CHAPTER V
NON-GUJARATIS’ CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECONOMIC & INDUSTRIAL SECTORS OF KACHCHH

I
Economic Sector

Hiralal Parakh:

‘Hirabhai’ as he is fondly called in and outside his trade circle, Hiralal Parakh is the most famous face in Gandhidham where he and his family has multiple business interests in key sectors such as timber, plastic, transport, raw and refined salt. These are joint family businesses of the Parakhs who comprise 8 families of four brothers of Hirabhai and 7 more families of uncles.

“We are separate only in our 10 kitchens, rest everything is joint. The secret of our success is blissful blessing of my father Champaklalbhai Parakh who at the age of 80 continues to be a guiding star.”

Hirabhai proudly told while frankly telling everything about their phenomenal rise in trade and businesses at their new home land in Kachchh. When Senior Parakh came to Kachchh in late fifties, he was a small time wholesale trader of pure ghee.

“My father used to come in Kachchh all the way from our village in Barmer district solely to purchase pure ghee from here to sell it back in Rajasthan. In those days Kachchh produced a plenty of good quality pure ghee. My father Champaklalbhai then set up a wholesales grain and seeds shop in Gandhidham in 1960. The family then entered salt business in 1970 and purchased salt works at Chirai village. A whole new world of edible oil was waiting for the family when the Central Govt. declared edible oil as an OGL item and there was import of edible oil at Kandla. They transported imported oil. This was thriving business in partnership with M R Shah, well-known transporter of the time. This very building where I have my office
chamber and where we are talking is known as MR Shah building. Our partnership business set up by my father Champaklalbhai still continues." he proudly said.

Hirabhai who gave up his education after passing SSC to help his distinguished businessman father in his business expansion totally devoted himself to the family business. They also found storage and warehousing to be lucrative business plunged head on and there was success here too for them. But salt remained core business of the Parakhs, especially for Hirabhai. They purchased and expanded Dungarshee salt works in 1986. Today the Parakh family is a big name in production of triple refined free flow iodized salt in the country with their most famous brand, Ankur Namak. He occupied position of the National President of the All Indian Salt Manufacturers Association and represented the country many a world salt meets in different countries as an authority on salt. The family business is run by highly educated professional family members who hold commerce, science or management degrees.

This is not a mean achievement for Hirabhai who is just 60 and keeping good health. He travels a lot. Though billionaire he drives his own vehicle when at home. For keeping himself healthy he does some yoga exercises taught by Baba Ramdev who was his personal guest when he visited Gandhidham for his yoga camp. He avoids eating out, be it marriage party or any other party. His food is always simple.

Hiralal was invited to join Rotary Gandhidham in the year 1984-85, thus his Rotary journey started 30 years back. He has served Rotary Gandhidham as Club President, twice, in 1989-90 and 2001-02.

Major Donor Hiralal’s “Parakh Family is a PHF Family” Appreciating his this gesture R.I. Dist 3050 many a times entrusted on him Rotary Foundation Chair. Being a passionate traveler, Rtn. Hiralal has attended 2 International Conventions, more than 25 Dist. Conferences as well as more than 20 Dist Assemblies.
With a very versatile personality and strong qualities Rtn. Hiralal has always been a great leader. He was nominated as Trustee on the Board of Trustees for Kandla Port Trust representing Gandhidham Chamber of Commerce and Industry, for the year 2004-2006. He was the member of Committee set up by Gujarat Electricity Regulatory Committee. He is the Past President of Gandhidham Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Being the Ex-General Secretary of Bharatiya Janta Party, Kachchh Dist. Associated with Jain Mitra Mandal for last 17 years, Divisional Warden of Civil Defense for Kandla, Gandhidham and Adipur etc, are some others feathers in his Cap.

Rtn. Hiralal’s professional journey started in the year 1970 when Chirai Salt works came into being. In 1975 the next venture, Edible Oil Installations came into existence. After the separation of partners in 1986, Dungersey Salt Works was established. Currently, Hiralal is the Director of Ankur Chemfood (Guj.) Ltd. and also of Majithia Salt and Chemical Works Pvt. Ltd. In the present scenario Ankur Salt is Asia’s largest manufacturer of free-flow refined Salt. It’s all due to Hiralal that the Salt Industry in Kachchh has seen the new horizons. 70 years old “Indian Salt Manufacturers Association” was almost on the death bed but Hiralal’s efforts not only revived it, also gave it a great recognition. In the year 2009, for the first time there was a historic representation of Indian Salt Manufacturers in an International Conference held in China. In 2010 this International Conference was hosted by ISMA for the first time in India under the Presidentship of Rtn. Hiralal Parakh.

