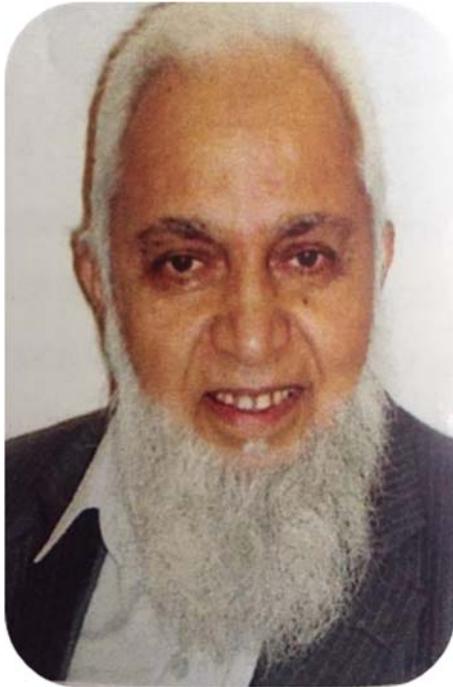


The Munshis of Manubar



**Feeling for the Community
with the Spirit of Philanthropy**

**Founding Trustees
of Munshi Manubarwala Memorial Charitable Trust**



Late Daud
Munshi



Late A. Rahim
Munshi



Late Mohamed
Munshi



Dilaver Valli



Late Bashir Chokiwala

Munshi Educational Complex



The Munshis of Manubar: A Family History

June 2019

Edited by:

Adam Ghodiwala • Yacoob Mank

Published by:

Friends of Mohamed Munshi in partnership with Munshi Vidyadham (MMMCT) and Vahora Voice UK (VVUK)



Uniting and Empowering
Bharuchi Vahora Community

Contents

1. Munshi Manubarwala:
Family values - Adventure - Community Service
2. Daud Munshi
3. Abdul Rahim Munshi
4. Mohamed Munshi
 - Family Values
 - Education
 - Migration
 - Upheaval in Africa
 - Settlement in England
 - Community Service
 - Social concern
 - Heritage
 - From the heart
5. Appendix
 - Munshi Manubarwala: Family Tree
 - Mohamed Munshi: In the eyes of other

1. A Shining Example

Among the members of Bharuchi Vahora Patel community, the name of Munshi Manubarwala is synonymous with charity and social service. The Munshis have aided the poor, supported deprived sections of the society by providing them with food, clothing, shelters and medical care. Moreover, the Munshi (Manubarwala) Memorial Charitable Trust has not only founded many charitable institutions but is also maintaining them for the benefit and empowerment of the community. This concern for the welfare of fellow-beings and this spirit of philanthropy is indeed a blessing for our people and a shining example to be emulated.

The family history of Munshi Manubarwala is thrilling as well as inspiring. The enterprising sons of this cultured family migrated to distant lands, worked hard, faced numerous challenges and made a fortune. What is remarkable is that this hard-earned money was then utilised for the welfare of the community. The Munshis hail from Manubar – a small and remote village in Gujarat, India. This brief history of the family illustrates how from humble origin they rose to great heights, made generous contributions to welfare projects and earned for themselves the title of Hatim Tai of Bharuchi Vahora Patel community.

The story begins with an ordinary, impoverished family of Manubar village. Ahmed Munshi was head teacher of the village primary school earning a meagre salary of 15 rupees per month. His wife Aminaben worked on the farm to supplement the family income and make ends meet. Their life style was simple. Ahmedbhai was greatly respected in the village as an honest, refined and principled man. The leaders of the village held him in high esteem and sought his opinion and guidance in many village affairs. As a teacher he was sincere, hardworking and conscientious. Humorist and poet Sufi Manubari who was his student recalls that Munshi sahib had good command of all the subjects in the curriculum and his classroom teaching was very interesting and his methods were very effective.

Ahmedbhai's three sons - Daud, Abdurrahim and Mohamed inherited these qualities from their parents and internalised the family values of hard work, honesty, integrity, mutual respect and social consciousness.

This family history of Munshi Manubarwala attempts to highlight their numerous welfare activities and charity projects, but more than that it also illustrates what the Munshi brothers have achieved through adventure, determination and perseverance. These are not just personal sketches of the Munshi brothers, but it is an appreciation of the sacrifices they have made for the community and their valuable contributions to social improvement.

This brief account of the Munshis is intended to serve as a source of inspiration for the young generation of Bharuchi Vahora Patel community.

Note:

Following Dilaverbhai Dashanwala's suggestion, this book was conceptualised in late 2016. The proposal was placed before late Mohamedbhai Munshi, and he consented. He was regularly consulted during the preparation of the manuscript and was kind enough to supply the missing details. The final draft of English and Gujarati versions was forwarded to him, and he carefully went through it, approved it and expressed his pleasure and satisfaction. However, in line with his humble and unassuming nature he put the condition that it should not be published during his lifetime. This is what he said in an email message dated 10/12/2018 to Yacoob Mank:

Dear Yakubhbhai AOA,

Thank you for your email.

I appreciate the efforts you and Dr Adam are putting in enhancing the name of Munshi family. I am still of the opinion that any publication to be done should be after my demise.

WS

Mohamed Munshi

2. Daud Munshi



Daubhai was the eldest of the three sons of Ahmed Munshi. He was born during the British Rule in India in 1918. Although the son of a primary school head teacher, he was not interested in formal education and said goodbye to schooling at the age of 18. His parents were obviously displeased with his decision but the daredevil teenager was bubbling with adventure and left home and the village he was born in at a very young age in search of adventure, taking the road to the dark continent of Africa. From Bombay, he rode a ship to Mombasa and finally reached Congo by travelling on the train which crossed through Kenya and Uganda. Once in Congo, he hitchhiked and walked to the town called Stanleyville, now known as Kisangani.

