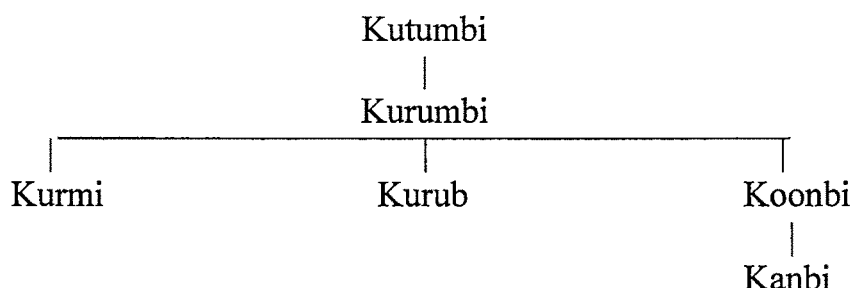


## Chapter III

**SOCIO-HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PATIDARS**

Patidar is the name of an old kanbi agricultural community of Gujarat which came to be evolved in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The word kanbi has come from the word kutumbi which means home or family. The origin of the word kanbi is given below:



The term kanbi and kunbi are synonyms, meaning cultivation; the former was usually applied to cultivating castes in Gujarat while kunbi denote the similar occupational caste in the Deccan and Konkan.<sup>1</sup> According to David Pocock who studied the patidar community of Gujarat, the name kanbi connotes agriculturist and the word was said to have been derived from 'kutumbi'- a householder.<sup>2</sup> Some trace it from the Sanskrit word Kristmi' a ploughman. The

---

<sup>1</sup> R. E. Enthoven, *The Tribes and Castes of Bombay*, vol. 2 Delhi 1997 (Reprint) p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> David Pocock; *Kanbi and Patidar: A Study of the Patidar Community of Gujarat*, 1972, Oxford, 1972, p. 56.

kanbis themselves believed that their name came from kan-grain and bi-seed.<sup>3</sup>

### III.1 Distinction between patidar and kanbi

Before 1931, distinction between patidar and kanbi was hierarchically related. Therefore a distinction of rank between the two terms continued to operate in this society. A man may be a patidar in his own eyes and in the eyes of his affine and still be considered a kanbi by other patidars. Even as; late as 1901 the census officer of Baroda wrote that the Patidar division of the kanbi castes did not intermarry with the kanbi caste fellows. This was an extreme statement but it indicates the prestige attached to the word patidar. In Kheda (Charotar) only the lewas were called patidar others in simply termed as kanbi.<sup>4</sup> In fact by that time their term Patel having become common usage and the original meaning of the term patidar having lost much of its significance, many kanbi were already calling themselves patidar. Finally, in the census of 1931 the term kanbi was dropped altogether and patidar was substituted for it.

---

<sup>3</sup> D. N Majumdar, *Race Realities in cultural Gujarat: Report on the Anthropometric Serological and Health Survey of Maha Gujarat*, Bombay, 1950.p. 30. According to K. S. Singh kanbi may have been derived from the Hindi word kunba meaning large family or from the words 'kun' meaning 'who' and 'bi' meaning 'seed' denoting the 'people who generate seed' Or from the word kutumbin meaning cultivator family or household; or from kutumbi meaning husbandmen. K. S. Singh, *People of India*, National Series, Vol. IV Series, H. M., P. 1897.

<sup>4</sup> R. E. Enthoven, Vol.2, op. cit., p. 134.

People claiming to be patidars were dismissed as kanbis by those of higher levels while they themselves so designated yet inferior caste fellows. In Saurashtra the Saurashtrian lewa kanbis because of occasional marriages with the lewa patidar of the Kheda district were willing to call themselves patidar while attaching no great significance to this alternative name. Further west still and northwards in both Saurashtra and Kutch the agriculturists took pride in their caste name kanbi.

When we are discussing a ranking within caste it is not advisable to speak of status. All were patidars and the patidar caste as such had, in the eyes of other castes, status. It is not possible to say that a poor patidar had inferior status to another patidar in the same or another village. This would imply that the relationship between the two was homologous with that existing between castes which was absurd.<sup>5</sup> Since 1931 the term 'patidar' became the official designation of all the kanbis and much earlier in the British period when surnames were felt to be necessary, 'patel' became the commonest surname in

---

<sup>5</sup> Any particular patidar felt himself one with many thousands of others that he might indeed never meet. He knew that in theory his family can intermarry with any other Patidar family and could exchange food and drink with them.

the caste. However, the terms 'desai' and 'amin' were also used as surnames among the caste people but in a limited way.<sup>6</sup> People known today as 'patidars' or more rarely 'patels' are the descendants of people known in the last century as kanbi.

The kanbis have had various subdivisions. R. E. Enthoven divided them in nine endogamous<sup>7</sup> divisions, viz. Anjana, Dangi, Gujar, Kadwa, Lewa, Matia, Momna, Pattani and Uda<sup>8</sup> whereas another Scholar D. N. Majumdar has divided them into four divisions of Anjana, Kadwa, Lewa and Matia. Though various scholars have divided them into various sub-divisions, yet the most notable were the Lewas and Kadwas and though originated from Kheda and Kadi respectively, they were found in the princely State of Baroda in overwhelming majority. And as my area of research is the former princely State Baroda, therefore this study is focused on these two divisions, viz. lewas and kadwas.

---

<sup>6</sup> The words 'Desai' and 'Amin' were less easily claimed, but they underwent genealogical extension long after the original functions had ceased to exist. We find the surnames Desai and Amin used and the only trace of their origin was the occasional dispute between families as to whether their titles were Mughal or later Maratha creations. Most important of all had been Patidar rights.

<sup>7</sup> Endogamy or the custom of 'marrying in' which forbade the members of a particular social group to marry anyone who was not a member of the group. A man must marry not only within his caste but also within his sub-caste, if it was divided into sub-castes. During the last half of 19<sup>th</sup> century the anavalas, lewa kanbis and other castes in which hyper gamy prevailed had started looking towards the *kulins* with feelings of less regard than before, and had in some places resolved to marry their girls only in their own social circle and not to the *kulins*. The result of all these tendencies had been to multiply, even within the limit of a caste, the number of groups within which marriages were restricted.