Besides excelling on the professional front, Hiralal is a great visionary. A beautiful set up of Amarchand Singhvi International School under his able Chairmanship and guidance is a meaningful gift to the children and residents of Adipur-Gandhidham complex. The students of Adipur and Gandhidham have been provided an international level school due to the efforts of this Non-Gujarati. Kachchh’s educational upliftment is possible only because of such Non-Gujaratis who have devoted their lives in supporting and co operating the native people.

This third generation inheritor and entrepreneur is very religious man and never misses religious TV telecast in the morning. He also watches TV for news. He loves to watch old melodious films of the seventies. He is strong BJP man and takes
active interest in politics. He originally was a congress man, but left the party in protest against imposition of emergency by the late assassinated Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. He is known for his social services and his rotary services and will be occupying the highest and coveted post of District Governor for Rotary for the year 2015-16.

Mr. Hiralal Parakh
Ankur Salt Of Hiralal Parakh:

Talk about the rich, talk about the poor, everyone will consider salt at the basic necessity of the life salt. Salt is not only used for making recipe tastier but also in the various industries starting from clothes to detergents. Thus from food to clothes, salt is an essential thing, and it is a surprise that 50 percents of the India’s total production of salt is accessed in Kachchh only and even more surprising is that Ankur Salt is the most promising name in this context which exports salt to the most parts of India.

Ankur Salt Co. of Hiralal Parakh is the largest salt producing company in Asia which has earned Kachchh an eminent place in the Salt Industry. In an interview with Mr. Parakh, he confidently said that he would like to extend the reaches of the company and one day it would enter in final too. The Parakh Family has been there in the salt industry since 40 years. It started extending the business in 1997 and established the prestigious company called Ankut Salt near Gandhidham Bhachu Road in Choparva, which also proved to be the first technical salt refinery in Kachchh.

“The Ankur Salt Co. has capacity to produce 200 tons of salt on 1 daily basis which has allowed it to draw 150 ‘crore rupee’ turnovers per annum. And such salt is exported to Assam in East, Tamil Nadu in South and Jammu Kashmir in North along with other states of India. In all these states salt is sold with the brand name of Ankur. According to Mr. Parakh, 10 to 12 percents of Indian Market of edible salt is shared by Ankur Salt Co. of Kachchh. The production limit of 2000 tons per day will be increased by 1000 tons and the total production will be 3000 tons per day in 2014,” says the M.D., Mr. Parakh.

Moreover the salt is of international quality and it is exported to many of the countries of the world on a regular basis. The Production Manager Mr. Prakash Jain and Mr. Piyush Shah says that a new plant to increase the production limit by 800 tons is ready to be established and the most beneficiary thing for Kachchh is that more
than 1000 labors have been appointed to help the project through which they’ll draw their wages and thus the Economic sector is enriched by the Ankur Salt Co.

Lest the company should feel the scarcity of raw material for the production of salt, it has arranged for 1500 acres of land to assist the salt works and on this land, 2.5 lac of tons of raw material for salt is produced which is used to produce edible salt in the factory. Mostly it is believed that salt is used to spice up the recipes only but it’s not the truth, the fact is that only 40 percents of the refined salt reaches the kitchens. The rest is accessible for the industries.

Ankur Chemfood Ltd. is world’s largest salt refinery founded in 1994. The company headed by Mr. Hiralal C. Parakh belongs to reputed Champalal Group Company. It is engaged in manufacturing, marketing & exporting of Triple Refined Free Flow Iodized and Pure Industrial Salt. The Company has stake in diversified industries, with annual group turnover of more than Rs. 1000 Crore (US$200m).

“Ankur Chemfood Ltd. is one of the world’s largest refineries. We are the leading Refined Edible and Industrial Grade Salt manufacturer, exporter & supplier. Combined wealth of experience coupled with industry networking is what gives us an edge over others. Our highly reliable and most efficient staff has made us emerge as the most preferred name in the industry. With the focus on quality and good business ethics we have earned a prestigious position in this field,” says the Director, Mr. Hiralal Parakh.