In those days, Congo, a Belgian colony in Central Africa between 1908 and 1960, was known as Belgian Congo. Once in this unknown land, Daubhai found work as a stock boy with Indian traders called Nasser and Company who were in the business of buying goods from one place and selling it to the other. Daubhai learned to drive the truck in no time and once at the driving wheel, he started his own independent business, bringing goods from Uganda and selling it to the Congo market. He soon opened up a small shop in Irumu, a remote place in the deep jungle where the African pygmies lived, with the profit he made in his new business. As the business grew, Daubhai bought another truck and opened other shops, set up a candy factory in Bunia but soon unrest and chaos spread in the independent Congo. The rebellion broke out and there was Civil War, also known as Congo Crisis, which lasted for four years. With the situation worsening, Daubhai left Congo and went

to Kampala, Uganda with his family. His shops were looted and burnt down, but this man of strong will and undefeatable courage was not disheartened and he never gave up hope.

In 1968, Daudbhai went to Mombasa to see his nephew Ishaque who had joined the Kenyan government service after graduating at the age of 22. Daudbhai said to him: “We Munshis are not born to work for others. Come and join the business in Kinshasa. Your uncle Mohamed needs someone who knows how to buy and sell.” After this, their business flourished in Kinshasa and the Munshis settled as manufacturer of ballpoint pens.

In 1971, during the reign of military dictator and President Mobutu, Congo changed its name and became known as ‘Republic of Zaire.’ The political situation also changed. Under Africanization policy, Ugandan President Idi Amin adopted an anti-Asian policy in Uganda. As a shrewd businessman, Daudbhai sensed the wind of change and Africanization blowing and sweeping the whole continent. Having seen and survived so many upheavals around him, at last Daudbhai thought that he had had enough of it all and left Kampala to settle in England after selling his house and car. He spent his retirement in Chorley where after a short illness, this highly adventurous and industrious man breathed his last in 1986 at the age of 66.

The flow of donations for charitable works which had started in his lifetime continued even after his death. From their joint assets, he received 3,500,000 dollars as his share. With the consent of his heirs, 10% of this amount was donated for the establishment of “Salihaat”, the religious education centre for girls at his home village of Manubar. As this was not enough, the Munshi family later added further 350,000 dollars to see the completion of the project.

Besides this, a donation of 100,000 dollars was received from the late Daudbhai’s fund when the Munshi (Manubarwala) Educational Complex was established in Bharuch in 1993.

In 1985 while Daudbhai was still alive, a modern hostel was built at Rander to provide residential facilities for the promising students of our community who wanted to pursue further education. A large number of young people of our community have used the hostel facilities over the years while studying at various colleges in Surat and have qualified as doctors, accountants and engineers.

In this way, the life story of Daudbhai Munshi is a combination of adventure and generosity. A young man who left his home and his village empty handed at a very tender age of only 16 built up a small business empire of his own out of nothing and from his hard earned money there sprang a stream of generosity which is still flowing after his death, keeping his good name alive for generations to come.

Daudbhai Munshi left behind him two sons Umar and Imtiaz and five daughters namely Mumtaz, Shehnaz, Rosemina, Rukhsana and Hasina.

3. Abdurrahim Munshi



Abdurrahim, the second of the three sons of Ahmed Munshi, was born in Manubar in the year 1926. After finishing his primary and secondary education, he also went to Africa in 1950, following the footsteps of his elder brother Daud.

In Mombasa to begin with, he started working as an accountant. Living with his wife Bibiben in a rented accommodation, he used to commute to work on a bicycle. To add to his income, he started supplying wheat flour, salt and cement to Daudbhai in Congo and later on, on the advice of Daudbhai he bought a grocery shop and set up a company in Mombasa known as Alibhai Essa and Co. He also started supplying fresh fruit and vegetables and pursued other business opportunities as they arose - salt production, ship painting , and chicken farming. With the business diversified, he became financially very solvent.

This was made possible through self-help, hard work and business skill. In 1998, Abdurrahim went to Makkah to perform Umrah with his wife Bibiben where she was taken ill and diagnosed with cancer. They came to England with the intention of spending a few weeks with their children but unfortunately Bibiben died 6-8- weeks after their arrival. Abdurrahim's intention was to live in Kenya but with the passing away of Bibiben, he changed his mind and decided to live with his children in a small town called Leyland, near Preston.

After the death of Daudbhai in 1986, he took upon himself the responsibility of looking after their parents and lived with them in

Manubar. While there, he devoted most of his time in the establishment and development of the Munshi Vidyadham, giving the benefit of his knowledge and experience in the field of education and social work.

Following his family tradition, Abdurrahim also made his full contribution in the charitable works of social welfare. He was also active in the establishment and development of the Munshi (Manubarwala) educational complex. Besides helping many charitable organisations Abdurrahim, kind and generous hearted as he was, also provided financial support to a number of needy people in Mombasa, India and Pakistan. He died in 2005, leaving behind three sons and three daughters.

Abdurahim's children also performed well in their respective fields and achieved considerable success. His son Usman qualified as a Mechanical Engineer. His eldest son Ishaque accepted a job as an agricultural economist after graduating but later joined Daub Munshi in independent business.