<sup>8</sup> D. N. Majumdar; *Race Realities*, op. cit., p. 30

### III.2 Origin of Patidars:-

According to well placed traditions both lewa and kadwa patidars were believed to have come from Punjab. They were all Gurjars. Narayan Sheth in his book Kshatra Falabarsh that kurmi kanbis were all Kshatriyas<sup>9</sup>

According to the mantras of Rigveda they stayed for sometime in Afghanistan, then moved to Punjab and stabilized there, then they moved to Mathura. They entered Punjab via Khaibar and Kurum passes and settled at a place in Punjab known as Gujranwala and stabilized over there. In Gujranwala district there were two areas known as Karar and Lewa. Those who came from Kara were known as kadwas and those who came from Lewa were known as lewas. During the rule of Kushan King Kanishka, Guajars left Gujranwal district of Punjab and spread around Mathura<sup>10</sup>

According to one theory their arrival in Gujarat from Ayodhya to Mathura, and subsequently through Marwar into Gujarat was supposed to have taken place some 200 years ago. According to the

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 78

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

Bombay Gazetteer, they belonged to the race of the great conquering white Huna tribe of Gujars, who during the second half of the sixth century, passed south through the Punjab and settled in Malwa and in Bombay Gujarat.<sup>11</sup>

### III.3 Location of Patidars in Gujarat and in Baroda:-

During the period under study in Gujarat the lewa and kadwa Patidars were found all over Gujarat. However, Lewas were found in overwhelming majority in the Kheda district (Charotar). Lewas are also found in the Vakal circle,<sup>12</sup> containing villages of Baroda and Padra Mahals and some villages of Jambusar. Kahn timer circle consisted of 24 villages and Dhawat circle of 16 villages of Karjan and southern portion of Baroda mahals. (See map-3)

The Kadwa Patidars were found in overwhelming majority in the erstwhile Kadi Pranth, present Mehsana district. (See map- 2). They were also thickly populated in Ahmedabad and in Padra taluka of Baroda.<sup>13</sup> (See map-1)

---

<sup>11</sup> See, *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, Vol. IX, Part I, Gujarat population: Hindus, Bombay, 1901, pp. 154-163.

<sup>12</sup> The term 'circle' is similar to that of 'Gol'

<sup>13</sup> Among other groups of Kanbis-Matia kanbis are found only in the Jalapur and Bardoli subdivisions of Surat, Anjara Kanbis were found chiefly in North Gujarat and Damji or hill kanbis were found in Mahikantha.

**Map1**

**map2**



**map3**

### III.4 Lewa Patidars:

Lewas were the largest division of Gujarat kanbis and found all over the region though cheaply in the talukas of Anand, Nadiad and Borsad in the Kheda district. They were found also in Kutch, where they had two territorial divisions, Halai and Vaghadia, who ate together but did not intermarry.<sup>14</sup> They were most numerous in Baroda district.<sup>15</sup>

Socially they were divided into patidars or shareholders in the village lands and kanbis or cultivators. Among different village *gols* of lewa patidars in Charotar the first and the higher *gol* in status is six village *gol*<sup>16</sup> consisted of Nadiad, Vaso Sojitra, Bhadran Dharmaj and

<sup>14</sup> R. E Enthoven, Vol. 2 op. cit., p. 149

<sup>15</sup> Jayaprabha Anant Prasad Amin, Conformity and Non-conformity of Norms Regarding Marriage System of Patidar Caste of Vaso belonging to Six Village *Gol*, Research Report of M. A., Faculty of Sociology, The M.S.U. of Baroda, Baroda, 1964, pp. 17-18

<sup>16</sup> Various *gols* among Patidars as mentioned by David Hardiman are listed below : The Chhagam includes the villages of i) Bhadran, ii) Dharmaj iii) Karamsadi v) Nadiad vi) Sojitra vii) Voso. ii). The five villages 1. Nar. 2. Od. 3. Pij. 4. Sunav 5. Uttarsandaiii). The Nine villages expanded to twentytwo by 1930 which include : Chikhadra 2. Jharola 3. Khambholaj 4. Ras 5. Redel 6. Sajipur 7. Sarsa 8. Vadod 9. Vasad 10. Adas 11. Amod 12. Bhurakai 13. Bochason 14. Gana 15. Isnava 16. Kanisa 17. Navli 18. Pandoli 19. Randi 20. Runaj 21. Sinjivada 22. Sisva. iv. the goal of twenty seven villages founded by a patidar of chakalashi includes; Alindra 2. (Mator 2. Alindra (Nadiad 3. Anand 4. Bahrol 5. Bandhani 6. Boridvi 7. Chakalashi 4. Changa 9. Babhan (nadiad) 10. Dabhon ( Petlad) 11. Demol, 12. Deva 13. Gada 14. Kanjri 15. Khandali 16. Mahadev 17. Maholel 18. Mahudha 19. Malataj 20. Napad 21. Narsanda 22. Palana 23. Piplav 2. Ranlol 25. Salun 26. Sanjaya 27. Thama 28. Mogari 29. Napa, 30. Palaj 31. Valavod, 32. Vanthvali. v. The Twenty- one villages of Borsad included : 1. Agas 2. Ankjav 3. Ashi. 4. Bodai 5. Boria 6. Borsad 7. Dobhasni 8. Dantali 9. Davol 10. Deredarda 11. Dhun dakuva 12. Ghunteli 13. Joshikuva 14. Kavitha 15. Sandesar 16. Sihol 17. Simarda 18. Surkuva 19. Valhera 20. Vasna 21. Virol. vi. the Twenty two villages of Nadiad included: 1. Akhdol 2. Bhupal 3. Bilodra 4. Darda dumral 6. Gutal 7. Kaloli 8. Kanjoda 9. Keriavi 10. Manjipura 11. Mitral 12. Padgol 13. Petli 14. Piplata 15. Parda. 16. Soudhana 17. Zhalandi 18. Vndhela 19. Vadtal 20. Valason 21. Valetva 22. Valla. vii. the twenty- seven villages of Anand include : 1. Bhalej 2. Bharoda 3. Gamdi 5. Kasor 6. Kunjarao 7. Lambhavel 8. Lingada 9. Marida 10. Parvata 12.