Vision and Mission of the company is:

i. To strictly adhere to their values and ethics based system in order to maintain their integrity.

ii. To perform constant research in order to improve the quality of products and innovate new value-added products.

iii. To expand their network with significant global presence.
iv. To provide utmost work satisfaction to the employees. To educate, encourage & motivate the work-force & to allow them to give their valuable ideas for the growth of the company.

v. To maintain the trust of consumer by always providing them best quality, at best rates, with attractive packaging.

Undoubtedly, Ankur Salt doesn’t give any chance to the customers of any complaints as it is refined under triple refinery process. Ankur Salt Co. has its special laboratory and enough care is taken to provide the customers the highest quality salt. Ankur salt also produces salt for Saffola, Tata, Reliance Food Bazar, Birla Group and such other giants. As it is an ISO 9000:2000 certified company, its hold in the market is valid and influencing. Also it makes it a trustworthy industry in the world market. Its various giant clients are Britannia Industries, Nestle India, Merico Industries, Parle Biscuits, etc.

To sum up, it can be said that Ankur Salt industry has succeeded in fulfilling its goals to provide the nation & the world the better lot of salt. The Economic sector of Kachchh has met with its expectations due to a variety of industries but Ankar Salt Co. ranks amongst the topmost ones. Many of the native Kachchhis have been provided the employment due to its record breaking production of salt.

Yash Pal Nanda:

Yash Pal Nanda’s name is synonymous with wheels. He gave Kachchh mobility which has now brought unprecedented and unthinkable prosperity changing the very face of the state’s most backward biggest border district. This he did by pioneering transport industry and explaining the benefits in this business. His easy accessibility and genuine guidance plus much needed financial help encouraged local people who were again farmers, shepherds and small time grocers to buy Tata vehicles. Remaining confined to their villages for ages, they now do business in and out of the state. Ratanal, former Minister Vasanbhai Ahir’s village on Gandhidham-Bhuj road is a glaring example of prosperity solely emerging from the Transport Industry. The Ahir village once got its water supply from a railway engine which had
a stop over here. Now, the village boats of the hundreds of trucks and motor garages for repair.

Born with a silver spoon in his mouth in a wealthy Zamindar family in west Punjab in Pakistan on August 18, 1925, Yash Pal however had to migrate to India penniless on account of the country’s partition. He settled in Delhi and decided to be in automobile trade.11
In the mid-fifties when TEL CO, the country’s biggest automobile company, offered him dealership for sale of their heavy vehicles in the difficult district of Kachchh, he accepted it and he set up his ‘small wheel house’ at Gandhidham, an upcoming township for refugees from Pakistan. The company he incorporated in 1959 was named as Cargo Motors Private Limited. The venture was success and the company spread its tentacles all over the state from Gandhidham. But the noteworthy thing here is that the port of Kandla owes much to Cargo Motors for its fast development of transportation of export-imports goods from its 10 lakh square km hinterland in northern India. With his multiple first ever transport-related activates in the country, he had become legendary figure in the transport sector. But before this visionary much could do for people earning their bread and butter from this fast-expanding industry, he all of sudden departed from us for the kingdom of heaven on April 24, 1995. In their glowing tribute, the people of Kachchh called him Bhishma Pitamaha of Transport Industry as he had transformed their life with a touch of magic.12

It is only because of Nanda that people could have afforded small cars in the eighties in Kachchh. He let the wheel of Industrial Growth go at its rapid fast pace as none had done earlier in Kachchh. The Industrial, Economic and Infrastructural growth of Kachchh owe its development to Mr. Nanda.

Vimal Gujaral:

If you are currently witnessing an unprecedented ‘auto boom’ in Kachchh to such an extent that the border district is said to be topper in per capita vehicles in the country, the credit solely goes to Cargo Motors which pioneered the transport industry here in the early fifties when owning a cycle was a luxury. As you will see in the adjoining columns, the man who did this was Y P Nanda. Following Nanda’s customer-friendly unique sales policy, Vimal Gujaral, his brother-in law has made Cargo Motors house-hold name in the Transport Industry.

