

Pangal Ramnath Nayak, Commemorating the centenary of his birth

By: - Lakshmi Nayak

"I have thought about your life, and you have never bent your back to anybody. You have always held your head high." So spoke a friend about Mr. Pangal Ramanath Nayak near the end of his life, a compliment he appreciated and repeated to me, his granddaughter.

He was born 29 March, 1911, while India was still under British Rule. He died 12 September, 1988, and in his 78 years he lived through the Independence movement, World War Two, Partition, and the daily work of managing a new India after the excitement and turmoil of its creation. He had an interesting perspective on all of this, for he was in the Indian Civil Service, rising to positions of great responsibility.

During his career, my grandfather was at times Municipal Commissioner of Bombay (as it was known then), the first Municipal Commissioner of New Delhi, and Secretary for the Ministry of Petroleum. He played a huge role in creating a modern petrochemical industry in India, including establishing the refineries at Guwahati, Barauni, Cochin, Gujarat, Madras, and Haldia, as well as many fertilizer and chemicals factories.

He worked in Sind before it became Pakistan, and later with Partition refugees, both Hindu and Muslim. One night in Delhi, during the height of the troubles, he heard that an ICS colleague and friend, who was Muslim, might be attacked in his house that night. So he went to see the Defense Minister, managed to get a couple of armed soldiers, and went to spend the night at his friend's house.

In Bombay, he modernized the water supply by connecting the city to Lake Vaitarna through a new pipeline. He commissioned the creation of the Kamala Nehru Park on Malabar Hill. He came up with innovative schemes for fighting bubonic plague, and took great pride in supporting the proper development of a municipal resettlement camp into a township with streets, electricity, schools, health services, water and sanitary services. Over time, its citizens built bigger and better houses, hospitals, and schools. It grew into a township of about 30,000 people, called Mankhurd. He was devastated when, 20 years later, the Supreme Court decided that the Atomic Energy Commission had more of a right to the land than the people who had lived and worked there. He fought for them in court, but to no avail.

In a speech made to the Udipi Rotary Club in 1984, my grandfather said, "I have found in my life that, however blessed one may be, there is always sunlight and shadow, mountain and valleys, honour and dishonour, praise and discredit, friend and foe. ... There have been for me moments of great elation and equally great dejection. ... The test of an individual is in the way he reacts to dishonour, discredit, enmity, rejection." He knew that he had always acted with honor, and that his actions matched his words. To those who knew him – his family, community, and esteemed colleagues – he was "a man of great integrity," as one of his younger brothers said of him. All three of his younger brothers followed him into the Indian Civil and later the Indian Administrative Service, and all had a reputation for honesty and incorruptibility.

He devoted his career to public service to his country through the I.C.S., but he was not defined only by his job. At home, my grandfather, along with my intelligent, and resourceful grandmother, raised my father, and my father's brother and sister. He was a supportive brother and uncle to his eight siblings and many nieces and nephews, and he loved his grandchildren. As a parent and an I.C.S. officer he had always demanded the best performance in school and at work from his children and from himself; with his grandchildren, in retirement, he was able to let his sense of humor come out to play. He had long conversations with them in made-up languages, listened to music, told stories, and, to their delight, waggled his dentures as a special treat.

Today, if you go to Bombay, in this 100th year anniversary of Pangal Ramanath Nayak's birth, remember him when you walk in Kamala Nehru Park and when you get running water from your tap. Anywhere in India, remember him when you can find petrol without rationing for your car or scooter. Stand up for local citizens who take pride in the civic infrastructure of their neighborhood, and do not let their efforts lose out to richer or more powerful interests. Support good relations between peoples of different religious and economic backgrounds. Be proud of all of the city's children when they work hard and do well. Support your family and community, and be a person of integrity and service to others. In this way you will most sincerely honour the memory and legacy of my grandfather.

Editor's Note: Lakshmi has worked with her father, P. Ranganath Nayak, and her mother, Sandy Nayak, to bring out a book about her grand-father. Titled Pangal Ramanath Nayak: His Life and Work, it will be available in November 2011. If you are interested in getting a copy, please write to P. Ranganath Nayak, 12 Orchard Street, Belmont, MA 02478.

HISTORY OF SARASWAT MIGRATIONS

To the editor of *Khabbar*,

Below is an article sent to me by a non Konkani friend, I had sent it to many of my friends every one liked it, it has generated lot of interest in many Konkanis in India and also here in US. I do not know the author or any thing about the article, except it looked very interesting, looks authentic, looks like lot of research has gone in, I thought if you can publish lot of other Konkanis can read about our history. I am sending it to you exactly like I received it. I only wish I knew the author was . Thank you.