Karamsad. Among these six villages, Vaso, Sojita and Bhadrans used to be part of the Baroda State. These six village patidars had arrogated to circulate their daughters within their *gol*. Even in this *gol* there were certain families of hierarchy who would not go outside their inner *gol* of three and half villages- namely, Vaso, Nadiad, Sojitra and Savli. Even in those three and half villages there were some top class families who had given their daughters to the top classes of these three and half villages. Clearly class had come to play a crucial role besides caste for social purposes. If one wanted to give one's daughter in another *gol* due to any reasons, he had to take permission of the leaders of the family. Any defiance would invite the social boycott. He would lose his right to receive *kankotris* (invitations) from other members of his family and had to remain isolate even from other members of his own family. This was called the 'sanction' taken for non-conformity to norms.<sup>17</sup>

---

Rasnol 13. Ratanpura 14. Samarkha 15. Shili 16. Surasamal 17. Tranol 18. Vaglas 19. Vansol. Viii The fourteen villages of Borsad cover :- 1. Bhatia 2. Blavanipura 3. Davalpura 4. Phagani 5. Golel 6. Israma 7. Jesarva 8. Naman 10. Rupiapura 11. Santokpura 12. Shalpur 13. Vadeli 14. Vishrampur. 1. The sixteen villages of Borsad include : ix. Alarsa 2. Amlav 3. Ankav 4. Asodar 5. Bhetasi 6. Dahami 7. Haldani 8. Kantharia 9. Khadol 10. Kinkhalad 11. Lalpura 12. Nisraya 13. Pipli 14. Singlav 15. Umlav. x. The Sixteen villages of Petlad includes : 1. Danteli 2. Devtaj 3. Jalsan 4. Talundh 5. Jantral 6. Kanjhat 7. Khadana 8. Khotavi 9. Limbali 10. Manoj 11. Piploi 12. Sansej 13. Sayma 14. Sundra 15. Vatra 16. Vasna.

<sup>17</sup> Jaya Prabha Amin, op. cit., p. 17

M. N. Srinivas has divided the village-groupings or *ekdas* into three groups; those belonging to “six villages”; to “twelve villages” and “twenty-seven village”. In all they comprised of 45 villages. No. patidar from these 45 villages might marry a girl from the six villages, might not marry a boy from either the twelve or twenty seven villages; and similarly, a girl from the twelve villages may not marry a boy from the twenty-seven villages. The principal underlying hypergamy was that a girl might not marry below her but only an equivalent or superior boy. That is a girl from the twenty-seven villages had a relatively wide endogamous circle which included the twenty-six villages from her group, and the twelve and six of the others, a girl of the twelve villages had eleven of her own and six of the group above; and a girl of the six villages had only five.<sup>18</sup>

Thus hypergamic marriage system was the root cause of various social evils especially of dowry system and female infanticide which will be discussed afterwards.

Besides exacting large dowries from other patidars wishing to give them their daughters in marriage the upper group also practiced

---

<sup>18</sup> M. N. Srinivas, *Prospects of Sociological Research in Gujarat*, Journal of M. S. U. of Baroda, vol. II, 1953, p. 29.

polygamy. During the last half of the nineteenth century a change came in the general attitude of the caste towards *Kulin* patidars, and in most of the villages *ekda* or solemn agreements had been made to eschew the *Kulins* and to give and take in marriage only in their own social circle. For instance, the Vakal circle containing villages of Baroda and Padra Mahals and some villages of Jumbusar, had framed rules, providing for heavy fines for giving a daughter in marriage outside the circle. The Kahn timer circle of 24 villages had similarly penalised against giving brides to Charotars. The Dhavat circle (16 villages of Karjan and Southern portion of Baroda Mahal) derived a large income from such fines and distributed *lahnis* (domestic utensils for eating or carrying food) to its members.

The patidar name has now practically lost its tenurial significance and is generally affected by all lewas, especially the socially conscious section in the central Gujarat. In South Gujarat and Kathiawad, the lewas residing there are content to call themselves kanbis. North and South Gujarat kanbis had been considered inferior, and even daughters were not taken from them by the hypergamous patidar section, except surreptitiously or driven by want.

Owing to minute sub-divisions of ancestral land many of the Charotar patidars had to leave their original calling and had taken to education. Many of them joined government service in various departments. They were very enterprising and some of them had gone to Africa in search of employment.<sup>19</sup>

### **III.5 Kadwa Patidars:-**

The kadwas were chiefly settled in Ahmedabad and in the Kadi division, the present Mehsana district of the Baroda State. (see Map-1). They were closely connected with the lewas. Even while they dined with lewas, they did not intermarry with them. According to one story, the kadwas are descendants or followers of Kush, the second son of Rama and Sita. According to another, they sprang from clay figures fashioned by Uma or Parvati, the wife of Shiva. Shiva at Uma's request inspired the figures with life and founded for them the village of Unjha about sixty kilometers north of Ahmedabad, where a temple was raised in Uma's honour. All the kadwa kanbis considered the Unjha village and the temple the chief seat of their community and to it they resort from long distance to pay their vows. Some of the

---

<sup>19</sup> *Census of India*, Baroda 1931, pp. 448-449.

community leaders believed that they came to Gujarat from Kabul through the Punjab.<sup>20</sup>

A curious marriage custom prevailed among the kadwa kanbis. Once in every 9, 10 or in 11 years, the priest and astrologers connected with the temple of Umia Mata used to fix a day on which marriages were to take place in the whole caste. Children about a year old and even unborn children were married. In the latter case the pregnant women walked round the *chori* on an understanding that if their children were a boy and a girl, the couple will marry. If a suitable husband could not be secured for a girl, she was married to a bunch of flowers.<sup>21</sup> The flowers were afterwards thrown into a well or a river and the girl, now a widow, can at any time be married according to the simple *natra* form. Sometimes a married man was induced for money consideration to go through this form of marriage with a girl, and to divorce her as soon as the ceremony was over. The girl can then be married according to the *natra* form. Widows marry, but not

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 145.

