk Pujya (revered) Yati Shri Hemchandrajji arrived in Mombasa and he advised community leaders to start social projects, which would benefit the general public. Following his advice, the community opened a medical dispensary in mahajanwadi on December 26, 1946. This was fully staffed and treated as many as 500 patients a week, most of whom were Africans. Later, a maternity home was opened in 1954 A.D. using some rooms in the mahanjanwadi. In 1958 A.D. the community purchased land for a hospital and maternity home. The project failed as the city government refused to evict 36 squatters. Both the dispensary and maternity home were closed in 1969 A.D. as very few Oshwals were using the facilities and it was difficult to get staff to manage the facilities.

The Mombasa Oshwal community was the first Oshwal community in East Africa and probably in the world to start a health insurance plans for its members.

Commercial Activities: Being the gateway to Kenya and Uganda Mombasa was a very important seaport. Most of the Oshwals were in the import business importing mostly consumer goods for Kenyans and Ugandans. Oshwals began to branch out into industries in nineteen-sixties A.D. Prior to 1960 A.D., Oshwals owned two major

industrial undertakings, Kenya Aluminum owned by the Chandaria family and the Coastal Brick Works owned by the Kanji Meghji Malde family. Oshwals currently own more than 50 undertakings ranging from knitwear to blankets to footwear to textiles.

CHAPTER 24

NAIROBI

In 1900 A.D. there were only three streets in Nairobi: Government Road, Bazaar Street and River Road. The streets were unpaved, covered with dirt and during the rainy season there was mud all around. There were rows of shops on both sides of the streets. The shops were all alike. The walls and roofs were made up of corrugated galvanized iron sheet and floors were made of hardwood. Behind the shops were living quarters.

There were already many established businesses in Nairobi, most of which were owned by Ismailis and Bohras. The most prominent firms belonged to Valji Hirji, A. M. Jivanjee, Suleman Virji and Aliddina Vishram.

An Oshwal business was generally opened in partnership with relatives or friends. People worked very hard and long hours. The daily life of a person who owned a clothing shop started very early. Get up at six o'clock early in the morning, get ready and open the shop by eight and keep it open until six in the evening. Most shops not only sold clothes but also did the tailoring. The tailoring part was done at night. The men will do the tailoring and the women would sew the buttons and buttonholes. The work would go on probably until midnight. Even the older children would help. In a grocery business selling foodstuffs spices and likes, the life was even harder. The heavy bags of the grain weighing up to 200 lbs. had to be carried from one place to another. The grains had to be cleaned. Every one pitched in.

The living quarters were behind the shops. There would be one room that was used as living room, den, and bedroom and a kitchen, which was also used as the dining

room. Several families shared toilets and bathrooms. If there was a big family, the women would sleep in the rooms and the men would sleep in the shops.

In early days there were no gas or electric ranges, people used to make their own stoves out of empty metal cans. Charcoal and wood was used as fuel. Ash and earth were used to clean greasy pots and pans, as soap was expensive. Jute or sisal rope coir was used as a scouring pad. The water for bathing and washing was heated on the stoves.

Wheat, barley and millet were available as whole grain only mixed with dirt and tiny stones. The grain had to be cleaned by hand first. Rice had to be pounded with a wooden pestle in a large wooden mortar to remove the husks. They were then ground into flour manually with a stone hand mill (ghanti) by the women. Pulses such as lentils, moong beans, chickpeas, pigeon peas and the like, were also available as whole grain only and had to be split manually in the stone mill. Spices like coriander, cumin, turmeric and ginger powder were all ground finely at home. Turmeric and ginger roots were bought fresh, cleaned and dried in the sun before being ground. Chili powder was made from grounding dried red hot peppers. Because of these long hours people hardly had time for entertainment.

The woman of the house would get up at five o'clock in the morning and grind the whole grains (wheat, millet and barley) in the stone hand mill into the flour needed for the day's use. If a large quantity were needed two women would sit opposite to one another working on the hand mill. Sometimes even older children would sit down and help. The larger mill was used for grinding flour and the smaller version was used to split the peas, moong and so on to make daal.

The sanitation conditions were inadequate. There were no modern flushing toilets. Instead there were metal cans in the lavatories, which were emptied at night by the sanitation workers. There were open gutters in the streets. Because of poor sanitation, the rat population increased. The plague was endemic and the plague, which swept Nairobi in 1931 A.D., was worst. As there was hardly any treatment available many people died.

In those days Nairobi was surrounded by open land with wildlife roaming around freely and people often heard the roars of lions and the trumpeting of elephants in the night. An Indian by the name of Abdul Wahid had a private zoo. He had lions, cheetahs, elephants, giraffes, zebras, antelopes and many other animals. The elephants were taken out to the Nairobi River nearby for a bath and scrub every morning. There were sightings of lions and other wild life even as late as late the nineteen-forties.

As time passed, businesses started doing well. Many flourished so well in a short time that they even opened branches in different places. There were more people working. Therefore people had more time to spare. Because of business and social activities they were making new contacts and were exposed to new experiences. Because of free time new activities were begun. There were social get-togethers arranged from time to time. Celebrations of religious festivals were held. Life was getting better.

As the population went on increasing, education and a need for a community meeting place became a priority. In 1918 A.D. a society called *Shri Halari Visa Oshwal Gnan Vardhak Mandal* was founded under the chairman ship of Devji Hirji. The responsibilities of the society were to organize religious and social events. Two brothers, Fulchand Karamshi and Raichand Karamshi Shah played a leading role in the establishment of the society.

Most of the people who settled down here were either uneducated or less educated but were hungry to learn. An adult school was started in the evenings to teach Gujarati and English languages. The classes in the initial phase were conducted at various business places. Books were bought. As there was no communal place available, small libraries were established at various business places to keep the books. As the number of people went on increasing a small house was rented in 1925 A.D. opposite Jeevanji gardens (*Ranibaag*) on Mokhtar Dada Street. The library was moved there and the classes were held in this rented property. In spite of being busy with their personal businesses and jobs, there was no lack of volunteers to run the classes. Because the place was small, numbers had to be limited which was a disappointment for many. Community functions were generally held in large shops or warehouses.

As more people were settling down permanently the number of people in families was increasing and the children were growing up. A larger communal place was needed to hold communal dinners, social gatherings, religious activities and even marriages. To fulfill this dream a trust fund was established in Nairobi. The Nairobi and Thika community willingly donated money. An empty lot was bought in Canal Road from the firm of Messrs. Imtiazali with the help of Raishi Lakhamshi. The foundation stone was laid in 1926 A.D. and the work was completed in 1927 A.D. The place was named as *Jainshala*. It had a big hall with a small domed Jain temple at one side and several rooms in the back. The hall was used for evening classes for adults and social activities. A small part of the hall was used as library. One room in the back was used as a kitchen during small functions, but for large functions cooking was done in the back yard under the shade where several fireplaces were dug in the ground.

Youth League: As the younger generation was getting more educated, coming in contact with other communities

and was more in touch with things happening in the outside world a sense of revolt was rising in them. They were appalled by many old customs. They wanted to abolish child marriages, underage marriages, mismatch-marriages (marriages of young girls to old men), holding feasts after people died, and other customs. They wanted widows to be allowed to remarry. An organization called *Visa Oshwal Yuvak Mandal* was formed in Nairobi on February 1928.

The Youth league started many activities in Nairobi. Athletic activities were started on the grounds of Jainshala. A debating society was formed. A newsletter called *Agad Dhaso* (move forward) was started in 1929 A.D. under the editorship of Amratlal Raishi Shah. In the beginning it published handwritten articles due to lack of funds. To increase the distribution in wider areas, some of the members traveled 10 or 15 miles on foot. The articles were revolutionary written by young people. The older generation did not like it and made every effort to stop these activities even confining the leaders to their homes. In spite of all the obstacles the newsletter continued circulating for a year and a half but due to adverse circumstances it had to be stopped. But the spirit among the young people remained alive.

Eventually the first Yuvak Mandal died away and a vacuum was left behind. In 1935 A.D. a second young people's association was formed called the Jain Youth League. A monthly publication was also started called *Jyotsna* (moonlight). But due to lack of spirit neither the association nor the publication lasted very long.

The expansion of Settlement: Initially the settlement of Oshwal community was confined to Mombasa, Nairobi and a few in Mwanza, a small town near the shores of Lake Victoria. As railway extended to places like Thika, Kisumu, Nanyuki, Thomson Falls and others, the early settlers followed the railway, catered to the railway laborers, and started opening small businesses all over in

small and large places. In rural areas there were only one or two shops. The shopkeepers sold country produce, provisions, cheap textiles and other staple items. Later on the community expanded to Uganda and Tanganyika.

In Halar, as the Oshwals living in villages were mainly involved in farming and hard labor, there was hardly anyone involved in political activities. In East Africa as the Indian community was small there was close unity and friendship between different regional communities. After the end of the First World War the Oshwals diversified into different businesses. Many affluent businessmen started taking an active role in business as well as in political bodies. Some even got elected to executive committees and played leadership roles.

In 1924 A.D. the Indian Congress of East Africa held their convention in Mombasa under the chairmanship of Shrimati Sarojini Naidu. Leading Oshwal citizens attended the conference as official representatives. A resolution not to pay taxes was passed. Many Oshwals supported the resolution and stopped paying taxes. Some went to jail; their properties were confiscated and auctioned.

Thus the Oshwals played a major role directly or indirectly in the progress of the Indian Association, the Chamber of Commerce, and the East African Indian Congress. They also extended financial aid to the native Africans.

In East Africa educational facilities got better. The big towns had educational institutions up to high school level and small towns and villages up to primary level. In 1929 the first Oshwal youth to pass the London Matriculation examination at the first attempt was Amratlal Raishi Shah.

In 1939 A.D., the Second World War broke out and a strict blackout was imposed because of a possible threat of bombing from neighboring Somaliland. Trenches and

underground shelters were dug and at night there were mock air raid alarms.

In 1942 A.D. both Visa Oshwal Yuvak Mandal and Jain Youth League were dissolved and a new united organization was formed called Oshwal Youth League. In 1944 a monthly publication Jyotsna was started by Nairobi Youth League, it lasted for two years. The publication was restarted in 1949 A.D., and ran then for 15 years.

Nairobi Mahajanwadi: As the population increased and people started living in more developed residential areas like Ngara and Parklands, the community had the opportunity to buy four to five acres of land on Limuru Road near the City Park and schools. However, some people objected to having Community facilities far from residential areas in River Road and Bazaar Street. Therefore several prominent leaders went ahead and purchased the land in 1939 A.D. with their own money. After considerable dialogue the community purchased a three-acre piece of land from these individuals in 1940 A.D. Construction on this property had to be delayed until sufficient funds were available.

In 1946 A.D. the revered monk Yati Shri Hemchandraji came to Nairobi. His religious sermons were very impressive. Everyone respected and honored him. Due to his inspiration a decision was made to build a hall and start a nursery school on the Limuru Road property. A committee to collect funds was established. People donated money without any hesitation. A total of 557,815 shillings was collected. To meet the needs of the community it was decided to build general-purpose halls, offices and guest rooms. The foundation stone was laid. The construction of the hall was completed in good time. The opening ceremony was performed in 1949 A.D. In 1953 A.D. construction of a dining hall with a kitchen to meet the needs of community had been started at the

beginning of the year it was completed in a year's time at the expense of 225000 shillings.

The religious discourses of Yati Shri Hemchandraji also inspired the women-folk. With his encouragement and blessings the women formed their own separate organization in 1946 A.D. called Oshwal Mahila Mandal. The entire community gave them wholehearted support. They started many social and religious activities and made tremendous progress.

In 1956 A.D. a population census of the community in Nairobi was undertaken. The final count was 6270.

Boys' Boarding House in Nairobi: In East Africa the opportunities for education were much better than in India. The Government provided education. There were elementary schools almost every village; however high schools were available only in big towns like Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, Da-re-salaam, Kampala and Jinja. Therefore students living in smaller places had to move to one of these towns to pursue high school education. There were a few facilities provided by other communities but during the Second World War they were closed down because of financial burdens. Some students were able to stay with relatives. For a large number of students there was no place to go. The Board, to alleviate these problems, was able to rent a property owned by Shradhanand Brahmachariya Ashram in Nairobi and started a boarding house for boys on July 1, 1943 with 20 students.

As more and more students were applying, the rented place was not big enough to accept all. In 1945 A.D., during a conference in Mombasa, students of Nairobi Boarding House gave a display of gymnastics. Everyone was amazed and impressed by the skill the students had demonstrated. They all unanimously passed a resolution to build an independent, bigger boarding house for the

boys. A parcel of land of 5 1/2 acres with a house located on the corner of Mapaka Road and Second Avenue in Parklands area of Nairobi was purchased. The building was renovated and opened on April 24, 1946. There was need for more space as more students from upcountry were coming to Nairobi for secondary school education. A decision to build a new building for the boarding house was made. The foundation stone of the new building was laid on November 26, 1961 and the new boarding house was opened on February 17, 1963. As the number of Oshwals living in rural areas without secondary schools went down in the nineteen-seventies, the boarders were moved into the renovated old boarding house and the present building was converted into a Jain Primary School. However, once again, in the nineteen-nineties the demand for accommodation by Oshwal students went up and a new building has been built adjacent to the existing building. The new Oshwal Boys' Boarding House was opened on May 16, 1993. The new facilities are very modern and they include a swimming pool, which took two years to finish and was officially opened on May 1, 1995.

Nairobi Girls Hostel: More and more attention was being paid towards girls' education. A plan to build a hostel for girls from upcountry was made. The proposal to build a hostel for girls was first put forward in 1947 A.D., when it got a mixed reception. After much discussion a resolution was passed to build a hostel for girls. But nothing happened until 1956 A.D. In 1957 A.D. the resolution was put into action. A building was rented in 1958 A.D. and the hostel was opened with 17 boarders. Soon it became too small to handle the applicants and an independent building was built. The dream came true on January 1, 1960. The foundation stone was laid for the building on land located on Second Avenue Parklands. January 5, 1961 will be remembered as a milestone for girls' education in the Oshwal community. The hostel was officially opened on January 16, 1961.

Nursery School: There were hardly any facilities available for pre-school level care. There was only one nursery school run by Cutchhy Gujarati Hindu Union. The numbers of places was limited because of space and lack of qualified staff. As there were enough places in the Oshwal community center a decision was made to open a nursery school. The nursery school was started in the month of September 1951 in mahajanwadi. Over the years the number of pre-school age children increased considerably. Therefore it was decided to build a new modern nursery school to be located at Wambugu Road on community property. The new school was opened in 1968 A.D.

Primary School in Nairobi: In the past community children had encountered lot of problems in getting proper education. It was the intention of community leaders that no one should be left out of getting a proper education. Education was a key to success. A primary school was started in 1952 A.D. in mahajanwadi. Meanwhile continued efforts to get land for the school from the government proved fruitful. The community was successful in getting a parcel of land in Mapaka Road. The foundation stone of the primary school at Mapaka Road was laid in 1956 A.D. by Mr. O. W. F. Coats, then the Minister of Education, Labour and Lands. The school was moved from mahajanwadi and classes were begun in April 1958 with a capacity of 1500 students. The official opening ceremony took place on July 31, 1958 by Sir Evelyn Baring then Governor of Kenya. A year later the construction of seven more classrooms, the library and the assembly hall was completed. As demand increased an extension of the existing facility and a swimming pool were added.

Secondary Girls' School: The hunger for education had increased in the entire community. To make sure that even the girls got enough education, secondary school classes were started in 1959 A.D. in mahajanwadi. A parcel of land of two acres was purchased on Wambugu Road at the cost of one hundred and fifty thousand shillings for

the purpose of building a girls secondary school. The construction of the school building was started in 1961 A.D. and completed in 1963 A.D. A swimming pool was added in 1975 A.D.

Oshwal High School: In Kenya free education was provided by the Government. The primary school comprised grades 1 to 7 and secondary school grades 8 to 11 or Form I through IV. To qualify to enter a secondary school, students had to pass a special examination, which was difficult. Only one attempt was allowed. The students who failed had to quit school. Many Oshwal children were affected by this rule. The Board's five-year development approved in 1959 included construction of a boys' secondary school to give a second chance to children of the Oshwal community. Kanji Meghji Malde laid the foundation stone on November 26, 1961 and the school was officially declared open February 17, 1963. The school is located on First Avenue Parklands behind the boys' boarding house. It started with an enrolment of 40 students. In the past 40 years it has made terrific progress and at present it is considered one of the best schools in Kenya. It has facilities to teach up to Form VI or A levels (Junior College). Additional classrooms, an administration block and a theater were added in 1997. From September 2003, girls are admitted to the school.

Oshwal College: In 1992 A.D., a humble beginning of Oshwal College for advanced studies took place by starting evening classes in the Oshwal high school with seven students. In the same year daytime classes were also started at Oshwal high school and the college management was separated from Oshwal high school in view of the increased number of students who now totaled over 100. In 1994 A.D., Oshwal College moved out of Oshwal high school premises to a rented 3-story building at Ken-India Business Park on Westlands Road. Currently Oshwal College has a student population for both day and evening classes of nearly 700 and the curriculum includes the

following courses: U.K. based: Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), Association of Business Executives (ABE), The Institute of the Management Information Systems (IMIS); and Kenya-based Professional Banking Course (KNEC) and computer software.

Nairobi Oshwal Sports Facilities: The community used to own a sports ground off the present Uhuru Highway but in late 1950 A.D., the government took it over to make room for Uhuru Highway. In exchange, the government gave land for sports facilities on Thika Road. To cater for the demand of sports among young people, it was decided to build a modern sport complex on this land. The community received a major donation from the Meghji Pethraj Charitable Trust and the foundation stone for a sports pavilion was laid on July 17, 1961. The pavilion was opened on July 22, 1962. The facilities did not become popular with Oshwals, as the distance from the center of Nairobi was considerable. The facilities were eventually sold. Later, the community built a swimming pool on the Wambugu Road. Once again, the young people lobbied for a sports center. It was decided to build a large sport complex next to the existing swimming pool on the Wambugu Road near other Oshwal-owned facilities. The foundation stone of the complex was laid on April 25, 1982. The work of the sport center was completed within a year. The center was opened on May 22, 1983.

Oshwal Center: As the number of Oshwals increased, there was a need for larger and better facilities for social functions with ample parking. After a long search for suitable land near the city, the government gave 13 1/2 acres of land located on Ring Road in the Westland area in 1985 A.D. The land had to be filled to level the ground. The river, passing through the land, had to be canalized and covered. A proper system to drain the water had to be installed. The paved access and internal roads had to be built. To enclose the compound for privacy a wall of

stone around the boundary had to be built. Two main gates with decorated pillars had to be installed. All this work needed a lot of money. People of the community donated money willingly and generously. Within one and half months the money for the decorated pillars and the gates was collected. It was decided to build the complex in two phases. The foundation stone for the first phase of the Oshwal Center was laid on Sunday January 31, 1988. The work on phase one was completed in 1989 A.D. In 1995 A.D. on the auspicious day of Dhan Terus (day of worship of Lakshmi, goddess of wealth), (October 22, 1995) the foundation stones for four main halls, kitchens, a theater, and other facilities were laid. The construction of all the facilities was successfully completed in 2002 A.D. and the Center was officially opened with grand celebrations on March 31, 2002. The four dining and wedding halls have been named after the four major donors. This is the biggest and most prestigious administrative and social complex ever built by a community.

CHAPTER 25

FAMINE IN HALAR

In 1936 A.D. due to drought and failure of harvest a killer famine spread all over India. The state of Saurashtra was affected worst. For several consecutive seasons in many parts of India including Halar there was very little rainfall. The rivers, wells and even some lakes had completely dried up. There was no harvest. There was not enough food for the people and domestic animals. The buffalos, cows and oxen were dying. Many people did not have enough to eat. The land could not be ploughed. Unemployment went up as the businesses went down. Farmers could not meet payments on borrowed money. Poverty and hunger was evident all over.

The news of the famine reached East Africa. As most of the Oshwals had gone through a similar experience in the past they understood the plight, which their fellow brothers were going through in Halar. They had nothing but sympathy for them. As this time the community was financially in a better position a desire to do something was in everyone's mind. The Nairobi community accepted the challenge. Meghji Pethraj Shah took the initiative and called an emergency meeting, which was held on the premises of the firm of Premchand Raichand & Co. The people in attendance included Premchand Vrajpal Shah, Bharmal Raishi, Popatlal Karman, Vershi Mepa, Somchand Meghji, Hemchand Meghji, Maganlal Popat Chandaria, Virji Narshi, Amratlal Bharmal and other community leaders, unanimous decision was made to provide aid to the people of Halar. A committee was formed under the name *Halari Visa Oshwal Mahajan Mandal*. Meghji Pethraj was elected as the president and a famine relief fund was established. Every one donated money willingly and generously. An amount of 175000 shillings was collected in a short period

of time. The only community who absolutely refused to participate and did not donate any money in this time of need of their own people was the Oshwal community of Mombasa. The reason was not because they were financially not well off, but because of strained relations with the Nairobi community concerning the Mombasa mahajanwadi. Thus they brought shame on themselves. This was the first time the community was able to provide relief to their motherland Halar. Before that they always had to depend on others. This marked the beginning of the integration of different Oshwal settlements in Kenya.

Millet is a staple diet for the people of the Oshwal community back in Halar. In that year there was a good yield from the millet crop in Kenya, with a surplus. For immediate relief a decision was made to ship millet to Halar. Even though there were strict export regulations, knowing the situation the government officers gave permission and millet was shipped to Halar. It was distributed to all the needy families.

For financial aid and long term relief a special committee was formed in Jamnagar. The committee members visited all the villages in Halar and talked to the leader of each village and asked each one of them to make lists of people in need of help and the amount of financial help they needed. According to the list money and other necessities were distributed to the needy families. Because of timely relief the people were able to face the disaster without much loss. The Halari people were thus spared from starvation, financial loss and further loss of domestic animals.

CHAPTER 26

ACTIVITIES IN OTHER EAST AFRICAN CENTERS

The settlement in East Africa of the Oshwal community is wide spread. Wherever there are a sufficient number of families the community has an official organization. The big centers like Nakuru, Kisumu, Kitale, Eldoret, Fort Hall, Nyeri, Moshi, Arusha and others, have built communal centers with banquet facilities. Some even have religious shrines or temples.

Thika: Thika is located around thirty miles away from Nairobi. Settlement started in 1910 A.D. As the railway was built between Nairobi and Thika it also became a major center of our settlement, and it has a very active community. After the First World War there was a substantial increase in the Oshwal population. Therefore an official organization was formed in 1934. Meghji Kanji Bid was elected the first president. A plot of one-acre land for a community hall was acquired in 1933. Oshwals contributed generously for the construction cost.

The Jain Youth League was founded on April 1, 1941. The Jain Youth League started a lottery, which became very successful all over East Africa. The money collected was used for aid for poor people. Two rooms donated by Messrs' Vershi Devshi and Premchand Vrajpal in the hospital were reserved for the use of community. The annual expenses of these rooms were paid from the income generated from a lottery. Thika will go down in history for its unique Shah Free Eye Clinic project that was started in 1980 A.D. This noble humanitarian undertaking has become famous amongst all the people in Kenya. Many other organizations have followed the example set by the Oshwals and the

Jain Youth League. Free eye examinations, treatment to preserve better eyesight, surgery and other necessary procedures are done here for poor people. The full support to this project to keep it running also comes from Nairobi, Muranga (Fort Hall) and other Oshwal Communities. Nine or ten-day camps are conducted every year. Doctors and other medical support staff from India have been running these camps diligently up to the present. By the year 2003 A.D., over 220,000 patients have been screened, over 12,000 patients have been operated upon, over 45,000 reading glasses dispensed, 1,250 lenses implanted and 100 hearing aids have been provided.

In 1953 A.D. additional land for the mahajanwadi was obtained. In 1956 A.D. construction of a kitchen, dining hall and store area was started and completed in 1957 A.D.

During the 1962 A.D. Oshwal Education and Relief Board's annual meeting held in Thika, Bharmal Kanji, then President of the Thika Community, donated one hundred thousand shillings for a girls hostel on behalf of the Jain Youth League.

In June 1997 A.D. construction of a large prayer hall, guest rooms, an office block, two residential blocks, a kitchen and store was started and completed in November 1997.

Nakuru: Settlement in Nakuru started in 1913 A.D. The first Oshwal business was a soda water factory. Nakuru being in the center of rich agricultural highland was becoming an important market town for nearby large and small farms. This created a demand for consumer goods and attracted several businesses. Also there were good education facilities. Education up to high school was available. Until 1951 A.D. Hemraj Hadha Shah was chairman of the Oshwal Community. After Kenya became independent in 1963 A.D. many changes took place. There

was a mass exodus of people because of political unrest and government policies to encourage Africanisation. In 1967 A.D. the Lalji Nangpar group bought the blanket manufacturing plant and moved to Nakuru. From then on the Oshwal population in Nakuru started increasing, as Laljibhai was a very influential person and helped people get licenses and immigration permits.

In 1974 A.D. construction of a mahajanwadi and Jain temple was started on a plot located on Odinga Avenue. In 1976 A.D. Laljibhai performed the opening ceremony of the mahajanwadi and installation ceremony of the image in the temple. In 1978 a library was started.