With the political instability and the situation worsening day by day, Ishaque left Zaire in 1975 to settle in Canada where he took employment in a foam-rubber factory in Hamilton. However, there was an economic crisis in Zaire in 1976 and Mobutu soon realized his mistake. He requested the Asians who had left the country to come back and take possession of their properties. With the advice of his business-wise uncle Mohamed Munshi, Ishaque took the way to Kinshasa again. Once there, he took a loan from the bank and with 'a mind for money' made a fresh start in business. His brother Yunus had trained as a pilot. Soon both these brothers started an airline service, operating chartered flights of cargo. These daring and adventurous *entrepreneurs* of the Munshi family who were bitten more than once and had lost more or less everything before persevered in the most dangerous and challenging conditions and prospered again. They had not only taken financial risks, but put their lives into risk many a times. But they were not the ones to give up hope altogether. With courage and determination, they kept entering into different ventures, from selling candles and cosmetics to cutting trees, exporting timber and planting

coffee beans. In his article which was published in July 2007 issue of the magazine *Vanity Fair*, journalist William Langewiesche has complimented the unflinching courage, business knowhow and adventurous spirit of these Munshi brothers in particular and the Munshi family in general in these words: “The Munshis – a family of Indian immigrants - have survived 50 years of dictatorship, war, and plunder”.

Abdurrahim’s illustrious daughter Naseem has got a doctorate degree from the London South Bank University. She did some research work in the *Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory* (Berkeley Lab) which is a Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science lab managed by University of California. At present she is running a worldwide company known as Composite Technology Development from Lafayette, Colorado, United States and has been involved with the NASA research centre for the last fifty years.

Of Abdurrahim’s other children Zarina is an Eye Consultant while Abeda is a graduate in geology and is the Head Teacher in a British school.

4. Mohamed Munshi



The Flambeau

The flambeau kindled by their illustrious father Ahmed Munshi and carried forward by Daud and Abdurrahim Munshi is now kept ablaze by the youngest brother Mohamed Munshi.

Mohamed Munshi was born on 15th May 1931 in Manubar village of Bharuch District in Gujarat State (the then Bombay Province), India. At the time of his birth, the Munshi family were neither affluent nor prosperous, but they had strong family values and Ahmed Munshi was the role model not only for his sons but also for other young people in the village.

From early childhood, Mohamed was greatly influenced by his father's simple living and high thinking. When he was only 14 or 15, a small incident took place in his village which left a lasting impression on him. The Village Council of Manubar had employed a village watchman who also guarded the crop on the village farms. Ahmed Munshi's nanny goat had strayed into a farm and grazed some crop. The watchman took the nanny-goat away and locked her up in the shed where such animals were kept. When Munshi sahib found out what had happened, he went and pleaded with the watchman to release his nanny goat. The watchman treated him harshly and tried to manhandle him. Munshi sahib asked him to calm down but he did not listen and kept shouting abuse at him. When the village elders came to know about this, the entire village gathered at the scene, rebuked the watchman for his

aggressive and insulting behaviour and made him to apologise to Munshi sahib.

The people of the village held Munshi sahib in such high esteem that they would not allow the watchman to be impolite to him. It all ended with the watchman saying sorry to Munshi sahib and Munshi sahib forgiving him for his rudeness. Young Mohamed was a witness to this incident. He asked himself: “What is it in my father that has made him so respectable in the eyes of the whole village that they would all stand by him and take his side?” He knew that it was nothing but his helpful, polite nature and good conduct. “I will be like him when I grow up,” resolved young Mohamed, “I will also lead a respectable life and earn a place in the hearts of the people,” Thus Mohamed had found a role model in his father and has always tried to follow his example and live up to his father’s ideals.

Education

Mohamedbhai completed his primary education at the village school. There was no high school in the village in those days. Very few students continued their studies beyond the primary level. But Munshi family knew the importance of higher education, so Mohamedbhai joined Haripura Sarvajanik High School in Surat where he stayed with a Soni family for eight months. He studied Sanskrit as one of the subjects and even at the advanced age of 85, he still remembered the Subhashita he had learnt as a student. Surat was a cosmopolitan city and his stay and education in Surat widened the areas of his interests and increased his understanding of social structures as he came into contact with children from different social backgrounds. This was reflected in his conversations in those days. A friend recalls that when Mohamedbhai visited Manubar during vacations, he spent a lot of time with friends like Mohmed Sufi, Ahmed Mogal and Ismail Karigar, discussing politics, religion and literature. He also talked about the role of young people in the development of the village. Thus Mohamedbhai’s upbringing and education played a part in increasing his social awareness and his passion for welfare activities.

He passed the Secondary School Certificate Examination in 1949, and joined Victoria Jubilee Technical Institute in Mumbai where he studied for four years and took a Diploma in Textiles in 1953. After graduating from VJ Technical Institute, he was employed at Tata Textile in Nagpur where he worked for one year.

These were the formative years in his life. All these early experiences broadened his vision and sowed the seed of his future mission – service of the community. His early encounter with students from different social backgrounds enabled him to make sure that the benefit of his charitable activities reached all sections of the society without any distinction of creed or caste.

The First Migration

Bharuchi Vahora Patels are a daring, dashing and adventurous community. Migrating to foreign lands in search of livelihood and better life has been a tradition among them for centuries. Following this tradition, Daudbhai and Abdurrahim Munshi had already left the shores of India and settled in Africa.

The young Mohamed Munshi found the field of his job in the textile industry rather limited. He aspired to explore and find new horizons. After working at Tata Textile for one year, he resigned from his job in 1954 and decided to migrate to Africa.