‘Like Nandaji, I have visited each and every village of Kachchh to explain the importance of Transport Industry to transform Kachchh
and how easily native Kachchhis can own four wheelers’ Gujaral said, adding that this was possible because of Maruti Udyog chose them to handle its’ car cargo—imports of cars in CKD and exports of ready-made cars at Kandla.13

Holding post-graduation degree in chemistry from Alighar University, Gujaral who had his entire education from KG to Master of Science at native place Uttar Pradesh came to Gandhidham in 1972 to join their family business of vehicle selling, set up by visionary Nanda. His father, Chunilalbhai I, an ex-Army Officer of the British Army, was already working as the Cargo Motors resident representative.
Gujaral junior was initially appointed as an Assistant Sales Manager and later, after training in all departments and gaining much experience, he was asked to head the company’s Gujarat operations as its chief executive officer in 1978. His hands on experience of this highly competitive automobile industry earned him a top position in the company as its director of Gujarat in 1996.

Because of the company’s state wide operations his work is demanding involvement of lots of travelling. But still he has maintained his health by daily exercise in the morning.

“I get up 6.30 in the morning and to my physical exercise to keep me fit. I do not do yoga even though i have heard about its advantages. I cannot do this when I have to be out for ten to fifteen day. Earlier I did not go for daily walking, but this too has now been stopped,”

He is a successful entrepreneur, but his this success and wealth has not gone to his head. He is very polite and a good Samaritan. He prefers to travel by economy class by plane. Earlier, he drove his own car, but now he uses chauffeur-driven car.

He subscribes to many English language dailies especially financial and also sees TV for news to keep himself abreast of latest development in the country and world over. He is music lover and likes ghazals. Here what is unknown is that he himself sings this Persian form of music. His two sons, Abhishek (34) and Gautam (32) are also following in his footsteps with the former, a commerce graduate, looking after Honda scooter agency in Kachchh and the later who hold MBA degree from London working with his father at Cargo Motors.

The Gujarals are philanthropist family and never hesitate to provide helping hand for right cause. Vimal Gujaral has special interest in sports and education. He is President of Kachchh Badminton Association and Vice President of State Table Tennis Association with the famed Guru Nanak Public School in Gandhidham and on the advisory board of TIMS. He is also President of Punjab Sabha and heads Kachchh Petrol Pump Dealers’ Association as its President.
Bimal kumar Jha:

This financial year Kandla is again poised to be the country’s number one port in handling of export-import cargoes. Bimal Kumar Jha, new Secretary of the port trust is naturally happy at this. But he does not want this numero uno position should only remain cargo-related. It should extend to every other activities of the port trust, His special interest is in his area; Management and Human Resource Development.

Mr. Bimal Kumar Jha

“In today’s world, fast growth, application of modern management methods and key human resource development are the need of the hour. And my mantra or priority whatever you call it, here is this one. I want this port to be number one in every respect,”16 Jha said with a firm resolve writ large on his face in a brief talk in his office chamber.
A very affable person, Jha said that Kandla still needed to match with professional standards of the major ports like J&PT and Vizag in the matter of system automation, HRD and industrial relations he however added that he was happy to know that the port was already trying in this direction. While visiting port, people suggest names of outstanding port personnel out to change the port; the one name on every lip was that of Jha. The impression he has gained in the port employees is that he is very knowledgeable person with positive frame of mind and such high official has been posted after a long time. The other trait has been talked about him is that he never hesitates to call a spade a spade.

Jha who hails from Bihar was born in Madhubani in 1964. He holds honour’s degree in B.Sc. from Kolkata and Master’s degree in Business Management. He specializes in Personnel and Industrial Relations. He has diploma in HRD to his credit. He says his UGC (NET) qualification helped him lot here. Jha began his port career at the Dock Labour Board at Kolkata port as an Asstt. Administrative. He then went to promotion to Cochin port to be its Deputy and Senior Deputy Secretary. After spending longest years at Cochin, he came to Kandla to hold coveted post of its Secretary.17

Can you believe an engineer in an organization brings international laurels to him and his employer body in a field other than his own? Thus, the economic development of the port has been uplifted to the highest pitch due to the efforts of Mr. Jha and Dr. Rao.

