

બાંધણી નાં બંધન
Ties of Bandhana
The Story of Alladin Bapu



by
Safdar Giga Patney

Excerpts from the book:

The Alladin Giga family could trace their genealogy from Alladin to Suleman, to Hasham, to Mahamad, to Giga to the family name of Patney, which took them back to the middle of the Sixteenth Century to the name Giga. It is probable that Mahamad, who was given the name of the Prophet, was converted to Islam at that time. The oral traditions of Khoja Ismailies and Bohra Ismailies, later written down, say it was at Pattan in King Siddharaja Jayasingha's time that the king, his courtiers, their wives and children, and servants were converted *en masse* to Ismailism by Pir Satgur Nur in around 1100 (Christian Era, 500 Anno Hegirae, Muslim Era).

The title of *Pir* was given to proselytizers who were sent by the Ismaili imams in old Persia to the cities of old India. In their oral tradition, and devotional *Ginan* songs, the Khoja Ismailies refer to Patan as *Pir-na Patan*.

Alladin Giga's family name, *Pattani*, suggests they that they came from Patan.

Farewell

At Verawar, the time had come to put the possession

on the boat. Kankubai, their sixteen year old daughter; Kassam the eldest son of seventeen and Maanbai, his child bride of fifteen from the Damji family; Ali-Mohamed and Karim, ten and nine; and Shariff, the toddler of two that Prembai carried at her side on her hip, got ready to get on board the boat. Alladin's sister Phulbai who was married in Veravar had come to say goodbye. So had Motibai, his eldest daughter, who had been married off in in the neighbouring village of Kodinar and had come with her two toddler sons. Alladin's other sister, Rajbai, had married into the Dadani family and was in Africa. Alladin Giga was supervising the loading of their bundles and chests. Among other things, Prembai had got her wooden chest of medicines and folk remedies together. She had learned about the remedies from her mother. Boiled black syrups brewed to reduce period pains, mixtures of resins, powdered roots and dried fruits to take after a delivery. Postnatal poultices, pastes for sprains and fractures, tisanes for chest infections, squeezed juices for when babies were squirming with colic - *black moosri, white moosri, goond, kankatch, inderjuw, mindiawar, bawar, hurdey, burdey, sonamukhi* and some fifty little parcels of other precious herbs, roots, seeds, dried flowers and dried fruits wrapped in pieces of cotton. Prembai had also put together seeds of fruits, vegetables and herbs that she was going to grow in the new world. She had also carefully wrapped her gold and silver jewellery and silk *bandhanis* from Jamnagar, and Alladin's formed and brocaded turban in

her collection of possessions. The silk tie-and-dye Jamnagri *bandhani* in the Kathiawari colours of red, ochre and saffron, with gold thread embroidery, on a ground of brown black silk was a part of her trousseau. That and the gold would be needed when the rest of her children reached marriageable age - she was going to make sure that her daughter and sons were married off properly in Africa. Her husband's brocade turban, the *pagri*, wrapped in cloth, would be brought out on high days and holidays as his ceremonial wear. Brass utensils, a supply of rice, daal and millet; earthenware jars of mango and lime pickles; pots of turmeric, chillies, cumin, fenugreek, coriander and mustard were put together. Two round slabs of granite that fitted together to make a mill for splitting lentils, grinding spices and making millet flour were tied together in burlap. So was the flat grinding stone with a smooth, long piece of granite rolling pin used for making garlic, ginger and chilli paste and chutneys of mango, coriander and coconut.

Prembai's two brothers, Virjee and Alibhai Ibrahim Teja had also come to see her off. So had her two sisters, Virbai and Panbai who had come from Korinar to say goodbye. There were people from the Damji family who had come to say goodbye to Maanbai, their daughter.