In June of that year, he boarded the SS Karanja passenger ship from Mumbai port and started his voyage. Most of his fellow travellers in that ship were Indians heading to east African countries like Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Being sociable, Mohamedbhai made some friends during the voyage. Being young and energetic, he also tried to be helpful to others, especially to people who were older than him. Amongst the many passengers, there was an old Indian lady who was travelling on her own and was rather nervous. Mohamedbhai comforted her and promised to help her with whatever she wanted. This sympathetic offer of help reassured her and she felt happy and grateful. After 10 days of stormy sailing, the steamer reached Mombasa. The old

lady's husband, who was working in Dar-es-Salaam had come to pick her up from the port. She introduced Mohamedbhai to him and told him how this young man had helped and looked after her during the whole voyage. Her husband felt very grateful and asked Mohamedbhai to visit them if ever he happened to come to Dar-es-Salaam. Years later, when Mohamedbhai happened to be passing through Dar-es-Salaam on his way to Congo, he did remember that old lady and visited the elderly couple.

On reaching Mombasa, Mohamedbhai lived with his brother Abdurrahim for some time and then on the advice of Abdurrahimbhai he joined his eldest brother Daudbhai in Congo where Daudbhai had established himself in general trading. He boarded a coastal steamer which took him through Zanzibar, Dar-es-Salam, Morogoro, Tabora and Mwanza. Here he took a train and after a very exciting and memorable train journey he reached Kisumu in Kenya.

His struggle to settle in Africa had now started. During this period in 1957, he met Khatija, daughter of Ismail Adam Kahanwala in Kisumu and this first encounter resulted in their engagement and marriage. They have now completed 58 years of a happy married life, blessed with four children: sons Munir (deceased), Munavvar and Mustak and daughter Rehana.

During his difficult days in Africa, he received tremendous help and support from Ibrahimbhai Nathalia who was originally from Tankaria village of Bharuch district and a very successful businessman in Congo. He not only offered financial support but provided Mohamedbhai with accommodation in his own home. Mohamedbhai has never forgotten this favour and remembering him with gratitude, he often says to his friends: "Whatever I have achieved in business is due to the initial support and encouragement I had received from this very generous and kind hearted gentleman called Ibrahim Nathalia. I can never forget him."

Upheaval in Africa

Mohamedbhai worked hard, set up a business in Africa and expanded it. He was also settled in family life. But this story does not have a happy ending like I came, I saw, I conquered and I ruled.

In those days Congo was a Belgian colony. People started their fight for freedom which led to civil war and soon the political chaos resulted in the worsening of social and economic conditions. There was lawlessness and disorder everywhere. In 1960, Congo became independent but during the rule of Lumumba between 1960 and 1964, the situation got even worse. It was like a nightmare. In the words of Mohamedbhai: “For nearly four months we lived our lives at gun point, constantly under the shadow of death. The Central Government was in Kinshasa. At last Bunia, which was occupied by the rebellious army, was captured with the help of the British army and we were transported by plane to Kinshasa as refugees.”

The rebels in Congo had seized Mohamedbhai’s two trucks. In Kinshasa he was told that there was a possibility of recovering these trucks. So he travelled to Bunia with his friend Ibrahim Isa (Gringo) but this move put their lives in great danger. Mohamedbhai describes their encounter with death in these words: “On reaching the village called Mambasa, we met the army commander to reclaim our trucks but to our dismay, he arrested us and immediately put us in a dungeon. The following day, a captain came with a jeep and drove us to a river some 10 miles away from the village. He got us out and made us stand on the bridge and asked us to look below. There in the water we saw a number of floating corpses, all black and naked! The captain asked us in a stern voice to forget about the trucks and run if we wanted to save our lives. “If not,” he continued pointing to the corpses, “your bodies will be among these.” We ran as fast as we could reaching Bunia, breathless and exhausted and from there we took our way to Kinshasa.

Mohamedbhai witnessed the bloody phase of African history during this chaotic period. This experience was indeed agonising and traumatic. These frequent upheavals and ups and downs made him to

learn an important lesson in life that nothing is certain and one never knows what could happen the next day or the next moment. One must therefore be prepared for any eventuality in life.

Alarmed by the continuing atmosphere of uncertainty and instability, which prevailed since 1960, and sensing what was lying ahead, Mohamedbhai's wife Khatijaben's sisters and her two brothers had moved to England in 1970. They were all born in Kenya and before giving independence, the British Government had given the foreigners a choice to either become British citizens or remain citizens of Kenya. They all had decided to become British citizens including Khatijaben, so she also joined them in 1974.

The Africanization mania had spread all over and the African Asians lived in constant fear. In 1973, the Ugandan Government of the fearless leader Idi Amin launched a vicious Anti-Asian campaign and issued a threat to all Asians to either leave the country or get looted and killed. On the other hand, amidst this atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, as if adding fuel to the fire, President Mobutu, following his policy of "Zairization" declared in Kinshasa that the African Asians will have to give up their businesses to the natives and either live as their employees and workers or leave the country.

Thus Mohamedbhai faced a dire situation in Congo which was getting worse day by day. Finally having put his life at risk and having escaped death on more than one occasions, he left Africa in 1975 and came to live with his wife and family in the town of Bolton in Lancashire, UK.

The Second Migration

This was his second migration. He had lost all his hard earned money and property in Africa. The toil of two decades came to nothing and he had to start from scratch. But being an optimist, despite many falls and bruises, like the proverbial spider, he tried again and again and rose from the ashes. To begin with, he set up a business called 'Anglo Fabrics' in Bolton in partnership with Gulambhai Kothiwala. This

business ran for a couple of years but did not prove to be profitable and they had to wind it up.

Meanwhile news came from Africa that conditions there were becoming normal. Mohamedbhai has some good contacts with the traders, bakers and political leaders there. He started making flying trips to Africa and set up trading companies again. Two of them – Shamco and ETS Muhammad Trading Company expanded as time passed and the business flourished.