<sup>21</sup> Natra or marriage of widows is permitted by all Kanbis, but among the well to do it was rarely resorted to. Natra was celebrated on Sunday or Tuesday, less often on Thursday. It always takes place at night. The widow was conducted by five relations of her new husband from her parents' house. There was a little ceremony; the couple was seated facing each other, and in-front of them was placed an earthen pot containing a lighted lamp fed with *ghi*. The pair was asked to look down into the pot and as they did so their heads touched, which completes the ceremony. In some places Ganpati was worshiped, often which the widow put on new bangles presented by her intended husband.

necessarily to the brother of the deceased husband. A woman could divorce her husband without his consent or after she had become a mother.<sup>22</sup>

Certain upper class families held the position of Shethia or Patel, which was a hereditary distinction to manage the affairs of the caste. For the betterment of the caste, a reform movement under the leadership of the enlightened Patdi chief started nearly 100 years ago. Their main efforts were at first directed in the first place to abolish their en-masse marriage system and secondly to spread education amongst the people. In the first matter, the state helped them by their legislation preventing child marriage. *The Kadwa Patidar Kelvani Uttejale Mandal* was established for the lastly ten years at Kadi and has to its credit a number of educational activities.<sup>23</sup>

### III.6 Comparison between Lewa and Kadwa Patidars:-

Lewas and kadwa have had almost similar customs and practices since birth to death, and there were only minor difference. In 1904, Sayajirao Gaekwad setup a committee of three people to list out the customs and practices of kadwa and lewa patels. The committee

---

<sup>22</sup>. Ibid., p. 442

<sup>23</sup>. Ibid., p. 442



members included Diwan Vasudeva Gopal Bhandarkar Hargovind kantwadala and Chnagulal Modi. They found that 1)Kadwa Patels got married once in twelve years; 2) Kadwas had the practice of *natra* (widow re-marriage); 3) in lewa Patels those who practice *natra* were known as Kanbi and those who did not practice *natra* were known as Patidars.<sup>24</sup>

Other differences founded are listed below :

The practice of hypergamy i.e. marriage with families of higher social status prevailed among lewas which was not prevalent among kadwas. The practice of hypergamy gave birth to the system of excessive dowries for marriage in the higher groups which afflicted the lewas whereas Kadwas were more or less free from the custom. Female infanticide was prevalent among the lewas which was rare among the kadwas. Widow marriage was allowed among kadwas which was not allowed among the lewas. Among kadwas marriage used to take place once in nine, ten or eleven years which was known as occasional marriage or *bandha bibaha*. But lewas believed in *chota lagan* which was undated and marriage could have take place any time.

---

<sup>24</sup>. Mangubhai Patel, *Patidar Pragati Parivartan*. Ahmedabad, 1997, p. 77.



### **III.7 Main Features of the Patidar Society during Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

According to the caste hierarchy of Hindu society of Gujarat, the brahmins come first, next comes the banians and then the patidars. A. M. Shah ranked the brahmins and banias in the higher caste order and the Patidars in the middle caste group.<sup>25</sup>

The Patidars were basically farmers and practiced certain customs which were considered undignified by the brahmins and banias, such as remarriage of widows, eating meat, drinking liquor etc. In society generally it was noticed that the higher the caste, the stricter the rituals and social taboos. It is true that the individual could raise their status by adopting the Sanskritized norms.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore the patidars with a desire to raise their social status stopped having liquor, eating meat and put a stop to widow remarriage. Makrand Mehta described this attitude of the patidars as Sanskritization which according to him was particularly noticed

---

<sup>25</sup> The caste category of Hindu Society (as mentioned by A. M. Shah and I. P. Desai in their book *Division and caste Hierarchy* is given below: Higher Caste: Brahmin, Bania, Rajput and others; Middle Caste: Bharwad, Bhal, Barot, Bhol, Kharva, Koli, Machhi, Kanbi, Patidar, Mali, artisan caste; Lower Caste: Depressed, untouchables and other backward castes; Others: Aboriginal, Muslim, Christian, Parsi and others.

<sup>26</sup> Makrand Mehta, "From Sahajanand to Gandhi: Role Perception, Methods and Social integration", *Journal of M. S. U. of Baroda*, Vol. XXVII, 1978, No. 1 and Vol. XXVIII, 1979, No. 1, Combined issue, Baroda, p. 57.

among the community member after their contact with the Swami Narayan Sampradaya. Besides increasing social taboos they also tried to raise their social status by improving their financial position.

Secondly, hypergamy or the practice of marrying girls in families higher in social rank in the caste than that of their parents once prevailed among the lewa kanbis as prevailed among the other Hindu castes notably among the anavala, audich and khedawal bralmins. The different '*kuls*' or families of the same caste were not treated with equal consideration. Certain families are considered '*kulin*' or of good births, either from some honour conferred on their ancestors by the rulers of the land or from the benefits conferred by them on the caste. The '*kulins*' married their daughters only in their own circle but had no objection to take wives from families of inferior rank, provided they received handsome dowries which ranged from a few hundred to several thousand rupees. It was always part of the illusion, are object of solicited to the parents of a female child that they should procure her marriage with the scion of a more noble family. To wed her to a bridegroom of inferior rank was considered disgraceful.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> *Census of India*, 1911, p. 163.

However, the census of 1911 reported that 'within the last twenty years' the lewa kanbis started looking towards the *Kulins* with feelings of less regard than before and had resolved to marry their girls only in their own social circle and not to the *Kulins*. Therefore, the practice of hypergamy considerably reduced among the lewa kanbis under the influence of '*ekdas*' which initiated them to perform marriages only in their own social circles. Thus the practice of endogamy i.e. the custom of marrying in considerably strengthened since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>28</sup>

Thirdly, even towards the end of nineteenth century the practice of child marriage continued among the kadwa kanbis because of their popular custom of marriages in the whole caste on a particular day, once in every nine, ten or eleven years, which led them to perform the marriages of about a month old girl and sometimes even unborn children.