From 1988 to 1990 A.D. the Nakuru community took the lead in project planning, initiation, and administration of a historic medical relief scheme for Oshwals living up-country. The scheme has been a blessing for many needy families. Unity, brotherhood and vision of our leaders have made progress possible so far.

Lalji Nangpar Academy: In 1990 A.D. a decision was taken to build a school complex in Nakuru in honor and memory of the great philanthropist Lalji Nangpar. A nursery school had been completed earlier primary school complex was added in 1992 A.D. A sport complex, which included a swimming pool, volleyball and tennis courts, were also added in 1994 A.D. An auditorium was added in 1996 A.D. and a secondary school in 1997 A.D.

Cabernet Visa Oshwal Primary School: At the request of the then president Arap Moi, the Board decided to build a primary school in Cabernet for the native Africans. Vaghji Nangpar Shah laid the foundation stone on April 13, 1986. The Primary School at Cabernet project was completed in 1988 A.D. The ceremony to donate the school to the government took place on September 29 1988. The chief guest for this occasion was Mr. B. K. Kipkulei, the Permanent Secretary of Department of Education. Mr.

Philemon K. Chelagate, the chairman of the town council of Cabernet accepted the school on behalf of the town.

Kisumu: Devchand Khimchand Kachra Gudhka of Navagam was the first Oshwal to settle in Kisumu. In 1924 A.D, Devchandbhai joined the Wali Hasan Company in Kisumu as an accountant. In 1925 A.D., he left the employment and started his own shop in Kisumu. He helped any new Oshwals who came to Kisumu to find a job or start a business. In 1930 A.D., Devchandbhai set up the first Oshwal business in Kisi.

In 1931 A.D., by the efforts of Fulchand Keshavji and Devchand Khimchand the *Visa Oshwal Jain Community Mandal* of Kisumu was started. The name was changed to Visa Oshwal Community in 1944 A.D. Devchandbhai was active in volunteer work for society and was an executive committee member of several political, business and educational associations in Kisumu.

A piece of land to build a mahajanwadi was acquired in 1948 A.D. The construction work on the community hall for the mahajanwadi was started in 1951 and the hall was opened in 1952 A.D. About 350 Oshwals live in Kisumu most of whom are industrialists and businessmen.

The Kisumu Oshwal community was always desirous of having a domed temple, which was built in a record time of one year and was officially opened on December 12, 2003.

Nyeri: Meghji Rupshi Dodhia of Navagam was a very active in volunteer work for the community. Meghjbhai was a very generous donor to the Visa Oshwal community mahajanwadi in Nyeri, which has a small Jain temple (*ghar-derasar*). The mahajanwadi was officially opened in 1952 A.D. Meghjbhai also made generous donations to several health, educational and religious organizations. He provided financial support for building an Asian wing

at the Nyeri General Hospital. The wing is named after him, Meghji Rupshi Ward.

Fort Hall (Muranga): Oshwals came to Fort Hall in the year from 1910 A.D. and included Premchand Vrajpal Shah. The construction of the mahajanwadi was begun in 1950 A.D. and the building was officially opened soon after. One of the most prominent volunteer workers for the community, R.L.Shah, comes from this place. In February 23, 1996, the late Vidhu Ramji family (Represented by Amubhai and Bachubhai of Nairobi's famous Sarit Center) donated Vidhu Ramji Academy to the people of Fort Hall. This academy was built at a cost of 10 million shillings to teach 200 students from nursery, primary and secondary school levels.

Eldoret: The first Oshwal to settle in Eldoret was Mohanlal Karamshi of Dabasang. He came here in 1926 A.D. As the population started increasing, a building of the Mahajanwadi was constructed and opened in 1963 as a result of untiring efforts of Vaghji Nagpar and several other leaders. One of the large knitwear factories called Ken-Knitwear owned by Oshwals is here.

Limuru: Bhagwanji Hansraj Shah was the first Oshwal to settle in Limuru.

Kitale: The first Oshwal to settle in Kitale was Somchand Keshavji in 1926 A.D. Shri Visa Oshwal Community was established in 1934 A.D. In 1949 A.D., land for a Mahajanwadi was purchased and a nursery school was opened in 1951 A.D. The foundation stone laying ceremony for the new mahajanwadi building was performed on May 28, 1997.

Arusha: Oshwal settlement here started in 1932 A.D. In 1938 A.D., *Halari Visa Oshwal Mitra Mandal* was established. In 1960 A.D. the Shri Visa Oshwal Community was formed and in 1974 A.D. a building was purchased to run social, religious and sports activities. But the number

of Oshwals has been declining steadily and according to the 1998 A.D. census there were only eighteen Oshwal families.

Moshi: Oshwals came to settle here in 1932 A.D. soon after the first Oshwal settled in Arusha. In 1941 A.D., Shri Halari Visa Oshwal Community was formed and land was purchased to build a mahajanwadi. The mahajanwadi has a temple, a library and facilities for social, religious, sporting and other activities. Just as in Arusha, the Oshwal population has been declining steadily and according to the 1998 A.D. census; there were forty-nine families.

Building bridges of communication and understanding will enrich our heritage and ensure strong bonds of brotherhood. Unity is the key to our continued progress and survival as one close-knit community based on ideals of Jainism. Mahavir showed us that the purpose of life is to create, to heal, to inspire, to bring lasting happiness and peace to each and every living being on planet Earth. Following these principles the Oshwals from various centers in East Africa have contributed to the overall progress and prosperity of their adopted land.

CHAPTER 27

ACTIVITIES IN INDIA

Jamnagar

In Jamnagar young people, encouraged by youth activities in East Africa, formed an association called *Visa Oshwal Yuvak Mitra Mandal*. They were also much concerned to change the old customs of child marriage, mis-match marriages (old men marrying young girls), selling girls for marriages (*kanya vikray*), and so on. The movement started bringing about changes slowly but surely.

Jamnagar was a main stop for travelers. The number of travelers was increasing but there were no facilities for them to stay. The *Yuvak Mandal* rented two rooms outside Khambhalia Gate, which was used as a rest house for travelers. The villagers had no or very little excess to health care system. A small fund was collected and an agreement was made with Irving Hospital to provide health care to sick people, which became very successful.

Mahajanwadi: The hard work of *Yuvak Mandal* paid up. The attitude of the community leaders changed. A generous gentleman Ratanshi Rajpal of Dhinchada, who has a successful business in Arvi, Madhya Pradesh, was impressed and pledged a donation of a thousand Rupees towards the project for a rest house for travelers. They were so much encouraged that they went around and got pledges of seven to eight thousand more rupees. This was still not enough. Meanwhile an active community leader from Mombasa, Kanji Meghji Malde, of the village of Changa, was visiting Jamnagar with his family for personal business. He sought accommodation in Cutchhi Rest House. He was refused as the caretaker was given specific instructions not to give accommodations to Halari

Oshwals. He therefore stayed in the rooms rented by Yuvak Mandal. The leaders of Yuvak mandal approached him and briefed him about their activities and future goals. Kanjibhai was impressed and promised to help them. Even though he had completed his personal business, he stayed longer. He traveled from one village to another, house-to-house and person-to-person and collected substantial funds for the project. He became a hero of the Oshwal community of Halar. The property was bought for the rest house.

Now Jamnagar has become a major business and industrial center. Because of its strategic position it is a major center for all Indian armed forces units. It has one of the most attractive crematorium grounds with a beautiful garden. There are many colleges and a medical center thanks to the generosity of the Halari Oshwals.

Jamnagar Boys' Boarding House: The majority of people in Halar lived in villages. They were either farmers or farm hands. Most of the villages did not have schools. In early days very few felt the need for education even though some villages had schools up to primary level. Therefore people had very little or no education. But as time passed, more and more people started leaving the villages to get jobs. But to get better jobs education was necessary. Therefore many youths would walk miles to other villages to get education. To alleviate that problem, the government opened schools in more villages. Some schools even introduced the teaching of the English language.

But to get high school diploma the students had to go to Jamnagar. This was not easy as there were no facilities for them to have a place to live or eat in Jamnagar. A few who had relatives would stay with them others were helpless. Most other communities had boarding houses for their students. Halari Oshwal students were not admitted in those boarding houses.

There was a kindhearted gentleman living in Jamnagar Shri Samji Bhai of the Vanik community, who opened his house and took some Halari students to stay with him. In spite of all these obstacles a young man in 1925 A.D. passed the matriculation examination, which was an inspiration for many more.

The famine had come to an end. There was adequate rain. People had a good harvest. Less and less money was being spent from the relief fund. A substantial amount of money was left in the balance. The Nairobi committee in charge of the relief fund, after much discussion and with the full support from the community leaders, decided to use the leftover money to provide facilities for boys from villages to pursue high school education in Jamnagar. In February 1938 a property was rented for a boarding house in Jamnagar and it was opened with five students. The number of boarders increased to eleven within a year. The committee members worked very hard to make it successful. The fruits of their hard work were reaped in a few years.

The administration of the boarding was done under the guidance of the Nairobi community association until 1941. As soon as the Board was formed the administration of running the boarding was handed over to the Board.

As more and more students were applying to stay in the boarding house a bigger place was needed. The first project the Board handled was building a new boys' boarding house in Jamnagar. An acre of land was bought in Digviay Plots for the boarding house. In the initial phase it was decided to build a building, which could house one hundred students. To meet the financial obligations a general fund was established. The members of the committee worked continuously for two months. They traveled extensively and visited fifty to sixty places. Everywhere they were received with open arms and a tremendous sense of pride. People willingly and

generously pledged the donations. A total of 300000 shillings was collected. This resulted in a solid strong foundation for the Halari community in the education field. Meghji Pethraj Shah laid the foundation stone of the building on February 27, 1941 with the blessings of the ruler of Navanagar State, Jam Digvijay Sinhji. There were many prominent people of the community present during the ceremony. An attractive single storey building was built with a beautiful garden in the front. The foundations were made strong enough for a future second storey extension to be added. The first most auspicious occasion handled by the Board was the opening ceremony of the Jamnagar boys' boarding house. No less a person than the ruler of Navanagar State, Jam Digvijay Sinhji performed the opening ceremony on April 27, 1942. The Navanagar ruler appreciated very much the efforts put in by the Halari community living abroad towards the building of the boarding house.

Over the years, as the boys' boarding house did not have enough space. A decision was made to build a new bigger boys' boarding house on a plot located on Saat Rasta that was purchased in 1956 A.D. and to convert the existing boys' boarding house (in Digvijay Plot) into a girls' hostel. Premji Parbat Karamshi and Bharmal Vaja Virani of Dabasang donated the cost of land for the new boarding house. Bharmal Raishi Haria laid the foundation stone for the new boys' boarding house on April 3, 1962. Construction was completed in March 1963.

The students who stayed in the boarding house and pursued higher education became some of the leading citizens at home and abroad. They never forgot the place, which helped them achieve their goal.

Jamnagar Girls' Hostel: Just as the importance of girls' education was realized in East Africa, in India also people were realizing the importance of girls' education. An

existing boys' boarding house was converted into a girls' hostel.

Jamnagar Halari Visa Oshwal Vidyalay: Ramji Anand Shah on January 26 1993 performed the opening ceremony of ground floor and Rameshchandra Harakhchand Dodhia performed the opening ceremony of the first floor on the same day. It has facilities for a primary school and a high school with a total capacity of 2500 students.

Oshwal Education Trust: To meet the demand for a good educational institution with English as the medium of instruction in Jamnagar, Lakhamshi Govindji Haria gave a donation of 1,100,000 rupees. A charitable trust known as the Oshwal Education Trust was registered on March 14, 1986.

On December 4, 1981 a kindergarten school was started in temporary facilities. A new building was built in June 1986 to provide education from kindergarten to high school level in the L.G. Haria School. The first year enrolment was 440 students. At present the enrolment is 1800 students.

To cater for college level education the Trust established Shri G.H.Gosrani Commerce and Shri D.D.Nagda B.B.A. College in June 1998, in Jamnagar. An MBA program has been started in the year 2000 in the Shri Jaysukhlal Vadhar Institute of Management Studies and Shri Bipin T. Vadhar College of Management. On February 27, 2001, a new building for the college level classes was opened. There are plans to build more support facilities such as a sport complex, theater and other facilities.

Jamnagar Oshwal International Center: A community center with accommodation for travelers and full facilities for social and religious activities was completed in 1994

A.D. The center is located on a large piece of land (24 acres) on Saat Rasta, which was donated to the Oshwal Shikshan ane Rahat Sangh (Education and Relief Organization). The Oshwal Center has two community halls and a guesthouse.

Mumbai (Bombay)

During the drought of 1895-1896 A.D. and the famine of 1899-1901 A.D., many Oshwals from Halar went to Mumbai because of the rapid expansion of commerce and industry that had started in the eighteen-eighties.

More and more people started settling down in Mumbai. Most opened small shops selling grains, spices, edible oils and other food items. The first Oshwal from Halar to settle in Mumbai was Devshi Jivraj Gudka from Navagam. In 1933 A.D., Gulabchand Meghji of Dabasang was the first to start an export and import business in Mumbai. The firm was named Premchand Gulabchand & Co. With hard work and honesty it soon gained a good reputation. Not only was he a good businessman but also a good writer and he had a great desire to do something for the community. He therefore started a news letter called Oshwal Abhuday in 1934 A.D., and made his younger brother, Liladhar, the editor. They wrote revolutionary articles, which brought about a social awakening among the Oshwal community of Mumbai. As usual they also had to face a lot of opposition and the publication did not last very long. He tried syndicating with a Cutchhi publication. That also failed.

As time passed some people started settling down in Mumbai. They saved enough money, bought small shops and started their own businesses. They asked family members in Halar to come and stay with them. Oshwals in Mumbai have made great progress. A large number are involved in export, import and manufacturing

industries. The more educated are in Government services and professional vocations such as medicine, engineering, and the like. When the conditions in East Africa became difficult after the countries got their independence, many Oshwals went back to India and some of them settled down in Mumbai and started industries and general trading.

Mumbai Mahajanwadi: As Mumbai was the gateway for travelers going to and fro from East Africa a search for a rest house was started. Volunteers would go to the port to meet travelers and take them to the rest house also to take others to their ship. In 1939 A.D. an association was formed called the Halari Visa Oshwal Association under the chairmanship of Govindji Shamji Dodhia of the village of Khara Beraja.

There were community houses already in existence in Nairobi, Mombasa, Thika and Jamnagar. As the traffic of travelers was increasing considerably from Mumbai and also more people were coming to Mumbai to settle down, a decision was made to acquire a community house in Mumbai. A fund was established. Most people donated money generously. As this was not sufficient to buy a property, a building with four rooms located in Dadar was rented.

As the population as well as traffic of travelers was increasing, the rented place was not enough to accommodate them or to hold social functions. In 1951 A.D. a property was bought on Ranade Road, Dadar. But due to unforeseen circumstances it could not be developed into a community place. In 1961 A.D. a parcel of land was purchased at the cost of 125000 rupees. As there was need to raise more money a separate fund was created. The community received 500,000 rupees from East Africa and it raised locally 143,000 rupees. Loans were obtained from members of the community. The money from the sale of property in Worley and Ranade

Road became available in time. The construction was begun in 1965 A.D. and completed by 1969 A.D. The complex is made up of a magnificent seven-story building with a guesthouse, a conference hall and other facilities. Today this is the biggest and best place with the most facilities owned by a community in the metropolitan city of Mumbai.

Directories: A directory of Halari Oshwals was first published in 1962 A.D. by the hard work of Hansraj Meghji Chandaria. Devchand Jethabhai Shah and Zaverchand K. Shah published the second edition in 1993 A.D.

Other Activities: The local *Mahila Mandal* and Youth League have also made tremendous progress. During racial riots in Bhivandi the community helped members who were directly or indirectly affected by the riots. The community's work was recognized and was honored by the Maharashtra State Government. In 1972, owing to the political problems in Uganda, many people fled and left Uganda. They were given all sorts of help by the Mumbai community.

Bhivandi: Many Oshwal families started expanding their businesses in India. In 1960s A.D., many Oshwal entrepreneurs started setting up power looms in Bhivandi and it was becoming a major center for power looms. The influx of Oshwals in Bhivandi has continued at a very fast pace. It is estimated that of the total Oshwal population of 24,222 in the Mumbai/Bhivandi/Ahmedabad area, according to the year 2000 A.D. census, nearly 40 percent or approximately 10,000 people live in Bhivandi. Some of them have offices in Mumbai in the Kalbadevi Cotton Market. There are several Oshwal-managed facilities in Bhivandi. The *Mumbai Samaj* bought land in Bhivandi and established a mahajanwadi.

Bhivandi Halari Oshwal Vidyalay: To ensure that every Oshwal child will get opportunity to get high school

education a decision was made to build a school. In 1983 A.D. the foundation stone was laid by then the president of *Oshwal Sikshan ane Rahat Sangh* India. The overseas delegates present at that time included the Chairman of the Board, the President of Mumbai community and the first chairman of *Oshwal Sikshan ane Rahat Sangh* India. The school was opened in 1993 A.D. At present there are about 4000 students studying in the two schools.

Shri Halari Visa Oshwal Samaj, Vapi: The Oshwal community in Vapi has bought land to build a mahajanwadi with major donations from Jayantilal Panachand Karania of Goinj/Vapi and Lalji Vershi Gudhka of Gagava/Kisumu-London. Dhirajlal Devraj Karania of Targhari Devaria/London-Nairobi has promised a donation for building a hall. Several community members have also promised funds for the hall.

Pandhurna Halari Oshwals: In 1937 A.D. Narshi Lakhamshi Gudhka of the village of Gagva came to Pandhurna and opened a provision store, Shah Raishi Hirji & Co., in partnership with his brother Fulchand Lakhamshi. In 1945 A.D. He started an oil mill. Since then many more Oshwals have moved here. At present there are twenty-seven Halari Oshwal families with a population of round 145 people. In 1980 A.D. an association called *Shri Svetamber Murtipujak Jain Samaj* was formed with Ratilal Narshi Gudhka son of Narshi Lakhamshi Gudhka as the Chairman.

Education: Kanji Jivraj Sumaria has been running Mahendra pre-school. And with full financial support from Hemendra Raichand Dodhia of Massachusetts USA has started an arts and commerce college in Pandhurna.

Social and Humanitarian work: The Lion's Club of Pandhurna with a substantial donation and full financial support from Hemendra Raichand Dodhia of Massachusetts USA, has built and maintains a modern crematorium in

Pandhurna. The club runs sewing and embroidery classes for poor people. Every year 135 to 145 girls from poor families get training. The club in future has plans to start computer training classes. As the old place does not have enough space, in January, 2004 Hemendra Raichand Dodhia laid the foundation stone for a new building which when completed will be use to run training classes. Part of the space will be used as a sports club. The project will be funded from Shrimati Hiraben Raichand Charitable Trust's donation. Hemendra Dodhia from Massachusetts U.S.A. has established this family trust in memory of his mother.

CHAPTER 28

ACTIVITIES IN THE REST OF THE WORLD

United Kingdom

Due to the lack of facilities for higher education (college) around 1935 A.D. few students from our community in East Africa went to India and England. After completing their education they all returned home and established reputable, flourishing businesses or entered professional vocations.

Around 1950 A.D. some who went for higher education stayed and settled down in England. Students stayed as paying guests with English landladies. They were provided with living accommodations with breakfast and dinner or a small kitchen where students did their own cooking. There would be no central heating in the house and the only form of heating was electric heating or gas heaters. The students were allowed to take a bath once a week only.

Kishorilal Bharmal Nagda (Virani) was probably the first Oshwal to settle in London. He was soon followed by Meghji Pethraj Shah who was the first person to open a business in England around 1956 A.D. and laid the roots for our settlement. Others were Harakhchand Lakhamshi Haria of Uganda, Velji Khimchand Gudhka and Ramniklal Karamshi who opened a shop called Overseas Grocers Ltd. After nineteen-sixties, more students started settling down in England after finishing their education rather than go back because of the political uncertainty in East Africa. In 1962 A.D., the British Government started making changes in its immigration policy and there were signs

that those Asians living in Kenya who were holding British passports would not be freely admitted to the United Kingdom. Also after Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania became independent in 1963 A.D., the three governments introduced exchange controls and work permits for non-citizens. The government of Kenya also pushed for participation of Africans in commerce. The business community was in a dilemma. They had to have a trading license for their businesses; there was a problem when the licenses were not renewed. The government wanted the local African people to take over the businesses and they were given licenses instead. Therefore, a mass exodus of Asians including Oshwals started in 1962 A.D. Some went to India. But as most of the people were British subjects they opted to go to England.

The second exodus came when the British Government introduced an immigration law in 1969 A.D. Many young people left East Africa in a hurry to legalize their entry to England by the end of year the 1969 A.D. As they had to leave most of their property back home and there were restriction as to the amount of money individuals could repatriate, for several years they experienced a lot of hardship. They took whatever work they found in the new, and at times harsh, environment.

As the population of Oshwals in U.K. increased a few community leaders took the initiative to form an organization called the Oshwal Association for the Welfare of Halari Oshwals. The first president elected was Kishorilal Bharmal Nagda (Virani). A constitution was drafted in 1972-73 A.D. under the chairmanship of Ratilal P. Chandaria. In 1974 A.D. it was registered as a charitable organization.

In 1979 A.D. an 80-acre parcel of land was purchased north of London in the Potters-Bar area of Northlaw, Hertfordshire. A fund was established. £600,000 was collected and the land was purchased at a cost of £500,000

Due to internal conflicts and the egos of a few people, it took a long time to repair and build additional facilities at the Potters Bar property. The local council gave the community a deadline to start construction by 1985. The community lacked the funds to meet the deadline. Twenty-two generous people gave their personal guaranty for a loan of £350,000 from a bank. These twenty-two generous people had to suffer a personal loss of £95,000 in interest when the loan was being repaid.

To increase money in the general fund special tokens were ordered. £263,200 was collected from the sale of the tokens in the United Kingdom and Kenya. Three draws of tokens took place for the three important events associated with the construction of new facilities: the foundation stone laying ceremony for the multipurpose halls, the opening ceremony of the multipurpose halls and the opening of shrine (ghar derasar). The bank loan was repaid with the funds.

Jain Temple: The Kantilal Haria family performed the foundation stone laying ceremony for the temple under the supervision of Pujya (revered) Chitrabhanu on Easter Sunday April 11, 2004. The temple is going to be built at the cost of two million British pounds at Oshwal Center in Potters Bars, North London. This will be the first authentic Jain temple in England. The temple will be built on approximately ten acres of Greenfield site of Oshwal Center. It will be in the middle of landscaped gardens and walkways, which when viewed from the air represent the Jaina symbol of *Triloka* (the Cosmos). The walkways will be in the shape of a santhio (swastik). The symbol of *Ahimsa* (non-violence) will be represented in form of a mosaic pond at the base of *Triloka*.

Oshwal Association of U.K. is the parent organization for the following active Oshwal associations or branches in: East London and Essex Branch, North London, North East

London, North West London, South London, West London, Leicester, Luton and Northamptonshire.

The Oshwal Association of U.K of South area was established in 1972 A.D. In 1974 A.D. a Gujarati school was started in a rented hall. Now there are 234 students and 12 teachers. Now the classes are held in mahajanwadi. In 1982 A.D., it purchased a church property at a cost of £135,000. The church needed repairs. The community spent about £100,000 to make the necessary modifications to make it usable as a mahajanwadi. In 1990 A.D. a music school was started. In 1991 A.D., a ghar derasar (shrine) was opened in the mahajanwadi. The Gujarati school now operates from this building.

Oshwal Mahila Mandal: A *Mahila Mandal* (Women's Association) was established in the South London area in 1975 A.D. Pushpaben Jayantilal Virchand Virpal served as President for a total of eight year, probably a record for any Oshwal organization. The Mandal is very active and it conducts several activities such as cooking classes, art classes, exhibitions, competitions, dinners, and musical programs for the benefit of Oshwals.

Future plans are to establish a Jain library equipped with books in all the languages and on all subjects (religion, art, philosophy, yoga, meditation and so on). Journals, audio-visual materials, and material on other non-religious subjects like literature and culture will be added.

United States of America

The first Oshwal to come to the USA for education and training was Jethalal Khimchand Kachara Gudhka of Kenya. He came to New York in 1945/1946 A.D. and stayed for about three years. In 1948/1949 A.D., four more Oshwals came to the USA for studies.

Dhiru Shah who came to the USA for higher education was in Los Angeles from 1949 A.D. to 1954 A.D. The following are Dhiru's comments about his experience as a student in early 1950's A.D. "Having studied in Kenya and then India, to arrive in New York and then in Los Angeles was both exciting and bewildering as culturally and physically it was a totally different atmosphere. When our batch arrived in USA, it was the beginning of international students coming to pursue higher education in large numbers. Americans were very hospitable and made our stay a pleasant one. We got invitations for dinners, for short stays with Americans in their homes, to speak to various groups and so on. I will never forget those wonderful gestures. While at university in India, very few students study and also do part-time jobs, while in the USA the majority of the students have part-time jobs while they study. No job was below their dignity as long as it was well performed. The idea of dignity of labor and self-reliance amongst student left a deep impression on me."