Hunnarshala Of Sandeep Virmani:

Sandeep Virmani, a native of Punjab, is a Director of Hunnarshala foundation (HSF) established in 2003. This organization facilitates self-sustaining housing for the poor, favour artisans’ involvements in mainstreaming buildings and promotes local eco-friendly and cost-effective material sand technologies like earth, bamboo and sewerage recycling. HSF has worked in disaster rehabilitation in India, Iran, Indonesia and Afghanistan. HSF approach particularly focuses on empowering communities and
their artisans by mainstreaming their sustainable knowledge systems, positioning artisans to be in charge of the technical success of the programs and ensuring a decentralized community driven process. They provide technical guidelines and training to engineers and artisans as well as policy making for governments. Sandeep Virmani designs and guides the disaster rehabilitation and natural resource development programs in Kachchh Nav Nirman Abhiyan (KNNA). Created in 1998, KNNA is a network of 27 NGOs, of Kachchh working on policy, capacity building and natural resource management programs.\textsuperscript{18}

**Residential project:**

Sandeep Virmani took profit from this remote and arid district conditions to gain global/holistic understanding in the fields of water harvesting, organic agriculture, renewable energy, nomads’ living conditions, sociology and rights defense. As Executive secretary of Sahjeevan, he developed projects such as decentralized drinking water systems in villages and towns or community’s environmental rights defense regarding industrializations. Some notable projects undertaken:

i. Socio-Technical Assessment of Post Tsunami Reconstruction in Tamil Nadu
ii. Community-Run Tourist Eco-Resort by Pastoralists of Hodka, Banni in Kachchh
iii. Recycling sewage of a rivulet to create a green belt for Bhuj city
iv. Post-Tsunami community-led housing design and construction in Banda Aceh, Indonesia.\textsuperscript{19}

**About Hunnarshala:**

The genesis of Hunnarshala lies in the collaborations and associations that were built after 2001 earthquake in Kachchh with an objective to capacitate people for reconstruction of their habitat. Post-quake reconstruction saw large scale implementation of earth construction. It was a process in which artisans emerged as
bearers of tremendous knowledge and the strengths of traditional building systems and forms were revealed.

During this process, the team realized that the emerging ideas were important not only for reconstruction process but were invaluable for long term sustainable development in many contexts. Interaction between scientific and modern building science and traditional knowledge suggested directions for strengthening engagement of artisans to deliver high quality buildings, infrastructure and community spaces. Applied research has shown that there is a method of transfer of knowledge. Knowledge building and transfer requires not only understanding of technology but also of people and places. Hunnarshala was envisaged as institution to take this up. Hunnarshala took off from projects which demonstrated processes controlled and managed by people themselves. This concept of people managing the processes had already been demonstrated in other sectors like crafts, savings & credits, etc.

Hunnarshala believed that same concepts could be applied there also. Coming together of professionals, corporate and research scientists and NGOs in the aftermath of earthquake became an opportunity for this idea. It was the period when all kinds of talent came to Kachchh and Hunnarshala came out of this melting pot. Three themes have emerged as cross-cutting for Hunnarshala for its direction and works – i) how people are empowered to shape their own habitats; ii) how habitat solutions can become more environment friendly, sustainable and disaster safe; and iii) how local artisanal knowledge and skills can deliver high quality products.

To institutionalize this process of continuous learning, revelation and application in different contexts, Hunnarshala was registered in 2003 as an organization under section 25 of Companies Act promoted by Prof. K. Jagdish (IISC, Bangalore), Kirteebhai Khatri (Kachchhmitra) and Sandeep Virmani. The first board of directors included Kantisen Shroff (industrialist, social worker and Chairman, Hunnarshala), Prof. Neelkanth Chhaya (Director, School of Architecture, CEPT, Ahmedabad), K.G. Krishnamurty (Director, HDFC Bank Ltd.), Sudhin Choksey (Managing Director, GRUH Finance Ltd.) Kiran Vaghela (Deputy Managing Director, Hunnarshala), Mahavir Acharya (Engineer and Director- finance), Kirit Dave (Designer), Tushar Dayal (Chairman, Transmetal Ltd.), Durgalaxmi
Venkatswamy (Handicrafts promoter) and Sandeep Virmani (Managing Director, Hunnarshala).

Hunnarshala is enabled in its endeavor by its shareholders sharing its vision and perspective, Hunnarshala derives its ideological nourishment for making positive contribution towards its objectives of promoting and demonstrating people centric, environment friendly, artisan based approaches and technologies. Shareholders of regular companies are interested in company’s balance sheets. However, shareholders of Hunnarshala have never held financial gain as the motivating factor, but what brings them together to invest in Hunnarshala is to get connected and promote the ideals of the company and towards which they would hold Hunnarshala accountable.