Fourthly, formation of caste associations was an important aspect of social reform movement of Gujarat. These new associations

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, pp. 162-63.

were basically different from the old caste *panchayats* in as much as they attempted to reform castes from within rather than merely administer them in the traditional way. These associations tried to reform the internal organization of the castes by decreasing expenditure on such occasions as marriage and death, limiting the customary monetary and other exchanges at the time of marriage and assisting in the education of members of the caste by providing books, scholarship and boarding facilities. These associations published their own journals and organized conventions and conferences. Some caste organizations undertook censuses of their castes. Some suggested diverting excess expenditure incurred in marriage and other customs to education. Thus the former enthusiasm for abolishing their caste system gave place to a desire for reform of their caste system. In Baroda they established their own organizations. Among various caste associations of lewa Patidars mention may be made of *Vakal Seva Kendra* in Sayajigunj, *Shree Ahmedabadi Lewa Patidar Stree Samaj* near Baroda Airport, *Ahmedabadi Lewa Patels* in Raopura, *Sardar Patel Samaj* near Vishwamitri and *Kahnam Patidar Samaj* in Pratnagar etc.

Among the caste associations of the kadwa patidars mention may be made of *Kadwa Patidar Kelavani Mandal* in Karleibaug, *Shree Samasta patidar Kelavani mandal* in Karelibaug, *Kadwa Patidar Samaj* behind Khanderao Market, *Saurashtra patel Seva Samaj* in Fatehgunj and *Mehsana Samaj* in Raopura.

Similar organizations of both the lewas and kadwas also got established in various parts of Baroda State some of these actively tried to reform the patidar society by removing social evils and also by the spread of education.

### **III.8 Development of Patidars as a Community:-**

The Kanbis were hardworking, industrious and tradition loving people. Mr. Monier Williams' Survey in 1821 gives the following description of this community:

The most respectable part of the population and the principle cultivators of this highly cultivated and fertile collectorate are the Koonbees or the Kulbees or Kulumbees, for the words is pronounced in all the different ways. The Koonbees were a peaceable as they were industrious and doubtlessly the most valuable subjects of the State in this quarter. No Hindoos are more particular as to the simplicity of their food, or more rigid in abstinence from using anything as such that has had life in

this differing widely from the Koonbees of the Dekhun; neither will they knowingly occasion the death of any animal, or the meanest insect those that commit the greatest depredations on their crops being equally safe with the most harmless. The deer, monkeys, and birds that devour their grain are frighten away, but never killed. They conceive that the creator intended a portion of the fruits of the earth for these creatures, as well as for man, and that there is enough for all besides that it would be only wanton cruelty to destroy them, as all their endeavors would not sensibly diminish the numbers or the evil. The following remarks on the Koonbees are attentive agriculturists. They are particularly well acquainted with the qualities and powers of all the variations of the soil, and have distinctive terms for differences that, to an experienced eye, are difficult to be perceived. They are also perfect master of all the circumstances which are favourable or adverse to the growth of each particular subject of cultivation, and there is not a season in which this knowledge is not applied : They are by no means averse to new experiments, provided they can be made without much trouble or expense; but they do not like to wait for a tardy result and in case of failure, they have neither enterprise nor capital to persist, considering the general standard of intellect in the country and the various obstacles to improvement in which their very condition is involved, they may be called good farmers; their processes, if not the best possible, are nearly the best that circumstances admit of. The Koonbee heads of villages generally live in a very patriarchal way with their Ryots: there is a great apparent equality, but still an active superintendence,



and an undisputed superiority. Subjects of general concern are publicly and unreservedly discussed, and what appears to be the general opinion is usually acted on. In their domestic life, as far as I have been able to penetrate, I observe a great deal of quiet, unostentatious, simple morality.<sup>29</sup>

These people were known for their doggedness, tenacity and extraordinary virility. Some of them had rise to high posts in government service, or made money in trade or as money lenders. A good many were village headmen, either as revenue headmen or Police Patels, and used to enjoy allowances from the State in cash or kind. But the bulk of the community was capital husbandmen, well versed in the knowledge of the properties of every kind of soil and thoroughly acquainted with all the detailed wants of every crop. They were sober, peaceful, hardworking, hospitable, independent and thrifty except on the occasions of marriages and similar festive ceremonies. Their respect for brahmins and the spiritual leaders in general was an index to their intensely devotional temperament and religious outlooks. Though original sharply distinguished from the patidars, but later the kanbis had been practically absorbed into the patidar community. This had been largely due to the fact that the patidars

---

<sup>29</sup> Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government, No. III, *Memoir on the Zilla of Baroche being the Result of a Revenue, Statistical, and Topographical Survey of that Collectorate* by Lieutenant-colonel Monier Williams, Bombay, 1855, p. 43.

were treating the tillers of the soil as their friends and social equals; and in fact the distinction between the two groups now survived only to this extent that intermarriages between the members of the two groups were yet few and far between.<sup>30</sup>

There had been in circulation numerous legends and traditions, indicative of the traits which had made them conspicuous for patriotism, for diplomacy, statesmanship and administrative ability of very high order. The Patels of Savali, Karmasad, Sojitra, Virsad and a few other places were given large tracts of land by Mahamad Begada in appreciation of the assistance in administration which they gave him, after he took the fort of Champanair in 1484.

Accordingly to David Pocock they were industrious, had agricultural skills and conducted themselves peacefully for which they were almost invariably commended by the British officers.<sup>31</sup> In the course of the last hundred and fifty years the patidars became well-known. Some became such wealthy that according to some saying Gujarat had become the private property of the patidars. Certainly their enterprise was represented in almost every town. Some of their

---

<sup>30</sup> Gordhanbhai Patel, *Vithalbhai Patel-Life and Times*, Vol. I, Bombay, 1950, pp. 3 -4

<sup>31</sup> David Pocock, op. cit., p. 57

members occupied high positions under the Gaekwads of Baroda when their villages fell in his territory. Others were high ranking officers in the courts of Saurashtrian princes.<sup>32</sup>

In the field of education there was a big expansion in secondary education in Kheda district and in the Baroda parts of the Charotar during the second decade of 20th century. Most of the boys at the Petlad boarding house appear to have been Patidars. Although many were of a landlord or rich peasant's background, a significant number were intelligent young men of middle class peasant families who had been given scholarships by Motibhai Amin. Many went on to successful careers in which they were sympathetic to the nationalist movement, but were not active nationalists. However many others decided to devote their lives to serving society by becoming school teachers and social worker. After 1917, they became supporters of the Gandhian movement and combined their social reform activities with leadership of their local congress organizations. Motibhai Amin had taken the cream of the Patidar youth of this day and without meaning to had made many into future leaders of the nationalist movement in Kheda.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup>.Ibid., p. 61.