Alladin had said goodbye to his five cousins in Chachhar: Walli Hasham Mohamed Patney; Walli Sidi Gulam, Ali Gulam and Kapoor Gulam Patney; and Nanji Nathu Mohamed Patney whose daughter Sherbanu was in

Africa married into the Moolji Nazerali family in a town in the interior called Moshi, under a snow covered mountain. Alladin was assured that he would get help and assistance from the Moolji Nazeralis if he went to Moshi. Alladin's sister Rajbai was in Moshi too, married into the Dadani family. He was also told that there were land grants given by the *Germania Sarkar* there for a few rupees for a *bigha* of land. There were banana groves and cool mountain streams flowing through the land there.

When the time came to get on the boat, the keening started. The women threw their arms around one another and cried loudly knowing full well that they were never going to see one another again. There would probably be news by word of mouth on the boats returning from Africa but that was all. Sometimes, there were stories of shipwrecks and boats lost at sea. The men hugged and patted each other on the backs and wiped tears from their eyes with the back of their hands.

The family had walked on the gangplank on to the boat and they were now at the gunwale giving a last look at their loved ones. The Kharwa sailors started weighing up the anchor hauling the anchor sheet a length at a time. Two sailors hoisted the sail up the main mast to the rhythm of the heave-ho song they had broken into...

On the Way

On the fifth day they reached Korogwe on the banks of River Ruvu-Pangani, which roared and thundered in a narrow gorge near the settlement. There was already a small mosque in the village where families from Kathiawar with names like Harji, Hirji, Somji and Virji welcomed the travellers and invited them for food and water.

There were so many things that were strange. The animals, the insects, the plants, and the birds. Even the sky was different. And night noises were different too. There were crickets and frogs croaking but there were the screaming hyenas with their insolent laughter and noises of birds and animals they did not know. For example in Korogwe, where they spent the night at the prayer leader's house, the *mukhi's* house, in the night they heard an animal crying like a baby and then a hiccup and a thud of something falling on the ground. Maybe a coconut dropped to the ground they thought. But what of the baby crying? In the morning, they asked the *mukhi* and his wife the *mukhiani* about the noises.

Oh, those are *khomba*, little monkey like animals that come out in the night and cry like babies. They are called bush babies. In the evening, local men climb the top of the palm trees, tap a hole at the head of the tree and hang a calabash to collect the palm juice. In the morning, they go up the tree and bring the calabash down. Fresh palm

sap is sweet to drink but it ferments very quickly.

Perhaps you would like to try some, the *mukhi* said and turning to his older son he said:

‘Ey Sadru, take a heller from the box and ask the man to sell you a calabash of neera.

Turning to the newcomers he said:

‘Sometimes the men forget to bring the neera down and it ferments in the pots and turns into tembo. The bush babies love to steal the neera but sometimes it has turned to alcohol so the animal gets drunk and makes noises like a baby crying. Sometimes, it loses its grip and drops to the ground drunk. That's what you heard last night. We are so used to it now that we don't hear the noises anymore.’

‘Hañ, hañ’, Alladin responded. ‘Of course we have neera in our land too, you well know. And people drink the fermented tadi to get drunk, you must remember’.

‘Hañ, hañ. I remember, an English visitor to Verawar asked for tadi to drink. He called it toddy’.

The son came back with a calabash of fresh palm juice and they were given little cups of the sweet palm sap to drink.

So, it was a strange mixture of the known and the

unknown. There were things that were familiar and things that were new.

Beyond Korogwe, the land got drier and the earth got redder.

Arrival at Moshi

On two sides of the town square, were little shops with open fronts where Indian men sat behind lengths of cotton, blankets, oil cans of sugar and salt, reels of cotton, skeins of twine, farming implements, cans of oil and bottles of medicine. Alladin went to one of these shops and asked where the *jamatkhana*, the community mosque was. That is where he knew where he would get the whereabouts of his cousins and other people from Chhachhar and Verawar. That is where help and information was. The vines of Kathiawari *biradhari* spread all the way from Chhachhar to the land of the Chaggas.