Mohamedbhai's life in India, Africa and Britain was full of ups and downs, trials and tribulations. His various businesses passed through good and bad phases. But in all that his morale remained high. He refused to throw down his arms and give up. In his words: "Under adverse conditions what has sustained me is faith in the Almighty, tenacity and willingness to work hard." Even today, in his conversations he often quotes a line from the old Gujarati poem from the children's textbook which is about the repeated attempts made by the spider, despite many falls and failures, to weave its web.

Mohamedbhai lived in Bolton for some time and then moved to Chorley where his brother Daudbhai, niece Fatema and Muhammad Mala of Kantharia had already settled. Thus once again, he got a family environment, his business expanded, financial prosperity increased and the circle of his friends and colleagues became wider, making life rich and enjoyable once again! Here he found himself settled in the true sense of the word.

The Mission

With the improvement in his circumstances, Mohamedbhai's attention immediately turned to charity and welfare activities. The seed of humanitarian spirit was sown in his youth and it was now ready to sprout and grow.

In 1981, the amount Munshi family had set aside for charity increased to 45,000 dollars. They donated a substantial part of this amount to

Darul Uloom, Kantharia. Daudbhai who passed away in 1986, had left a huge amount with Mohammedbhai. Out of this, 10% was donated to found the Darul Uloom for girls near Manubar. 45,000 dollars were donated for the developmental projects in Manubar village. In 1990, a grand Munshi Memorial Community Hall was constructed in Manubar which is now used by all the neighbouring villages for their wedding functions, conferences and other social gatherings. In addition to all this, financial aid was provided to poor families for food and clothes and shelters were built to house the poor homeless families of the village. The unemployed youth were given rickshaws, tool kits and vending carts to make them self-sufficient.

When the Welfare Hospital Bharuch was founded to provide health facilities to the poor people of Bharuch district, Mohamedbhai worked closely with Muhammad Patel (Fansiwala), Alibhai Umarji Vali and others connected with the project.

Around 1993, Mohamedbhai was contemplating a long term project which would empower the young people in the community. He had a discussion with the educationist Prof. Adam Ghodiwala who emphasised the need for a residential higher secondary school in Science Stream and explained how such a school would benefit the aspiring students of entire Bharuch district. Mohamedbhai consulted the late Bashirbhai Chokiwala who was then living in Mumbai. He supported the proposal and promised his full commitment to the project. Dilaver Valli Dashanwala, a leading figure in the Bharuchi Vahora Patel community in the UK, was also actively involved in these deliberations. He readily donated five acres of his precious land for the proposed institution.

As soon as the project was announced, there were offers of financial help from various people and money started flowing in. \$100,000 were donated from the late Daudbhai Munshi's fund. Ayyubhai Matliwala of Karmad donated £20,000. A generous donation of \$30,000 came from Ayyubhai Akuji Dayadrawala. The project received significant support from social workers like Hafiz Ibrahim Badeen and numerous other well-wishers.

Soon the foundation of Munshi Educational Complex was laid at Dahej Road in Bharuch. Started as a higher secondary school for science with only 42 students, it rapidly grew into a huge complex with K.G. Classes, Gujarati and English Medium Primary and Secondary Schools and also a Higher Secondary School of Common Stream and a Technical College.

In 1996, Adam Ghodiwala created a link between Munshi Complex and Preston College, UK. During the four years of this collaboration, a total of 30 students were awarded scholarships by Preston College to come and study in the UK. Preston College also sponsored six teachers from Bharuch for eight weeks training in Britain. Every year two specialists from Preston College visited Bharuch and conducted training programmes for the teachers. They also provided financial aid of one million rupees to set up a language laboratory at the Munshi campus.

In 2005, the Bhodu family of Leicester, UK (originally from Ikhar) came forward to promote higher education among girls. This resulted in the Vali Charitable Trust founding an Arts and Commerce College, a B.Ed. College and an M.B.A. College as part of the Munshi complex. Today the total number of students on roll at the Munshi Vidyadham, availing themselves of these wonderful facilities in Bharuch, is 6,000.

Thus the dream to provide facilities for quality education to students from all sections of the society in and around Bharuch soon became a reality. The growth was so rapid and the support which came from so many quarters was so profuse that it all seemed beyond imagination. Referring to this unprecedented progress and development, late Abdurrahim Munshi once described it as “nothing short of a miracle.” Along with this monumental educational project, Munshi Trust also sponsored many other welfare activities in and around the city of Bharuch. These included erection of electricity poles, and models of boat, cannon and bullock cart to make the well-known Mohammadpura area attractive and welcoming to the visitors; building of water huts in collaboration with the Rotary Club of Bharuch; Amina Munshi sewing classes; tree plantations, and a housing colony for poor families in Kavi, to name but a few. Simultaneously the Trust carried our Relief and

Rehabilitation work in times of natural and man-made calamities and disasters.

This list of charitable works and activities carried out by the Munshi family is by no means exhaustive. However it gives an indication of what this large hearted Vahora Patels have done and are still doing for the benefit and welfare of the society in general and the Vahora Patel community in particular.

The Spirit of Charity

Today (2016 CE), Mohamedbhai lives in a beautiful house with gardens and a balcony to enjoy the songs of the birds in the evening and the first rays of the sun in the morning on Preston Road, Whittle-le-Woods, Chorley with his wife Khatijaben and their children and grandchildren. Even at this advanced age his passion for welfare activities and social betterment has remained as keen and strong as before. This is evident in his conversations with his many visitors and trusted friends and in his activities.

This brief biography of Mohamedbhai Munshi highlights the major events in his life and documents some of his charitable and welfare activities. But it is more than just a biography. It is the success story of an ordinary person who was born in a remote village of Gujarat, struggled in Africa and Britain and succeeded. But more importantly of one who made a huge contribution to the empowerment of our community.