In 1945 two visionaries Bhailal Bhai Patel and Bhikabhai Patel set out to establish educational township in Anand in 1945 and thus Charotar Vidyamandal (CVM) came into existence. Inspired by the late Sardar Vallabhabhai Patel for rural resurgence of post-independent India through education, Bhailalbai Patel (fondly addressed as Bhaikaka) realized that the most potent instrument to improve the subhuman life of villagers was to bring higher learning to their very doorstep. Thus the concept of establishing institutions of higher education started taking shape. He got in touch with Bhikhabai Kuberbai Patel, a dedicated and farsighted educationist, fired by the same ideal. They held several meetings in different parts of Kheda district with people interested in higher education in Anand town. On March 28, 1945 it was decided to draw and implement the plan of planting an educational township in a wilderness area infested with dacoits, which later came to be known as Vallabh Vidyangar. Bhaikaka persuaded the farmers to donate their land free of cost, saying, 'Donate your land to us now; we'll develop and use two thirds and return you the remaining one-third in course of time'.<sup>46</sup> It was explained to them that while having the pleasure of assisting in the establishment of an educational township at no cost to themselves the

building plots they would each obtain would appreciate sufficiently not only to cover the value of the land donated, but also leave a handsome margin of profit. At a meeting in Bakrol, a village at a hailing distance from today's Vallabh Vidyanagar, spontaneous offer of land was made to Bhaikaka and Bhikhabhai. A map of the village was spread before the duo and they were asked to mark with a pencil the area needed. Residents of Anand and Karamsad (Sardar Patel's village) followed suit. Thus a total of 555 acres of land at the intersection of Bakrol, Karamsad and Anand was received in donation.

The founders decided to form two institutions Charotar Viday Mandal (CVM) and Charotar Gramoddhar Sahakari Mandal. The former was a charitable trust devoted to the cause of education, that is to establish colleges and schools and the later was meant to produce building materials for educational institutions and residential quarters of the township. They were registered on August 10, 1945 and September 7, 1945 respectively.

Bricks were manufactured locally, cement pipe factory was set up, rubber factory and pre-stressed concrete factory was established to produce and procure the basic raw materials required to build the

entire Vidyanagar Township. Jawarlal Nehru laid the foundation stone of Vallabh Vidyanagar and the first CVM educational institute 'Vithalbhai Patel Mahavidyalaya' catering to arts and science students came about in June 1947. Within a span of five years two more colleges were set up, one to train students in the field of engineering and the other for commerce stream students. The first engineering college of Gujarat Birla Vishwakarma Mahavidyalaya was started with a grant of 25 lakhs from Birla education Trust on 14 June 1947. It was declared open by Lord Mountbatten, just a day before he was to leave India for good. Dr. Rajendra Prasad laid the foundation stone of a commerce college named Bhilkabhai Jivabhai Vanijya Mahavidyalaya (BJVM) in 1950.

Later on in 1955 it became an University township with the setting up of Sardar Vallabh Bhai Vidyapeeth, now called Sardar Patel University, with Bhaikaka being appointed as its first Vice Chancellor on 15 Dec. 1955.

In politics also their representation was noteworthy. Mention may be made of famous political leader Vithalbhai Patel and Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel. Gordhanbhai Patel in his biography of Vithalbhai

Patel remarked: "Most of the elements which make the history of Patidars so fascinating are represented in the life and work of Vithalbhai. Both Vithabhai and Vallabh Bhai have demonstrated vividly and in the fullest measures, all the traits and peculiarities of temperament and character, which may be summed up as the racial psychology of the Patidars, in the wider field of Indian politics".<sup>33</sup>

In the Maha Gujarat Movement patidars were extremely active. In the decade before Gandhi returned to Gujarat, nationalist ideas had gained a hold in the villages of Kheda, which provided link between the patidar peasants and the nationalists of the towns. The leads were taken by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Vithalbhai Patel, Narsinhbhai Patel etc.<sup>34</sup>

Vitahlbhai and Vallabnhbhai Patel were lawyers and were patidars of the Chhagam village of Karmsad, the sons of an impoverished member of the patidar gentry. They had both started their legal practices at Godhra in the Panch Mahal district, but in 1898

---

<sup>33</sup> Gordhan Patel, op. cit., p.9.

<sup>34</sup> David Hardiman, *Peasant Nationalists in Kheda District*, p. 70.

Vithalbhai had shifted to Borsad and in 1902 Vallabhbhai had followed him<sup>35</sup>

During the first decade of the twentieth century, nationalist ideas began to circulate amongst these lawyers of Borsad. The main source was Baroda city Vallabhbhai Patel knew Aurbindo Ghose and was a friend of Narsinbhai Patel. Among other leading nationalists in Borsad was Phulabhai Patel, a Borsad Patidar of peasant origin who made a fortune from his legal practice and became a substantial landlord.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile Vithalbhai Patel was establishing a career in politics using Kheda district and particularly Borsad, as his constituency. In 1911, he successfully defended his friend, the revolutionary Narsinbhai Patel, against the changes brought by the Baroda Government. These cases enhanced Vithalbhai's reputation as a champion of the people. In the years before Gandhi's return to India, Vithalbhai and Vallabhbhai Patel established themselves as champions

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 76.



of the patidar peasants of Borsad Taluka and the petty bourgeoisie of Borsad town.<sup>37</sup>

The nationalists among Patidars were also influenced by the extremist ideologies and their leaders were Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Aurovind Ghose and Lala Lajpat Rai, rather than Naoroji, Pheroze Shah Mehta or G. K. Gokhale. Even in Baroda State especially in Baroda city, the ideas of the extremist nationalists of Bengal, Maharashtra and the Punjab circulated freely during the first decade of the twentieth century. The leaders of the terrorist movement were the Bengali Aurobindo Ghose, who was a Professor at Baroda College from 1892 to 1906 and K. G. Deshpande, a Maharashtra intellectual who served as a Suba, or district head in Baroda State. One of the focal point of terrorist activity was a nationalist school called the Ganganathe Bharatiya Sarvba Vidyalaya founded by K. G. Deshpande in 1907. In its boarding school there were many patidar students, side by side with Marathi and brahmin students. Young Patidar landlords appeared to have responded best to there nationalist activities. Among them was Narsinbhai Patel belonged to Chhagam village of Sojitra. (in

---

<sup>37</sup>.Ibid., pp. 78-79.

