

A BRIEF HISTORY OF
BANAJI ATASH BEHRAM
(1845 - 2001)



by
Marzban Jamshedji Giara

This booklet has been prepared with the idea that more and more Zarthostis would be inspired to visit our sacred Atash Behrams regularly to pray and to receive divine inspiration to lead happy purposeful lives. Thereby the objectives with which these sacred places of worship were established by our noble devout ancestors would be fulfilled.

***Ma Pendar K - Atash parastan bodend
Parastande ye pak Yazdaan bodend.***

(Do not think that they are fire-worshippers,
for they are worshippers of Paak Yazdan, one God.)

Pictures and sketch map courtesy :

Jamshed Z. Sethna

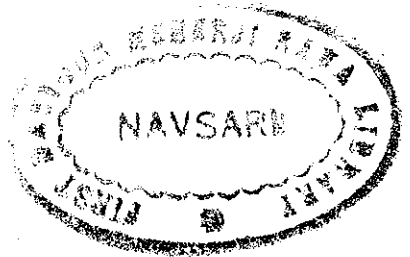
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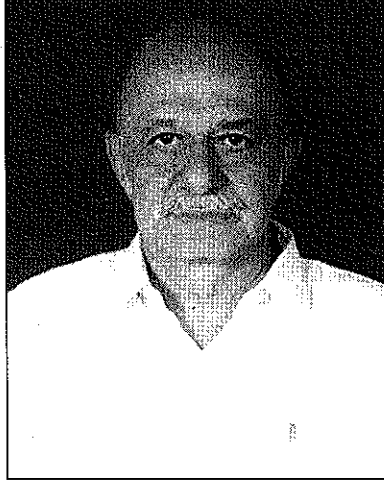
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Price: **Rs. 60.00**

This book is dedicated to



Phiroze Navroji Patel

Left for Heavenly Abode on
Roz Hormuzd, Mah Khordad A. Y. 1371,
20th October 2001

**Bai Goolbai Jamasji Gundevia
Dossamai and Navroji Phirozeshaw Patel
Gustadji and Sam Navroji Patel**

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PREFACE

My friends Hanoz and Zubin Phiroze Patel of Din Publications and Powerpusher Financial Services Private Ltd. requested me to write a history of Banaji Atash Behram. To the best of my knowledge there has been no such booklet or souvenir brought out in the 156 years of this Atash Behram's history. The year 2001 coincides with the 150th death anniversary of Seth Faramji Cawasjee Banaji, one of the founders of this Atash Behram.

This Banaji Atash Behram like all places of worship has its own old world charm and aura. The sacred fire continues to glow here for 156 years. Devotees have experienced the peace and calm and had their good wishes fulfilled by its blessings. This Atash Behram serves as a focal point for jashans, gahambars, religious discourses, navjotes, weddings and rituals.

For the guidance of devotees, a sketch map showing the route and location of all the four Atash Behrams in Mumbai city is enclosed.

May this holy Atash padshah continue to guide, inspire and bless the Parsi Zarthushti community.

Marzban J. Giara

Mumbai
Roz Sarosh Mah Khordad Yezdezerdi 1371
Monday 5th November 2001.

*This book was presented to me by
Mr. Hanoz Patel of Power Pusher*

[Signature]
Dec 2001




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*Sketch map showing location of
all the Atash Behrams in Mumbai*



THE ATASH BEHRAMS IN INDIA

There are 8 Atash Behrams in India, the most sacred being the Iranshah at Udvada. Among others, one is in Navsari, two are in Surat and four are in Mumbai.

The first Atash Behram in India was consecrated at Sanjan five years after our ancestors landed on the west coast of India in 721 A.C. Since 1742 A.C. the Iranshah sacred fire is located at Udvada.

The next Atash Behram was consecrated at Navsari in 1765 A.C. Roz 17 Sarosh Mah 2 Ardibehest 1135 A.Y.

The first Atash Behram in Mumbai, the Dadysett Atash Behram, was consecrated by Mulla Kaus Rustom Jalal on Roz 17 Sarosh, Mah 1 (Kadmi) Farvardin, 1153 A.Y. 29th September 1783 A.C. Thereafter, three Atash Behrams in Mumbai and two Atash Behrams in Surat have been consecrated.