Hunnarshala would like to be held accountable to gain this patronage of its shareholders which helps in achieving its objectives. People from various backgrounds such as industrialists, businessmen, activists, educationists, scientists, etc. all bring unique strengths and capacities to Hunnarshala. Hunnarshala currently has about 80 shareholders. Hunnarshala offers its knowledge and skills for building designs, settlement planning, social housing, disaster reconstruction, waste water treatment systems, infrastructure development, etc. Sandeep virmani, in capacity of Managing Director, leads Hunnashala team of about 50.

**Recycling sewage transforms rivulet into Green Belt of Bhuj city:**

“Rivulets, 12 km long network through the city ... like ‘arteries’ bringing life to the lake systems of the Hamirsar Lake. This pilot project takes 30,000 liters of sewerage every day from the Municipality sump feeds it to the micro organisms in the DEWATS treatment plant and uses it to bring life to half a kilometer and transform this neglected rivulet to become the ‘lungs’ of the city.”

This was what had been inscribed on a board on the site, in the middle of Bhuj city. The city was devastated after the earthquake in 2001, destroying buildings and killing more than 7000 people in the city. Few could have imagined that the city would bounce back, and be recognized as one of the fastest and finest examples of
rehabilitation in the world. The city had gone beyond providing basic services and infrastructure and the green belt project epitomizes such an approach of placing bold new tools of planning and technologies, that responded to the problems our cities of the next time would face. The DEWATS sewerage treatment plant and the landscaped banks of the rivulet were built with the help of India Today readers and support from Indians in the US through the American India Foundation (AIF).

The rivulet was a dump yard with garbage, sewerage and bush into which people went to defecate. It was also land that developers hoped they could get some day as the land prices soar in this part of the city. The sewerage of the adjoining Bankers colony was taken from the main sewer line and treated in the middle of a busy part of the city in the ‘state of the art’ technology called DEWATS, (Decentralized Waste Water Treatment System). In fact, the treatment chambers were themselves designed such that it had become a place for morning walkers to use for yoga, and for children to play in the evenings. The treated water was used to irrigate trees and plants along half a kilometer of the rivulet. Hunnarshala foundation, that had designed and promoted the project with the Municipal Corporation and the adjoining residents of the nalla, had developed an urban watershed project with five other NGOs of the city and was confident of recycling more than 60% of the city sewerage thereby reducing 30% of the requirement of water for Bhuj. Put to good use the water could green the city and bring income too by developing public spaces and growing horticulture trees along the rivulets. The Green belt had planted high quality organic Kharek (Dates) along with more than 126 local species. The entire treatment was based on gravity flow and had no movable parts that needed maintenance or technical personnel to manage. The plant was overseen by the gardener.

To stop some of the building residents from throwing garbage into the rivulet, Hunnarshala along with other NGOs had to resort to ‘Gandhigiri’ tactics, personally cleaning the garbage. Some of the societies who had built large walls along the dirty nalla were then contemplating breaking the walls and opening themselves on to the green belt.

This project demonstrates the solutions to the multitude of problems faced by Indian cities. Our nallas and water bodies have shrunk, even disappeared causing
havoc in the monsoons, with waters leaving the nallas to flood parts of the city, causing loss of lives and to the economy. Supported by Care Today, the project was managed by Kachchh Navnirman Abhiyan, a network of NGOs in Kachchh.\textsuperscript{21}
The Singhvi Family:

The five Singhvi siblings, Sukharajbhai, Babu Lalabhai, Tribhuvanbhai, Ashokbhai and Rameshbhai, are a household name in the shipping sector at the country’s number one part of Kandla for their unique entrepreneur qualities and multiple big businesses which are no less than amazing economic empire par excellence of the famed family originally hailing from as small Asada Village in Barmer District of neighboring state of Rajasthan. The seeds were sown by their father, Amarchand who ran a small grocery shop in their native village. When he came to know that independent India’s first major port was being constructed at Kandla, he came to new land which was nothing but marsh to try his luck.

‘It was not an easy journey then. One had to undertake arduous journey by ferry service from Navlakhi to reach here. He set up his shop and then small oil mill, but when destiny did not help, he sold everything including a house to return home’ recalls youngest Rameshbhai.