The family stayed with Rajbai, Alladin's sister, and her husband Noormohammed Dadani. From the town, the land in the foothills looked lush and fertile. The Wachaggas, people who lived on the foothills of the volcano, tended field of bananas and herds of goats where the cold mountain streams, from the snow of Mount Kilimanjaro gurgled. There was land available beyond

the foothills but there were no bubbling brooks there. Mulji Nazarali, who was married to Alladin's cousin Sherbanu, took Alladin to the office of the *Distriktkommisar* the next day, to a square building with three foot thick walls and a wide verandah and a corrugated tin roof over and open attic where bats and bush babies hung out at night. The thick walls, the open attic and the wide verandah kept the buildings cool. The German officer showed Alladin his piece of land on the map. Ten acres for a thousand hellers, or ten Indian rupees. The transaction took place in German with a few Kiswahili words. Alladin Giga would have found it difficult to communicate with someone from another part of India, let alone in German and Kiswahili. The cousin-in-law translated for him, mainly with intelligent guesswork and a few words of German and much more Kiswahili that he had learned. They left the *distriktkommisar* with papers signed and stamped in purple ink.

(Go to Amazon.com: Giga Patney, author, bio for details)

Shariff and Zera Alladina Giga Patney family 1950's



L-R, standing: Aziz Fazal, Nizar, Sadru, Salim, Abdul 'Baboo' Vellani,
sitting: Malek, Khatun, Sharifbhai, Zerabai, Shirin, on the floor: Safder, Wajid

Shariff, Alladin Giga's son, had a good singing voice.
There are four ginans and a thumri sung by Shariff Alladina
that can be accessed at:

SoundCloud: << Bapaji 04 by Safder playlist >>

**Zerabai Shariff Alladina (Nee: Zerakhanu Hassanali
Gulamhussein Harji Sumar):**

**Paternal Grandfather: Gulamhussein Harji
Sumar (pictured below)**

**Maternal Grandfather: Gulamhussein Bhaloo
Kurji (pictured below)**

Mother: Khati bai Bhaloo Kurji

**1878: Bhaloobhai Kurji, Zerabai's Par-Nana,
Kamadia of Zanzibar Jamatkhana**

**1879: Zerabai's Par-Nana Mukhi of Zanzibar
Jamatkhana**

**1896 and 1899: Zerabai's Nana-Bapa,
Gulamhussein Bhaloo Kurji (pictured below),
Mukhi of Zanzibar Jamatkhana.**



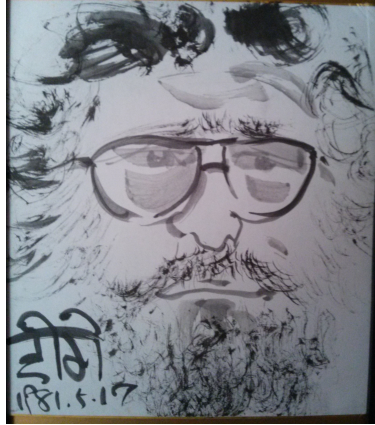
Zanzibar 1905: Aga Khan III, 48th Ismaili Imam, with the First Supreme Council for Africa

*BACK ROW (left to right): Mohamed Bhanji, **Gulamhussein Harji Sumar**, Mohamed Rashid Alana, Alivalli Issa, Gulamhussein Karmali Bhaloo*

*CENTRE ROW (left to right): Peermohamed Kanji, Visram Harji, Varas Mohamed Remtulla Hemani, HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN III, Varas Saleh Kasmani, Fazal Issani, **Gulamhussein Bhaloo Kurji***

FRONT ROW (left to right): Mukhi Rajabali Gangji, Varas Kassam Damani, Varas Janmohamed, Rai Mitha Jessa, Bhagat Juma Ismail, Itmadi Jivan Lalji, Saleh Valli Dharsi, Janmohamed Jetha, Kamadia Fazal Shivji.