Kheda district).<sup>38</sup> He served in the Baroda bureaucracy in Mehsana town in the Baroda territories of north Gujarat. He learnt Bengali so that he could translate nationalist literature into Gujarati and by 1911 had published six books, largely translations. These were printed at the Shiksha Press at Mehsana which was owned by Narsinhbhai's brother.

The Patidars who took active part in the Indian Freedom Movement were listed in the government's secret records. They were:

Patel Ambalal Bajibhai (1932) from Gorva

Patel Ambalal Nathubhai (1932) from Patdi

Patel Ambalal Ranchhoddas (1930)

Patel Ambala shandkerbhai (1932) from Sojitra of Baroda State

Patel Ashabhai Bhagwandas (1940-41) from Sokhda Taluka of Matar

Patel Ashabhai Lallulbhai (1941-43) from Borsad

Patel Babubhai J. (1941-43) from Nadiad

Patel Babubhai Vithal Bhai(1941-43) Bhadran of Baroda state

Patel Bailal Bhikhabhai (1940) from Anand

Patel Bhagvandas Kashibhai from Anand

Patel Bhailal Jawarbhai (1930) from Bardoli

---

<sup>38</sup> Besides Patidar landlords Marathi Brahmin and Gujarati Brahmin landlords also responded to nationalist movement and the most important Gujarati terrorist group was formed by Mohan Lal Pandya, Punja Bhai Bhatt and Narshinhbhai Patel all three were from Kheda district.

Patel Nanubhai (1930),

Patel Bhaskar R. (1930)

Patel Bhavanbhai Hathibhai (1941-43)

Patel Chaturbhai Bhailal Nisraya (1932)

Patel Chhotabhai Shankar bhai (1941) of Anand

Patel Dayabhai Bholabhai (1940-41) from Borsad

Patel Dayabhai Govanji (1941)

Patel Dhirubhai (1942)

Patel Gordhanbhai Becharbhai (1941) from Ganpatpura of Karjan

Taluka of Baroda

Patel Govinbhai Haribhai (1941-42-43) from Gomtipura

Patel Ravjibhai Haribhai from Sojitra of Baroda State

Patel Sardar Vallabhai

Patel Ravjibhai Manibhai (1934) from Sojitra

Patel K. C. of Bhadran of Baroda State

Patel Khushalbhai Kalidas of Petlad of Baroda State

Lallubhai Bhajibhai of Sali , Sawli

Lallubhai Laxmandas (1932-34) from Bhadran of Baroda State

Patel Motibhai Zaverbhai of Nar, Baroda State

Patel Narayanbhai Chhaganbhai (1933) from Vaso of Baroda

Patel Parbhudas Dhulbhai (1941) of Borsad

Patel Ramnanlal Bhailal Bhai (1941) of Bhadran of Baroda State

Patel Raoji Manibhai (1932) from Sojitra of Baroda State etc.<sup>39</sup>

Nallabhbhai expressed his great joy at the courage of patidars' convictions in resigning their service while referring to the esteem in which the agriculturists and patels were held by Government and the epithets 'deceitful', 'untrue' and 'intriguing' were applied to them, Nallabhai observed: "God has provided means of filling bellies not only for you, but for animals also: and what is the difference between you and animals if you fill your bellies with such a reputation? I have told the agriculturists that they should not low their heads everywhere. Their heads should be bowed down only before God and not before everyone else. The head of a man bows before God. However great a representative of the devilish authority may, he may be a representative of cannon and rifles, he may have the power to take life, to grant jagirs, yet he who bows before such person is not a man he is a coward. We have remained cowards up till now, now take care that our progeny do not remain` cowards".<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Maharashtra State Archive, Home Dept. Special File No. 800/74/4 III.

<sup>40</sup> Maharashtra State Archive, Home Deptt. Political, Books and publication: A book in Gujarati, entitled *Sardar ni Vani*, file. No. 543, year, 1930, p. 7

Continuing he said: “The miseries of the agriculturists of Gujarat lie in their ignorance. Patels also are included in them. Patels of former times were protectors of the people. Now they are being eaten through Patels. I explained this to you very well during the Borsad and Bardoli campaigns. If we serve this Government it is tantamount to murdering our children and our families”.<sup>41</sup>

Patidar women also participated in the freedom movement in respectable numbers. Mention may be made of the followings:-

1. Dahiben Umedbhai Patel of Palaji Taluka, Borsad, was arrested at Borsad for offering Satyagraha by citing anti-war slogans.
2. Dahiben widow of Lallubhai. Bhadkhabhai of Boriavi taluka, Anand, was sentenced with (Simple imprisonment) and a fine of RS.100/- she was arrested on 14/7/1941 for anti war slogan. She was convinced and sentenced fine of Rs. 50 on 17/7/1941.
3. Dahiben Ravjibhai Patel of Bhaladu Taluka, Matar was sentenced for one month and fined Rs. 200/-.
4. Kamalben Prabhudas Patel was arrested on account of anti-war slogans and satyagraha in Taluka of Borsad 28/4/1941 and imposed a fine of Rs. 200/- but fine not paid.