Modi Atash Behram at Surat was consecrated on Roz 17 Sarosh Mah 2 Ardibehest 1193 A.Y., 19-11-1823 A.C.

Sixteen days later, Vakil Atash Behram at Surat was consecrated on Roz 3 Ardibehest Mah 3 Khordad Kadmi 1193 A.Y., 5-12-1823 A.C.

The second Atash Behram in Mumbai, Seth Hormusji Bamanji Wadiaji Atash Behram at Dhobi Talao was consecrated on Roz 17 Sarosh Mah 2 Ardibehest Shahenshahi 1200 A.Y. 17th November 1830 A.C. It was the first Shahenshahi Atash Behram in Mumbai.

The third Atash Behram in Mumbai, Seth Cawasjee Byramjee Banaji Atash Behram, opposite Charni Road Station, was consecrated 15 years later on Roz 17 Sarosh Mah 4 Tir (Kadmi) 1215 A.Y. 13th December 1845. It was the second Kadmi Atash Behram in Mumbai.

The fourth Atash Behram in Mumbai at Dhobi Talao was the Anjuman Atash Behram (Shahenshahi) consecrated on Roz 3 Ardibehest, Mah 2 Ardibehest, A.Y. 1267, 17-10-1897 A.C.

CONSECRATION OF AN ATASH BEHRAM

The Fire Temples are divided into 3 grades. The fire belonging to the first grade is that enshrined in an Atash Behram, the second is the Fire of the Adarian and the third is the Dadgah Fire.

An Atash Behram fire is consecrated through an elaborate series of rituals during which the priests maintain the highest laws of purity involved in the process. The bringing together of the 16 Fires representing the natural order as well as the different trades and classes of ancient Iranian society, reflects the universality of the Atash Behram Fire. The Fire of lightning, for example, is collected when lightning strikes the earth and is witnessed by two Zoroastrians. The priest makes the 16th Fire, the household fire of a Zoroastrian, by first creating a fire through friction using flint stones or twigs and then mixing it with fire from the hearth of a Behdin.

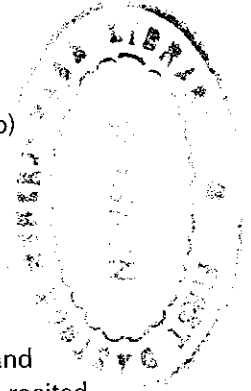
THE SIXTEEN FIRES REQUIRED FOR THE CONSECRATION OF AN ATASH BEHRAM (FIRE OF VICTORY) ARE AS UNDER:

	No. of times for (a) the Collection (b) Purification (c) Consecration Processes	Names of Yazatas in whose honour Yasna & Vendidad are recited for first three days
--	---	--

FIRE OF:

1. A burning corpse	91	Ahura Mazda
2. Dyer	80	Bahman
3. King or ruling authority	70	Ardibehesht
4. Potter	61	Sherewar
5. Brick Maker	75	Spandarmard
6. Ascetic	50	Khordad
7. Goldsmith or (Alchemist)	60	Amardaad
8. Mint	55	Daepadar
9. Ironsmith	61	Adar
10. Armourer	61	Avan
11. Baker	61	Khorshed

12. Brewer, Distiller, or idol Worshipper	61	Mohor
13. Soldier or Traveller	35	Tir
14. Shepherd	33	Gosh (Dravasp)
15. Atmospheric Electricity	90	Daepmeher
16. Zoroastrian, i.e. a Dastur (Head-priest) Mobed (Priest), or a layman and of friction by flint and pieces of wood	184	Meher
Total	1,128	times Yasna and Vendidad are recited



(Source: *Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees*
by Dr. Sir Jivanji J. Modi p.216)

HISTORY OF BANAJI FAMILY

The history of Banaji family is a glorious chapter in Parsi history similar to the history of Dadiseth and Wadia families. The descendants of Banaji family were well-known businessmen. They carried on trade and commerce and shipping. The founder of the Banaji family was Banaji Limji, who came to Bombay around 1690 A.C. from Surat. He was the first to go to Pegu, Burma at the beginning of the 18th century. In 1709 A.C. he was known as the first davar (leader) among Parsis in Bombay. He had a daremeher consecrated at Fort, Mumbai on 25th June 1709, Roz Adar Mah Adar 1078 A.Y.