Through this small booklet, we show our appreciation for all the work Mohamedbhai Munshi and his family have done for the community and we do hope that this story of his life and works will inspire our young Bharuchi Vahora to follow his example and actively participate in community projects.

The list of all the charitable activities accomplished by this youngest son of the Munshi family and all the donations made by him in private and in public would be far too long. Moreover it would not be

appropriate to publicise them here. What needs to be emphasized is the fact that welfare activities and helping others has become an integral part of his being. This concern for the poor and the needy of the society has become his second nature. It is reflected in the way he thinks and in the way he lives his life. We would like to narrate only a couple of incidents to illustrate this:

Mohamedbhai had once given £30 to a friend and asked him to buy a pair of shoes for him next time he went to the market. Two days later a friend of his happened to visit him who was wearing new shoes. Mohamedbhai noticed this and asked him how much he had paid for the shoes. £10, was the reply. Knowing this, Mohamedbhai rang the other friend and asked him to buy three pairs of similar shoes at £10 each instead of just one pair for £30. When the friend asked why he wanted three pairs of shoes, he replied: “I will keep one for myself and the other two I will give to some poor persons during my next trip to India.” And that is what he did. This shows how in his day-to-day life he always thinks of people less fortunate than himself.

Here is one more example to show how he always thinks in terms of common good and community welfare. Years ago Mohamedbhai had taken out a private health insurance for an annual premium of £8,000. He paid this for one full year but when the time came to renew the policy, he thought to himself that the NHS (national Health Service) is good enough for his health requirements and there is no need for a private insurance. He then cancelled the policy and the money he saved he has been donating to the NHS every year. He very much appreciated the wonderful 24/7 health services provided by the NHS and this is one way of showing his gratitude.

His day-to-day life is guided by the principle that one should spend less on oneself, and utilise the spare resources for the welfare of others in the society.

Mohamedbhai’s life reminds us of the incense which burns itself to give fragrance to others. There is a saying in Gujarati – *ghasai ne oojala thaiye* – meaning if a brass vessel is in constant use and is being

scrubbed and washed, it becomes more shining. Similarly if a person keeps striving all the time to help others, his existence becomes brighter.

Adil Mansuri, a renowned Gujarati poet says beautifully in the following couplet:

*Foolo bani bhale ne ame to khari gaya
Khooshbu thi kintu aapno palav bhari gaya*

Yes, like the flowers in the garden we wilted away
But we filled your robe with the sweetest of fragrance

This is what Mohamed Munshi has been doing. Through his welfare activities, he is trying to uplift the community and brighten the lives of those who are less fortunate and deprived.

Mohamedbhai is known as Munshi Manubarwala. ‘Manubar’ is the distorted Gujarati form of the original Urdu word ‘Munawwar’, meaning bright, glittering, shining. Mohamedbhai’s charitable works have added to this radiance. His works justify the name of his birthplace making it more meaningful, more relevant.

In their personal, social and business life, in individual as well as joint ventures, each one of the three Munshi brothers played his own part to the full. In Mohamedbhai’s words: “We were three brothers, Daudbhai being the eldest, he used to spend considerable time in Manubar to look after our parents. As there were no proper educational facilities in Congo, all the family children had their education in Mombasa, Kenya under the care and supervision of Abdurrahimbhai. I was the youngest, so I concentrated more in business. In this way each one contributed to the family welfare and prosperity.

Thus, the wealth they acquired and the success they achieved in their personal lives is the result of the joint efforts of the three brothers. Accepting this fact, Mohamedbhai very politely says: “ Both the brothers took upon themselves the responsibility of looking after the

family and created for me the opportunities to pursue business. It will therefore not be fair if I alone took the credit and the honour of the success of the Munshi family and the remarkable contribution they have made in the field of education and social welfare.”

The Heritage

Mohamedbhai has passed on the Munshi family tradition of generosity, charity and community spirit to his two sons – Munavvar and Mustaq and it is his strong wish that they continue this tradition in the years to come. We are pleased to say that his sons have imbibed these virtues and are well geared up to carry on their dad’s mission and the family tradition.

Munavvar is a British national who lives in Sharjah and successfully runs the family business. He actively participates in welfare projects and keeps the family tradition alive. Mohamedbhai is now retiring and Munavvar has taken over the responsibilities of Munshi Educational Complex in Bharuch. He started this in right earnest by constructing a *masjid* on the campus. He believes in a balanced education, and the existence of the *masjid* has added a spiritual dimension to the all-round development of the young people of Munshi Vidyadham. Munavvar takes his role as President seriously and he has a clear vision for the future development of the complex.

Mustaq lives with his family in Whittle-le-Woods, Chorley and follows his father’s example by helping the poor and the needy. Eventually it is expected that he will also find a field of social service to suit his own inclinations and keep the flame of ‘*khidmat-e-khalq*’ lit by his dad burning for many more years to come.

Mohamedbhai’s daughter Rehana is married to Yunus who is the son of Mohamedbhai’s close friend and one time business partner the late Ibrahimbhai Nathalia. Rehana lives with her family in Leicester.

Reflection

This brief history of Munshi Manubarwala family is based on a few stray notes and oral data available to us. It may give a glimpse of their family values, adventures, integrity, generosity, charity and welfare activities.

However, we know that more intimate and authentic details can only be obtained from Mohamedbhai himself. Therefore we persuaded him to talk to us about his perceptions, aspirations and innermost feelings, which he shared with us with some hesitation. We have tried to present their life story here in this booklet more or less in his own words.