But the family was not in despair, Kandla was still beckoning Sukharajbhai, the eldest, was first brother to come here and he was followed by Babulalbhai (second eldest) here in 1978 to do business. He mainly participated in auction of gunny bags and other items by Kandla Port. He then came in contact with Bhagwan Mansukhani who ran typing institute and decided to form a partnership company to do cargo handling business. The company, ‘Friends and Friends’ proved successful enterprise and acquired number one position in handling of cargoes at Kandla. Though Mansukhani and the Singhvis with their others partners have parted company, the company with same name has not looked back in prosperity.

The Singhvis are perhaps the richest siblings in Kandla and the noteworthy thing here is that this phenomenal rise and rise of the Singhvi brothers has been
accomplished in the one current generation only which is solely by dint of their hard work, honest dealings and entrepreneurial drive. And here they have gone beyond the port and shipping-related activities. Their diversification includes logistic services and salt manufacturing and its exports. And of late, they have plunged into construction business.

‘We are a large joint family and therefore this diversification was a must. My four elder uncles and my cousins are looking after each specific business and we run our business professionally with use of wisdom and long experience of our elders’ modern day knowledge of business management. For example, my brother Mayank and I- we are twins in our late twenties and hold MBA degrees from Dubai and London. While I help my father, my brother helps my uncle in our other businesses,’ highly courteous and fresh-faced Mridul, commerce graduate Ramesh bhai’s son told in a brief talk in his father’s chamber.

The inspiring thing about the Singhvi joint family is that it continues to revert so much that all the five brothers live in a row of houses without any boundary between them ‘Interesting thing about our joint family is that like my father my all four uncles have two sons each and we never in ourselves see each others as cousins but as real brothers,’ revealed Mridul another unique aspect of their joint family.

The Singhvis are highly religious and God-fearing people. Their philanthropy knows no bounds. They run an international school at Gandhidham, while they have set up a shelter house for unwanted children in Rajasthan. Many such activities have been conducted to support the native people of Kachchh and thus their contribution towards the natives cannot be ignored. Though Non-Gujaratis, they possess the same feelings to the Kachchhi people as unto their natives.

TV Sujan:

You cannot predict your destiny. It unfolds itself at right time and right place.
This is what has happened in the life of 68-year-old T V Sujan, a non-gujarati from Southern part of India, now Kandla’s one of the finest shipping luminaries who has been helping to uplift the economic and industrial level of Kachchh.

Sujan is a first generation shipping magnate, now at the peak of wealth. When you peep in his past, you really feel that his is no mean personal achievement in this complex business of shipping. Though firmly riveted to his Karmabhoomi Kandla, he has also set his foot on other distant major ports.

Sujan’s entry into shipping is not by and design. It is by an accident. A man of a few words, replying always in short sentences during an interview in his office chamber, Sujan said;

“I had passed my matriculation in 1964 at my native village of Poonjar in Kotayam district of Kerala and had come to Gandhidham for an interview for the post of a clerk in the Gandhidham branch of SBI. I, however, reached a day late as in those days you had to change many trains and come via Navlakhi. I was disappointed, but my friends from my state insisted I should not return and work here. I accepted their advice and stayed here. I got a clerk’s job at a J & M Baxi company in 1996 and rose to a high position of executive. I left the company to start my own company.”

This life-changing event took place in his life in 1982. He started as a cargo clearing agent. He then set up a new company named Aditya Cargo Transportation. But a big change, however, came with the launching of yet another company in 2004: ACT Infraport Ltd. which combined shipping, clearing and forwarding, infrastructural development, logistics and cargo handling activities. That is all sea-trade-related businesses. The company has also a tank farm in Cochin. A Rs.1 Crore company in 1982 is today Rs.100 Crore worth Company, handling annually five million tons of various dry and liquid cargoes at Kandla. Increase output is the sole mantra of company, especially personally of Sujan.
He tells how and why of this.

“’The age-old norms per day dry cargo handling norms were 800 to 1000 tons. We set the new norms; 3500 MT per day and this continues to be the yardstick for the Port even today.’”

Always venturesome Sujan who is the Director of the ACT group works at this sublime age of 68, possessing good health. He remains all the time busy with work which involves a lot of travel. But he maintains his health by daily one hour morning walk and other exercises without fail.

‘I mostly take vegetarian food which is again simple. I have fruits and oats in the morning, while I take vegetables and chapaties with a little quantity of rice. Almost same in the menu at dinners.’