Satish Panachand Bharmal Shah of Plano Texas an engineer by profession came to Stanford, California in 1959 A.D. for studies and practical training. He stayed for two years and returned to Kenya. Satish returned to the USA with his wife, Surya, and two daughters, Seema and Shilpa, in 1972 for permanent settlement. He worked for the U.S. Government Agency for International Development and he was the first Asian to rise to the level of the Senior Foreign Service (Executive) and served as Director of A.I.D.'s Regional Office in Nairobi and Development Resources Offices for the Middle East.

Gulabchand Khimchand Raishi of South Hadley Massachusetts a physician by profession came in 1963 A.D. He was the first Oshwal to marry in the USA, an Oshwal girl, Anila daughter of Juthalal Vrajpal Shah of Mombasa, Kenya, in 1966 A.D. Their son, Parag, is the first Oshwal boy born in the USA in 1967.

Ratilal Lalji Khimji Dodhia of Lincoln Rhode Island a physician by profession the author of this book came to United States in 1965 A.D. with his wife Indira and son Rahul, who was 13 months old, for post graduation studies in Pathology. Their daughter, Anu Radha, who was born in September 1967 A.D., was the first Oshwal girl born in the USA.

Rati Dodhia has served as a member of Executive Committee of the Jain Center of Greater Boston in various capacities from 1981 A.D. and was elected President of the Jain Center in 1984 A.D. for a term of two years. The Jain Center of Greater Boston has carried out many important works for the Jain community of North America. It is the first Jain Center to start a *Jain pathshala* (religious school) for the young people. It is the first center to publish pathshala books on Jain religion for children in English, which were written by Rati Dodhia. During the JAINA Convention (Federation of Jain Associations in North America) in Toronto, Canada, in 1997 A.D., he was one of the persons honored and received a Recognition Award for Leadership in Promoting Jainism.

Hemendra Raichand Juthalal Dodhia of Leominster Massachusetts truly a native son of Pandhurna, Madhya Pradesh, came to the USA in September 1969 A.D. for graduate study. He is owner of the business name Spectro Coating Corporation. The company manufactures pile fabric that is used in the furniture industry and majority of the product is being exported to Europe and other countries. He has established a family charitable trust called Hiraben Raichand charity Trust in the name of his mother Hiraben. Through the trust he has established scholarships for students to pursue education and provides money for the treatment of poor people, equipment for invalids, and to run medical camps. He gives financial support to the Lion's club of Pandhurna to run many humanitarian projects.

He is married to Madhu and has two children a son, Rajesh and a daughter Sonia. President Clinton invited him to Washington during the NAFTA treaty negotiations with Mexico and Canada. He was a Rotarian for 15 years and served as the Director of North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce for five years.

Jayantilal Zaverchand Galaiya is a trustee of Sidhachalam, a Jain religious place (tirth) in the Pocono Mountains, New Jersey. He and Chandulal Lalji conduct Jain classes for children.

Niru and Manu Gosar Rajpar have been very active in the Jain Society of Metropolitan Washington as Secretary and newsletter editor.

Biren Amritlal Karamshi Nagda came to the U.S.A to study medicine but instead did a doctoral degree in both social work and psychology. He is an assistant professor at the University of Washington School Of Social Work and received the Outstanding Distinguished Teaching Award in 2001 A.D.

Rahul Motichand Hansraj Dodhia got a doctoral degree in Cognitive Psychology from University of Columbia, New York in 2001. He works for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in its Ames Research Center, Silicon Valley, California.

Misty daughter of Punita and Arun Shah of Vestal New York is an accomplished singer of devotional songs. She has already recorded CD of Jain devotional songs (*bhajans*) at age ten. She donates all the proceedings from the sell of CD to *Veerayatan*, a *Jain Ashram* located in Bihar India.

After the U.S. Immigration Act of 1964 was passed, quotas for permanent settlement visas were allocated to Asian and African countries. This provided opportunities for Asians and Africans to settle in the USA.

Many professionals (mainly doctors and engineers) from East Africa and India started migrating to the USA after 1965 A.D., as it was easy to get permanent settlement visas. Also, as Oshwals became interested in higher education, many started coming to the USA for specialized training in fields such as computer science and they stayed, as there was a demand for their skills. Some came specifically for investment purposes. Since 1970 A.D. a large number of Oshwals who came to the USA for settlement have been relatives of Oshwals already residing in the USA, just as in Kenya and the United Kingdom, Oshwals already living in the USA supported them whenever help was needed.

At present the total Oshwal population of the USA is estimated to be about 1,500 people. There is an active Halari Visa Oshwals Association of America. During a Christmas gathering in 1985 at Venilal Sumaria's home the Oshwal group from New England decided to start an association. The Oshwals from the North East, including Champa and Velji Bid of Livingston, New Jersey, gave their full support. The first meeting was held in Massachusetts in 1987 A.D. The association was officially formed. Gulabchand Khimchand Raishi was elected as the president and Venilal Sumaria as the secretary. The association elects an executive committee every two years. It publishes a newsletter regularly. Surya and Satish Panachand Shah of Texas publish a Members Directory every three to four years jointly with Oshwals in Canada. The association has a web site, probably the only Halari Oshwal web site. Ketan Dodhia of Suffern, New York, updates it regularly. For the last several years women have been elected as the president and they have done a wonderful job. These are Dr. Vibha Mukesh Shah (1997-1999), Pooni daughter of Champu and Velji Bid (1999-2001) and Manisha Kantilal Shah (2001-2005). This is probably the only Oshwal Association with women as presidents.

Oshwals in the USA maintain our traditions and cultures and participate fully in Jain activities. There are about 80,000 Jains in the USA and there are Jain temples in almost all major towns and cities of the USA. The Jain societies in the USA and Canada are unique in the sense that all three major branches of the Jain religion (Svetambers, Digambers and Sthanakvasis) are united and use one temple for religious ceremonies. The umbrella organization is The Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA). Oshwals are active members of Jain societies. Their children attend Jain and Gujarati classes.

Every two-years, JAINA holds a convention and this is attended by a large number of Oshwals. Oshwals use this opportunity to arrange its own gathering. In addition, many State representatives hold gatherings (picnics, dinners) for Oshwals living in their State. Also Oshwals living in the Eastern States of the USA meet once a year in November. This tradition was started in 1986 A.D. and has been continued. A first joint gathering of USA and Canada Oshwals was held in year the 2002 A.D. It was decided to have such gatherings every two years. This is one way to continue interaction and relations among Oshwals. Oshwals in the USA are proud of their traditions and customs and continue to follow them. The second generation, children of Oshwals who immigrated in nineteen-sixties and later, have excelled in their education.

Oshwals in the USA have been successful in their professional fields. Some have been, or are, working for several international organizations and U.S. government departments in senior positions. Some have been also successful in private businesses. Veni Sumaria heads one of the leading software engineering firms, Rajesh Ramji Raishi Shah of Shah Safari is one of the leading suppliers of garments to large department stores.

Oshwals in the USA have not forgotten their homeland. They have contributed generously to Oshwal and other

charitable organizations in India such as the Halar Drought Relief fund, the Gujarat Earthquake Relief fund, and scholarship/loan funds of the *Oshwal Mumbai Samaj* and the *Oshwal Shikshak ane Rahat Sangh*.

Canada

The history of Oshwals in Canada has been relatively short, less than 40 years. The first arrivals were the then newly qualified professionals and undergraduate university students in the late nineteen-sixties. More professionals and business entrepreneurs followed them in the nineteen-seventies. This trend continued in the nineteen-eighties and nineties right into the twenty first century.

Today, there are approximately 120 Oshwal families, professionals and business owners well settled in Canada, the majority of whom reside in the Metropolitan Toronto area with pockets in the urban areas of Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Ottawa and Montreal. There is also one Oshwal family in St. John's, Newfoundland and in Winnipeg.

The children of the early Oshwal settlers have now all grown up into young adults. They are well-educated and pursuing professions in many diverse fields such as medicine, pharmacy, actuarial profession, architecture, accountancy, computer engineering, journalism, teaching, and others.

The World Oshwal Federation

During the World Oshwal Seminar held in London in July 1985 delegates talked about forming a United Organization representing Oshwals of the whole world. After much discussion of this idea a unanimous decision was taken to go ahead and form such a body. An ad hoc committee was formed.

The ad hoc committee stayed in close contact with the Oshwal Education and Relief Board, East Africa, *Oshwal Shikshan ane Rahat Sangh*, India, and the Oshwal Association of UK and the committee came up with a rough draft of the constitution copies of which were sent to various centers for consideration.

During the meeting of the Oshwal Education and Relief Board, East Africa, in Nairobi in July 1987, a rough draft of the constitution was put on the agenda. After much debate and many new suggestions, it was accepted.

During the meeting of the *Oshwal Shikshan ane Rahat Sangh*, India, in Jamnagar in 1988/1989, the revised constitution was put on the agenda for discussion. After making further corrections the constitution was finalized.

CHAPTER 29

EDUCATION AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

First All East Africa Visa Oshwal Halari Conference

The First World War had come to an end. The Halari Oshwal community on the whole was prospering. There were further important issues ahead. For the common good disputes between Nairobi and Mombasa community were forgotten. The community stood united. There was sense of jubilation and pride. In such an atmosphere leaders of the community decided to hold a conference of the whole East Africa Halari Visa Oshwal community. After informal discussions among the community leaders at a meeting of the Shri Visa Oshwal Halari Mandal a decision was made to hold the conference during the Easter holidays 1941 A.D. in Nairobi to pursue the matter further.

The community of Nairobi welcomed the news of being the host city with utmost pleasure. A total of 250 invitations were sent to the representatives of all the Halari communities of East Africa. Depending upon the size of the community they were requested to send one delegate for small and two for a larger community.

This was an historical event. As this was the first time such a gathering was taking place, the Nairobi community worked very hard in preparation of the conference. The conference was held in Jainshala hall. It was a huge success. Arrangements for board and lodging for the delegates were made. Many families played host for the outside delegates.

The delegates from Mombasa, Moshi, Kisumu, and Eldoret came by train; from Thika, Sabasaba, Karatina, Nanyiuki, and Limuru they came by cars. Some delegates came early; others came on the day of the conference.

Friday April 11, 1941 was a milestone in the history of the Visa Oshwal community. For the first time representatives of all the community centers got together to work for the development and uplift of fellow community members.

The opening day of the meeting was April 11, 1941. The conference started at the appointed time, 4 PM in Jainshala hall in Nairobi under the chairmanship of Popatlal Karman Malde, then president of Nairobi Visa Oshwal community. Delegates from every community were present. The hall was packed to capacity with people filled with joy, enthusiasm and anticipation. The conference lasted for three days. Everyone attending was very enthusiastic. There were various topics presented at length in the president's speech. Many burning issues were discussed with many useful suggestions from the participants. Many resolutions were passed. Education was a very important part of the agenda for the coming and future generations. Since the rainfall and natural disasters in the homeland were unpredictable, provision for future relief also seemed to be a priority. A resolution to create a central organization was put forward. This was accepted and passed unanimously by all the delegates. The name of the organization selected was the "*Oshwal Education and Relief Board*". The authority of the Board was to be limited to matters related to education and relief funds. The Board was mad up of 21 representatives from all the Oshwal communities from different places. The first president of the Board elected was the able and deserving person Popatlal Karman Malde and as the secretary Raichand Karamshi Shah. A subcommittee was appointed to draft the constitution for the newly formed organization. The administration of large funds was delegated to the Board.

This conference not only brought all Oshwals living in East Africa closer but it also formed a stronger link between Oshwals in East Africa and India. The conference laid the foundations for the most remarkable progress made by Oshwals in the education field.

The Oshwal Education and Relief Board meets every year during the Easter holidays. The meetings are held for two to three days in various towns of East Africa, India and England at the invitation of the local Oshwal community.

The twenty-second Board Meeting in Jamnagar

During the Board meeting of 1962 A.D. the invitation of the Jamnagar community to hold the twenty-second Board meeting in Jamnagar from April 8 to 11 1963 was accepted. On March 17, 1963 around 100 delegates from East Africa boarded the State of Bombay steamer traveling third class (deck class), as it was the most affordable fare for the majority. During the voyage the behavior of delegates was exemplary. Even the captain was impressed and invited the leaders of the delegates to his cabin. The steamer reached Mumbai on March 27. The Mumbai Oshwal community played host to the delegates from East Africa. On March 30, the delegates left Mumbai for Jamnagar by train and reached Jamnagar the next day.

The meeting started on April 8 and ended on April 11. Khimji Ramji Malde performed the opening ceremony of a magnificent new boys' boarding house on the morning of the first day of the meeting. The Board meeting was started in the afternoon. Jam Saheb Digvijayji graced the occasion. The board gave a gift of 50,001 rupees to the Jam Saheb. In the evening of the second day the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Jamnagar boarding house was celebrated. It was a very joyous occasion. Students of the boarding house put on a great gymnastic show. The

hospitality extended by both the communities of Mumbai and Jamnagar was extraordinary.

Golden Jubilee

In 1991 A.D., the Board was 50 years old. To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary dinners, entertainment programs and cultural activities were held in Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru and Eldoret. A special souvenir was also published on this golden jubilee giving the history of the achievements of the Board.

The Board's Major Activities

Thus a tiny seed was sown which in years to come has blossomed into a large banyan tree due to the hard work, dedication and sacrifice of many people. The Board from the day of its inception has played a major role in the community. In spite of many hurdles, the members of the Board never lost courage. The Board members realized that the best investment was in the educational field and that eventually paid off.

The achievements of the board are many. It started with building and administrating of a boarding house for boys in Jamnagar. The success of this project inspired the Board to start a similar project in Nairobi. Over the years numerous educational institutions have been founded in various places.

Support for Education in Halar

The Board's first major initiative was to build a boys' boarding house in Jamnagar. The boarding house in Jamnagar soon became full. There was not enough room to accommodate all the students who were hungry for education. Therefore wherever there were schools in villages, the Board gave grants for the teachers' salaries and necessary supplies to teach English. Also financial

aids were extended to build new schools, schools for girls or to restore old school buildings.

In addition to building and managing many educational institutions which are described in detail elsewhere in this book under the locations, the Board initiated several innovative activities to support education institutions and encourage higher education in the Oshwal community.

Trusts

To run the boarding houses in Jamnagar (India) and Nairobi (Kenya) an independent trust for each was established. The idea was to meet all the expenses from the income generated from these trusts. For the Jamnagar boarding house two properties were bought in Nairobi one in Victoria Street and the other in Harding Street. In addition a cash amount of two hundred thousand shillings was deposited in the trust. For the Nairobi boarding house similar fund with investment properties and a cash amount of two hundred thousand shillings was established.

However the expenses of running the boarding houses turned out to be more than the income generated from the trusts. People always donated more and the deficits were met. The main expense was the food. The board came up with a novel idea. A special fund was created initially for the Jamnagar boarding house. A sum of 101 shillings as a donation for one meal (*tithi*) was established. The response was so good; people were donating money for anywhere up to 10 meals. Therefore the Board decided to create a new type of donation. A lump sum donation of two thousand shillings would provide a meal for a whole year. This scheme was so successful that a similar type *tithis* were created for the Nairobi boarding house for boys and later on for girls' boarding house when that was opened. The donation was 50 shillings for one meal and one thousand shillings for one meal for one whole year.

Extracurricular Activities

After both the boarding houses were running well, other activities were introduced, gymnastics, outings, picnics, tours, debating societies and the like.

The gymnastic activities were very successful in both places. In Kenya during the August school vacations gymnastic tours were conducted. The meetings were held in various large and small places. This writer was fortunate enough to see the skillful demonstration of these activities in Elbergan. People would give them an enthusiastic reception and were so impressed by their achievements that it created a new respect for the students.

Financial Aid

The charges for the boarding and lodging were set at three levels, depending upon the financial condition of the student:

- (1) Full Charges,
- (2) Half charges or
- (3) Free. No charges.

Because some well-to-do people took advantage of this system a loan system was introduced. A person depending upon his or her financial status could pay back the loan in due time. This scheme became very successful. A resolution was passed to give scholarships or loans to needy students pursuing higher education.

As the expenses to run all the activities were increasing a proposal was made to introduce a tax depending upon a person's wealth. This was well received and accepted without any opposition.

Because of increasing needs in education, in 1959 A.D. a five-year plan was drawn up, which included:

1. A new boarding house for boys in Jamnagar.
2. A new hostel for girls in Jamnagar.
3. A secondary school for boys in Nairobi.
4. A secondary school for girls in Nairobi. And
5. A new boarding house for boys in Nairobi.

It was estimated that to complete all these five schemes would cost at least five million shillings. A separate fund was established to meet the financial obligations. The project of a secondary school for girls was taken over by the Nairobi Oshwal community. The three projects of girls' hostel and boys' secondary school in Nairobi and a new boys' boarding house in Jamnagar were simultaneously handled and completed by the Board at the cost of two million shillings.

The India Education Fund

The Oshwal community of East Africa carried the entire financial burden of the Board's education program in India. In 1961 A.D., the Oshwal community in India decided to take the financial responsibility into their own hands. To meet the obligation a special fund was established.

The Oshwal Centenary University Scholarship Scheme

The Board organized a function on September 23, 1999 in Nairobi to officially mark the awards of university scholarships to 101 indigenous students who had been admitted to five state universities in Kenya.

Education Fund Scheme

During the Board's fifty-eighth annual meeting held in May 1999, it was unanimously agreed that the levy of 250 Kenya shillings per year per family should be abolished

from December 31, 1999. In its place, an Education Fund Scheme was approved for a period of 12 years, where every Oshwal family will be required to pay 2,500 Kenya shillings per year or a lump sum of 24,500 Kenya shillings. The purpose of the scheme is to provide a fund for needy students in higher education.

Oshwal International Millennium Education Fund

This fund has been established to seek donations from Oshwals throughout the world. The fund will be used to provide loans to deserving Oshwal students for university education. About 60 students receive loans at present. As the cost of education is going up, there is going to be a need for additional finance.

Some of Board's major activities were as follows:

- Boys' boarding house, Nairobi
- Girls' hostel, Nairobi
- Oshwal Jain primary school, Nairobi
- Oshwal high school, Nairobi
- Oshwal College, Nairobi
- Jain primary school, Nairobi
- Mombasa Oshwal Academy
- Shah Lalji Nangpar Academy, Nakuru
- Kabarnet Visa Oshwal Primary School
- Boys' boarding house, Jamnagar
- Girls' hostel, Jamnagar

Oshwal Shikshan ane Rahat Sangh, India

An ad-hoc committee of five members was formed on March 31, 1968. The committee consulted with leaders of several Oshwal organizations, Oshwal Education and Relief Board, and other interested Oshwals and prepared a constitution. A meeting took place in Jamnagar mahajanwadi to plan the first conference of *Oshwal Shikshan ane Rahat Sangh* under the chairmanship of

Raichand Lakhamshi Dodhia. It was decided that one delegate for 200 members would represent each city, town and village in the conference.

For the first time in the history of India all the Halari Visa Oshwal communities of India got together in Jamnagar for their first conference. The conference took place from June 10 to 12, 1972 at 46-47 Digvijay Plots, Girls' hostel, Jamnagar, under the chairmanship of Raichand Lakhamshi Dodhia, president of ad hoc committee. Jamnagar community hosted the meeting. A total of 118 delegates attended the meeting, 62 came from villages, 19 came from Jamnagar, and 39 came from Mumbai. Many delegates from East Africa were present at the conference, which included the President, Secretary and Treasurer of the Board. The *Oshwal Shikshan ane Rahat Sangh* was officially formed. An executive committee of 13 members was elected with Raichand Anandji Shah as the president. Five trustees were elected. The Oshwal Education and Relief Board of East Africa transferred management of all facilities in India to the newly formed Sangh on February 25, 1973.

In 1974 A.D., nine members were nominated to the Rahat (Relief) committee and they collected 611,613 rupees. The Sangh assisted communities in Saurashtra at the time of a tornado.

From 1972 A.D. to 1979 A.D., a new executive committee was elected every year. From 1980 A.D., the election for the executive Committee takes place every two years. The Sangh was registered as a charitable organization in 1992 A.D.

During the Cutchh earthquake of 2000 A.D., the Sangh collected funds for reconstruction and the work was completed satisfactorily. The Sangh has set up a program to provide loans for higher education and has collected over nine million rupees. The Sangh had plans to approve

loans amounting to 1,500,000 rupees in the year 2003 A.D.

The Sangh has undertaken many activities following in the footsteps of the Board. These are some of them:

1. Jamnagar Halari Visa Oshwal Vidyalay.
2. Jamnagar Oshwal International Center. And
3. Bhivandi (Mumbai) Halari Oshwal Vidyalay.

In the following years Halari Oshwals have entered almost every profession and business. Many hold high positions. Many are internationally recognized experts in their fields. The Halari Oshwals have indeed come a long way. From the days when they needed someone to read and write personal letters or documents they have now risen to a new financial and literary freedom. It must be recognized here that the individual triumphs and victories in education and attaining fame and fortune would not have been possible in many cases without help from the Board and the Sangh. They have very effective loan systems, which gives the opportunity to an individual not to miss out on education due to lack of finance. It is due to the existence of the Board and the Sangh that many an impossible dream became reality.

There is a saying, 'Our strength often increases in proportion to the obstacles imposed upon us.' Our elders had courage, endurance and the desire to attain their goals against all odds. They were far-sighted and made plans for future progress. It is to their credit that they did not fall into the trap of complacency, smug and content with their achievement. It is so important today for us to borrow a page from their book and remember to not to rest on past laurels or victories. We must work with the same selfless devotion and seek and search for new ideas, new plans, new venues, and once found, new endeavors, and aspire to realize them, so that we ourselves can be proud of them.

'Selfless pilots gain their reputation from storms and tempests.' Like our elders we should be determined to conquer new fields, new domains, new confines, new possibilities, new territories and new disciplines. The field of education is limitless, immense and infinite. We only have to be determine and resolute. As a symbol of success of the Board Oshwal House in Nairobi on Tom Mboya Street stands as a proud monument.

CHAPTER 30

SOCIAL REFORMS

There were many orthodox social customs prevailing in the community. Child marriages, age-mismatched marriages (an old man marrying a young girl), giving a girl in marriage in exchange for money (*kanya vikray*), widows banned from marrying again, celebrating completion of the ceremonies for a dead relative by holding lavish feasts (*naat tedu*) a ban on marriages outside the community all these were followed by people and needed to be reformed or stopped.

The number of young widows of 14-16 years of age was increasing because of age-mismatched marriages. Remarriage of widows was against the rules of our society. It was difficult for many to remain celibate. The number of illegal abortions or girls eloping with men of other communities was increasing.

Lilaben, a young woman from the village of Chela became a widow at a very young age. She wished to remarry and have a full life. She did not want to elope or have a secret life. She met a young man, Lakha Kara of the village of Changa. Both of them fell in love. They got married and lived together as husband and wife. Goriben, a young widow from Dhinchada also had courage to remarry. In the late A.D. 1930s a young man from Vasai, Lakhamshi Virji Shah, had the courage to marry outside the community a maharastrian girl. The community did not approve of this and all the three families were banished from the Oshwal community.

In East Africa the Halari Visa Oshwal community of Thika was quite revolutionary and introduced many reforms. On the November 10, 1933 during the community meeting, a resolution was passed to allow widow re-

marriage in certain circumstances. Oshwal communities residing in other parts were advised of the resolution and their support was sought. Most places approved the resolution. The Nairobi Halari community followed suit and passed a similar resolution in 1934 A.D.

The first widow marriage took place in Thika on June 20, 1937. Devchand Parbat, a businessman from Tanzania and widower, married a widow, Amritben, a daughter of Manek Sura of Padana, living in Fort Hall. Many young people and prominent leaders of our community attended the marriage and gave their approval as well as blessing the couple.

Naat tedu: Just as the community had bright moments there were some dark moments too. Even then the community was following many orthodox outdated customs. Due to the hard and persistent work of younger generation many changes were made, but mostly overseas. Back home in India the changes were slow to take place. One of such customs was to celebrate the death of a family member by holding a feast (*naat tedu*). Depending upon financial and social status this could be limited to family and friends or extended to the entire community.

In 1945 A.D. the chairperson (patel) of the village council of village of Kansumara, Raja Deepar passed away. The family was well known and wealthy. They decided to have a naat tedu in honor of the deceased. They called on the community leaders and told them about their decision. As this type of celebration was taking place for the first time in 50 years all the leaders unanimously gave their approval. But some conditions were imposed. Since the families of Lakha Kara of the village of Changa and Goribai of Dhinchada were banished from the community they were not be invited for this occasion. The Raja family agreed to the conditions. The group made up of 27 (*satavisa*) families who had supported those two families

tried everything in their power to change the decision, but it was all in vain. The invitations were sent out to each and every Oshwal family living in Halar, but the families of Lakha Kara, Goriben and the 27 families who had supported them were not invited.

These 27 families were well to do and well known and had a lot of influence with the Navanagar royal family. They were not ready to accept defeat. They were ready to fight back. The night before the date of the naat tedu people from faraway places started coming to Kansumara. A dinner was arranged for them. The 27 families with the families of Lakha Kara and Goribai also arrived there and asked to be served dinner along with the others. They were refused and were asked to leave.