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

5. Mrs. Kashiben Parshottambhai Patel : arrested at lambvel, taluka, Anand, for offering satyagraha by citing anti-war slogans on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1941.
6. Mrs. Kashiben Shirabhai Patel of Ode in Anand taluka was convicted and sentenced to suffer imprisonment till the rising of the court and to pay a fine of Rs. 50/- on 19/3/1941.
7. Kashiben Zaverbahi Patel led procession females of Savarkatha, taluka Anand on 31/7/1932.
8. Miss. Moniben Ptel was arrested on 2.8.1930 convicted on 7/8/1930 and sentenced with a fine of Rs. 100/- in connection with the Civil Dis-obedience movement. Later on she accompanied Vallabhabhai Patel on 31/7/1942 while he came to Nadiad from Ahmedabad. She performed satyagraha by shouting slogans and addressing anti-war meeting and she was arrested on 21/11/1940.
9. Mrs. Maniben Patel was convicted and sentenced to five months R. I. and fine of Rs. 25/- on 5/2/1932.
10. Mrs. Maniben Shivabhai Patel was arrested at Borad for offering satyagraha by citing anti-war slogans on 6/1/1941. She was fined Rs. 200/.
11. Miss Maniben Vallabhbhai Patel appointed as a director of the Gujarat Pratik Samiti on 11<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1932. She was sentenced to

15 months R. I. and was arrested at Nadiad and prosecuted on 4/12/1933.

12.Maniben Fulabhai Patel from Bochasan was another political agitator during 1932.

13.Miss Yasodaben Manibhai Patel was convicted and sentenced S. I. for one month and fined Rs. 300/- in default S. I. for 3 months. She was the head mistress of the Vithal Kanya Vidyalay Nadiad and was arrested for offering satyagraha in 1941.

14.Mrs. Savitaben Somabhai Patel of Khandhlio taluka- Matar was convicted and sentenced to suffer S. I. till the rising of the court and to pay a fine of Rs. 200/-.

15.Miss Shantaben Dahyabhai Patel was convicted and sentenced S. I. for one month and fine Rs. 200/- of offering satyagraha by reciting anti-war slogans at Nadiad on 7/10/1941. She was arrested at Nadiad and sent to the Ahmedabad central Prison for detention.

16.

### **III.9 Patidars in East Africa:-**

In the course of time patidars established themselves in East Africa and also in Fiji and Burma, as notable businessman. The

patidars of Charotar began their migration to East Africa in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. By 1970 there were as many as 50,000 patidars spread over almost every part of East Africa, making them the largest Hindu community in that part of the continent. The earliest emigrants who reached at Mambasa in East Africa in 1895, included Maganbhai Patel and Ishwarbhai Patel of Karamsad, and Umedbhai Patel of Vaso. Resourceful farmers, they landed in Mombasa with enough capital to start up modest shops catering to the needs of local consumers. Within a year, however, they made enough money to invite family and caste members to join them. This sparked an exodus of Patidars to East Africa as news spread that their Brethren were ‘striking *gold*’ in a foreign land.

They joined Government jobs in the railways, post and telegraph revenue, income tax and educational departments in East Africa. Others took up law and medicine. What ever their profession, the Patidars carefully saved money to send for their family members and caste fellows, who would then set up business with small amount of capital. It is quite noteworthy that having close ties with Sardar Patel and the Indian freedom struggle they sent handsome donations which were used for the Satyagraha movements and reconstructive



activities. Utilizing their close family and kinship structure and also the patidar association of East Africa, the patidars developed a wide retail and wholesale trade specializing in hardware, pharmaceuticals, cotton textiles, alcohol, bicycles and the automobile spare parts. Some creative minds even set up in the cinema business. They used their contacts with the growing Bombay film Industry and the Indian Motion Picture Producers' Association in the 1930s to bring Hindi and Gujarati movies to Kampala, Jinja, Mombasa, Nairobi and other cities.<sup>42</sup>

In clever and subtle way in which the diasporic patidars brought in the movies show that they had combined the business and the nationalist spirit in East Africa and this had been rooted in their original Charotar soil.

---

<sup>42</sup> 1920's was the period of silent films. The enterprising Patidars led by Gordhanbhai Patel of Sojitra and Manibhai Patel of Bhadran organized tents and showed 'Sheth Sagalsha'. "Krishna-Sudama" and 'Raja Sripal'. The crowds were unaccustomed to even the silent films and they welcomed them with great enthusiasm. With the emergence of the talkie films in the 1930's the Patidars brought in 'Kisaan Kanya' directed by Ardesar Irani, 'Hunterwali' starring famous actors, John Kavas and Nadia, V. Shantaram's 'Saint Tukaram' and a Gujarati film "BC Ghadi Moj". Muljibhai Madhawani, apioneer of the Madhavani Group of Industries, saw this Gujarati film on 28<sup>th</sup> may, 1932. He had enjoyed Hindi movies but the Gujarati film failed to entertain him. His journalist friend who had accompanied him, wrote in a typical Gujju style: 'paisa padi gaya'. Hindi films like 'Ramrajya' and 'Kismet' exhibited in the 1940's proved box office hits. It may be remembered that 'Kismet' appeared during the Second World War, soon after the 'Quit India' movement. Its song 'aaj himalyaki chotise phir hamne lalkara hai, dur hato ye duniya walo Hindustan hamara hai full of nationalist and patriotic fervour generated such historical and tumultus emotions that it inspired not only Indians but also the Africans who were also then fighting for their Independence. Makarand Mehta. "Patidar Diaspora in East Africa in Historical perspective" paper presented at the International Seminar on 'Indian Diasporic Experience: History Culture and Identify' organized by North Gujarat University, Patan on Dec. 22-24, 2004.

Patidars also came to dominate the ginning industry and trade in Uganda. Competing with such Lohana stalwarts as Nanjibhai Kalidas Mehta and Muljibhai Madhvani. By 1952, they owned as many as 43 out of a total 193 ginning factories in Uganda. Still others excelled in soap and oil business. A few enterprising patidars cultivated sisal, sugarcane and other commercial crops, and also flowers and fruits in Kenya and Uganda. In East Africa they modernized their tradition by setting up vast experimental farms and conducting marketing surveys for local consumption and export trade. That had enabled them to more fortunes.<sup>43</sup>

Therefore involvement of patidars in agriculture, trade, business, film-industries, in education, politics and freedom movement was noteworthy and participation of women in freedom struggle was gratifying. But in social atmosphere, the condition of women as a whole was deplorable during the period under study instead of efforts of reformers which is discussed at length in the next chapter.

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 4.