Appendix

Munshi Manubarwala: Family Tree

- Saleh:** Two sons, namely Adam and Ali
- Adam:** Three sons: Mohmed, Umar and Musa
- Musa:** Three sons: Ibrahim, Ahmed and Vali
- Ahmed:** Three sons: Daud, Abdurrahim and Mohammed; Five daughters: Ayeshaben, Huriben, Fatamben, Bibiben and Mariyamben
- Daud:** Two sons: Umar and Imtiaz
Five daughters: Mumtaz, Shehnaz, Rosemina, Rukhsana and Hasina
- Abdurrahim:** Three sons: Ishaque, Usman and Yunus
Three daughters: Zarina, Naseem and Abeda
- Mohamed:** Three sons: Munir (Deceased), Munavvar, Mustaq and daughter Rehana

Mohamed Munshi: As seen by others

Mohamed Munshi's passionate desire has been and is to serve the society and do whatever they can as a family for the betterment of Bharuchi Vahoras in particular and the underprivileged members of the society in general. The aim of the various charitable activities undertaken by the Munshi family over the years has been the empowerment of the whole community through education and economic prosperity. That is the reason why the fragrance of Munshi family's social and charitable works has spread all over.

Due to his concern for the community and his immense contribution towards various noble causes and works of public welfare, Mohamedbhai Munshi occupies a respectable place in the community. Those who come into contact with him are immediately impressed by his simplicity, his humbleness and his gentlemanly behaviour.

Mohamedbhai Munshi is soft spoken, well-mannered and quite approachable. During his long life he has come into contact with numerous people as a relative, friend, businessman, social worker and a community member. He has left a large group of friends, well-wishers and admirers wherever he lived and worked. Let us now see what some of them have to say about this noble man's personality and his charitable nature:

Leadership, Vision and Community Centred, that is “Mama”

□ *Dilaverbhai Dashanwala*

Mama has been an inspirational figure in business, in community life. He tries to ensure that Islamic values of charity, honesty, integrity and self-discipline are best demonstrated by personal action. Over the last thirty years I have been with Mama in many situations – the adventures of the next business deal, travels to many foreign lands and planting the seeds for numerous charitable and community causes. It would be unwise to mention some of those causes and charitable acts, as we all firmly believe that such actions and deeds are for Allah (swt) to witness and make such contributions as a source for the hereafter.

However, I would like to focus on some principal personal attributes that should be a source of knowledge and future guidance to us. Mama has the following skills and attributes that we should try and learn from:

1. He is incredibly well organised with timing, time keeping and his administrative skills.
2. Tech-savie. Even today he is well aware of emails, web site, the use of laptops, android phones and can hold skype, facetime and whats apps conversation with anyone in the world.
3. He has the talent to adjust in social and community setting with anyone of any age and hold a conversation in sports, politics and community issues.
4. Even today he has the instinct for business and is able to conclude commercial opportunities and financial projections without the aid of well-crafted Business Plans and Financial Projections

In our Travelogue we have many humorous stories that can be categorised within the six qualities mentioned at the outset:

- a. Travelling to China in the 1990s – Mama Prepared for all eventualities. He knew that his fellow companions on the business trip needed full air conditioning in the shared rooms. Mama came prepared with his ski hat, gloves and winter socks and requested that the full AC should be turned on in order that others can have a restful night.
- b. Emirates Flights. The spare cutlery are normally taken from the flight in order that they are not disposed and affect the environment. They are then re-used in India and Bharuch for as long as they last.
- c. The 20 years Jumper in Masjid. Mama spends more on others than himself. A 20 year old jumper was a regular appearance at Chorley Masjid until a fellow worshipper stated that we will go and buy you a new one. Mama said don't worry I will dispose this one, he now wears it under the “kurta” rather than over. That money is sent to charities and he buys new shoes and clothes for the poor.
- d. Donation to the NHS. His absolute love and affection for the NHS staff and the service, that his former BUPA fees goes as an annual contribution to the NHS in Chorley. He states that they are “angels on earth, and they exemplify Islam with their actions and good deeds”.
- e. The Indian Malae “cream” at Bombay Airport. Once we had a stopover between China and Manchester with a five hour stopover at the former Santa Cruz Bombay International Airport. He had arranged from China to meet an old friend, but that was also to have the breakfast with the famous India Malae with the Parsi Rusk.
- f. The Slippers being repaired in Manubar. There was a time I was flying to India and staying in Manubar. Mama gave me old worn slippers to have them repaired in Manubar by a local Mochi to ensure that he had enough business and that he was gainfully employed. The slippers were then donated locally.
- g. College visitor “expecting a mansion of a residence” after a long visit and working with the Munshi Complex and when on the final day of the visit we visited Mama’s house in Manubar. At that time Mama was staying at the heritage property, but the visitor expected a large Mansion in Manubar.
- h. The donation of land in a one-minute conversation. The VCT land was donated at a drop of hat to encourage others to ensure that the

educational mission in Bharuch and Gujarat is extended and that Muslims become a progressive force in India.

- i. The more “ I give, the more I will get” philosophy.
- j. The multi-lingual Mama. Mama is conversant in many international languages in particular French. Many overseas visitors view Mama as a “Desi” person, but upon conversation they get astounded by the international figure and personality.
- k. His relationship with Bankers and Business contacts. He has maintained those relationships till today.

My modest Munshi *kaka* □ *Sufi Manubari*

Mohamed Munshi, my neighbour and my uncle, is by nature very humble and generous. Whenever he visited the village as a young person, he would talk to us about literature and the books he had read. He also loved to discuss religious issues. He used to tell us about his migration to Africa and his business experiences in that land of opportunity. He does not forget his old friends. He loves to maintain friendships and keep in touch even with those he had met once or twice in his lifetime.

During his school days in Surat, he happened to live with a goldsmith family whose son was studying with him and was his friend. When he came to India for the first time after going to Africa, during his visit to Surat he remembered that goldsmith *kaka* and went to see him.