HOW THE BANAJI FAMILY BECAME KADMI?

The Banaji family were originally Shehenshahis. Seth Banaji Limji had consecrated a daremeher at Fort, Mumbai, according to the Shehenshahi traditions. The Banaji and Dadiseth families were related. Once Faramji Cawasjee Banaji went to China as an agent of Dadi Noshirwanji Dadiseth. After finishing his work in China, he left for India, but for several months there was no news. His father Cawasjee often used to come to Dadiseth and inquire about the news of his son Faramji. One day, Dadiseth asked Cawasjee, "What would you do if your son Faramji returns

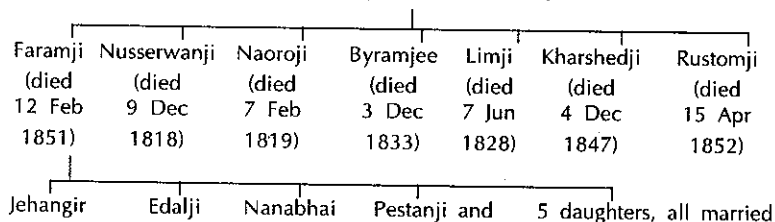
safely? Would you and your son become Kadmis?" Cawasjee, in anticipation of his son's early arrival, agreed. Faramji returned safely within eight days. Thus Cawasjee's faith towards the Kadmi sect increased. He along with his seven children became Kadmis. Thus he fulfilled his promise to Mota Dadiseth.

CAWASJEE BYRAMJEE BANAJI

PP, Vol. 1, pp. 275 He was the youngest son of Seth Byramjee Banaji Limji. He was the father of Faramji, Nusserwanji, Naoroji, Byramjee, Limji, Kharshedji and Rustomji. He had a loud voice and was therefore known as Cawasjee Ghogha. At first he was the partner in his father's firm, "Banaji Limji" along with his brothers and cousins. Later, as the partners had differences, around 1800, he set up a big shop in Parsi Bazaar Street and started trading in English goods. In his old age, he spent a few years in solitude. He passed away on Roz 17 Sarosh, Mah 4 Tir, (Kadmi) 1204 A.Y. i.e. 16th December 1834. After his death, his sons Faramji, Kharshedji, Rustomji and grandson Dadabhai Rustomji Banaji, had an Atash Behram consecrated according to Kadmi tradition at Karelwadi, Charni road, on 13th December 1845.

GENEALOGY OF THE BANAJI FAMILY

Cawasjee Byramjee Banaji



SETH FARAMJI CAWASJEE BANAJI (1767-1851)

He was the great grandson of Banaji Limji. He was, through his mother, Bai Jaiji, descended from the Dadiseths. He was given instructions first by a Brahmin and then in a small Eurasian School where he was taught English. He took his first step in business as dubash for his uncle Dadiseth, and in 1795, took service with the East India Company. He displayed considerable aptitude and soon rose to a high status in the community. For half a century

he was considered the most enlightened merchant in the whole of India. He introduced western ways in his own family, in particular imposing the study of English on his daughters and granddaughters.

Faramji Cawasjee Banaji was born at Homji Street in Fort Mumbai in 1767 A.C. Faramji joined his mother Jaiji's maternal uncle "Mota Dadiseth" in business. He earned plenty of wealth like the illustrious Dadiseth. He later became the owner of 40 ships. He and his brothers traded with China and Burma. At his estate in Powai, he had one lakh mango trees planted. He introduced the cultivation of cotton and tea and planted sugarcane, indigo, mulberry for silkworms. He was one of the greatest of Bombay's scientific agriculturists. Sir John Malcolm, the then Governor of Bombay, referred to him as "Lord Leicester of Western India". He was one of the founders of Bombay Times (now the Times of India). Only his stern integrity, candor, truth and frankness surpassed his intelligence, kindness, benevolence, and philanthropy. He was an enterprising and industrious Parsi sethia.