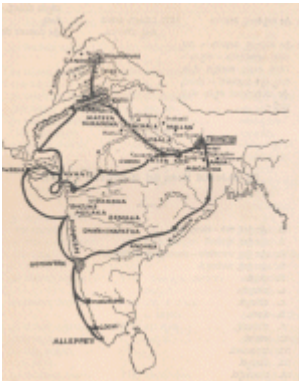
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Editor's Reply:

Thanks. This unedited version will be published in parts

History of Saraswat Migrations (2 of)



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The Migrations

First Migrations leaving the Saraswat Desh

Some calamity, it is believed, struck Saraswat Desh. Most historians suspect that after a few thousand years of flowing, the glacier began empty of its potential and the Saraswati began to dry out and became non-existent by 1000 BC. The entire region started becoming arid and with no means of growing their crops, the Saraswats had no choice but to pack up and move. This period of history saw many civilizations abandoning their settlements. The migration happened not overnight but spread over centuries. The last of the exodus was in about 350 BC due to a wide spread famine which lasted for 12 years. The Saraswats migrated in **three** directions - mostly followed the river routes and migrated to the **South-West (Sind), North (Kashmir), and East (Bihar)**.

Migration to South and West

The migrations to south and west followed the course of the River Saraswati, went up to Dwaraka and by ship they sailed to Goa. For their stay in Dwaraka, the Gowda Saraswats are nicknamed as *Dorkes* also. Along the route, these migrants left small colonies behind, and these settlements have been referred to as Saraswat Tirthas in Mahabharata.

Migration to North and East

The second route of migration was from Punjab into Kashmir. The traditions of Saraswats of Kashmir asserts that all Brahmins in Kashmir are Saraswats. They have some thirty two sub-sects in Jammu and Kashmir, belong to six classes and 133 gotras. In the 14th Century, the Muslim rulers of Kashmir commenced persecution of the Hindus. Saraswats left on a large scale, and only a few families remained in Kashmir. Many families both Brahmin and others were converted to Islam. Some of the families who had migrated southwards, returned to Kashmir when the circumstances became more favorable. A predominantly Hindu state had by that time, become a predominantly Muslim state. Kashmir was prey to ravages of Afghanistan as well. These caused so much distress to the people that some prominent Kashmiris appealed to the Sikh

Chief Ranjit Singh for help and he succeeded in getting rid of the Afghans. The Kashmiri Saraswats were Devi worshippers.

As the powerful Kshatriya kingdoms rose, a few Saraswats migrated to Indraprastha, Mathura, and Prayag, Kashi and other places. But as Kshatriyas fell with the rise of Buddhism, a few Saraswats migrated to Rajputana and Sind, married local girls and formed separate communities.

Those who migrated to Kashmir called themselves as Kashmiri Pandits, Sind-Sind Saraswats, Kutch-Kutchi Saraswats, Punjab-Punjab Saraswats, Rajasthan-Rajasthan Saraswats and Gomantak- Gowda Saraswats.

Migration to Bihar

The Saraswats who moved South East were mainly from the saraswat desh and they followed the Ganges and reached Trihotrapura or modern *Tirhut* in upper Bihar. This was in 400-350 BC. The major settlements were in Kanyakubja (Kanpur area), Magadha and Mithila. The Lichhavis were the ruling dynasty then, to be followed later by the Mauryas. With a strong ability to adapt, the Saraswats easily mingled with the locals, but did not try to compete with them in agriculture the major occupation in that area. Instead, they relied on their superior intellect and educational background to secure administrative positions in the Lichhavi Republic based at Vaishali. The Saraswats lived in this area during the reign of the Maurya and Pala dynasty. After the Pala kings, the kingdom was plundered repeatedly by hordes of Muslim invaders and local kings from central India.

Tirhut is the historic name of a tract in Bihar north of Ganges, about 55 km north of Patna. The geographical area known as Tirhut corresponds to the ancient region of Mithila. Today, Tirhut division is an administrative geographical unit of Bihar state with Muzaffarpur as the administrative headquarters and has four districts: Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur, Saran and Champaran.