They returned to Jamnagar. They were very angry. Next morning they went to Kansumara accompanied by police escort. They sat down with the others and demanded to be served. In spite of the order by the head of the police escort the organizers refused. The 27 families were very upset; they threw dirt in the dishes of the other guests and did not allow them to eat. They then forcefully took the food, ate the dinner and left.

There was confusion all over. People did not know what to do. They did not want to share the food with the satavisa. Immediately the leaders went to Jamnagar and lodged a complaint with the Jam Saheb. The satavisa lodged a counter-complaint. The Jam Saheb was put into a difficult situation. To him both the parties were equally dear. He hurried to the temple and prayed to Devi Ashapura, the family deity. He then ordered both the parties to come to an agreement, sit down and celebrate the feast together. Both the parties interpreted the order the way they wanted and declared themselves the winners.

Meanwhile the situation in Kansumara was becoming tense. Due to the interference by the police the food could not be served. The children were getting hungry and

started crying. As time passed and as the people did not want to give in they started leaving Kansumara to return to their homes.

Again an atmosphere of animosity and disunity clouded the whole community. The community council fined the *satavisas*. The effects of this incident were felt all over East Africa. The community was divided into two groups. The group in support of satavisa stopped paying the membership dues. The executive committee in return passed a resolution that only people who are paying their membership dues can use the community property.

Meanwhile a religious festival was being celebrated in Jamnagar. One of the sponsors ordered the food from boys' boarding house. He invited all the student boarders to dinner. The students refused the invitation as the sponsor had asked the son of Lakha Kara to volunteer to taste the food. The boarding house committee made every effort to change the students' their mind. They were all dismissed from the boarding house as they had broken the boarding house rules. As some of the committee members belonged to the satavisa, the situation became nasty. Many members were forced to resign. There was disunity, animosity, and disharmony among the entire community. Progress came to a standstill. But there were some even-minded community leaders who, realizing the consequences, started working hard to bring back a peaceful solution.

At present, even though some old customs are difficult to get completely abolished, many reforms have taken place. Now lavish feasts celebrating dead relatives, the practice of child marriage and age mismatch marriages hardly take place. Widow re-marriages, marriages outside the community, including inter-racial marriages, are very common.

CHAPTER 31

RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

India

The majority of the Halari Visa Oshwals practice the Jain religion. But because of poverty and lack of education during the early part of the settlement in Halar the true practice of religion was forgotten. Also because of a contemptuous attitude by the well to do fellow Jains many even became followers of the Swaminarayanis and Vashnavis.

There are Jain organizations and foundations that will voluntarily come to rescue and help the community to regain faith in the religion. *Jain Shreyskar Mandal* of Mahesana is one of them. They took on the task of helping the Halari Visa Oshwal community. Arrangements were made to send teachers, distribute religious books and conduct classes and religious discourses in various villages. The entire financial burden was borne by the *Mandal*. When the Oshwal community became financially sound the community took over the financial responsibility from the *Mandal*.

Members of the Halari Oshwal community who had settled down in Jamnagar lived in the area called Digvijay Plots located outside the Khambhalia Gate. As religious activities were increasing and they were not welcomed in the temples, which already existed in the town, the community needed a temple of their own. A separate fund was established. A resolution to build the temple in the compound of the boys' boarding house was rejected by the Board on the ground that the boarding house belonged to people of all sects, while the temple was going to be of one particular sect (*Svetamber Deravasi*).

In 1951 a house, *Shanti Bhuvan* (House of Peace), was bought from a private trust and converted into a prayer hall (*upashray*). Eventually, as enough funds were collected, a plot for the temple was bought and a temple was built on it. An association was formed called *Shri Halari Visa Oshwal Jain Sangh* for the management of the temple. At present there are three Jain temples managed by the Halari Oshwal community. They are (1) Digvijay Plot Temple: This temple is also known as the Elephant Temple, (2) Oshwal Colony Jain Temple and (3) Kamdar Colony Temple. These temples have *anjali shalka* (consecrated) images.

Shrimati Kunvarbai Jain Dharmashala: Hemraj Nathoo, of the village Navagam, built this religious guesthouse (*dharmashala*) in Jamnagar in memory of his mother Kunvarbai. The guesthouse is located on New Jail Road. The guesthouse has a two-storey block for the travelers, which has several two-bed room and single bedroom flats with attached kitchen and bathrooms. There are four dormitory halls, a dining hall, a library and a garden with a fountain. There is also a common kitchen, which provides the meals for the travelers. With support of the Gulabkunvarba Auyrvedic Society, the trust has opened Kunvarbai Jain Dharmashala Auyrvedic Medical Center. With the support and backing of trustees of Guesthouse, Jayaben Heath Center and a Sanatorium wing are run by Keshavlal R Shah charitable trust and computer classes are run by Oshwal Education Trust.

Aradhana Dham: In 1993 Vaghji Nangpar Shah and family built a magnificent pilgrimage place called *Aradhna Dham* (place of worship or pilgrimage) near the village of Vadalia Sinhan in Jamnagar District, Halar region. It is also known as *Halar Tirth*. It has a domed Jain temple with Lord Mahavir as the principal deity. A large prayer hall (*upasray*), a guest house (*atithi graha*) and place to live for worshippers (*aradhna dham*).

Jain Temple in Bhivandi: The grandson of Devraj Depar Gudhka, who was the first person from Navagam to settle in Mumbai, Ramji Meghji Gudhka, and his family, built Shri Suvidhinath Jain Temple in Bhivandi. The grand ceremony (*Pratistha Mahotsav*) to install the images was performed from April 27, 1985 to May 1, 1985. On May 1, when the images were installed, Ramji Meghji Gudhka and his family arranged a grand feast for all Halari Visa Oshwals living in Thana District and Svetambar Jains living in Bhivandi.

Jain Temple in Pandhurna: In the beginning there was no Svetamber Jain Temple in Pandhurna. Everyone used to go to the Digamber Jain Temple for worship. In 1980 a Svetamber Deravasi Association was formed with Ratilal Narshi Gudhka, son of Narshi Lakhamshi Gudhka as the Chairman. In 1986 when Narendra Raichand Gudhka, was Chairman a decision to build a temple was made. The Raichand Juthalal Dodhia family laid the foundation stone of the prayer hall on October 10, 1987. The Keshavji Khachra Khimasia family originally from Vasai laid the foundation stone for a non-domed Jain temple (*ghar derasar*) in 1989. As the construction was completed in six months in the same year the installation ceremony of the images of the Tirthankars was performed under the supervision of Acharya Shri Nardev Sagar Surishwarji. Three images were installed. The image of Lord Shitalnath as the principal deity (*Mulnayak*) in the middle was installed by the Raichand Narshi Gudhka family, the image of Lord Sambhavnath on the right was installed by the Raishi Haria family and the image of Lord Malinath on the left by Dhanji Meghji Vora. In addition Motiben Fulchandbhai's family also installed a metal image of Lord Shitalnath. In addition to the temple there are two general-purpose halls and three other rooms built at the same time. Many families participated in this auspicious event. Shrimati Maniben Meghji Pethraj of London (originally from Dabasang) donated a substantial amount of money.

Oshwal Yatrik Gruh, Palitana: From as early as 1940, Halari Oshwals had been desirous of having a rest house (*dharmashala*) in Palitana. In 1963-1964, three Halari Oshwals, Pethraj Merag Gosrani of Kansumara, Premchand Popatlal Chandaria and his wife Punjiben of Champa Beraja had gone on pilgrimage (*Navanu yatra*) to Palitana. During this pilgrimage, Maganlal Popatlal (younger brother of Premchand Popatlal) went to Palitana to meet his brother, sister-in-law Punjiben and his brother-in-law, Pethraj Merag. During that visit Maganlal Popatlal died in Palitana of heart failure on December 23 1964. In March 1965, Pethraj Merag bought 5 acres of agricultural land for the rest house. The agricultural land was approved for non-agricultural use in 1968. In April 1972 the Gosrani family established a public charitable trust called Oshwal Charities, and put part of the land (25,531 square yards) under the trust. The Chandaria and Khimasia families each donated 2,50,000 rupees to the Trust. On October 18, 1972, Pethraj Merag laid the foundation stone for the *yartik gruh*. Punjiben Premchand Popatlal Chandaria officially opened it on July 1 1974. In 1979, a 'B' Wing was built and in 1983 a 'C' Wing, a dining hall and an assembly hall were built.

What is *Navanu Yatra*? The legend is that Lord Adinath, the first Tirthankar of our time went to pilgrimage to Satrunjay ninety-nine times. Since then doing a *Navanu Yatra* pilgrimage carries a special meaning. However a pilgrim undertaking *Navanu Yatra* is required to perform total of 108 pilgrimages, which must be completed in two months (60 days).

Manjuben and Navinchandra Bhagwanji Raja performed the opening ceremony of the dining hall on December 3 1989, which was furnished by a donation of 500,000 rupees by the Bhagwanji Raja family (Kansumara/Nairobi). A part of the cost for the meals provided to yatriks (pilgrims), sadhus (monks) and sadhvis (nuns), is

recovered from an endowment for which Oshwals have generously donated funds for 365 *tithis* (meals) annually.

Mrs. Jemaben Premchand Dodhia and Chandrakant Premchand Dodhia (Navagam/Nairobi), and Hemlataben and Dhirajlal Meghji Sojpar Dhanani (Nairobi) officially opened the breakfast hall on February 19 1989. A part of the total cost was recovered from a separate endowment for which funds have been donated by Oshwals.

The *yatrik gruh* became very popular not only with Oshwals but people of other communities. At present there are 68 rooms, 9 dormitories, an assembly hall, a dining hall, a breakfast hall, *navkarshi gruh*, *ayambil gruh*, *upashray* and a *aradhna* hall. It has a beautiful garden and the facilities are maintained very well.

The credit for building and maintaining this excellent facility goes to Somchand Pethraj Gosrani, the trustee.

East Africa

In East Africa things were not different. Even after 50 years of settlement there was no organized religious teaching by qualified teachers. Only in Mombasa and Nairobi were religious activities going on but on a very small scale.

Mombasa: A house was rented in 1918, which was used for a guesthouse for travelers as well as for religious activities.

Mombasa Shri Svetamber Deravasi Jain Sangh: Devji Kara brother of Hirji Kara work very hard and established a religious association called *Svetamber Deravasi Jain Sangh* in 1922. He was elected at its first president and he served in that capacity till 1931. The Sangh purchased a building on Rogers Road in 1923, which was converted

to a temple and an image of Lord Parshvanath was installed as a principal deity on January 24, 1924. In 1927 the Sangh started Jain Pathshala. In 1936, a parcel of land was purchased on Longoni Road and in 1938 a domed Jain temple was opened with image of Lord Parshvanath as the principal deity. A magnificent new Jain temple was completed in 1963, which is run by the Sangh. It also operates a guesthouse, a library, Jain religion classes, a secular nursery and a primary school (Maniben Meghji Pethraj Shah Primary School).

Nairobi; In 1918, the first Oshwal institution in Nairobi called *Visa Oshwal Jain Gnan Vardhak Mandal* was established after the hard work of Fulchand Karamshi Shah and his brother Raichand Karamshi Shah, Devji Hirji Shah was elected the first president. Religious functions were arranged and celebrated under this organization. As there was no community-owned building the religious classes and language classes in English and Gujarati were conducted in the evening in shops owned by Oshwals. The association was officially registered in 1921. In 1925 a building was rented opposite the Queen's Garden (Jeevanji Gardens) on Moktar Dada Street. In 1927 a small religious shrine was built on one corner of Jainshala Hall. In 1928, Fulchand Karamshi Shah brought a metal image from Mumbai for the shrine. This was the beginning of religious activities. In 1957, a small domed Temple was built on the Canal Road land. On August 22, 1957, the auspicious last day of Paryushan, marble images of Shri Mahavir Swami, Shri Adeshvar Prabhu and Shri Shantinath Prabhu were installed. Vershi Mepa Shah and his family donated the images.

No religious teacher or monk had then visited East Africa. The Mombasa Jain association (*Shri Svetamber Deravashi Jain Sangh*) contacted a Jain organization back in India and sent an invitation for a monk's visit to East Africa. On their request Yati Shri Hemchandraji and Yati Shri Fulchandji accepted the invitation. In 1946 Yati Shri

Hemchandrajji and Yati Shri Fulchandji arrived in Mombasa. They stayed in Kenya for several weeks. They visited various places in East Africa and Yati Shri Hemchandrajji gave religious discourses. Yati Shriji was a good orator. His delivery was simple, informative, revealing and clear. Many people were so impressed that they gave up drinking alcohol, eating non-vegetarian food and many other addictions. During his visit through his encouragement many new projects were started. However for the next 25 years nothing much happened.

In July 1971 a learned ascetic Gurudev Shri Chitrabhanu came to Kenya. Most of the time he stayed in Nairobi. People were very much impressed by his religious discourses. He inspired the Nairobi community to build a domed Jain temple. I was fortunate enough to come to know him personally as he stayed at the house of my brother Keshavlal Lalji Dodhia. Since then learned Jain monks and Jain teachers visited Kenya on a regular basis as old and young people alike wanted to know more about Jain religion. While the plans for the domed temple were going on a proposal was made to build a prayer hall (*upasray*). The proposal was accepted. The foundation ceremony for the prayer hall was laid in 1974 and it opened in 1975.

Planning for a domed temple started in 1970 during the chairmanship of Kantilal Narshi Shah. An architect from the firm of Anandji Kalyanji in India was contacted. On August 22 1971, images of three Tirthankars -Shri Parshvanath, Shri Shanitnath and Shri Mahavir Swami were temporary installed in a specially built *ghar derasar in the mahanjanwadi*.

In 1974 the celebration of the auspicious event of Liberation (*moksha*) of Lord Mahavir was conducted on grand scale. Learned speakers, artists and musicians were invited from India who did a magnificent job in making the celebration a memorable event.

After a long wait the dream to build a domed temple came true. The foundation stone of the temple was laid on January 22, 1976. At this time, Amritlal Ranmal Raja and his family presented nine statues and the paintings. A delegation went to India to purchase marble and other stone especially for the temple. A team of artisans came from India to carve the stone and lay it properly. After continued construction for eight years, the work on the temple was completed. In the last three decades a lot of progress had been made on the religious sector. The dream now had become reality. This was an auspicious event. The celebrations of *Pratistha Mahotsav* (installation of the images) took place from February 4, to February 12, 1984. During these nine days people from India, the United Kingdom, Canada and many other places participated in this event. This event had an international flavor. Images of nine Tirthankars have been installed. This was a milestone in the history of the Nairobi Oshwal community. Over 10,000 people attended the celebrations. In 85 years of our settlement in Kenya the building of the domed temple was probably one of our most outstanding achievements.

A religious school was started in 1920 with just a few students. By 1970 the number had increased to 100 students. There was a desire in the community to start a school to teach Jain religion to the youngsters on regular basis. The number of students using boys' boarding house had decreased considerably. It was becoming clear that there was no further use for the boarding house. To make use of the facility a Jain school was started in the year 1978 in the existing building of the boarding house. In 1995 a new administrative block was added and in 1997 a new wing added.

Mumukshu Mandal Nairobi: Khimchand Virpar Zakharia of the village Of Kakabhai Sinhan who had attended Gurudev Kanji swami's discourse on Jain Religion in Songadh migrated to Nairobi around 1948/49. There he

met Kachra Narshi Sumaria Shah and he heard Khimchandbhai discussing the topic on Jain religion and got interested in it. They started meeting regularly for lectures by Khimjibhai at first at Kachrabhai house and then in a room in Jainshala till 1963. Torchbearer Khimchandbhai initiated the formation of *Shri Sanatan Digamber Jain Mandal* in Nairobi, the first ever in any foreign country. Later on the name of the association officially was changed to *Shri Digamber Mumukshu Mandal*, Nairobi, Kenya. Fulchand Karamshi Shah was elected as the *mandal's* first president.

The land for a hall and the temple was bought on Kolobot Road, Ngara Area in Nairobi. Ramji Devraj Shah performed the foundation laying ceremony for the *swadhyay hall* on January 5, 1964. Fulchand Karamshi Shah performed the opening ceremony of *swadhyay hall* on August 30 1964. All the official activities were moved to the hall from the Jainshala.

A decision to build a domed temple was under consideration. Raichand Devan Shah performed the foundation-laying ceremony of the temple on June 17 1978. When temple was completed, a weeklong celebration with Installation Ceremony of the images (*Pratistha Mahotsav*) was officially held from, January 11, to January 19, 1980, in presence of the Shri Gurudev Kanji Swami. The Laxmichand Keshavji Shah family installed the image of Lord Mahavir Swami as the principal deity (*Mulnayak*) in the middle. The Jethalal Devraj Shah and Hansraj Devraj Shah families installed the image of Lord Parshvanath on the right side of Mulnayak. The Zaverchand Punamchand Shah family installed the image of Lord Shantinath on the left side of Mulnayak. The Bharmal Vagji Haria family installed the image of Lord Simandhar Swami in the dome.

All together there are seven images in the temple. Five images are made of marble. (The image of Mahavir

Swami, which was originally installed in the *swadhyay mandir*, was later moved to the main temple). Two images of Lord Neminath and Lord Suryakirtinath (future Tirthankar) are made of five metal (*Panchdhatu*).

Young Jains Nairobi (YJN): As the younger generation was eager to learn more systematically about Jainism a movement was underway to form an organized group. It came true and Young Jains Nairobi (YJN) was established under the guidance of Shashikantbhai Mehta of Rajkot in 1996.

Revered Sadhviji Shilpaji was invited to Nairobi by YJN and a religious school *Shri Chandna Vydyapeeth* (SCVP) to teach Jainism was started for children with the blessings from Acharya Shri Chandnaji in 1997. By the year 2003, four hundred students attend the classes on every Saturday morning. Because of the success of this venture even parents started showing keen interest in learning more about Jainism. An adult class was started where by the year 2003 around two hundred adult students mostly women attend the class.

The YJN holds religious camps, workshops, exhibitions and pilgrimages to promote the Jainism. They even publish a quarterly newsletter focusing on different aspects of Jainism. Because of tremendous success of SCVP in Nairobi, communities in Thika, Eldoret and Kisumu started similar projects under the guidance of YJN.

Thika: In Thika a Jain temple (*ghar derasar*) was built in the mahajanwadi with donations from the Vershi Mepa, Mulji Mepa and Devsi Mepa families. The installation ceremony of images took place on July 2, 1951. The images are of three Tirthankars - Shri Mahavir Swami, Shri Dharmanath and Shri Neminath. A foundation stone for a new domed Jain temple to be built at the site of old temple was laid on February 23, 1990. In addition to the images of the three Tirthankars, images of two more

Tirthankars, Shri Parshvanath and Shri Adinath were installed during grand celebrations held from February 3 to February 7, 1998. The opening ceremony of the *upashray* hall was conducted during the celebrations.

Kisumu: In Kisumu, on December 12, 2003, Narshi Punja Shah officially opened a domed Jain temple. The temple was built with a generous donation of the Narshi Punja Shah and his family. A grand four-day celebration leading to the *Pratistha Mahotsav* was organized. People from all parts of the world attended the celebrations.

ENGLAND

Mumukshu Mandal, London: In 1978 few interested people used to get to-gather during lunch break and read and discuss the articles from *Atma Dharma*, a monthly magazine published by *Shree Digamber Jain Swadhyay Mandir Trust Songadh*. As more people starting participating the discussions became regular. In 1982 the group invited learned guest lecturer from India. Since then the learned guest lecturers from India come on regular bases.

In 1989 during the celebrations of *Dash laxan Dharma Purva* (Festival of Ten Supreme Virtues) an official organization called *Mumukshu Mandal* of London was formed.

A building was purchased on March 16, 1993 and Gurudev Kanji Swami's birthday was the first function celebrated in the new building on April 24, 1993. Bhagwanji Kachra performed the official ceremony of the Swadhyay Hall on May 15, 1993. The hall later on was converted into a temple.

Renovation of the temple was begun in year 2000, which was completed in 2001. The temple was officially opened

on April 1, 2001. Ceremony to install new idol of Lord Parshvanath as a principal deity was officially conducted on August 24, 2003.

Oshwal Association of U.K.: The Oshwal Association of U.K of South area purchased a church property and converted it into community center (*mahajanwadi*). In 1991 A.D., a ghar derasar (shrine) was opened in the *mahajanwadi*.

A foundation stone laying ceremony was performed to build an authentic domed Jain temple at Oshwal Center in Potters Bars, North London under the supervision of Pujya Chitrabhanu on Easter Sunday April 11, 2004.

CHAPTER 32

EMINENT PERSONALITIES

The Oshwal Sect is known for its righteousness, philanthropy, hospitality and bravery. These are the inherent characteristics of the Oshwal community wherever they reside. In East Africa and in India the Halari Visa Oshwal community had its own heroes. Most of them were ordinary people in almost every village and town.

There were three brothers Hemraj Hadha, Ramji Hadha and Premchand Hadha living in Nakuru with a well-established wholesale and retail business. These three brothers were known for their generosity and hospitality. Any stranger who happened to be in Nakuru was most welcome at their home for food and a place to sleep. They happened to be my cousin brothers whose support and encouragement were the principle factors for my success.

One incident I will never forget. During my school days I used to spend almost every summer vacation in Nakuru at their house. During one such vacation Hemrajbhai received a phone-call from Nairobi. A bridegroom party of around fifty people from Nairobi was going to Kisumu for wedding. Will they be willing to take food to the train station for the party? Hemrajbhai said yes. When it was time to give Hemrajbhai never said no. Kisumu is around three hundred miles from Nairobi. The only way a large party could go to Kisumu was to take the train. The train would leave Nairobi in the morning and reach Nakuru around six in the evening. The station was about two miles from their home. They did not own an automobile. The food had to be taken to station on foot. Their wives prepared tea and puffed up bread (Paratha) for the party. We, all the men of the family carried the tea and bread,

walked two miles to the station and made sure that everyone in the party got enough to eat. Now this would never be possible without the support of the women of the house. I salute my three sisters in laws, Monghiben, Ratanben and Kasturben.

I would like to stress to the reader that there were such men and women belonging to the Oshwal community in every large and small place in East Africa. Even though I was just a young boy I had experienced such hospitality in Kisumu, Njoro, Elbergen, Kitale, Mombasa, Limuru, Thika and Kikuyu. I can go on and on.

Such hospitality was not unique to East Africa. While I was in college in Mumbai in 1954 A.D., I had the opportunity to spend some time in my home village Changa during the summer vacation. We a group of five people, took a walking tour and visited about 12 villages of Halar. Our trip lasted about nine days. During all those nine days whether we knew people or not wherever we stayed we got the best hospitality from the village people.

Philanthropy is in the blood of Halaris. Many people gave money freely during the famine of 1936 A.D. There are many philanthropists like Raichand Jethalal Gudka, Devchand Khimchand Gudka and Hemraj Nathoo Gudka who donated substantial amount of money for Jamnagar boys' boarding house. The Virani (Nagda) Brothers, Lalji Nangpar and brothers, also gave large amount money for educational purposes. At present many well-to-do people have established trusts for good causes. But one person who stands out among all is Kachra Merag Shah.

In 1946 A.D. Kachra Merag Shah, who was a middle class businessman, donated the sum of 50,000 shillings for Nairobi boys' boarding house. This was almost all his wealth. This was not just a donation but also a sacrifice like the famous philanthropists Bhama Shah and Jagdu Shah. Those were billionaires while Khachrabhai was just

an ordinary man. There are not enough words to describe his sacrifice.

There are very outstanding and extraordinary people who rose from poverty and became rich beyond their expectation and did so much for the community. Some of who are:

Premchand Vrajpal Shah: Premchandbhai was born in the village of Padana in 1897 A.D. He studied up to third grade in Gujarati. At the tender age of 14 he boarded the steamer from Porbunder and left for East Africa. In 1916 A.D. he settled down in Fort Hall (Muranga). He became a very successful businessman in a short span of time.

In 1924 A.D. he moved to Thika where he stayed until he returned to India in 1941 A.D. In Thika he started many businesses, industries, manufacturing plants and the like in partnership with others and became one of the richest men of the Oshwal community. He had reached the highest peak in the business field. His achievements and work in the social and political fields were no less.

He was an active member of the Kenya Indian National Congress. In 1924 A.D. during the conference of the Kenya Indian National Congress a resolution was passed to fight against the poll tax which every Asian of 18 years and older had to pay. Premchandbhai joined the fight. The government passed a law that any one who refused to pay the tax would be fined or put into jail. Premchandbhai elected to go to jail. In 1927 A.D. he was elected treasurer of the Indian National Congress Foundation Fund. He took a leading role in building the Desai Memorial Hall in Nairobi. He gave scholarships to native Africans to go for higher studies in India. He also gave generously financial aid and loans to native Africans in establishing businesses. He helped Peter Koinange in establishing an African school in Githunguri.

During his stay in Kenya he spent money to teach native Africans carpentry, masonry, pottery, and accounting and to help them open small businesses so that they could become independent and stand on their own feet. The Africans respected him so much that they use to call him 'Mehta'.