PP Vol. 1 pp. 560 Faramji Cawasjee Banaji - He was the eldest son of Seth Cawasjee Byramjee Banaji. He purchased a big ship named *Sulemani* for Rs.1,33,000/-. Later in 1806 he purchased ships named *Golconda*, *Sarah*, *Bombay Castle*, *Minerva* and *Buckinghamshire*. In 1811 he sent his brothers Byramjee and Naoroji to Calcutta and founded a commercial firm there. In 1819 his brother Rustomji took over the firm. He carried on extensive trade with Madras, England and other countries. In 1824, in memory of his son Edulji, he bought a large plot of land and had three large wells dug and arranged for supplying water to the people at Kamathipura. In July 1829 he had several villages including Moje Powai, Kopri, Kurah, Tirenda, Moje Shanki, Moje Paspoli and Vikhroli on a lease of Rs.1787/- per annum.

He had a dokhma built and consecrated at Bombay on 3rd May 1832. He along with Sir Jamshedji Jeeebhoy and Jeeebhoy Dadabhai, started a school on 11th July 1836 to teach Zend Avesta and Gujarati to children of poor Zoroastrians. He took the lead in all activities of public welfare. He was the leader of the Parsee Punchayet since 1817 and a trustee of its funds since 1823. In 1820 he was an official of the Native School Book and School

Society, since 1827 of the Native Education Society, of the Elphinstone College Committee since 1835, and on the Board of Education since 1841 A.C. He was the Vice-Chairman of the "Agricultural and Horticultural Society of Western India" since its inception in 1830. In 1834 he was also one of the first twelve Justices of Peace appointed by the government.

In 1835 the government took from him 10 years' lease rent as a lump sum of Rs. 47,470/- and sold the villages to him. He carried out many improvements in agriculture by his own efforts in these villages. In the same year the government nominated him as a director of the first established Savings Bank. He took the lead in founding "Bombay Native Dispensary" in 1835, "Bombay Chamber of Commerce" in 1836, "Bombay Bank" in 1840 and the "Great Indian Peninsular Railway Company" in 1844. He was a director in all these institutions. On 18th May 1838 he sent a present of choice alphonso mangoes to Queen Victoria. He passed away on Roz 19 Farvardin Mah 6 Sherevar(Kadmi) 1220 A.Y. i.e. 12th February 1851. His passing away saddened the public and shopkeepers had their shops closed for one day.

At his death, a public meeting was held at the Town Hall where it was unanimously resolved to erect a monument in his memory, the first example in the history of India of a joint initiative by Europeans and Natives, so to honour a Native. It was decided to construct a building comprising a library and reading hall, a museum of art and industry, and give it the name of the Framji Cawasjee Institute for the permanent edification of future generations.

The Faramji Cawasjee Tank close to the Institute for the purpose of securing permanent supply of water to the public is an excellent monument of Faramji's catholic charity and benevolence.

SETH KHARSHEDJI CAWASJEE BANAJI (1790-1847)

- THE LION AMONG PARSIS

PP Vol.1 pp. 498 He was the sixth son of Seth Cawasjee Byramjee Banaji. He initially worked as a dubash for ships

coming from U.K. Later he started trading along with his brother Faramji. In 1828 after the death of his brother Limji, he was given the work of a broker for M/s Remington Company. On 1st January 1838 he, along with Faramji Pestonji Patuck and Mancherji Faramji Cama started a partnership firm by the name of Kharshedji Cawasjee & Company, trading with China and England. His firm owned the following ships: *Ardeshir, Charles Grant, Qandahar, Herbert Captain and Pearl*. He built a famous huge monument called "Grant Building" at Colaba. In 1830 he obtained from the government seven villages including Majas, Goregaon, Poisar, Moghra, Voshirva and Bandoli. In 1834 he was one of the first twelve natives to be appointed a Justice of Peace. He was a trustee of the Parsee Panchayet. In 1835 he donated his land to the Panchayet for a doongerwadi. He contributed a substantial sum for consecrating the Atash Behram built in memory of his parents at Karelwadi in 1845.