They both remembered the old days and before leaving, as is his habit, he handed some money to his old acquaintance. After that whenever he visited India, he would go and visit this man and each time shower him with some gifts. Not only that, he even invited him to his son Mustaq’s wedding.

Such qualities endear him to most people.

A Modest Millionaire of Manubar

□ Yakub Gati

Humble nature, sympathy for the poor, readiness to make sacrifices for friends and to forgive others - these are the qualities which raise the status of Munshi sahib above anybody else. I have been in his company a lot and I have had many first hand experiences of his generosity and humanity. To quote a few incidents:

A person owed him some 40-50 thousand pounds. When he talked to me about this, I said to him let's go and remind him of the debt. He would be at home because he was in hospital and has just returned home. On hearing this he asked me to leave it for now, saying that our visit would upset him and his health could deteriorate again! He avoided visiting him saying we would go some other time. That some other time has never come since then!

Once Munshi sahib was not feeling so well and we had to go to India. I suggested him to buy a business class ticket which, knowing his condition, would be more comfortable. Straight away he asked me 'do you know how much that ticket costs? My dear friend, if I can put up with some discomfort during the travel, that would save us three thousand pounds and with that saving we can help a few poor people.

One day a Harijan of the village came to see him at his house and sat away from us near the entrance. Munshi sahib insisted that he comes and sits with him which he did after much hesitation. Munshi sahib ordered a cup of tea for him, and fulfilled his need by giving him some money. People present there were all surprised with this humanitarian treatment!

One local poor friend of Munshi Sahib took an offence when once he advised him on the phone from UK not to unnecessarily interfere in the village affairs. So next time Munshi sahib went to India, this friend did not come to see him as usual. On the third day, Munshi sahib himself went to see him after the Fajar prayer and said to him 'my dear friend,

you didn't come, so I have come to see you. Friendship is not something which can be ended just like that!'

Never mind the expense, provide good education

□ *Suleman Patel*

Sulemanbhai, a childhood friend of Munshi Sahib, sent someone to Manubar from Kapodara with a request to accept his invitation for *dawat* (dinner) at his house. When he arrived, Munshi sahib was about to leave the house, so thinking this man has come for some help like other people do, he asked him to go away for the day and come back again tomorrow.

When he returned home that evening, that person was still there, waiting for him. Munshi sahib was annoyed a little bit and in a raised voice asked him why he had not gone away. That person very politely informed him of his reason for the visit. On hearing that, Munshi sahib apologised to that man for telling him off and sent him off with a cash gift of Rs 10,000-

At Munshi Vidyadham in Bharuch, Munshi sahib has always insisted that irrespective of the expenses involved, we provide all the necessary facilities to our students to ensure they get the best of education here. One day he asked me why we were not running classes for Year 11 and 12 in the English medium school. I explained that it would be too expensive, and will add about 30 lacs rupees each year to our annual budget. "Does it mean that we have to leave our students at the mercy of others after Year 10?" he asked. Before I could say anything, he added "never mind the expense, start classes for Year 11 and 12 as soon as possible".

That provision has now been made in the English medium school and a number of students are benefitting from it.

A high profile character wrapped up in low profile, that is Munshi sahib

□ Ahmedbhai Vahaluwala

I must say that everybody, whether Hindu or Muslim, feels proud about this man and salutes him with respect. I am connected with the Munshi (Manubarwala) Memorial Charitable Trust since 1994 and have known Munshi sahib since then. I can describe him as a man of many qualities who has brought educational revolution and opened up doors of varied opportunity for the new generation of our community. This visionary architect has given new hope and direction to the underprivileged section of the society and has found a place in their hearts.

I remember an incident about an old sweater he had been wearing for quite some time. One day at a meeting of the Trustees someone lightly commented to Munshi Sahib:

“You’ve been wearing this same sweater for God knows how many years now. It’s time you changed it for a new one”.

Munshi sahib smiled and asked him: “Then tell me what I do with this one?”

“Give it to some poor man, he’ll bless you for it” was the reply.

With a gentle smile, this generous hearted man replied: “But why should I give the poor man this old one, shall I not give him a new one instead?”

BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF MMMCT



**Munavver
Munshi**



Aiyub Akuji



Suleman Patel



**Naseem
Munshi**



Ibrahim Saleh



Ishaque Munshi



Mustaq Munshi



Salim Patel



Harun Patel



Ebrahim Bassa



Mansur Mehta



Nisar Patel



Yunus Manjra

OBITUARY: Mohamed Munshi

The millionaire man of Manubar, the visionary, the philanthropist. The youngest of the enterprising sons of the well known and cultured Munshi family of Manubar, Mohamed Munshi was born on 15th May 1931. This man of humble origin rose to great heights, made generous contributions to many welfare projects through charitable activities and earned for himself and the Munshi family the title of Hatim Tai of Bharuchi Vahora Patel community. He achieved great success in whatever he did through adventure, determination, perseverance and above all unshakable faith in Allah. From childhood he had found a role model in his father and always tried to follow his example and live up to his ideals of being of humble nature and helpful to others.

His creation of the Munshi Vidyadham in Bharuch has progressed so well in short period of time that his eldest brother late Abdurrahim Munshi described it as “nothing short of a miracle.” This large institution, with its numerous educational, vocational and recreational facilities is benefitting thousands of students of Bharuch and the surrounding villages.

He left this transitory world on 23rd November 2018 at the age of 87, passing on the Munshi family tradition of generosity, charity and community spirit to his two sons – Munavvar and Mustaq. He will be long remembered for his simplicity, humble nature and great concern for the poor and the needy of the society.

