



BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by
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THE MEMON DIASPORA

The "Diaspora" is not a common word but dictionary meaning of it gives its meaning as a "dispersion of an originally homogeneous entity, such as a language or culture." The title of the book has described the subject of the book as 'Nasserpuria Memon wanderlust and it's effect on community, Culture and Traditions'. It is a 200 page book and has been published by Media and Communications Committee of Nasserpuria Memon Jamat of Canada.

The book contains several chapters written by different Authors which include:

- * Shaheen Bagha
- * Azba Hathiyan
- * Fatima Noorani
- * Nargis Yakub
- * Shaheena Yakub

Nasserpur is a small town with a population of 25,000 persons in Tando Alahyaar District of Sindh. The majority of population is of Memons or so to say Sindhi Memons. The Memons of Nasserpur differ from other Sindhi Memons in the sense that they are very enterprising and many of them have migrated to South Africa, U.K. and Canada and have established their own Jamats at those places.

The book contains nine chapters each with a caption in English plus its free translation into Memoni. The translation and the headings of the chapters are very interesting and the same are being reproduced below:

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| I. A Walk Back Through the Past
'Kuro Zamano Huwo' | II. A Historical Trace
'Kida Uwasi'n Ne Kida Ai'yun' |
| III. Our Language
'Paanji Boli Cutchi' | IV. Our Rituals
'Riti Rivaaj' |
| V. Clothing
'Perwaas' | VI. Education
'Bhantar' |
| VII. Our Cuisine
'Paanji Khoraki' | VIII. Leisure Activities
'Ramat Gamat' |
| IX. Does the Journey End Here? 'Hida Thi Kida?' | |

The book repeats the usual story of the origin of the Memon community and refers to the Lohana Community and Syed Yusufuddin Qadri. The book also refers of the migration of the new muslims from Thatta to Kathiawar and Cutchh etc. The Memons of Nasserpur are very enterprising and ambitious. They migrated to Zanzibar and South Africa in nineteenth century. They established Nasserpuria Memon Jamat in Mombasa and other places in South Africa. As is usual with Memons they established several mosques in their new homeland. The following paragraph about building of a Mosque in Mombasa will be of interest to readers:

"By the turn of the century, almost all of the Nasserpurians had moved from other settlements and made Mombasa their home. When this had happened, building a mosque

was found absolutely necessary. As a result, the families residing in Mombasa bought a plot where they built 'Memon Jamia Masjid' in 1880 and a 'Jamiat Khana' in 1883. Prior to that, the Salah was performed at Masjid Munara, which still exists."

There are quite a few interesting things about Nasserpuria Memons which agree with the culture and traditions of Halai Memon. Back in Kathiawar, our women folk did not get proper education. Many of them could read only "Noornamo" and some book of Qaseeda in Urdu. The book on Nasserpuria Memons refers to "Noornamo" in Sindhi which used to be read by women folk belonging to Nasserpur.

The engagement and wedding ceremony and other customs during this period were same as we used to have in Kathiawar. The book translates engagement as 'Sagai' and wedding as 'Vyan'. There was a practice of Dahej but Dova ageold practice of offering valuable for boys and from the parents of girls called 'Dowey' was not there.

Incidentally the book also refers to Kathiawar Muslim Educational Conference, Memon Educational and Welfare Society set up by Adamjee Haji Dawood and Madrassa-e-Islamia – a chain of schools in Karachi managed by Memon Educational Board with Mr. Suleman Bhura as the main sponsor. It also lauds the services of Mr. Suleman Bhura for his struggle for application of Mohammedan Law to Memon Community during pre-partition days in Bantva. It is really unfortunate, that those of us who belong to Kathiawar and particularly Bantva have completely forgotten the services rendered by Mr. Suleman Bhura for application of Mohammedan Law to the Memon Community. They also refer to Hajiani Khadija Bai and chain of the girls school & a college under the name of Raunaq-e-Islam schools established by her under the banner of Pakistan Memon Women's Educational Society.

As it has been said in the beginning, the book refers and discusses the tradition and culture of Nasserpuria Memons in detail. For example, the following paragraphs about lunch and dinner should be of interest to the readers:

"The ingredients were prepared at home with "masalas" ground on a stone rather than at a touch of a button. Think about 'samosas', the well-known delicacy. Unlike now when we have choices as to whether we want them fried, ready to be fried or alternatively buy the pastry and fill and fry them at home, our mothers and grandmothers actually went through the whole process of making the dough, rolling out the chapatti's baking and cutting them into wraps ("maandas"), cooking the filling which ranged from beef, chicken, vegetables, or coconut (think "mitha samosa"), and finally frying them.

"Eating at a table with chairs was not common, nor was eating in plates with cutlery. A 'sadhri' (mat) would be laid down on the floor and a huge "thalo" (very big round tray) was placed in the middle on a "chakar" (a raised platform). The family would gather around the "thalo" and the food was placed in the centre. A young member of the family would go around pouring water to help wash the hands. The meal commenced with an elder of the family saying 'bismillah'.

Until I read this book, I did not know that members of the Nasserpuria Memon Jamat were so enterprising and their cultures and traditions were almost same as were the customs and traditions of Halai Memon in the pre-partition days. The book was received by me with the courtesy of brother Qasim Abbas of Canada. The Media and Communications Committee of Nasserpuria Memon Jamat, Canada deserves all the compliments for producing such an interesting book. Those who want to know the history of Nasserpuria Memon Jamat, Canada, they may visit the following website: www.nmjcanada.com

Those who want to know about origin, language, culture and traditions of Memon community in general may visit the following website: www.memon-world.net