An untouchable neighbor in Jamnagar lost his house in a fire. He gave 1000 rupees to him to rebuild the house. He will help anyone who came to him for help even when he himself was in financial difficulty.

He was a social reformer. He believed in widow marriages, education for girls and boys alike. In 1934 A.D. during a community meeting in Thika he introduced a resolution to allow widows to remarry. The resolution passed unanimously. Because of this the first marriage of a widow took place in 1936 A.D. in Thika. Premchandbhai gave away the bride.

He was a proponent of education. He believed that education was the foundation of progress. In 1941 A.D. because of his close friendship with Jamsaheb Bapu, the ruler of Navanagar State, he was able get a large parcel of land in Digvijay Plot area for a boys' boarding house.

He was man of character, polite, truthful, generous and full of compassion. He had a sweet voice and was a very good orator. His circle of friends included harijans (untouchables), rich people, governors, politicians, and kings. He passed away at the age of 63 years on July 31,1961.

Meghji Pethraj Shah: Meghjibhai was born in the village of Dabasang in 1904 A.D. Soon after he got married he set sail from Mumbai and landed at Mombasa on 18 July 1919.

In 1922 A.D. Meghji bhai moved to Nairobi. There in September 1922, he opened an independent business working as a door-to-door salesman. In 1929 A.D. he joined in partnership with Premchand Vrajpal Shah. They started a factory to produce tanning extract from wattle tree bark, located in Thika, which proved to be a gold mine.

In 1936 A.D. he was the chairman of the fund raising committee for relief of famine in Halar. In 1943 A.D. during the disastrous Bengal famine he was the treasurer of the famine relief fund.

In 1952 A.D. he started a financial business, Guarantee Discount Company. It was a high-risk business. He suffered from defaults, but he made a point of not pursuing his debtors into the court but rather wrote off the bad debts.

At the age of 49 in 1953 A.D. he retired. Instead idling away the time he devoted himself to the service of humanity in different way. He started charitable activities and founded various projects for social welfare and promotion of education.

In 1948 he founded the Meghji Pethraj Charitable Trust in Jamnagar. The work of the Charitable Trust was to improve the conditions of the poor people of Saurashtra particularly in the fields of education and health, and also to make provision for emergency relief works in times of natural calamities.

The educational fields included nursery schools, primary schools, girls' schools and libraries for villages. He established scholarships for school and college education. He built hostels for the students. In the health field he founded many dispensaries and hospitals.

In April 1955 A.D. the foundation stone for the M P Shah Medical College was laid in Jamnagar. He donated ten

million rupees over ten years for education, medical and other activities.

His donations in East Africa were many. He contributed generously to any publicly funded school and hospital. He helped African students to go abroad for higher education. The Trust gave generously to organizations committed to social service such as the Indian Association, the Gujarati Hindu Union and the Nairobi Social Service League. M P Shah Hospital is his biggest monument in Kenya.

In 1962 A.D. he donated a large sum of money towards setting up health centers in Kenya, a maternity hospital, hostels for boys and girls and many other educational institutes.

In 1955 A.D. his outstanding contribution to public life was recognized by his home state of Gujarat when he was appointed a member of the Rajya Sabha, which is the upper house of the Indian parliament. As he was not accustomed to the political life and felt uncomfortable he resigned after serving for a year.

His wife Maniben always shared his feelings and activities. She made a valuable contribution to his achievements. She was a very humble and simple person. Her name has been associated with large number of institutions for ladies both in India and in Africa. She was always glad and proud to see her husband give large donations.

In 1957 A.D. Meghji bhai decided to settle down in England. There he continued with the charity work. He passed away suddenly on July 30, 1964.

Meghji bhai will be remembered as a great donor. He donated freely. Jamsaheb, the ruler of Jamnagar gave him the nickname of Jagdu Shah.

He was a man of broad vision and a good judge of people. This is a quotation from a speech he once gave: "I came from a village years ago, I went abroad to earn my livelihood and by the grace of God I became successful in my business activities. But I appreciate that the money, which I have earned, is not just mine, but that of brothers and sisters of my own nation, and all the people have a share in it. I repay this share by giving financial help for public needs as far as I am able. In doing this I am not laying anyone under an obligation to me but am simply doing my duty".

The Chandaria family: The patriarchs of the Chandaria family were Premchand Popat, Maganlal Popat and Chaganlal Popat. They came from the village of Champa Beraja of Halar District. They came to Kenya in the early part of World War I. They started in business initially in partnership later on establishing their independent firm. Over the years the Chandaria family business flourished and expanded widely. At present they have branches all over the world. It can be easily said that, "the sun never sets on the Chandaria business empire".

Their work in charity goes a long way back. Premchandbhai was the first to establish the Oshwal Jain temple in Jamnagar. Maganbhai was one of the original members of the famine relief fund committee formed in 1936 A.D., when the State of Saurashtra was struck with a deadly famine. Since then the Chandaria family has never looked back. The Chandaria Family Trust financially supports many worthy causes with religious, social and educational aspects and to the cause of Gujarati literature. The Chandaria family has donated their bungalow in Jamnagar to the Shikshan ane Rahat Sangh.

Devchand Chandaria: He was one of the founder members of the Jain Youth League, which was started in 1935 A.D. in Nairobi. When he settled down in Mombasa he became actively involved in local politics. He even stood

as a candidate for the local Municipal Council. One of his pet projects was to capture all the Jain temples and monuments on camera and get them printed in book form for the benefit of future generations. In spite of being so rich he was the most humble and kind person. He passed away in Nairobi in 1978 A.D.

Ratilal Chandaria: Ratilal Chandaria was born on 24 October 1922 in Kenya. He was instrumental in expanding the family business in other parts of world.

In 1972 A.D. he was a member of the welfare for evacuees committee of Uganda. He was founder chairman of the Asian Association UK; He was elected President of the Oshwal Association of UK and later on as the chairman of the Board of Trustees in 1978 A.D. In 1988 A.D. he served as the chairman of the Fund Raising Committee.

In 1972 A.D. he became a member of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan executive committee and later on was elected secretary. In 1982 A.D. he became a trustee of Bharatiya Gymkhana and in 1995 A.D. he was elected Chairman. He was a Trustee of the Asian Women's Association in 1982 A.D. In 1991 A.D. he served as a member of the Board of trustees of the Festival of India.

He founded the International Forum of Overseas Indians. He founded and served as a chairman of the Sports and Physical Education Foundation. He is a member of the boards of trustees of the International Literature Trust London and the Religious Guest House (*yatrik guruh*) in Palitana India.

Somchand Premchand Shah: He was born in Nairobi on August 10, 1911. During his high school days he founded the Visa Oshwal Yuvak Mandal (*Visa Oshwal Youth League*) in Nairobi. He helped to start a monthly publication *Aagal Dhaso* (move forward). To acquire subscribers he traveled on foot from Thika to Muranga.

In 1930 A.D. he joined the freedom independence movement of India. He requested his school authorities not to hold Empire Day celebrations in the school. The request was denied. Therefore he organized a strike of 21 days. He refused to apologize and was thrown out of the school at 17 year of age. He boycotted foreign-made clothes and started wearing *Khadi*, hand-woven clothes from India.

He joined the family business in Mombasa. There he founded the *Hindi Sawayam Sevak Dal* (Indian Volunteer Organization) and *Hindi vyayam Mandal* (Indian Gymnastic Organization). In 1932 A.D. he wrote, produced and acted in a Gujarati play *Desh Tara Khate* (For you my motherland) in Nairobi.

In 1940 A.D. he was appointed secretary of the Mombasa community. In 1941 A.D. he was appointed a lifetime trustee of the Mombasa community. He played a major role in establishing the Oshwal Education and Relief Board. He was elected as president of the Board in 1951 A.D. and remained a member until 1964. He was elected as President of the Mombasa community in 1958 A.D. He also was secretary of many non-Oshwal organizations.

He was given a special gold medal for all the selfless work he did for the community. He also received a special award from the Board.

Raichand Narshi Gudhka: In 1937 A.D. he was instrumental in opening an office of the Indian National Congress in Pandhurna. He was its elected president. From 1939 A.D. to 1972 A.D. he remained the representative of the Congress party. He was elected president of the Regional (Jeela) Congress party from 1943 A.D. to 1945 A.D. and again from 1954 A.D. to 1958 A.D. In 1946 A.D. he was elected President of the Pandhurna Municipal Council. From 1947 A.D. to 1952 A.D. he served as President of the Grain Market of Pandhurna and of Madhya Pradesh. From 1957 A.D. to 1962 A.D. he served as the

member of Vidhan Sabha (Legislative Assembly) from Madhya Pradesh. In 1982 A.D. he worked very hard to establish the *Svetamber Murtipujak Jain Samaj* in Pandhurna.

Nemu Chandaria: Nemubhai, Deputy Chairman of the Institute of Jainology, U.K, was born in the small village of Ravalser, near Jamnagar, Gujarat, India, in 1938 A.D. He is closely associated with the activities of the International Sacred Literature Trust (ISLT) and was instrumental in getting the Jain scripture the Tattvartha Sutra translated and published jointly under the ISLT. In 1993 A.D. Nemubhai co-coordinated the Jain participation in the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago, and again, in 1999 A.D., in South Africa. Nemubhai coordinated the visit of the Jain delegation to the Vatican in February 1995 A.D. for an audience with His Holiness the Pope John Paul II and that relationship between the Vatican and the Jains is still very active.

Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II honored Nemubhai Chandaria, on her birthday, as an officer of the Order of the British Empire (O.B.E) for his work with Institute of Jainology for creating awareness of Jainism.

On the occasion of the celebration of the twenty-sixth Centenary of the birth of Bhagwan Mahavir the Prime Minister of India, Atal Behari Vajpayee, conferred the *Jain Ratna* award on Nemubhai in appreciation of his services to the Jain community.

Every single person who left his or her homeland and traveled far on a foreign soil in early part of the twentieth century is a hero in the mind of this author. There are many torchbearers (*jyotirdharo*) of Halari Visa Oswal community who gave selfless services to the community. They all worked very hard to bring this community, which had fallen to the bottom and was neglected by all, to the height it is today. It is a shame that their names cannot be included in this book.

CHAPTER 33

ACHIEVEMENTS, AWARDS AND HONORS

About 100 years ago Halari Oshwals were at the bottom of the pit. They were poor, illiterate and unsophisticated living in a rural area of the Navanagar State (Halar) which was one of the poor and underdeveloped regions in India. Today the members of this same community are one of the most highly educated and economically successful groups of Indians. This is because of hard work and perseverance, the traits they have inherited from their forefathers. They have continued the trend of moving to places where there are better opportunities to improve the quality of life. From Halar, they have migrated to other parts of India, to East Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada and Australia. They have been fortunate to have selfless, visionary leaders who devoted time, money and energy for the betterment of the community. Wherever they have ventured they have succeeded.

Commerce and Industry

In 1929 A.D., there were five leading Oshwal business houses; Hirji Kara Company, Meghji Ladha and Company, Premchand Brothers owned by the Premchand Popat Chandaria family, Premchand Raichand Company owned jointly by the families of Meghji Pethraj and Premchand Vrajpal, and Karman Mepa Company owned by the family of Karman Mepa Malde.

Hirji Kara Company was the first Oshwal-owned company that attempted to set up a factory in 1929 A.D. to manufacture aluminum cooking vessels. By the time the equipment imported from Germany arrived in Mombasa, Hirji Kara Company ran into financial difficulties and

declared bankruptcy, winding up the business. The equipment was stored in a bonded warehouse. When Meghji Pethraj came to know about the equipment, he approached Devjibhai of Hirji Kara Company and offered to buy the equipment and set up a company to manufacture aluminum saucepans and Devjibhai would manage the company to which Devjibhai agreed. Meghji established Kenya Aluminum Works Limited, the first industrial company owned by Oshwals in Mombasa. Premchand Vrajpal was the first Chairman of the Board of Directors. In 1947 A.D., when the Premchand Raichand group was dissolved, the Chandaria family became majority owners of the factory. The factory has expanded considerably and employs over 1000 people at present and is known as Kalu Works. The Mombasa factory was a gold mine that enabled the Chandaria family to expand its business empire to over 62 countries.

In 1930 A.D., Meghji Pethraj and Gosar Mepa Maru started a company called Kenya Builders and Timber Company. Others who joined this company were Amritlal Raishi, Hemchand Meghji and Premchand Devshi Dodhia.

In 1928 A.D., Premchand Vrajpal in partnership with Meghji Pethraj set up a small plant to cut into pieces wattle tree bark near the Chania Falls in Thika. The bark was exported to many countries for use in the leather tanning process. The owners saw the financial advantage of processing bark locally, therefore, in 1934 A.D.; they set up a company called Kenya Tannin Extract Company Limited. Machinery was imported and a large plant was built near Thika. Raishi Rupshi Dodhia was its first manager. Khetshi Nathoo Gudhka followed him. This venture was very successful and brought prosperity to Meghji and his brother-in-laws Hemrajibhai and Khetshibhai.

In 1936 A.D., Premchand Raichand Company started the Kenya Cotton and Produce Company at Sagana to process cotton. Another plant was set up in Meru.

Other major industrial developments were a brick and tile-making plant set up by Kanji Meghji Malde in Mombasa and a food processing plant set up in Nairobi. After World War Two, Oshwals started many large industrial undertakings to manufacture textiles, knitwear, blankets, soft drinks, confectioneries, cooking oil, plastic containers, pharmaceuticals, tents, shoes, a steel rolling mill, galvanized corrugated iron sheets, carpets, and other products, as well as Oshwals have also opened financial institutions (banks), insurance companies and consulting firms in different areas.

Premchand Vrajpal was probably the first Oshwal in India to set up an industrial plant. In 1944 A.D., he started Harshad Textile Mill in Jamnagar with 92 looms to make saris and dhotis. To establish a link with Cutchh from where Halari Oshwals had moved to Jamnagar District, Premchandbhai started Shah Spinning and Weaving Mill in Anjar in 1947 A.D. Because of the shortage of cotton in that area the venture failed and the mill was closed down in 1956 A.D. In 1954/1955 A.D., he started a small ginnery and in 1960 A.D. he opened an oil mill in Anjar. In 1949 A.D., he set up a large oil mill to refine oil and manufacture soap in Jamnagar. At the same time, many Oshwals in Jamnagar started small-scale factories to make plastic buttons for garments. When the plastic button business became too competitive they diversified and started plants to make brass products. Nowadays Jamnagar is famous in India for manufacturing brass products. Premchandbhai left a legacy of entrepreneurship in his family. His sons, and sons of his three brothers, Kachrabhai, Devrajbhai and Juthabhai have been successful in several ventures throughout the world either as a family unit or in partnership with the Chandaria family.

In the early nineteen-fifties A.D., Popatlal Ranmal started a plant to manufacture caps for soda bottles in Mumbai. In 1960 A.D. there was a large influx of Oshwals in Bhivandi (near Mumbai) to set up looms. This brought

prosperity to many Oshwals. Some Oshwals who left Kenya in the nineteen-sixties A.D. to settle back in India set up industrial plants in Mumbai, Indore and Ahmedabad. As Bangalore became famous for its agarbati (scented sticks), many Oshwals settled there and got involved in manufacturing and marketing agarbatis.

Meghji Pethraj set up the first Oshwal business in England in 1958 A.D. and this was followed by a grocery store by Velji Khimchand Gudhka and Harkhchand Lakhamshi Haria in London. At that time, Oshwals were mainly in the grocery business or working for large department stores. At present there are several Oshwal-owned industrial undertakings, wholesale warehouses and retail shops. Because of the opportunities for higher education, many Oshwals have diversified into service industries such as accountancy, insurance, brokerage, law, banking and finance, and the like.

In the United States of America, almost every one in the beginning came as students to pursue further studies and after completing their studies some of them stayed behind ventured into businesses. At present there are several Oshwal owned large businesses, software engineering firms, motels/hotels, laundromats and grocery stores.

Venilal Hansraj Kachra Sumaria founded a company called Sumaria Systems Inc. In 1982 A.D. The company have been recognized by the Small Business Administration (SBA) and other well known industry organizations for on-time, quality project performance: In 1997 A.D. U.S. Small Business honored him and gave Veni title of 'Administrator's Award of Excellence'. Same year he was named 'Minority Small Business Person of the Year', of Region I, Northeast U.S. In 1999 A.D. the company was rated as National Fast 500 Company, Washington Technology Top 100 Federal Information Technology Company and New England Technology Fast 50 Company. Due to his entrepreneurial spirit, Veni Sumaria, was named

Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year (EOY) finalist in the year 2000 A.D.

Veni was born in 1947 A.D. in the village of Goinj of Navanagar State, Saurashtra. He came to the USA in 1967 A.D. to pursue higher education. He has a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering, a Master's degree in Systems Engineering as well as in Business Administration and a Doctorate degree (Ph.D.) in Automated Control. Due to his valued expertise in both mechanical engineering and control systems - a combination rarely found in 1972 A.D., he was recruited by Stone & Webster Engineering Corporation (SWEC) and because of his excellent job performance in designing nuclear power plant control systems for future energy facilities; SWEC sponsored him for U. S. Citizenship.

Besides his business accomplishments he has worked very hard for the Halari Oshwal community of the USA. He was one of the original members of the group who formed the Oshwal Association. He was also elected as its secretary. Over the years he has worked tirelessly to bring the association up.

Hemendra Raichand Juthalal Shah (Dodhia) owns the Spectro Coating Corporation. It manufactures pile fabric that is used in the furniture industry and the bulk of the product is being exported to Europe and other countries. He has established charitable trusts in India and U.S.A., which donates money to run many worthy causes.

Shashi Ramji Raishi Shah operates a large computer hardware marketing company and his brother Rajesh, in Seattle Washington, of Shah Safari is one of the leading suppliers of garments to large department stores.

Also in the Chandaria group, the families of Mulchand Somchand Khimasia and the Somchand Pethraj have offices/industrial plants in the USA.

In Canada, the Chandaria group, the Mulchand Somchand Khimasia family, the Somchand Pethraj family, the Velji Dharamshi Chandaria family and the Premchand Vrajpal group operate very successful industrial plants and businesses.

Community Leaders

Kantilal Punamchand Shah was born in April 1922 in Halar. He studied up to the third Gujarati grade. In 1949 A.D. at the age of 19 he migrated to Nairobi, Kenya. He worked there for seven years, during which time he educated himself. He served as assistant secretary of the Indian Association and President of the Indian Youth League. In 1959 A.D. he was elected President of the Nairobi Indian Chamber of Commerce. He was also elected a delegate of the East African Indian Congress. In 1954 A.D. he was one of the people to fight for liberation of Jomo Kenyatta. In 1961 A.D. he was elected a member of the Parliament of Kenya for the Kenya Freedom Party. In 1963 A.D. when Kenya became independent, the Kenya Freedom Party was dissolved; therefore he joined another party, the Kenya African National Union (KANU) and served as treasurer. In 1964 A.D. he became a member of the Transport Licensing Appeal Tribunal and in the same year he was elected Director of a public limited company called Lunch Kiore (Plantation) Limited. For years he had served in many community organizations and always fought against injustice.

Somchand Ladhabsai Gudhka was born in 1913 in the village of Navagam, located in Navanagar State Saurashtra. After few years of schooling in 1926 he migrated to Kenya. After working in various places, he opened his own shop in Nairobi in partnership with his brothers and moved to Mombasa in 1948. In 1974, he migrated to the United Kingdom.

Somchandbhai was a very active volunteer in the community affairs. He was a strong supporter of widow's

re-marriage and against the practice of covering faces (laj) While in Nairobi he was a member of the Oshwal Youth League and editor of the community magazines Aagal Dhaso and Jyotsna. In the years 1944-45 he was elected as President of the Oshwal Youth league. After moving to Mombasa in 1948 he worked in various capacities in the managing committee of the Visa Oshwal Vanik community of Mombasa and became its chairman in the years 1972-73.

He took deep interest in Jain religion and participated in the activities of Shri Svetamber Deravashi Jain Sangh of Mombasa for twenty-one years. He served as secretary, vice-chairman and in 1968 became its chairman. He was one of the driving forces behind the construction of the new domed Jain temple.

His love for education is well known. He played a crucial role in the establishment of the educational institutions in Mombasa. He was chairman of the Oshwal Academy Committee from its inception in 1968 to 1974.

While he lived in UK from 1974 until his death his main interest was to write history of the Halari Visa Oshwal community. He traveled widely in India in search of information about the origin of Oshwals and interview many historians of various other Oshwal and Jain communities. He wrote 25 articles on the history Oshwal community in Gujarati, which were then published in a monthly magazine the *Oshwal/Halari Bandhu*. He passed away on April 20, 2000 at Harrow in UK.

Literature and Entertainment

Chandrakant H. Shah was born in 1956 in the village of Goinj, Saurashtra (India). Chandu wears many hats; he is a poet, a play writer, an actor, a director, a producer and a journalist. He writes mostly in Gujarati.

He has written books of poems in Gujarati;

- (1) Ane Thoda Sapna (and some dreams) for which he was awarded the best collection of new Gujarati poems published in 1992-1993 by *Gujarati Sahitya Parishad*, a premier Gujarati literary institution of Ahmedabad India. And
- (2) Blue Jeans (in year 2000), poems based on blue jeans as a subject. This was subscribed as a textbook for Masters students by SNDT University of Mumbai in the year 2000-2002.

He has written several successful full-length plays in Gujarati; most of them Gujarati musical plays. He has even written a full-length play in English, Mahatma Gandhi.com.

He wrote commentary for a short film for Films and Television Institute of India *Chakkar Chandu ka Chameliwala*, which won National Award for the best experimental film in 1982. He also wrote commentary for documentary made by Ketan Mehta on Weavers of Cutchh in Gujarati and for documentary by a Film Division *Ek Bangla Bane Nyara* in Hindi.

He has produced directed and acted in many plays. His best performance as an actor was a one-man show as character of Narmad, *Maari Hakikat* in Gujarati and My Life in English. For which he toured India three times by official invitation from *Kala Gujarati*, a cultural Organization and by a special invitation from the Government of Gujarat. He has also toured UK, by formal invitation from Gujarati Literacy Academy, London UK and Paris by invitation from Association France Inde.

He has received several awards: (1) Bhanuprasad Pandya Award for First book of poems in 1992, (2) Chan. Chi Mehta Award, for overall contribution to Gujarati drama

in 2003, and (3) by Chicago Arts Circle a special honor for overall contribution of Gujarati literature in 2003.

Education

Amratlal Virpar Gada was born in 1900 in the village of Khara Beraja, Navanagar State in Saurashtra. After finishing elementary school in Khara Beraja he went to Jamnagar for high school education. While studying there he also worked in his maternal uncle's shop. When he was 17 year of age he came in contact with Gordhandas Mehta, a lawyer who used to work for His Highness Ranjit Sinhji, the ruler of Navanagar State. Mr. Mehta was impressed by the way Amratlal conducted himself. Mr. Mehta took him under his wing. Amratlal stayed with him for five years as an apprentice and learnt about the practice of law. On the advice of Mr. Mehta, Ranjit Sinhji declared him a lawyer and gave permission to Amratlalbai to practice the law in his State. Amratlalbai was the first person of the Halari Visa Oshwal community to practice law. During his lifetime he was always helpful to the village people and always gave them the right advice. In the legal matters he would work for them without charging any fees. After the death of Ranjit Sinhji, Digvijay Sinhji, became the king. Amratlalbai was put in charge of making all the arrangements during the wedding of Digvijay Sinhji. He passed away in Jamnagar in 1970 at the age of 70 years.

Professionals

As a result of the opportunities offered by educational institutions, which were started by Oshwal visionary leaders, there is probably a higher percentage of the Oshwals with a college or university education than in any other community. The Oshwals have excelled as actuaries, biologists, chartered accountants, computer scientists, medical doctors, dentists, engineers, librarians,

Montessori teachers, pharmacists, psychologists, professors, photographers, and the like.

In addition to having their own consulting business, many have served in high-level positions with state and federal or central governments and international organizations. They are editors of several magazines including *Oshwal Samachar*, *Sandesh* and *Jain Spirit*. *Jain Spirit* is a non-sectarian international magazine published quarterly. It contains news, articles and art from eminent writers and artists. It commands a global circulation. The executive editor of this magazine that shares Jain values globally is Atul Shah, a young man of the Halari Visa Oshwal descent.

Sports

In last 50 years, Oshwals have made very impressive progress in the field of sports. Some have won championships at national and international levels. The first Oshwal to represent a national team was Nandlal Popatlal Karman Malde who represented Asians in the annual Asians versus Europeans cricket match in Kenya. Among those who have represented Kenya in cricket have been Jawahir Nathoo Shah, Harilal Raishi Rupshi Shah and Ravinder Dhirajlal Shah. Harilal has been the captain and the manager of the Kenya cricket teams in international matches.

In golf, Anil Mohanlal Dharmashi Shah is probably the first Oshwal to win a major golf championship and regularly participates in national and international tournaments. Damayanti Pravin Shah has won several ladies golf championships in Mauritius and represented Mauritius in international tournaments. Other sports in which Oshwals have excelled include tennis, table tennis, squash, swimming, badminton, and the like.