Said the shipping veteran, sipping black tea on his return from Kandla to give an interview at the appointed time. He is helped in his business by his well-qualified and well groomed sons, Shankar (36) and Gopal (31).

While Shankar holds master’s degree in maritime management, Gopal is graduate in business and information management, Gopal was very courteous and polite when he was contacted on phone for additional information about his family. In fact, first Sujan senior was approached, but he being out of station, asked to talk to his son, Gopal for any help in preparing this piece on the Sujans.

“’Yes, I watch TV, but not for any entertainment for which I have no time. I watch only news to keep myself abreast of daily happenings in the world. I subscribe lots of English newspaper and read them avidly.’”

He said adding that all the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives are seen by his wife, Tusli Sujan.
Mrs. Sujan does not need any introduction as she is the most famous face of the Port Town for her multiple societal and sports activities. In fact, the Sujans are the only family which directly takes and supports sports. Mrs. Sujan is state head of the Gujarat Body Building Association. She is also General Secretary of the International Human Rights Association. She has also now turned politician and a key congress leader in the port town.

Guptas:

Gandhidham, this was his last destination when Nauratmal Ramnath Gupta, now 79 retired from his long distinguished Indian Railways Services as Station Master of the Port Town in 1986. He, however, did not go back to his home state of Rajasthan to live retirement life. He saw in his last destination a destiny of his family. And far-sighted Nauratmalbhai decided to stay here to guide and inspire his sons, Rameshbhai, Maheshbhai, Sureshbhai & Dineshbhai who were then in their twenties and had shown great entrepreneurial qualities. And there was a great scope of growth in Kandla which was independent India’s first modern major port, built to substitute Karachi which the country had lost to Pakistan on account of Partition of the country.
In fact, the two had already set up a small transport business, giving birth to the present-day prospering Rs. 5 billion worth Kiran group of companies.

‘When we started our business, we had only one tanker, today we own 400 plus tankers and trailers.’

Soft-spoken Maheshbhai and his young energetic MBA son, Manish Gupta, told in their huge office building in Gandhidham.

The group is mainly in shipping and logistics business which includes stevedoring, liquid storage terminals-they are specializing in chemical storage and only in the country to have coveted CDI membership-customs clearance, warehousing, drumming and repacking, transportation. Their other businesses are insulator manufacturing, wind power generation, real estate, infrastructural development, timber and schooling. And they are ISO certified companies.

All these businesses are their joint family ones, looked after by four Gupta siblings- Rameshbhai (58), Maheshbhai (55) Sureshbhai (52) and Dineshbhai (50) who is the then president of the Gandhidham Chamber of Commerce and Industries.
Their highly educated sons, Rishi (Rameshbhai’s son) and Manish (Maheshbhai’s son) hold Master’s degrees in Business Management while Harsh (Sureshbhai’s son) and Shanu (Dineshbhai’s son) are pursuing Management courses and readying themselves to join the family business as qualified persons as second generation inheritor entrepreneurs.

They believe in spending for right cause and this word is being done by family head, Nauratmalbhai.

“He has been in the service of poor for the last two decades.
We have a family trust named after him and our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives include helping an underprivileged, free medical camps, free education and free plantations.”

Maheshbhai said and added that Prachi, his son Manish’s wife is looking after school business as they are franchisee of world renowned Kangaroo Kids. The family is also sports lover and had come forward to donate four lawn tennis courts in Gandhidham. Through these statements, one can understand that the family has been doing a lot to help the native people. The Guptas have been continuously contributing towards the Educational Sector as the franchisee of Kangaroo Kids is the evidence. Along with the educational upliftment, they have been the continuous contributors towards the sports field through which Health Care Sector has been enriched, too.
Notes and References:


(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Ibid.


(6) Ibid.

(7) Ibid.

(8) Ibid.

(9) Ibid.

(10) Ibid.


(12) Ibid.


(14) Ibid.
(15) Ibid.


(17) Ibid.

(18) Veermani, Sandeep. “Recycling sewage transforms rivulet into Green Belt of Bhuj city”, the official website of Hunnarshala.

(19) Ibid.

(20) Ibid.

(21) Ibid.


(23) Ibid.

(24) Ibid.


(26) Ibid.

(27) Ibid.

(28) Ibid.

(30) Ibid.