(Parsi Lustre on Indian Soil Vol.I p.101) He was one of the active and enterprising merchants of China and England. He became the owner of the Goregaum Estate in Salsette, which he greatly improved. He was a most fearless and independent Parsi of his era. Once he called on the Collector of Thana in connection with his business. The peon asked him to leave his shoes outside the official's room. Kharshedji straight went to Government House and complained to the governor about the humiliation meted out to him. The story goes that the governor sent for the Collector and along with him called on the Parsi potentate and apologised to him personally.

On another occasion, Kharshedji hanged an effigy of the Governor on Cross Island in the harbour of Bombay in fulfillment of a challenge to an official of the government who had threatened him with capital punishment for some supposed crime. The official had said that the Governor would hang him but Kharshedji replied that he would hang the Governor first and so carried out his threat by executing the effigy of the Governor.

He passed away on Roz 8 DaepAdar Mah 4 Tir (Kadmi) 1217 A.Y. i.e. 4th December 1847. The Cloth Market and English Bazaar shops were half closed for three days to express their sorrow on

his death. When Kharshedji died, a Bombay English newspaper came up with the headline "The Death of a Parsi Lion," such being the esteem and respect in which he had been held even among the European community.

SETH RUSTOMJI CAWASJEE BANAJI (1792-1852)
(BABU RUSTOMJI)

PP. Vol. I, pp. 593 He was the youngest son of Seth Cawasjee Byramjee Banaji. He joined business under his elder brother Faramji in 1807 A.C. In 1812 he went to Calcutta for the first time. Returning from there he went on a voyage twice to China and to Madras and Ceylon. In 1817 he joined his brother Naoroji in business at Calcutta and resided there for his entire life. In 1834 he founded an insurance company called "Sun Insurance Office". He started paper mills, sugar factories and a screw for pressing cotton bales at Calcutta. In 1837 he purchased a large dock and started a firm called Calcutta Docking Company. He and his sons' firm owned twenty-seven ships. Of these, 15 ships were chartered by the British Government during the first China War for which Rs.1,15,000/- per month was paid to him till the end of the war.

He used to take the lead in all activities of public welfare at Calcutta. He enjoyed high respect and status, both with the government and the people, so much so that even the Governor-General used to come to his place for a banquet. He was the Vice-Chairman of the District Charitable Society since 1834 and contributed large sums to its funds.

He was the only Parsi among twelve natives who were appointed Justices of Peace in May 1835 at Calcutta. In 1838 he brought his family from Bombay to Calcutta for permanent residence. On 16th September 1839 he had an adarian daremeher consecrated at Calcutta for the use of Parsis. He suffered heavy loss due to the Union Bank at Calcutta closing down. In 1848 he closed his firm and lived a life of quietude at Calcutta. He passed away on Roz 22 Govad Mah 8 Avan (Kadmi) 1221 A.Y. i.e. 15th April 1852. Rustomji was a businessman in Calcutta where he was known as "Babu Rustomji".

(Parsi Lustre On Indian Soil Part I pp. 437) When he died *The Friend of India* wrote "In the days of his prosperity he gave like a merchant prince and sedulously emulated the example of his intimate friend Dwarkanath Tagore."

PESTONJI FARAMJI CAWASJEE BANAJI

PP, Vol. II, pp. 550 He was the second son of Faramji Cawasjee Banaji, Since 1830, he along with his brother Nanabhai started trading with China in 1836. His firm had a ship "*Golconda*". He was a committee member of Elphinstone Native Education Institution. In 1849, his father appointed him the manager of Seth Cawasjee Byramjee Banaji Atash Behram. He passed away on 4th December 1875 at the age of 77.