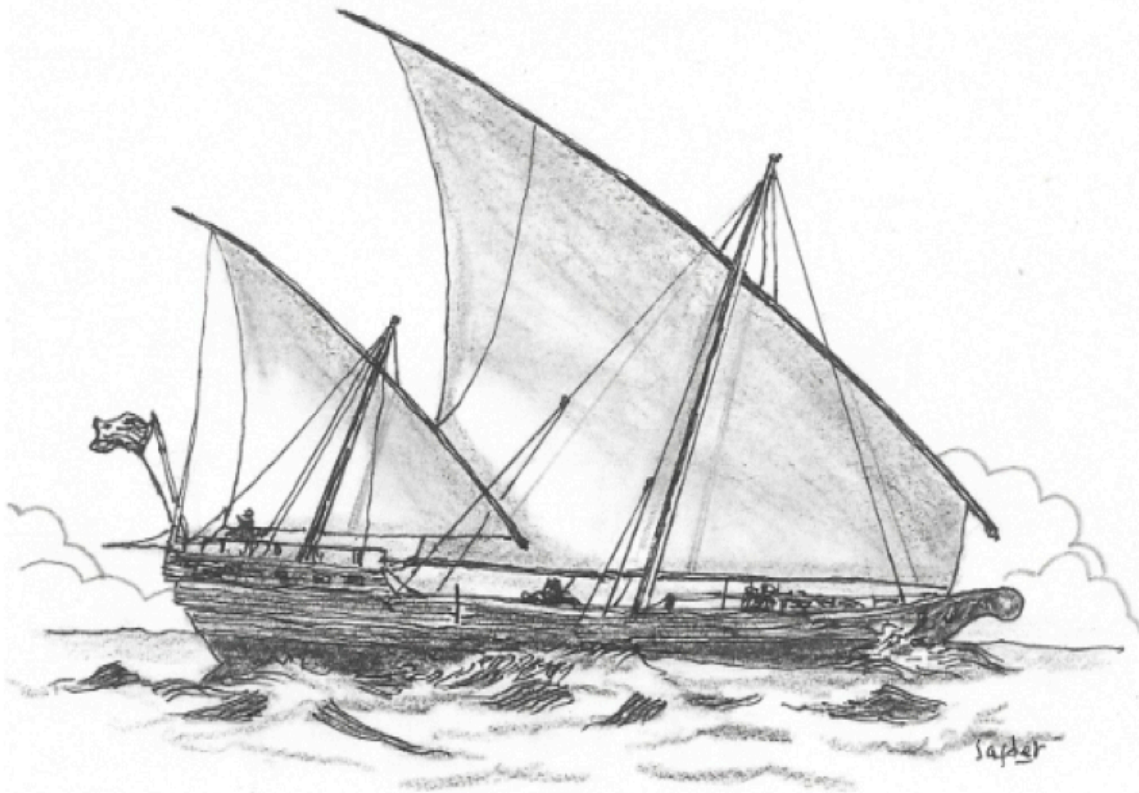
About the Author



By Hiro Ajiki, Hirata, Shimane, Japan, 1981

S. Giga Patney (Safder Alladina, born in Tanga, Tanzania) has taught English as a Foreign Language in England, Japan and Portugal and English as a Second Language in England and Canada. In his 35 years of teaching, he has taught Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Adult classes; and developed and taught Teacher Education programmes at graduate and post-graduate levels at universities in the UK and Canada. His research work is in Sociolinguistics. He has retired to a hobby farm in the interior of British Columbia where he now does creative writing.

Below, are some sample pages from one of books in the Alchemist Quartet, by Safder



The Alchemist's Manuscript

*of the Travels of the Merchant of Yemen & His Servant in the
Erythrean Sea as Related to the Alchemist of Gozo, the Younger*

S. Giga Patney

November MMXV

Chapter 5 of this book gives a fictionalized account of the Alchemist's meeting with Seth Sewa Haji and his wife in Bagamoyo.