Goodbye to Bihar

Life in Magadha became quite unbearable for the Saraswats, and so, around 1000 AD, almost 1500 years after they left the Saraswat desh, the Saraswats decided to move again. This time, however, they moved out mainly in **two** groups. **One group** (from Kanyakubja) **moved east** and settled in Bangla (now Bengal) where in the course of time they assimilated the Bengali culture. The striking similarities between some aspects of Bengali and Konkani languages and cultures probably bear witness to this historic link. **Another group** (from Mithila) **moved southwards** and reached the Godavari river, and then proceeded along the south bank towards the source of Godavari near Nasik. *The great Rishi Agastya had his ashram in Panchavati near Nasik and Sri Rama from Ayodhya came to Panchavati along the banks of Godavari.* The migrants also followed the same route and then moved into Go-rashtra which is **Goa** and thence to Gokarna Mandala in uttar kannada district, which was the southernmost settlement of ancient Aryans. Having migrated from Trihotrapura which was in Gauda Desh they prefixed Gowda and called themselves Gowda Saraswats. The migration from Bihar to Gomantak is recorded in the *Sahyadri Khanda* of Skanda Purana.

Goa was chosen mainly for its fertile soil and sea ports with flourishing overseas trade. Another reason for their migration into Konkan is the marital relationships between the Kadamba king Jayakeshi (1050-1080 AD) of Goa and a Saraswat king from Trihotra. Some historians believe that the king of Trihut sent ninety six families from ten gothras to the new land to propagate religion and philosophy at the request of the Kadamba King.

Saraswats in Goa *Goa chronological history*

The first migration (700 BC) to Goa by Saraswats was directly from the Saraswat river banks via Kutch and southwards mostly through sea routes. The three main groups who came to Goa were the Bhojas, the Chediyas and the Saraswats. These Saraswats in Goa immersed themselves into farming, fishing and trade. They were from the Bhargava and Angirasa clans and maintained connections with the Kutch, Sindh and Kashmiri Saraswats. Many from these areas migrated to Goa in this period in search of greener pastures. The Saraswat Brahmins worked in partnership with the local indigenous people, the Kunbi tribals who exist still today.

The second wave of immigrants were representatives of the Kaundinya, Vatshya and Kaushika gotras. They settled at Keloshi (Quelessam) and Kushasthal (Cortollim) and were named after those villages as Keloshikars and Kushasthalikars. They primarily sought professional careers in the fields of teaching, writing,

and accounting. They established the Magarish temple at Kushathali and Santha Durga temple at Keloshi. From here they spread to other villages. The main deities which also came along with them were Mangirish, Mahadeo, Mahalaxmi, Mahalsa, Shantadurga, Nagesh, and Saptakoteshwar besides many others. Gomantak region is dotted with so many Kuladevata Temples which testify this fact. All the saraswats in Goa at that time were Shavites.

The first group of Gowda Saraswat immigrants from Trihotrapura (around 1000 AD) settled in two different parts of the Gomantak region. Thirty families were grouped in one commune and sixty six in other. The first commune was known as Tiswadi meaning 30 villages (modern Tissuary), and the other Shashatis meaning 66 (modern salcette). The Tiswadi commune was migrants from Kanyakubja and Shashatis was from Mithila. There is a view that these settlements together were 96 and referred as *Sahanavis* (Saha means six and Navi means ninety) and later as Shenvis. These settlers belonged to 10 Gotras - Bhardwaja, Koushika, Vatshya, Kaundinya, Kashyapa, Vasishtha, Jamdagni, Vishwamitra, Gautam and Atri. Once settled down, they continued in their traditional professions of administration and education. Those Saraswats who were intelligent and lucky got royal patronage and positions in governance in due course of time. But the opportunities in these familiar professions were limited in Goa at that time. So some enterprising Saraswats branched out into the practice of trading. The successes of these pioneering Saraswat traders encouraged many other Saraswats to whole-heartedly adopt trading as a main-stream profession.

There is another version of the story that, Sri Parasuram brought 96 families of the Panchagauda Brahmins from Trihotra (in Bihar) and settled them at Panchakrosha in Kushasthali of Goa. Such stories are also narrated about settlements of Brahmins in Konkan Kanara Coast and Kerala. This is considered to be more mythology than history as Parasuram, the 6th incarnation of Vishnu, is a mythological figure and should have lived far earlier than the time of Saraswat migration. And most probably they arrived in Goa under the leadership of a strong personality named Parasuram.

Legends say that Lord Parasuram, shot an arrow from the Western Ghats in adjacent Konkan and the arrow (Baan) landed at the site of Benaulim town. Benaulim also known as Banavali about 40 km from Panaji and 2 km south of Colva is today a beach resort. Even if the legends are considered only as myths, today a temple of Parasuram exists in Painguinim village near Benaulim town of Canacona Taluka in South Goa.

To Be continued.....