Honors

Devshi Mepa Shah, the senior partner of the firm of Vershi Mepa & Co., of Thika, was honored by the British government as M.B.E. (Member of the Order of the British Empire) on the occasion of the Queen's birthday in 1960 for his distinguished services in business, social and government bodies and because of his unselfish devotion and hard work for the betterment of not only the Oshwal but the entire Indian community of Thika. He was a very popular leader among the Indian community of Thika.

Keshavlal P. Chandaria who is a member of the Rotary Club is actively involved in activities of various religious and social Indian organizations in Toronto Canada. Keshav Chandaria was honored by Providence of Ontario, Canada with the Order of Ontario in 1999 and in 2002 he was recipient of Queens Golden Jubilee Medal from Government of Canada.

Manu P. Chandaria, in 1982 received the International Award for an outstanding Gurajar for his achievement in International Business Sector. This award is given every year to a person whose origin is from the State of Gujarat and who has done outstanding work in a social, business or other sector. He was named "Most Respected Chief Executive Officer (CEO)," in East Africa for three consecutive years. In year 2003, he was honored by (1) Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II of United Kingdom as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.), (2) the Government of Kenya as an Elder of the Burning Spear (E.B.S.) and (3) he received Pravasi Bharatiya Samman award from the Indian Prime Minister. The *Pravasi Bharatiya Samman* awards have been instituted by the Government of India to recognize and reward the meritorious contributions made by Indian citizens and people of Indian origin in the furtherance of India's interests and causes. In addition Government of South Korea also honored him.

Arti Pulin Chandaria who is daughter in law of Keshav P. Chandaria was a recipient of the Queens Golden Jubilee Medal from the Government of Canada in the year 2002.

Hasmukh Raichand Dodhia holds the chairmanship or membership of many educational, business and religious associations including the Lion's Club of Madhya Pradesh. He has received many awards for his humanitarian services. He was honored by the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh in January 2003 for his humanitarian services and the title of 'Excellent Man of the Year', was bestowed on him.

List of the other honoraries:

Ratilal Champshi Shah, Keshubhai Mulji Malde, Soubhagyachand Vidhu Ramji (Bachubhai), Suresh Raichand Shah, Amritlal Bhagawanji Shah, Mahendra Dayalal Shah, Mohanbhai Dharamshi Shah, Satish Somchand Shah. Suryakant (Suresh) Bhagwanji Raja Shah, Piyush Ratilal Anand Shah were honored by the Government of Kenya; Himat Devchand Nathoo Shah by the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania; and Venichand Ranmal Harania by the Government of United Kingdom.

Arts

Oshwals who have been nationally and internationally recognized for their expertise in various fields are:

Pushpa Gulabchand Juthalal Haria, Vibha Arunkumar Mohanlal Shah and Reshma Mahendra Raishi Shah of Kenya in art of *rangoli*.

Manoj and Anupam Raichand Karamshi Shah, Dipesh Hashwin Galaya and Hashwin Devan Shah of Kenya in photography. And

Jaya Mahendra Meghji Malde, Kamal Kantilal Shah of Kenya in painting.

Honors of being first

Amratlal Raishi was the first person to pass the London Matriculation Examination (former university entrance examination) at the first attempt. Veluben Keshavji, Amratben Keshavji, Kasturben Keshavji and Motiben Premchand were the first ladies to receive a secondary education. Sobhagchand Kachra was the first person to get a degree in engineering. Jayantilal Nemchand Fulchand was the first person to get a doctorate in nutrition from a university in the USA. Shantilal Shah of Mombasa was the first person to get a degree in dentistry. Nimuben Kamdar (Nirmala Nathoo Malde) was the first person and first woman to get a degree in Medicine. Ramniklal D. Shah and Yashvant Zaverchand Keshavji Shah were the first two men to get degrees in medicine. Harakhchand Meghji Hirji, H. V. Shah and Velji Devshi were the first group to obtain degrees in law. Jyotsna Sudhir Amratlal Shah (daughter of Mohanlal Shah) was the first woman to get a doctorate in biochemistry. Amratlal Premchand Shah (A.P. Shah) was the first to be appointed a magistrate in Kenya. Amratlal Bhagwanji Shah was the first to be appointed a high court judge in Kenya. Suhas Kishore Meghji Gudka (daughter of Popatlal Ranmal) was the first woman to obtain a degree in law.

Appendix 1 (Early History)

The time is before Vikram Samvat (for B.C.E add 57).

5000: First historical evidence of Arhat religion from the archeological diggings of Mohenjo-dero.

820-720: Era of Lord Parshvanath (Twenty third Tirthankara).

542-470: Era of Lord Mahavir (Twenty-fourth Tirthankara).

448: Acharya Svayam Prabha Suri, fifth leader of Parshvanath's monastic order initiated the conversion of warrior caste (*kshtriya*), residents of Shrimal Nagar into Jainism and founded the Shrimal (*gachha*) sect.

400: Acharya Ratna Prabha Suri, sixth leader of Parshvanath's monastic order initiated the conversion of warrior caste residents of Upkesh Patan (*Osyia Nagari*) and established the Upkleshia sect, which in time came to be called the Oshwal. Originally there were 18 sub-sects.

310-300: Due to a great famine in the northern part of India, Acharya Bhadrabahu with his followers migrated to South. The Emperor Chandragupta Maurya, who embraced the Jain religion, accompanied the group. Some time after the famine ended Acharya Sthulibhadra compiled the Holy Scriptures in 11 *Angas* (Limbs) in Pataliputra.

112: The Kharvel Emperor Meghwan of Kaling kingdom a follower of Lord Parshvanath conquered Magadh and reinstalled the Jina's images.

97: Many Oshwals fled following a great calamity, which took place in Upkesh Patan (*Oshiya Nagari*), because Sachiya Devi (goddess) became very angry as people cut off the knots present on the thighs of Lord Mahavir's image. To calm the anger of Devi, Acharya Kakk Suri was invited to perform the Snatra Puja (The ritualistic worship and sacred bathing of the Jina).

17: As per the wishes of Acharya Kalak and with the help of Shakas, his followers assassinated the king Gardbhil of Ujjaini and rescued and brought safely back Kalak's sister nun Sarasvati. The monastic society of Kalak came to be known as the *Bhavada gachha*. The people of the Upkesh sect in Northern and Sindh province came to be known as the Bhavda gachha. Even now in the Punjab people of the Bhavda Oshwal sect are found.

The time is Vikram Samvat (for A.D. deduct 57).

0: King Vikramaditya defeated Shakas and become the Emperor. This was the beginning of the Vikram Samvat era.

108 or 187: The Oshwal Shresthi Javad Shah, son of Bhavad Shah donated money for thirteenth restoration of Shatrunjay tirth. (According to Dhaneshvar Suri restoration took place in 187).

136/139: Division of the Jain Society into the Digamber and the Svetamber sects.

222: Upkesh Shresthi Jaga Shah, son of Deshal of *Abha Nagri*, undertook a pilgrimage to Shatrunjay. (Based on the story told by bards/minstrels).

280: Many people of the Bhavda Oshwal sect were dying because of an epidemic of plague in Takshashilla and in

the northern part of India. Acharya Mandev Suri wrote and recited the *Shantikaram stavan*, which ended the epidemic. Because of this many non-Jains embraced the Jain religion.

339-357: Inspired by the discourse of Acharya Kakka the Bhavda Oshwal Mala Shah undertook pilgrimage to Shatrunjay. Shresthi Ranvir of Lahore took a big contingent on pilgrimage to Samet Shikhar. And the Oshwal of the Karnat gotra Shresthi Ravat of Takshashilla took a large contingent on pilgrimage to Shatrunjay.

357-360: Reading and memorizing of the Jain scriptures by Acharya Skandil in Mathura and Acharya Nagarjun in Vallabhi.

372: The Oshwal Shresthi Dhaval son of Gosal Shah of the Bhuri gotra under the leadership of Acharya Sinh Suri took a big contingent on pilgrimage to Shatrunjay.

412: Division of the Svetamber sect into *Chaitya vasi* (*Deravasi*), those who lived in temples or *Upashryas* and *Suvihit margi* those who did not live in one place for long period of time. They would only stay in one place during four months of rainy season (*chatumas*).

470: Soma son of Gokul Shah of the Chauradia gotra took a big contingent on pilgrimage to Shatrunjay from Marukot Malot.

508: In the temple of the village Atru of Kota Kingdom, installation of memorial stone of Oshwal Shresthi Bhensa Shah of the Aditya gotra.

510: Final reading and memorizing of the Jaina scriptures by Acharya Devardhigani, who reduced the scriptures to writing for the first time.

520-558: Under the leadership of Acharya Siddha Suri a contingent of the Sankhla gotra the Oshwal community of Virpur went on pilgrimage to Santrunjay.

530-585: Acharya Haribhadra Suri wrote a book *Samraich Kaha* in the Prakrit language in which he describes the glory of Upkesh Nagar and story of Upkesh Shresthi Samraditya and mentions the abolition of the tax imposed by Brahmins on the Upkesh community.

535-557: Toranmal Hun, who ruled almost the entire western region with Bhinmal as his capital. He was very impressed by Haribhadra Suri.

567: The tyrant king Mihir, son of Toranmal, was ruthless and tormented the Jain community of Upkesh Nagar, many of whom therefore fled to Gujarat.

592: Acharya Siddhshri Divangat passed away. His literary work *Upmitibhav prapanch Katha*, written in Prakrit was believed to be the first such work.

601-631: Installation of the image by Acharya Devgupt Suri in the Parshvanath temple of Damrol, as well as construction of the Mallinath temple by the Ranka gotra Oshwal Shresthi Kheta Shah in Syalkot.

613: Goleccha gotra, Agaron, the son of Bhopat Shah, from Jognipur (Delhi) took a large contingent on pilgrimage to Shatrunjay.

631: In Syalkot construction of a Shanthinath temple by the Ranka gotra Oshwal Shresthi Shah Kheta.

663: Harshvardhan became the emperor of India and made the Buddhist religion an official religion of the empire.

697: According to mythology, on Mount Abu during the ceremonial fire worship four persons of the warrior caste (*Kshtriya*) emerged from the sacred pit and established the *Chauhan, Padihar, Solanki* and *Parmar* clans.

703: According to a stele of Samoli Shresthi Jentak owner of tin, zinc and silver mines passed away.

732: The great poet Magh son of Shrimal Shresthi wrote the epic poem *Shishu-Pal-Vadhum* in Sanskrit and his cousin the Shrimal Acharya Siddhshri wrote his famous book *Upmitibhav Prapanch Katha* in Prakrit (the date varies according to different historians. Some believe this happened in fifth or sixth, or as late as ninth or tenth century).

764-775: Udayprabh Suri and other Jain acharyas converted King Bhan and other Shrimal nobles of Bhinmal to Jainism and created 62 sects of the Shrimal community.

795: Ratnabai daughter of the Oshwal Shreshthi Jaimal, given in marriage to King Bhan.

800-95: Acharya Bappbhat Suri converted the sons of King Aam by his queen originally of Vanik community to Jainism and founded the Raj-Kosthgar gotra.

802: After Pattan was founded, the people of Upkesh community of Bhinmal were invited to come and settle down there. Most of their descendants still live there.

835: Acharya Udhyotan Suri established the 84 gachhas. He wrote the book name *Kuwalya Mala*, describing the detailed account of King Toranmal Hun's reign in Bhinmal and how his son Mihirmal, when he became king tortured and brought misery to the people of Upkesh community, who left the city and fled to Gujarat. (Some historians believe Acharya Udhyotan Suri lived in 994).

845-877: Adi Shankracharya established the monasteries in Badrikashram, Shrungeri, Dwarka and Puri.

891: To celebrate the four months (*chaturmas*) stay of Acharya Devgupt Suri; the Oshwal Shresthi of Arya gotra, Kabad, son of Manuji Shah invited the entire Oshwal community for a feast.

954: Establishment of the Baradia gotra of Oshwals by the Digamber Acharya Nemichand Suri, writer of *Gomtasar* and other famous works.

990: The 57 feet high Bahubali's statue built at Sravan Belgola.

1026-72: Establishment of Sancheti, Lodha, Pipaada and other gotras of the Oshwals by Acharya Vardhman Suri and by his request construction of magnificent temples in Abu by Porwal Shreshthi Vimal Shah.

1057-1107: Construction of temples of Khajurao by the kings of Chandel.

1067-81: Twenty-fourth attack on India by Mohamed Gaznavi with pillage and destruction of Hindu temples and images.

1072-1135: Establishment of the Pagariya and other gotras of the Oshwals by Acharya Abhay Dev Suri.

1074: Establishment of the Khartar gachha of the Oshwals by Acharya Jineshwar Suri who founded the Shripati, Tilera, Chil, Mehta and Bhansali gotras.

1108: Nahata Gotra Bhensa Shah of Bhinmal took a large contingent for pilgrimage to Shatrunjay and also minted his own coins. (Some historians believe him to be a resident of Didvana).

1132-1211: Acharya Jindatt Suri of the Khartar gachha converted 136000 people to Jainism and established the Tantia, Kothari, Sethia, Chouradia, and other gotras of the Oswals.

1145-1221: Acharya Hemchandra Suri of the Ohad gotra gave a discourse and converted the Emperor Siddhraj Jaysinh and Kumarpal to Jainism. He wrote the life history of *Trishasti Shalka Purush* (63 Illustrious People), and established the Shankhla, Surana and other gotras of the Oswals.

1150-1205: Shrimal Shreshthi Udyan was chief minister of the Emperor Siddhraj Jaisinh.

1156-67: Acharya Jin Vallabh Suriji introduced rituals in the temple and founded the Chopda, Bhanthia and other gachhas of the Oswals.

1169-1236: Establishment of the Anchal gachha, a pro ritual sect, by Acharya Aryakshit Suri. Grand celebration held by the shravak (layman) Yashodhan Bhansali. Mahipal and Sahasguna Gandhi gachhas established in the Oswal community of Sindh.

1197-1223: The powerful senior Acharya Jinchand Suri of the Kartar gachha of the Oswal sect converted non-Jains to Jains and founded the Chhaged, Mini, Khajanchi, Shri Shrimal, Kothari, Dugad and other Oswal gachhas.

1200-1230: Reign of the Emperor Kumarpal. Due to the influence of Acharya Hemchandra Suri he embraced the Jain religion. He built 1440 magnificent Jain temples and 21 libraries.

1202-1258: Acharya Jaisinh of the Anchal gachha, son of the Oswal millionaire Dron to whom Siddhraj Jaisinh gave the title of *Yug Pradhan* (Minister of the Era) founded

the Oshwal gachhas, Hathudia, Jalha, Loldia, Mithadia, Nagda, Bhumania, Chokhedia, Lalan, Kataria, Devda, Nisar, Rathod, Chhajed, and others.

1205: Death of Shrimal Shresthi Udyan who was appointed the administrator (governor) of Khambhat by Emperor Siddhraj Jaisinh. The Emperor adopted Chahad Udyan's son. When Kumarpal became emperor he made Vagbhat the eldest son of Udyan his chief minister.

1233-66: Mohammed Gori invaded India.

1234-1298: The Anchal gachha Acharya Dharmaghosh of the Shrimal gotra founded the Devanand Sarwa, Gothi, Gosaliya, Fafodia, Dodia, Lecha, and Haria gachhas.

1276-1303: Era of the Porwal Shreshthis Vastupal and Tejpal. Division of the Oshwals into Visa and Dasa.

1285: The Svetamber Acharya Jagchandra Suri of Nirgrantha sect founded tappa Gachha.

1312-15: The philanthropist Shrimal Jagdu Shah during the great famine distributed food to millions and came to be known as Savior of the World.

1582: Babar became the Emperor of India.

1613: Akbar became the Emperor of India.

1684: Shah Jahan became the Emperor of India.

1747-57: Jab Charnak bought three towns including Calcutta and laid foundation of the British Empire.

1924-57: Birth of the Shrimal gotra Shrimad Rajchandra. At the age of 19 years he had ability of to hear, remember and recite in the same order 100 things at a time (*Shatavdhan*). He was Gandhiji's spiritual teacher.

APPENDIX 2

History of Halari Visa Oshwals in World

Cutchh and Halar

Time in Vikram Samvat

1550-1700: Mass migration of Oshwals from Sindh and Marward.

1575 (1529 A.D.): Jam Raval left Cutchh with 80,000 people including 5,000 Oshwal men, women and children for Saurashtra. On the way he conquered several kingdoms.

1585 (1539 A.D.): Jam Rawal who had conquered many kingdoms in Saurashtra consolidated his kingdom and named it Halar from the name of his ancestor Jam Halaji and made Khambhalia its capital.

1596 (1550 A.D.): Jam Rawal built a new city and called it Navanagar. He moved the capital of his kingdom from Jam Khambhalia to Navanagar and renamed it Jamnagar.

1613-62: Akbar became the Emperor of India. According to some historians he adopted the Jain religion in 1637-38.

1618: Jam Rawal passed away.

1668-1676: Oshwal Shreshthi Lalan gotra Vardhman Shah and Padmasinh Shah took a large contingent on a pilgrimage to Satrunjay. They built new Jain temples and started trade with China. Vardhman Shah appointed as prime minister of Halar.

Migration from Halar to Africa

Time in A.D. unless indicated otherwise.

1896 A.D.: The first Halari Oshwal to go overseas, Jetha Anand of the Village of Khara Beraja, migrated to Madagascar.

1899 A.D.: Four courageous young men, Hirji Kara of Rafudad, Popatlal Vershi from Ambla, Devji Hirji Gosarani of Dhuniya and Nathoo Devji came to Mombasa by dhow.

1900 A.D.: Premji Virji Nagda of Dabasang and Devraj Kara Malde of Rafudad came to Kenya with them was Kankuben Hirji Kara, the first Oshwal woman to come to Kenya.

1903 A.D.: Keshavji Ramji of Kansumara came to Kenya.

1906 A.D.: Karman Jetha Malde of Dhuniya, Raishi Lakhamshi Dodhia of Arikhana, Manekchand Khimji Malde of Dhuniya, Mepa Khimji Malde of Dhuniya, Kachra Dharamshi and Hansraj Ladha Khimasia of Haripur came to Kenya.

East Africa

Mombasa

1899 A.D.: The first person to settle in Mombasa was Hirji Kara.

1900 A.D.: Kankuben Hirji Kara (wife of Hirji Kara) was the first woman to come to Mombasa.

1901 A.D.: The first Oshwal firm Hirji Kara & Company opened in Mombasa.

1901 A.D.: The Mombasa Indian Association formed.

1902 A.D.: Ratilal Hirji Kara was the first Oshwal born in Mombasa.

1915 A.D.: The first get together under the leadership of Hirji Kara.

1916 A.D.: The Jain Society of Mombasa founded.

1916 A.D.: A fund was established under the chairmanship of Keshavji Ramji to purchase a religious guesthouse (*dharmasahala*) in Mombasa.

1917-1918 A.D.: A building was rented for a religious guesthouse. Religious activities were begun.

1921 A.D.: Mombasa *Jain Svetamber Deravasi Sangh* purchased a building to serve as a temple.

1927 A.D.: Plot for the Mombasa Oshwal *mahajanwadi* purchased on July 28. The people involved in purchasing and development of the land included Hirji Kara, Kanji Meghji, Devchand Nathoo, Popatlal Kanji, Ladha Kanji, Dharamshi Kachra, and Ratilal Hirji.

1930 A.D.: Foundation stone for the perimeter wall laid by Ladhahbai Kanji Shah on October 17. With funding from Premchand Vrajpal Shah, improvements were carried out to an existing building made of galvanized iron sheets (*mbati*) and *Yuvak Mandal* started its activities.

1935 A.D.: Devchand Fulchand Malde laid the foundation stone for a dining hall, kitchen and stores, and a 16-room residential block on May 5. However, because of funding constraints, the construction was delayed and only a nine-room residential block was built. Devji Kara officially opened the new residential block on August 27, 1938.

1934 A.D.: *Oshwal Yuwak Mandal* published a hand written newsletter entitled *Oshwal Prakash*. The young people involved were Lalji Ghela, Jethalal Fulchand, Popatlal Ranmal, Somchand Ladha, Ramji Pethraj, Harakhchand Nemchand and Lalji Meghji.

1935 A.D.: Nursery School started.

1936 A.D.: Current plot purchased for temple.

1938 A.D.: New temple opened.

1946 A.D.: The construction of the remaining seven rooms, a three-room basement and a front verandah completed and officially opened by Kanji Meghji Shah, a very eminent volunteer worker, on December 29.

1946 A.D.: Pujya Yati Shri Hemchandraji visited Mombasa. A medical dispensary opened in mahajanwadi.

1952 A.D.: Kanji Lakhtir Shah, father of Ramji Kanji of Moshi, laid the foundation stone for a five-story building (*Oshwal Bhavan*) on August 28.

1954 AD: The construction of Oshwal Mansion (*Oshwal Bhavan*) completed and officially opened by Dharamshi Kachra Shah on January 7.

1954 A.D.: Nursing home opened.

1955 A.D.: Devkurben Popatlal Karman Malde laid the foundation stone for a new dining hall and out-house on August 28.

1956 AD: The first census of the Oshwal community - total number 3173.

1956 A.D.: The new dining hall, which was named the Oshwal Assembly Hall was completed and officially opened

by Meghji Sojpal Dhanani on March 30. Deviben Karamshi Karania, mother of Hirji Karamshi laid the foundation stone for expansion of the old dining hall (Kanji Meghji Memorial Hall), on August 26.

1957 A.D.: Kanji Khimji Dodhia performed the opening ceremony of the Kanji Meghji Memorial Hall expansion on February 24.

1957 A.D.: Land was purchased for hospital and maternity home. The project failed as the city government refused to evict the tenants.

1968 A.D.: The second census - total number of Oshwals 3402.

1963 A.D.: Present magnificent Jain temple completed. Mombasa Deravasi Svetamber Sangh operated a guesthouse, library, secular nursery and primary school.

1967 A.D.: Mombasa Oshwal Secondary School: Like other places in East Africa, because of inherent problems in education the Mombasa community made a decision to build a secondary school. The Oshwal Education and Relief Board agreed to fund and run the school. Meghji Karman Malde, then the president of the Board laid the foundation stone of the building on October 15. Keshavlal Fulchand Shah performed the opening ceremony on April 6, 1968.

1969 A.D.: The dispensary and nursing home closed because of non-availability of qualified staff.

1974 A.D.: A commercial property on Moi Avenue (Oshwal House) to generate income was purchased.

1978 A.D.: A three-day festival to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of mahajanwadi was opened by Somchand Premchand Shah on September 29.

1982 A.D.: A primary school in existing facilities was opened.

1983 A.D.: The first edition of the community's quarterly magazine - *Oshwal Darshan*, was published on March 29.

1984 A.D.: The Mombasa Visa Oshwal Halari Association donated 101,000 shillings for the Kenya National Famine and Relief Fund. Yuvak Sangh, Oshwal Mahila Mandal, 23 Oshwal families and several Oshwal businesses and the Hindu Union were the main donors.

1984 A.D.: Mombasa Primary School: Ramji Punja Shah, then president of the Oshwal Education and Relief Board and a prominent leader of Kitale laid the foundation stone of this school which was supported by the Oshwal Education and Relief Board, on May 27.

1985 A.D.: Mombasa Oshwal Sport Complex: Mahajanwadi location was selected to build the sport complex. Jivraj Dharamshi of Meru performed the opening ceremony on April 5.

1986 A.D.: Amratlal Kalidas Shah, then vice-chairman of the Board performed the opening ceremony after the completion of the primary school on January 26. Both the primary and the secondary schools were later on consolidated as the Oshwal Academy.

1996 A.D.: D. V. Shah performed the foundation stone laying ceremony for the boundary wall of Nyali community property on April 28.

1998 A.D.: The total Oshwal population was 2138 or 713 families.

2003 A.D.: Oshwal Academy Mombasa: The construction of a new Oshwal Academy at the Nyali site is in progress.

The budgeted cost is 250 million (Kenya) K shillings. Donation of 10 million K shillings was received from the Late Nathoo Meghji family when the foundation stone was laid. The project is to build:

- (1) A primary wing cost of 10 million K shilling, donated by the Suresh Bhagwanji Raja family.
- (2) A lecture theatre and a library at the cost of 2.5 million K shillings each. Total cost of 5 million K shillings donated by the Premchandbhai Foundation - Steel Africa family.
- (3) Playing fields and swimming pool at the cost of 5 million K shillings donated by the Late Ramji Karman Shah family.
- (4) One computer laboratory, one biology laboratory, one physics laboratory and a music center at the cost 500,000 K shillings each; and art & craft workshops at the cost of 250,000 K shillings each total of 1.5 million K shillings donated by the Premchand Kachra Shah Family.
- (5) A computer laboratory at the cost of 500,000 K shillings donated by the Amu Raja Family.
- (6) A chemistry laboratory at the cost of 500,000 K shillings donated by Late Mohanlal Kanji Hirji Shah family.
- (7) 34 Classrooms cost at the cost of 250,000 K shillings each. Donations for four classrooms have been pledged so far. A nursery wing, cost of 7.5 million K shillings, a secondary wing, cost of 10 million K shilling, a multi-purpose hall, cost 5 million K shillings, one domestic science workshop cost, 250,000 K shillings, One humanities workshop cost, 250,000 K shillings and one audio visual workshop cost, 250,000 K shillings.