A few days later, *the Gazelle* weighed anchor and set sail for Bagamoyo on the mainland across from Zanzibar. There, we met Seth Sewa Haji, the Merchant of Guzzerat now known as the Merchant of Bagamoyo. He received us, and the Explorer most cordially and invited us for dinner at his house that evening. We sat eating on a mat on the floor. His wife had supervised the preparation of food in the kitchen earlier and it was interesting to see that she joined us for dinner and took part in the conversation, sitting modestly but confidently, in a long dress with a drape of transparent silk over her head and shoulders. She had a huge stud of a cluster of diamonds at one side of her nose and equally large studs of diamonds, as large as my thumbnail, in each ear.

The servant brought a huge steaming platter of rice and goat meat *pilau*. The rice was studded with cloves, peppers, cardamom and sticks of cinnamon. There was also a large bowl of strips of carrots,

cabbage and green chillies fried with mustard seed and turmeric. There were little bowls of lime and mango pickles and green pastes of ginger, garlic and coriander chutneys. A platter of seasoned and fried kebobs of beef was also laid on the dining mat.

Ordinarily, in a Muslim home, the diners would sit around a large platter and eat the food at their side of the platter pulling what they wanted to eat to their edge of the platter. However, as there was a Christian, a Jew, and a Hindu at dinner, Chinese ceramic bowls and spoons were provided for the diners to eat in their own vessels. At the end of the meal, finger bowls of water scented with orange flower and a platter of oranges, peeled and sliced, were brought to the feast.

Seth Sewa said the area was famous for its oranges and even Vasco da Gama, when he stopped there, had taken sacks full of oranges on his galleon.

Ramoo, the Tindal from Hind said, "In our country we call oranges *mosambi* and I wonder if that is because they came to India from Mozambique."

"Rather like oranges in Yunan, that is, Greece.

They call them *portokali* because they came to Greece from Portugal.” The Captain rejoined.

“And like the corn here,” Seth Sewa joined in, “we call *mahindi* because it was brought here by the Indians.”

“I think the word for mangoes here, *embé* came with us.” Sewa Haji's wife added to the conversation. “We call them *amba* in our language.”

After dinner, when we were sipping coffee from small cups, Seva Haji's wife whispered something in his ear. All I could make out were words that sounded like “*kooro, kooro.*” She was probably asking about something.

At his wife's urging, the Merchant of Bagamoyo asked: “Ya Doctor Explorer, why do you want to go to see a small river that empties in a lake?”

“Because it is there.” The Doctor replied petulantly.

I think the Doctor Explorer was telling himself what a Hindu merchant would know about exploration, the fact that Sewa Haji was a Shi'a

Muslim lost to him.

“Of course it is there.” The Merchant of Bagamoyo replied, “These places have been there for centuries. You know the *Puranas*, our ancient texts going back three, four, and some say six thousand years, well before the birth of Issa Kristi, May Peace be Upon Him, mention a river, the Great Krishna, flowing through *Cusha Dwipa* from a great lake in *Chandristan*, the Country of the Moon. A European explorer was here last year and I gave him this information and how the *Puranas* gave the position, in relation to the Islands of Zanzibar, of the Great Lake, the great inland freshwater sea the *Wanyamwezi*, the People of the Moon, call *Ukweré*. With this information, the Explorer was able to sketch a map of the Great Lake in the *Nyamwezi*, the Country of the Moon, *Rwenzori*, the Mountains of the Moon, the Great River Krishna and the Island of *Cusha*.

“Would you help me sketch that map again?”
The Doctor asked.

“Yes, certainly, and what is more, you may join my caravan which is leaving in ten day’s time to travel through the Country of the Moon as far as Ujiji

on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. There, you will be the guest of the Merchant of Ujiji who will give you food and shelter and all the information and assistance that you will need.”

Turning to me, the Merchant of Bagamoyo said, “As for you, *ya* Merchant of Yemen, I have a gift for you. Since I have no mangrove poles to sell you, if you take my stock of cotton and tiles to the Island of Komoro to the Merchant whose name I shall give you, he will also sell you mangrove poles for half the price of what I charge in Bagamoyo.”