In addition to the outright donations scheme, there are platinum plaques schemes, which are outright donations of one million K shillings. So far, 3 platinum plaques have been pledged. There are several pledges of one million K

shillings each toward the support group scheme, whereby these are interest free loans. 50% of the loan will be repaid after three years from the date of the loan, and 50% five years from the date of the loan.

Nairobi

1899 A.D.: The first to settle down in Nairobi were Devji Hirji and Papatlal Vershi.

1900 A.D.: Premji Virji and Devraj Kara came from India.

1901 A.D.: Devji Hirji opened the first Oshwal business.

1905 A.D.: Keshavji Ramji of Kansumara who came in this country in 1903 opened the firm of Meghji Ladha & Company.

1905 A.D.: Keshavji Parbat traveled by foot from Nairobi to Muranga (Fort Hall) in two and a half days. There was no transportation of any kind available that time.

1907 A.D.: Monghiben Devji was the first Oshwal born in Nairobi.

1908 A.D.: In Nairobi there were around 1000 Indians settled, of which 100 were Oshwals.

1908A.D.: The first gathering for a religious festival.

1910 A.D.: Cutchhi Hindu Union: Credit goes to Keshavji Ramji Shah, to start an organized community association. He laid the foundation of the Cutchhi Hindu Union, one of the major organizations of East Africa. Between 1910 and 1915 the Oshwal population reached 200. By 1920 it went up to 800.

1914 A.D.: Formation of the East African Indian National Congress.

1915 A.D.: The first Oshwal meeting officially took place in Nairobi under the leadership of Keshavji Ramji.

1918 A.D.: Visa Oshwal Jain Gnan Vardhak Mandal:

This was the first Oshwal Institution established after the hard work of Fulchand Karamshi and his brother Raichand Karamshi. Devji Hirji was the first president elected. The association conducted religious and social activities and language classes in English and Gujarati. The association was officially registered in 1921 A.D.

1920 A.D.: The religious school was started with few students. By 1970, 100 students attended daily classes.

1925 A.D.: A building was rented opposite Queen's Garden (Jeevanji Gardens) on Moktar Dada Street. The social and religious activities were held there.

1926 A.D.: Community Premises(*Jainshala*):The plot on Canal Road was purchased. A general fund was established. The money for the plot was paid from the fund. Raishi Lakhamshi played a major role in acquiring this plot. The land belonged to the firm of Messrs' Imtiazali, as he had some business connections with the firm he was able to negotiate the purchase. Raishibhai was a very generous man. He was known as a guardian of poor.

1927 A.D.: Ladha Parbat laid the foundation stone of Jainshala. A general fund was established to which members of the Nairobi community and of the central province (Thika, Makindi, and Muranga and other towns) contributed money generously.

1927 A.D.: Virji Narshi Shah a leading community worker officially opened the Jainshala hall On November 13. Religious and the language classes, a library, social and religious activities all were conducted in the newly built hall. It was also used as a guesthouse for students, new arrivals or guests from outside. Money was raised through

yearly fees, *ghee bolies* (auctions) and donations from individuals in Nairobi and throughout the Central Province. Shortly afterwards *Visa Oshwal Halari Mandal* was constituted to manage activities which took place in the temple. Religious and the social organizations merged in mid-1930s.

1928 A.D.: Visa Oshwal Youth League was formed. At the same time a similar organization was started in Mombasa. In Nairobi the Youth League started extracurricular activities such as sports, exercises, debates, music and the like. They even started a monthly publication *Agad Dhaso* under the editorship of Amratlal Raishi in which revolutionary articles were published.

1935 A.D.: Jain Youth League was formed in Nairobi by Devchand Premchand Chandaria and other young people including Devchand Patani, Velji Gosar Maru, Velji Galaiya, Mulchand Somchand Khimasia, Lakhamsi Ranmal, Velji Khimchand, and Rupchand Hirji. They published a special Divali issue of a magazine called *Jyotsna*.

1936 A.D.: A killer famine struck the sub continent of India. Saurashtra was badly affected. Meghji Pethraj Shah took the initiative and called a meeting held in the premises of the firm of Premchand Raichand & Co. The people in attendance included Premchand Vrajpal Shah, Bharmal Raishi, Popatlal Karman, Vershi Mepa, Somchand Meghji, Hemchand Meghji, Maganlal Popat Chandaria, Virji Narshi, Amratlal Bharmal and other community leaders. A formal community association called the *Visa Oshwal Halari Mahajan Mandal* was formed. Meghji Pethraj was elected as the president. A decision was made to establish a famine relief fund. A total of 175000 shillings was collected in the fund. A Committee was formed in Jamnagar to distribute the necessary help such as clothing, food, and money to the needy in Halari under the guidance of *Halari Visa Oshwal Mandal*. This was a timely help.

1940 A.D.: Nairobi Mahajanwadi. The population of the Nairobi community had increased considerably. There was a need for a bigger place. A plot was purchased in Nagara on Limuru Road, initially privately by six Oshwal firms. Many Oshwals virulently opposed the location as too far from the town center. The community eventually approved the purchase and repaid the firms from the general fund collected in 1946, coincident with the visit of the Jain teacher Yati Shri Hemchandraj. The six firms involved were, Premchand Brothers, Karman Mepa, Bhagwanji and Co., Amratlal & Co., Kachra Jivraj and Meghji Pethraj. Other leaders who gave full support were Bharmal Raishi, Popatlal Karman, Virji Narshi, and extraordinary support from Hemchand Meghji.

1941 A.D.: Oshwal Education and Relief Board: The leaders of the community realizing the need for education for the future generation got together and made a decision to form a single united community organization for the entire Visa Oshwal Halari Community. It was decided to call a meeting of the entire East Africa Oshwal Community. Nairobi was selected as the host city. The time selected was during the Easter holiday. Invitations were sent to the representatives of all the Halari communities of East Africa. The opening day of the meeting was April 11. Delegates from every community were present. The meeting was held in Jainshala hall. Many burning issues were discussed. One of the most important issues that were discussed was to form a central body to look after the educational needs and financial aid for the community during natural disasters. The resolution to form such a body was passed unanimously. The name of the organization given was 'Oshwal Education and Relief Board' popularly called 'the Board'. The committee was made up of 21 members. The first president of the Board elected was the very able and deserving Popatlal Karman Malde with a very able secretary Raichand Karamshi Shah.

1942 A.D.: Oshwal Youth League Nairobi: Both Visa Oshwal Yuvak Mandal and Jain Youth League were dissolved and a new united organization was formed called Oshwal Youth League. Virji Narshi was elected the first president of the newly formed organization. The other committee members were Meghji Karman Malde, Hansraj Kalidas, Lakhamshi Keshavji, Dharamshi Bharmal, Shantilal Devshi and other youths.

1944 A.D.: The Oshwal Youth League started a monthly publication called Jyotsna, which lasted for two years. The publication was restarted in 1949 and publication continued for 15 years. The people who worked hard and diligently at various times included: Somchand Ladha, Popatlal Ranmal, Raichand Parbat, Motichand Bharmal, Hansraj Devan, and Motichand Ramji in the initial stage. In the later stage Uttamchand Govindji, Prabhulal Narshi, Kantilal Narshi, Keshavlal Lalji Dodhia, Panachand Jivraj Dedhia, Ratilal Vidhubhai Shah, Kiran Hirji Shah and many others.

1946 A.D.: General Fund for Mahajanwadi Hall: The Jain Preacher Yati Shri Hemchandraji came to Nairobi from India. Due to his inspiration a decision was made to build a hall and start a nursery school on the Limuru Road property. A committee to collect fund was established. It included Popatlal Karman Malde, Bharmal Raishi, Kanji Nathoo, Raichand Meghji, Vershi Mepa, Lalji Makanji and Karamshi Panachand. People donated money generously. A total of 557,815 shillings was collected.

1946 A.D.: Oshwal Mahila Mandal Nairobi: The religious discourses of Yati Shri Hemchandraji also inspired the womenfolk. With his encouragement the women formed their own separate organization. They started many social and religious activities and made tremendous progress. The ladies who worked hard to start the organization included Deviben Devshi Shah, Kankuben Meghji Karman Malde, Kashiben Mulchand Shah,

Rambhaben Hirji Raishi Shah, Parvatiben Hemraj Nathoo Shah, Rupaben Jagjivan Shah, Puriben Velji Shah and Kasturben Somchand Shah. Later on Manuben Chandulal Shah, Sushilaben Kantilal Narshi Shah, Sushilaben Jayantilal Kalidas Shah, Rambhaben Shantilal Devshi Shah, Hansaben Chandrakant Devchand Patani, Vijyaben Jayantilal Mulchand Shah, Champaben Keshavlal Jivraj Raja and Kantaben Shantilal Devchand Shah continued the work.

1946 A.D.: Donation by Kachra Merag: Kachra Merag Shah who was an ordinary businessman donated the sum of 50,000 shillings for education. This was almost his entire wealth. This was not just a donation but also a sacrifice like the famous philanthropists Bhama Shah and Jagdu Shah. Those were billionaires while Kachra bhai was just an ordinary man. Words are not enough to describe his sacrifice.

1948 A.D.: Nairobi Mahajanwadi Hall: To meet the needs of community a decision was made to build community halls, offices and guest rooms. Popatlal Karman Malde laid the foundation stone for these facilities.

1948 A.D.: Donation for Mahajanwadi Hall: Hemchand Meghji not only took a keen interest in acquiring the plot for the mahajanwadi but he came all the way from India to attend the foundation laying ceremony of the mahajanwadi complex and donated 35000 shillings towards the construction expenses in memory of his beloved wife the late Panchiben. This was the exact amount, which was paid for the purchase of the mahajanwadi plot.

1948 A.D.: General Purpose Hall Behind Jainshala: As the activities in Nairobi had increased the Jainshala space was becoming too small. A decision was made to build a hall behind the Jainshala. Virji Narshi Shah, the prominent leader well versed in Jain religion, laid the foundation stone.

1949 A.D.: Opening Ceremony of Main Hall of Mahajanwadi: The construction of the hall was completed in good time. Bharmal Raishi performed the opening ceremony.

1949 A.D.: First Convention of all the East Africa Oshwal Community: The central theme of the convention was to bring reforms in the society. After much discussion many proposals were submitted and passed. The first East African Oshwal Conference officially ratified widow remarriage without restrictions. In 1949, 1953, 1956, and 1960 Oshwal conferences were held to discuss social issues and problems, but had no power to enforce reforms and little influence to press acceptance of reform by the general public.

1951 A.D.: Nairobi Nursery school: Nursery school was started in the month of September in the mahajanwadi. It was the beginning of the community's involvement in education.

1952 A.D.: Primary School Nairobi: In the past community children had encountered a lot of problems in getting proper education. It was the intention of community leaders that no one should be left out of getting proper education. A primary school was started in the mahajanwadi. Meanwhile continued efforts to get land for the school from the government proved fruitful. The community was successful in getting a parcel of land on Mapaka Road.

1953 A.D.: Dining Hall: To meet the needs of the growing community construction of a dining hall with a kitchen had been started in the beginning of the year. It was completed in a year at the expense 225000 shillings. Meghji Karman Malde, as the chairperson of the committee, worked very hard towards the completion of this project.

1956 A.D.: Primary School Nairobi: The foundation stone of the primary school on Mapaka Road was laid by the Mr. O. W. F. Coats, then the Minister of Education, Labour and Lands. The members of the executive committee, Keshavalal Fulchand, President and Somchand Pethraj, Secretary worked very hard for the success of the project.

1956 A.D.: The population census of the community in Nairobi was undertaken. The count was 6270 people.

1957 A.D.: Installation of Images: Day by day the religious activities were increasing. The family of Vershi Mepa Shah donated images made of marble, which were installed in the Jainshala temple.

1958 A.D.: Primary School Nairobi: Primary school classes were started on April 28 on Mapaka Road. The official opening took place on July 30 by Sir Evelyn Baring, then Governor of Kenya. Karamshi Panachand, Lalji Jetha and Dharamshi Bharmal supervised the completion of the construction diligently.

1959 A.D.: Secondary Girls School: To make sure that even the girls get enough education, secondary school classes were started on July 1 in mahajanwadi. At the same time the construction of seven more classrooms, a library and an assembly hall was completed in the primary school. The forms for registration of marriage were also prepared and a decision to issue marriage certificates was put into effect.

1960 A.D.: Nairobi Girls Hostel: A plan to build a hostel for girls from upcountry was made by the Oshwal Education and Relief Board. Somchand Meghji Khimasia, a trustee of the Board and a prominent businessman, laid the foundation stone for the building on land located on Second Avenue Parklands on January 26.

1961 A.D.: Nairobi Oshwal Girls' Secondary School:

A parcel of land of two acres was purchased on Wambugu Road at the cost of 150000 shillings for the purpose of building a girls' secondary school. Keshavlal Fulchand, a dedicated community leader who had worked very hard for the community for the last four decades, laid the foundation stone for the building on November 5.

1961 A.D.: Nairobi Sports Pavilion:

A decision was made to build a modern sport complex on the land on Thika Road given to the community by the government. Karamshi Panachand then President of the Nairobi Community laid the foundation stone for the pavilion.

1961 A.D.: Nairobi Girls' Hostel:

Meghji Pethraj Shah, East Africa's entrepreneur (Shah Sodagar) and the philanthropist performed the opening ceremony of the hostel on January 15. By his entrepreneurship and success in East Africa as well in India he had gained worldwide fame, a proud son of the Halari Oshwal community.

1961 A.D.: Nairobi Boys' Boarding House:

There was a need for a more space as more students from upcountry were coming to Nairobi for secondary school education. The Board decided to build a new boarding house. Kanji Nathoo Gudhka, the past president of the Board laid the foundation stone of the new building on November 26.

1961 A.D.: Nairobi Boys' Secondary School:

Many students who failed in the Kenya Preliminary examination were expelled from the school. To provide an opportunity for uninterrupted education to these Oshwal students, the Board decided to build a boys secondary school in the First Parkland area. Kanji Meghji Malde, the founder member, past president and a trustee of the Board, laid the foundation stone. Words cannot describe what Kanjibhai had done for the community in India and East Africa.

1962 A.D.: Nairobi Sports Pavilion: Dharamshi Bharmal Shah, a true community leader who believed in action rather than words performed the opening ceremony.

1963 A.D.: Nairobi Oshwal Girls' Secondary School: Kenya became independent. Motichand Bharmal Shah performed the opening ceremony of the newly finished Girls' secondary school on January 20. He was one of the old timers who had passed the London Matriculation examination.

1963 A.D.: Nairobi Boys' Boarding House: Meghji Sojpal Dhanani of Mombasa performed the opening ceremony. He was closely associated with *Shri Svetamber Jain Sangh* of Mombasa as well as many other societies. He was a very popular volunteer worker in the local community.

1963 A.D.: Nairobi Boys' Secondary School: A prominent community leader of Thika and a past president of the Board, Mepa Punja Malde on February 17, performed the opening ceremony.

1967 A.D.: Nairobi Nursery School: Hansraj Devan Shah laid the foundation stone to build a new modern nursery school on October 29. The school is located at Wambugu Road.

1968 A.D.: Nairobi Nursery School: Nyalchand Lakhtir Shah performed the opening ceremony on October 6.

1969 A.D.: Nairobi Oshwal House: In place of the old Oshwal house an investment property, a completely new magnificent building was built by the Board. Raichand Meghji Khimasia then the president of the Board performed the opening ceremony of the new building on Tom Mboya Street. Many prominent leaders of the community worked hard to see that the project was completed successfully,

some of who included Dharamshi Bharmal, Keshavlal Fulchand, Meghji Hansraj, Panachand Jivraj Dedhia and Meghji Karman Malde.

1971 A.D.: Pujya Shri Gurudev Chitrabhanu: A learned ascetic of Jainism came to Nairobi on July 4, 1971. He inspired the Nairobi community to build a domed Jain Temple. Thanks were due to Keshavlal Lalji Dodhia for accommodating Gurudev in his home during the entire stay of Gurudev in Nairobi.

1974 A.D.: Celebration of the Auspicious Event of Liberation of Lord Mahavir: The celebration was conducted on a grand scale. Learned speakers, artists and musicians were invited from India who did a magnificent job in making the celebration a memorable event.

1974 A.D.: Prayer Hall Nairobi: While the plans for the domed temple were going on a decision was made to build a prayer hall (*Upashray*). Kantilal Narshi Shah President of the Board, past president of the Nairobi community and a selfless and tireless community leader, laid the foundation stone for the prayer hall on April 28.

1974 A.D.: Swimming Pool Nairobi: A decision was made to build a swimming pool on Wambugu Road community property. The community Vice-President Meghji Fulchand Shah laid the foundation stone.

1975 A.D.: Prayer Hall Nairobi: The opening ceremony was performed by Meghji Hansraj Shah, past treasurer of the Board and chairman of the Community Temple committee on July 27.

1975 A.D.: Swimming Pool Nairobi: The opening ceremony was performed by Premchand Punamchand Shah, President of the Oshwal Community and Vice President of the Board on July 27.

1976 A.D.: Nairobi Domed Temple: Jashodaben Popatlal Padamshi Shah laid the foundation stone of the temple on January 22.

1978 A.D.: Nairobi Oshwal Jain Primary school: There was a desire in the community to start a school to teach Jain religion to the youngsters. The number of students using the boys' boarding house had decreased considerably. It was becoming clear that there was no further use for a boarding house. To make use of the facility the Board decided to start a Jain school in the existing building of boarding house. The opening ceremony of the school took place on May 20, by Jivraj Bhimji Shah of Mombasa, a trustee of the Board.

1982 A.D.: Nairobi Oshwal Sports Center: It was decided to build a large sport complex next to the existing swimming pool. Shantilal Raishi Shah President of the Nairobi Community laid the foundation stone of the complex on April 25. Shantibhai like his name (shanti means peace or quiet) is a quiet worker and has given his services to the community for the last two decades. The building of the sports center was completed within a year. The opening ceremony took place on May 22, 1983 led by Mohanbhai Karania, Vice-President of the community.

1984 A.D.: Nairobi Domed Jain Temple: After continued construction for 8 years, the work on temple was completed. Sobhagchand Ratilal Dhanji Shah performed the opening ceremony of the temple. This was an auspicious event. The celebrations took place from February 4 to February 12, 1984. During these nine days people from India, the United Kingdom, Canada and many other places participated in this event. Over 10,000 people attended the celebrations.

1984 A.D.: Nairobi Oshwal Library: For a long time library activity had come to a standstill. A new awakening took place. People were thirsty for knowledge. To meet

the demand a new library was established. The opening ceremony took place on October 28 performed by Hemraj Sangar Shah.

1984 A.D.: Nairobi Oshwal Primary School: For the extension of the existing facility, Khimji Vaja Shah laid the foundation stone. Raichand Pethraj Shah performed the opening ceremony of the extension in 1985 A.D.

1988 A.D.: Nairobi Oshwal Center: At the present time the activities under the management of the Nairobi Oshwal community are numerous. The administrative sector has expanded and is as big as a municipal department. For this purpose a large parcel of land is required. For a long time the community had been trying to acquire the land. In 1985 the efforts were successful. The Government gave 131/2 acres of land located on Ring Road the Westland area. The land had to be filled to level the ground. A river was passing through the land, which had to be taken underground. A proper system to drain the water had to be installed. Paved roads had to be built for proper access. A stonewall around the boundary had to be built to enclose the compound for privacy. The main gate with decorated pillars was to be installed. This needed a lot of money. The community people donated money willingly and generously. Within one and a half months the money for the decorated pillars and the gates was collected. It was decided to build the complex in two phases. Mulji Punja Chandaria laid the foundation stone for the first phase on Sunday January 31. The work on phase one was completed. The opening ceremony was performed by Panachand Jivraj Dedhia, Vice-President of the community, the past Chairman of the Board, a dedicated leader for the past several decades, on Sunday September 10, 1989.

1990/1991 A.D.: Oshwal Education and Relief Board: In the year 1991 it was 50 years since the Board was founded. The Executive committee decided to

celebrate the golden jubilee of the Board. A sub-committee was elected in charge of the celebrations. The members of the subcommittee were Panachand Jivraj Dedhia, Chair person, Dr Jayant Karania Secretary, Mohanlal Devraj Shah, Amratlal Kalidas Shah, Manilal Devchand Dodhia, Premchand Punamchand Shah, Shantilal Raishi Shah, Suresh Dharamshi Shah and Madhusudan Zaverchand Shah as Members. A special souvenir was published giving the history of the achievements. A variety of items were scheduled for the celebrations. The important items included:

1. Certificates to the past boarders, students and various Oshwal organizations.
2. A dinner in the mahajanwadi on May 19, 1990 to honor the past and present members of the Board.
3. During this dinner the past and present presidents and trustees were given presents in recognition of the services they had given to the Board.
4. In 1991 forms were mailed to Oshwal families to do the population census.
5. April 11, 1991 was the fiftieth anniversary day of the Board. An entertainment program and dinner were arranged in the mahajanwadi. All the Oshwals of East Africa were invited. Approximately 4000 people attended the function.
6. The Mombasa community had a cultural and dinner program to commemorate the anniversary. During this festivity all the members of the executive committee were present.
7. The Nakuru community also celebrated the anniversary with a cultural and dinner program. During this festivity all the members of the executive committee were present.
8. The golden anniversary convention took place in Eldoret from June 21 to 23, 1991. The local community celebrated by holding a cultural and dinner program.

1992 A.D.: Oshwal Rescue Corporation: A neighborhood watch Parklands (O.R.C.) was set up to provide security to the residents of Parklands and nearby areas.

1993 A.D.: Nairobi Visa Oshwal Nursery School: Opening ceremony of two multi purpose halls. Zaverchand Keshavji Shah opened the Mahavir Hall and Manulal Hansraj Shah opened the Rushabh Hall.

1993 A.D.: Swimming Pool: The foundation stone of the Board swimming pool was laid by R. L. Shah of Fort Hall on May 16.

1994 A.D.: Nairobi Mahajanwadi: Gulabchand Bharmal Shah laid the foundation stone for the new boundary wall on November 21.

1994 A.D.: Nairobi Visa Oshwal Primary School: Ranmal Mulji Malde laid the foundation stone for the swimming pool.

1995 A.D.: Oshwal Education and Relief Board: May 1, 1995 was a very significant day in the history of the Board when several activities took place under the umbrella of the Board.

1. Opening ceremony of the new Oshwal boarding house by Suresh Dharamshi Gudhka.
2. Opening ceremony of the new administrative block of the Oshwal Jain primary school performed by Maganlal Meghji Rupshi of Nyeri.
3. Opening ceremony of the swimming pool by Dr. Jayant Gulabchand Karania.
4. Prabhulal Punja Parbat Gudka laid the foundation stone of the administrative block of the Oshwal high school.

1995 A.D.: Nairobi Mahajanwadi: Mohanlal Dharamshi Shah laid the foundation stone for the upashray hall residential block, the office block and the kitchen for *ayambil*.

1995 A.D.: Nairobi Oshwal Center: On the auspicious day of *Dhan Terus*, October 22, 1995 the foundation stones for four main halls, a very ambitious project of the Nairobi community, were laid by the following Oshwal families:

1. The Devchand Punja Pattani families.
2. The Devan Tejpar Dodhia and Nemchand Kachra Sumaria families.
3. The Virpar Narshi Nagda families.
4. The Maganlal Motichand Devraj Chandaria families.

1996 A.D.: Nairobi Mahajanwadi: The opening ceremony of the new boundary wall for the mahajanwadi was performed by Maganlal Motichand Devraj Chandaria April 27.

1996 A.D.: Ramniklal Khetshi Devshi Shah preformed the foundation stone laying ceremony of boundary wall of community property on Muranga Road on April 27.

1997 A.D.: Nairobi Oshwal Jain Primary School: The foundation stone laying ceremony of the new wing of Oshwal Jain Primary School, managed by the Board, was performed by Somchand Zaverchand Shah May 2.

1997 A.D.: Nairobi Oshwal High School: The opening ceremony of the administration block of the Oshwal high school, managed by the Board, was performed by Manilal Devchand Dodhia on May 25.

Oshwal College (Managed by the Board)

1992 A.D.: January-evening classes for ACCA (Certified Accountants) level 1 started with 7 students at the Oshwal high school.

1992 A.D.: Registration certificates received from the Ministry of Education on 17 December.

1993 A.D.: Day classes started at the Oshwal high school in June.

1993 A.D.: The Oshwal College management separated from the Oshwal high school in September because of increase in number of students.

1994 A.D.: The Oshwal College moved out of the Oshwal high school premises to a rented three storey building on Ken-India Business Park on Westlands Road in March. Currently the Oshwal College has a student population, both day and evening of nearly 700 and it conducts many courses including ACCA, ABE, LDBM, CPA, ICSA and computer courses.

2002 A.D.: Oshwal Center: The construction of all the four main halls, kitchens and a theater was successfully completed in 2002 and the Center was officially opened with grand celebrations on March 31, 2002. The four dining and wedding halls have been named after the four major donors. This is the biggest and most prestigious administrative and social complex ever built by a community.

Thika

1933 A.D.: Thika Mahajanwadi: Halls were built on the land bought for the mahajanwadi. Premchand Vrajpal and Messrs' Vershi Devshi and Co. donated the money for the upper hall; Meghji Pethraj Shah performed the

opening ceremony of the main hall. Premchand Vrajpal, Vershi Mepa, Devshi Mepa, Hemraj Ladha, Mepa Punja, Meghji Kanji, and Jethalal Kachra played leading roles in the community work. Premchand Vrajpal played a unique role in the settlement of Oshwals between Thika and Mew. He played an important role in the establishment of Oshwal institutions in Kenya and India. He was really a leading Oshwal personality.

1933 A.D.: A resolution to allow widow remarriage in certain circumstances was passed unanimously in Thika during the local Oshwal community meeting. All the Oshwal organizations of East Africa soon adopted the resolution unanimously.

1936 A.D.: The first widow remarriage took place in Thika on June 20. More than 2000 people attended the wedding conducted in the Arya Samaj tradition.

1941 A.D.: Thika Jain Youth League: Formed on April 1.

1950 A.D.: Thika: Ghar derasar opened.

1956 A.D.: Thika Dining Hall: Foundation stone laid by Meghji Kanji Shah.

1957 A.D.: Thika Dining Hall: Opening ceremony performed by Mepa Punja Shah.

1980 A.D.: Shah Free Eye Clinic Jain Youth League of Thika will go down in history for its unique Shah Free Eye Clinic project, which it started in 1980. Free eye examinations, treatment to preserve better eyesight, surgery and other necessary procedures are done here for poor people. Full support for this project to keep running also comes from Nairobi, Muranga (Fort Hall) and other Oshwal communities. The nine to ten day camps are conducted every year. Doctors and other medical

support staff from India have been running these camps diligently. To date over 100,000 patients have been screened for eye problems and over 10,000 patients have been operated upon and their eyesight has been restored. This noble humanitarian undertaking has become famous amongst all the people in Kenya. Many other bodies have followed the example set by the Oshwals and Jain Youth League of Thika.

1990 A.D.: Thika Jain Temple: The foundation stone laying ceremony of the new domed temple in Thika was performed by the families of Vershi Mepa Malde, Mulji Mepa Malde and Devshi Mepa Malde on February 23.

1998 A.D.: Thika Jain Temple: Sobhagchand Fulchand Lakhamshi performed the opening ceremony on February 7. Lakhamshi Meghji opened the upshray hall and Mohanlal Dharamshi Shah performed the Pratistha (installation) ceremony of the Mulnayak Pratima (image of principal Tirthankar).

Nakuru

1974 A.D.: Nakuru Mahajanwadi: As the population of Oshwals increased in Nakuru, construction of a mahajanwadi as well as a Jain temple in the mahajanwadi compound was started.

1976 A.D.: Lalji Nangpar, a trustee of the Board and a very influential person who was always ready to help Oshwals in Government matters, performed the opening ceremony of the mahajanwadi and the installation of image in the temple. People who worked hard to finish this project included Lalji Nangpar, Kanji Rupshi then president of the community, Velji D. Shah, Virchand Mulji and Jayantilal Samji Shah past presidents of the community.

1978 A.D.: A library was started.

1988 A.D.: Project of a medical relief scheme for the Oshwals living in up-country was planned and initiated by the Nakuru Oshwal community.

Shah Lalji Nangpar Academy:

1990 A.D.: Foundation stone laying ceremony of a primary school complex on April 1. A nursery school had been completed earlier.

1992 A.D.: Foundation stone laying ceremony of a swimming pool on April 27.

1993 A.D.: Foundation stone laying ceremony of the secondary school by Kanji Rupshi Shah on August 1.

1994 A.D.: Foundation stone laying ceremony of the auditorium by Lalji Meghji Bid on February 13.

1994 A.D.: Opening ceremony of the swimming pool, volleyball and tennis courts on October 16.

1996 A.D.: Opening ceremony of the Lalji Meghji Bid auditorium by Maniben Lalji Meghji Bid on August 14.

1997 A.D.: Opening ceremony of the secondary school by Kasturben Lalji Nangpar Shah.

Kisumu

1924 A.D.: The first Oshwal, Devchand Khimchand Kachra Gudhka of Navagam, arrived in Kisumu and started business in 1925. Others to follow were Fulchand Hansraj Dodhia (1926), Fulchand Keshavji and Raichand Virji Gudhka (1929).

1931 A.D.: Devchand Khimchand and Fulchand Keshavji formed Visa Oshwal Jain Mandal.

1946 A.D.: Yati Shri Hemchandraji visited Kisumu.

1944 A.D.: Oswal Jain Mandal changed its name to Visa Oswal Community.

1948 A.D.: Acquired land for a mahajanwadi. Funds to build the mahajanwadi were donated by Oswals throughout Kenya.

1951 A.D.: Mahajanwadi Kisumu: The prominent community leader Meghji Khimji Gudhka laid the foundation stone on May 9. Devchand Khimchand Gudhka performed the opening ceremony of the mahajanwadi after completion on April 11, 1952. Devchandbhai was a prominent volunteer worker in Kenya and Jamnagar. The other local leaders were Fulchand Keshavji, Juthalal Nongha, Gosar Raishi, Motichand Fulchand, Narshi Punja, Hansraj Gudhka, Gulab Gudhka and Zaverchand Devchand Dodhia. Gosar Raishi was the well-known local as well as global community leader. He had worked very hard towards the unity of the community. He was involved in many other societies. He was once elected mayor of Kisumu.

1952 A.D.: Oswal Yuvak Mandal established and was chaired by Chaganlal Raishi.

1964 A.D.: A dining hall was built in the Mahajanwadi.

1976 A.D.: Oswal Mahila Mandal was established and the first chairperson was Jiviben Tarachand Shah.

1982 A.D.: Oswal Yuvak Mandal changed its name to Oswal Youth League and in 1983 held the second Oswal youth sports festival.

1988 A.D.: A modern kitchen was built in Mahajanwadi.

2003 A.D.: A Domed Jain Temple was built with a major donation and the untiring efforts of Narshi Punja Shah and his family. The Pratistha Mahotsav was celebrated from December 8-12, 2003 and was attended by Oshwals from several parts of the world.

Kitale

Kitale is a very fertile land area of Kenya. In the beginning the number of Oshwals was very few.

1934 A.D.: As the population had increased a community association was officially established.

1949 A.D.: Community premises were purchased.

1951 A.D.: A nursery school was started in this place.

1997 A.D.: Subodh Nagaria performed the foundation stone laying ceremony of the mahajanwadi on May 18.

Muranga (Fort Hall)

1950 A.D.: Mahajanwadi Fort Hall (Muranga): Kasturben Devashi Ladha laid the foundation stone for the building. After the construction was completed the local community leader Juthalal Jivraj performed the opening ceremony of the building. The other local leaders who worked very hard towards this project were Rajpal Ladha, Vidhu Ramji, and Hirji Gosar, R. L. Shah, Kanji Hemraj, Mohanlal Devshi and Kapurchand Devshi. Mr. R. L. Shah even today has given his services to many different societies, increasing the fame of the Oshwal community.

1996 A.D.: The family of the late Vidhu Ramji Shah donated the Vidhu Ramji Academy to the people of Fort Hall. The academy was built at a cost of 10 million shillings.

Nyeri

1952 A.D.: Nyeri Mahajanwadi: Mepa Kanji the leading local community leader performed the opening ceremony of the mahajanwadi. Meghji Rupshi Dodhia was an inspiring community leader who worked very hard for the local Indian community. Other leaders included Kapurchand Depar, Maganlal Meghji Rupshi, and Amichand Raichand Rajpal. Maganlal Meghji Rupshi, even though lived in Nyeri, was elected chairman of the Board and did a superb job.

Eldoret

1961 A.D.: Eldoret Mahajanwadi: The population of Halaris was increasing. There was a need for community premises. A community center was completed and officially opened in 1963. People behind the project included old and new community workers under the leadership of Vaghji Nangpar Shah.

Kabernet

1986 A.D.: Kabernet Visa Oshwal Primary School: At the request of the second President of Kenya, Daniel Arap Moi, the Board decided to build a primary school in Kabernet for local residents. Vaghji Nangpar Shah laid the foundation stone on April 13. The Kabernet primary school project was completed. The ceremony to donate the school to the government took place on September 25, 1988. The chief guest for this occasion was Mr. B. K. Kipkulei, Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education. Mr. Philemon K. Chelagate, Chairman of the Kabernet town council, accepted the school on behalf of the town.

Moshi

Moshi is located in the foothills of snow-covered Mount Kilimanjaro. The settlement here began just before Arusha.

1941 A.D.: The Visa Oshwal community was formed as the number of Oshwals increased here. A plot for a mahajanwadi was bought and a small hall, derasar and other facilities including a library were built. Sporting activities and cultural and religious activities were carried out at this mahajanwadi plot.

1997 A.D.: Construction work was begun to modernize the facilities at the mahajanwadi. A big new hall was constructed. Unfortunately V.O.C, Moshi, lost half of its plot to the government. This land was for sporting facilities. The number of Oshwals has been on the decline for the last 30 years and to day they number just over a hundred people, mostly of the older generation.

Arusha

1932 A.D.: The first settlement in Arusha.

1938 A.D.: Halari Mitra Mandal was founded.

1958 A.D.: The formal constitution was drafted.

1960 A.D.: The community was officially registered as Shree Visa Oshwal Gnati, Arusha.

1974 A.D.: In order to run social, religious, sports and other activities, a building was bought. This mahajanwadi caters for the community's needs but just like in Moshi the number of Oshwals has been on the decline and to-day the total number of Oshwals are about 25 people.

India

Jamnagar

1936 A.D.: Jamnagar Boys' Boarding House: It was decided to use the part of the money left over in the relief

fund to start a boarding house for boys in Jamnagar. A house was rented and the boarding house was started. The administration of the boarding was done under the guidance of Nairobi community until 1941. A plot was bought for the future boys' boarding house in Digvijay Plot Jamnagar.

1941 A.D.: Halari Visa Oshwal Boys' Boarding House:

The foundation stone was laid by Meghji Pethraj Shah on February 27, with the blessings of the ruler of Navanagar State Jam Digvijay Sinhji. Three Gudhka families of Navagam/Nairobi donated 80,000 Rupees. They were Raichand Jethalal (Rs40,000), Hemraj Nathoo (Rs20,000) and Devchand Khimchand (Rs20,000). The prominent people present during the ceremony were, Premchand Vrajpal Shah, Padamshi Narshi, Sojpal Karchra, Raishi Devshi, Raichand Kalidas, Mulji Ramji, Maganlal Popat Chandaria, Fulchand Karamshi, Meghji Virpal, Nathoobhai Anand, Premchand Popat, Raichand Lakhamshi, Khetshi Devshi, Somchand Meghji, Hemchand Meghji, Meghji Karman Malde, Nemchand Vrajpal, Savji Lalji, Devchand Khimchand and others.

1942 A.D.: Halari Visa Oshwal Boys' Boarding House:

The first most auspicious occasion handled by the Board was the opening ceremony of the Jamnagar boys' boarding house. Jam Digvijay Sinhji the ruler of Navanagar performed the opening ceremony, on April 27. The Navanagar ruler appreciated very much the efforts put in by the Halari community living abroad towards building the temple of learning. The students who stayed in the boarding house and pursued higher education became some of the leading citizens at home and abroad. They never forgot the place, which helped them achieve their goal.

1962 A.D.: Jamnagar Girls' Hostel: Just as the importance of girls' education was realized in East Africa, in India also people were realizing the importance of girls' education. A decision was made to convert the existing

boys' boarding house into a Girls' hostel and build a new bigger boys' boarding house on a plot located on Saat Rasta. This land was purchased in 1956. Raichand Parbat Virani who was secretary of the Board at that time and his brothers donated the cost of the purchase, which amounted to ten thousand rupees. Bharmal Raishi Shah laid the foundation stone for the new boys' boarding house in March 1962.

1963 A.D.: New Jamnagar Boys' Boarding House: Khimji Ramji Malde performed the opening ceremony of the new magnificent boys' boarding house on September 4.

1972 A.D.: Oshwal Sikhsan ane Rahat Sangh India: For the first time all the Halari Visa Oshwal Communities of India got together in Jamnagar for their first conference. That time besides many other issues a resolution was passed to form Oshwal Sikhsan ane Rahat Sangh. Many delegates from East Africa were present in the conference, which included the chairman of The Board, Dharamshi Bharmal; secretary, Panachand Jivraj Dedhia; treasurer, Meghji Hansraj Shah, and an executive committee member, Amratlal Kalidas Shah. According to the decision taken by the Board during the 1968 meeting the administrative powers to supervise institutions in India were passed to the newly formed Sangh by the Board.

1993 A.D.: Jamnagar Halari Visa Oshwal Vidyalay: The opening ceremony of the ground floor was performed by Ramji Anand Shah on January 26. Rameshchandra Harakhchand Dodhia performed the opening ceremony of the first floor on the same day.

1993 A.D.: Aradhnadham: Pran pratistha at Vadaria Sinhan.

1993 A.D.: New Oshwal Boys' Boarding House: The opening ceremony was performed by Somchand Bhoja Shah, past Chairman of the Board, on May 16.

1993 A.D.: Jamnagar Oshwal International Center:
The foundation stone was laid.

1994 A.D.: Jamnagar International Oshwal Center:
On December 22, the opening ceremony of hall No. 1 was performed under Oshwal Shikshan ane Rahat Sangh by Tarachand P. Shah. Mohanlal Devraj Karania of Nairobi and Dhirajlal Devraj Karania of the United Kingdom donated the construction cost. On the same day the foundation stone of Hall No. 2 was laid by Arvind Karman Juthalal of Nairobi who donated the cost of construction. On the same day Zaverchand Meghji Devraj of Nairobi performed the foundation stone laying ceremony of the guesthouse.

Mumbai (Bombay)

1934 A.D.: A monthly newsletter Oshwal Abhyuday published by the Mumbai Oshwal community under the editorship of Liladhar Meghji. Articles were forthright.

1961 A.D.: Mumbai Mahajanwadi: In Mumbai as the arrival of people from Saurashtra as well as East Africa had increased considerably and also the population of the community locally had dramatically gone up and there was a need both for accommodation for the visitors and to hold social and religious functions for the local community. A plot on Dada Saheb Fadke Road in Dadar was purchased. Popatlal Ranmal Shah then the president and committee members Hemchand Meghji Malde, Narshi Popat Maru, Jethalal Devshi Khimasia, Ramji Meghji Gudhka, Keshavlal R. Shah and Devchand Kanji worked very hard in procuring this land. Soon an Oshwal Complex was built in this area. It consisted of a magnificent seven-storey building with guesthouse, a conference hall and other facilities. Today this is the biggest and best place with the most facilities in the Metropolitan City of Mumbai owned by a community. The local Mahila Mandal and Youth League have also made tremendous progress.

The community published monthly magazine titled Mashal (torch). Tarachand P. Shah published monthly magazine titled *Oshwal/Halar Bandhu* until his death in 1995. A history of Oshwal written by Somchand Ladha Deva Gudhka of Nairobi, Kenya and London in Gujarati was published in the magazine in the form of 25 monthly articles. Hansraj Meghji Chandaria and Dhirajlal Velji Gudhka publish a monthly magazine titled *Oshwal Samachar*.

Bhivandi

1960 A.D.: Introduction of power looms in Bhivandi. By 1970 the number of looms had increased tremendously. Forty percent of the Oshwal population of Mumbai is in Bhivandi. The number of power looms is hundreds of thousands.

1983 A.D.: Bhivandi Halari Oshwal Vidyalay: The foundation stone was laid by Ramji Meghji Gudhka, president of Oshwal Sikhshan ane Rahat Sangh India. The overseas delegates present at that time included Kantilal Narshi Karamamshi Shah, chairman of the Board, Somchand Dharamshi Shah president of the Mumbai community and Ramji Anand Shah, the first chairman of Oshwal Sikhshan ane Rahat Sangh India. Somchand Dharamshi Shah performed the opening ceremony of the ground floor of the Bhivandi Halari Visa Oshwal Vidyalay on February 12, 1993. Devchand Kachra Shah performed the opening ceremony of the first floor on the same day.

1993 A.D.: Bhivendi Mahajanwadi: Opening ceremony.

Vapi

Halari Visa Oshwal Samaj of Vapi has purchased land to build a mahajanwadi. Donations have been promised to build a hall.

Pandhurna

1937 A.D.: Narshi Lakhamshi Gudhka of the village of Gagva came to Pandhurna and opened a provision store named Shah Raishi Hirji & Company in partnership with his brother Fulchand Lakhamshi selling groceries.

1945 A.D.: Narshi Lakhamshi Gudhka started an oil mill. Many more Oshwals followed him and started their own private businesses. At present there are 27 Halari Oshwal families with population of around 145 people.

1980 A.D.: A formal association was formed called *Shree Svetamber Murtipujak Jain Samaj* with Ratilal Narshi Gudhka son of Narshi Lakhamshi Gudhka as the chairman.

1986 A.D.: When Narendra Raichand Gudhka was the chairman a decision to build a temple was made.

1987 A.D.: The Raichand Juthalal Dodhia family laid the foundation stone of the prayer hall on October 10.

1989 A.D.: The Keshavji Khachra Khimasia family (village Vasai) laid the foundation stone of the Jain temple (*ghar derasar*). Later on same year when the construction of the temple was completed the installation ceremony of the images of Tirthankara was performed under the supervision of Acharya Shree Nardev Sagar Surishwarji. Three images were installed. The image of Lord Shitalnath as the principal deity (Mulnayak) in the middle was installed by the Raichand Narshi Gudhka family, the image of Lord Sambhavnath on the right was installed by the Raishi Haria family and image of Lord Malinath on the left by Dhanji Meghji Vora. In addition the Motiben Fulchand family also installed a metal image of Lord Shitalnath. In addition to the temple there are two general-purpose halls and three rooms built at the same time. Many families participated in this auspicious event. Maniben Meghji

Pethraj of London (originally from Dabasang) donated a substantial amount of money.

United Kingdom

1955 A.D.: The first Halari Visa Oshwal family to settle in London was the Kishorilal Bharmal Nagda (Virani) family of Dabasang. Meghji Pethraj's family followed soon after.

1961 A.D.: A movement started to form an association.

1969 A.D.: An association was officially formed. Kishorilal Bharmal (Virani) was the first president.

1972-73 A.D.: The constitution was passed when Ratilal Premchand Chandaria was president.

1974 A.D.: Registration as a charity was approved.

1979 A.D.: Oshwal Center: Thirty Kilometers north of London, Coopers Lane Road in the Potter's Bar area of Northaw, Hertfordshire, around 80 acres of land with a mansion were bought. The mansion was remodeled and a *ghar derasar* was opened in this building. With support from the Oshwal community in U.K. and Kenya a fund raising scheme was set up. Approximately 263,000 British pounds was collected. A two story multipurpose hall with kitchen facility has been built. The center has become very popular not only among Oshwals but also among other communities for social functions such as weddings, receptions and the like.

2004 A.D.: The Kantilal Haria family performed the foundation stone laying ceremony on Easter Sunday April 11, of a domed Jain temple to be built at Oshwal Center in Potts Bars, North London.

Oshwal Association of U.K. South Area

1972 A.D.: The Oshwal Association of U.K. South Area was established.

1974 A.D.: A Gujarati school was started.

1975 A.D.: The *Mahila Mandal* (Oshwal Women's Association) was formed.

1982 A.D.: A church was purchased and converted into a mahajanwadi.

1991 A.D.: Ghar derasar Jain Temple opened in the mahajanwadi.

Unites States of America

1945/1946 A.D.: Jethalal Khimchand Kachra Gudhka of Navagam/Nairobi was the first Oshwal to settle in USA. From 1960 onwards, Oshwals started settling in the USA.

1984 A.D.: The Halari Visa Oshwals of America Association was formed. With Gulabchand R Shah elected as the president and Veni Sumaria as the secretary.

1987 A.D.: The first Oshwal gathering was held in New Jersey.

World Oshwal Federation

Off and on the leaders of the community wanted to form an umbrella organization to bring unity among all the small and large Oshwal organizations spread all over the world. However for one reason or the other the idea could not be fulfilled.

During the World Oshwal Seminar held in London from July 26 to 28 1985 all the delegates discussed forming an

organization representing the 70,000 Oshwals of the whole world. A unanimous decision was made to go ahead and form such a body. An ad-hoc committee was formed.

The ad-hoc committee stayed in close contact with the Oshwal Education and Relief Board East Africa, Oshwal Shikshan ane Rahat Sangh India and Oshwal Association of UK and came up with a rough draft of the constitution. Copies were sent to various centers for review.

During the meeting of the Oshwal Education and Relief Board East Africa at Nairobi on 26 to 28 July 1987, a rough draft of the constitution was put on agenda. After much debate many suggestions put forth by various organizations were accepted.

During the meeting of Oshwal Shikshan ane Rahat Sangh India that met at Jamnagar from December 30, 1988 to January 2, 1989, the revised constitution was put on the agenda for discussion. After making further corrections the constitution was finalized.

APPENDIX 3

OSHWAL CENTERS AND POPULATION

INDIA: 2001 CENSUS:

Halar, 55 villages (Number of people in parenthesis):

Arablus (11); Aradhna Dham (13); Arikhana (44); Champa Beraja (17); Chela (234); Changa (69); Dabasang (179); Devariya (4); Dhinchda (178); Danta (54); Gajna (5); Gagva (88); Goinj (80); Jam Khambhalia (71); Juni Haripar (40); Jogvad (52); Kajurda (21); Kansumara (93); Kakabhai Sinhan (70); Kanalus (9); Khatiya (75); Khara Beraja (35); Khirasara (44); Lalpur (4); Lakhabaval (125); Macchu Beraja (37); Mithoi (2); Mota Ambala (49); Mota Mandha (41); Mota Lakhiya (22); Moti Rafudad (22); Mungni (105); Navagam (153); Navi Haripar (49); Nagda (26); Naghedi (146); Nana Mandha (44); Nani Khavdi (18); Nani Rafudad (19); Nanduri (6); Padana (153); Ravlsar (15); Rasangapar (112); Sikka (139); Seta Lus (95); Sevak Dhuniya (8); Sodasala (29); Singach (14); Targhari (7); Timbdi (10); Vadalial Sinhan (75); Vasai (122); Vav Beraja (18); Zankhar (13).

Total No. Of Families - 893; Total Population - 3189.

Other Parts of India (Number of people in parenthesis):

Jamnagar (5821); Mumbai, Bhivandi and Thana (24,222); Abu (13); Ahmedabad (158); Ankleswar (13); Anjar (29); Arvi (18); Bangalore (1092); Betul (10); Chandrapur (4); Coimbatour (22); Cochin (24); Calcutta (15); Dahanu (2); Hyderabad (97); Higoli (5); Indore (207); Jalna (18); Malegam (67); Morbi (5); Mysore (26); Nadiad (11); Nagpur (17); Patancheru (15); Pandhurna (163); Pipariya (37); Pune (4); Rajkot (109); Sicandrabad (5); Surat

(232); Than (102); Tirpur (16); Umerngaon (11); Vadodra (22); Valsad (2); Vankaner (8); Vapi (473); Viditha (23); Varud (15).

Total No. Of Families - 7796; Total Population in India - 36320.

AFRICA: 1998 CENSUS

East Africa (Number of people in parenthesis):

Nairobi (8,645); Mombasa (2138); Arusha (56); Dar-as-Salaam (22); Eldoret (484); Embhu (13); Kakamega (18); Kampala (13); Kapsabet (4); Kericho (40); Kiambu (8); Kerugoya (9); Kisii (112); Kisumu (464); Kitale (144); Limuru (7); Machakos (7); Meru (63); Moshi (128); Musoma (5); Mwanza (4); Nakuru (637); Nanyuki (13); Nyeri (117); Ruiru (32); Sotk (4); Thika (322); Voi (22); Webuye (6).

Other parts of Africa (Number of people in parenthesis):

Gabarone, Botswana (8); Madagascar (321); Mauritius (4); South Africa (4).

Total No. Of Families-4489; Total Population in Africa-13,872.

UNITED KINGDOM: Population-(20,000 Estimate).

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: Population-(2,000 Estimate).

CANADA: Population-(1,000 Estimate).

AUSTRALIA: Population-(300 Estimate).

Other parts, Hong Kong, Singapore, Europe, etc.: Population-(500 Estimate).

TOTAL WORLD OSHWALS: POPULATION-74,000.

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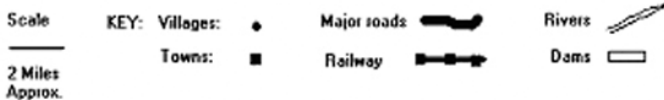
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MAP OF JAMNAGAR DISTRICT

MAP OF HALAR VILLAGES, JAMNAGAR DISTRICT, GUJARAT, INDIA

ACCORDING TO YEAR 2001 CENSUS, VILLAGES AND TOWNS IN CAPITAL LETTERS HAVE OSHWAL INHABITANTS. Villages in small letters have no Oshwal inhabitants but Oshwals were living in these villages at one time.



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