DADABHAI RUSTOMJI BANAJI

PP, Vol. III, pp.330 He first went to China in 1827 and started a commercial firm there along with his brother in 1830 by the name of Dadabhai and Manekji Rustomji. In the whole of China he was considered a leading businessman and citizen at that time. He took the lead in establishing a chamber of commerce there in 1834. During 1839-40 war in China he helped the British and worked to protect the interests of the businessmen. He owned several ships. In 1843 he came to Bombay via Calcutta. He served as a broker in M/s Nichol & Company and McQuicker Burn & Company. He was an official of the Chamber of Commerce till 1847 and the Commissioner of the Court of Requests in 1846.

In 1845, he had the Cawasjee Byramjee Banaji Atash Behram consecrated along with his uncles, the late Faramji and Kharshedji Cawasjee at Karelwadi. He also raised the gahambar fund. In 1846 he took the lead in establishing Oriental Bank, Bank of Western India, and Steam Navigation Company. His firms at China and Bombay suffered heavily due to the fiasco in the Union Bank, Calcutta, due to which he had to close his business from 1st July 1848. Thereafter, he served as the Consul of Muscat and Vice Consul for Iran for a few years. He started commercial life at the age of 16, enjoyed prosperity for 21 years and suffered downfall for 42 years. He was the father of Seth Cawasjee Dadabhai Rustomji Banaji. He passed away on 10th March 1890 at the age of 79.

SETH MANECKJEE RUSTOMJEE BANAJI, J. P. (1815-1891)

He belonged to the well-known and honoured Banaji family of Bombay, went to reside in Calcutta in 1837, and in partnership with his father became one of the most prosperous merchants in that city. In 1873, being distinguished as the first Indian gentleman to receive that unique honour the government appointed him Sheriff. He was a Justice of the Peace, Honorary Magistrate, and Municipal Commissioner for Calcutta and its suburbs and a Senior Citizen of Calcutta. The Shah of Persia appointed Maneckjee, Persian Consul in Calcutta in 1870, which appointment he held till his death in 1891. His was the unbroken record of 54 years of public life. A fund was raised to perpetuate his memory and a scholarship and a Gold Medal were endowed in his honour and given to the Calcutta University. In February 1898, an oil portrait of Mr. Maneckjee was placed in the Town Hall, which was unveiled by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal.

SETH BYRAMJEE NANABHOY FARAMJI BANAJI (1840-1901)

He was a grandson of the well-known philanthropist Seth Faramji Cawasjee Banaji. With rare skill and ability and by his business acumen, he became one of the foremost and eminent cotton merchants of his time. He suffered much later on in his business. He was a highly religious and charitably inclined gentleman. He married Meherbai, the daughter of Seth Cowasji Jamsetjee Ghandhy, the then well-known Dubashes of the sailing ships of the French line.

LIMJI NAOROJI BANAJI

PP Vol. V pp. 453 He was the son of the late Seth Naoroji Nanabhai Faramji Banaji. He was born on 26th September 1849. At the age of 15 he went to U.K. for higher studies. He became a barrister in 1869. After his return to Bombay in 1871 he was appointed Acting Clerk of the Crown at the High Court, in 1873 he became the Chief Assistant to the Prothonotary of the High Court, in 1884 acting Prothonotary, a judge of the Small Causes Court, Bombay, in 1890. In 1898 he was permanently appointed to the post of Prothonotary and Registrar of Wills at the Bombay High Court. He was the first Indian and Parsi to be given this

post. He served for nearly four decades and retired in 1910. He was a trustee of several Hindu and Parsi estates. In the case against the Parsee Punchayet, Justice Sir Dinshaw Davar had appointed him as a special arbitrator for preparing the list of voters to elect trustees of the Punchayet. He was a Trustee of the Banaji Atash Behram. He passed away on Roz 4, Mah 12, 1288 A.Y., 10th August 1919.

SETH SOHRABJI PESTONJI FARAMJI BANAJI

He was a brilliant scion of the Banaji family, and was a grandson of Faramji Cawasjee Byramjee Banaji. He was an advocate and patron of higher education and a great exponent and promoter of female education and social reforms. He secured many medals, prizes and scholarships in his brilliant school and college career. In 1840 A.C., the 'West Scholar' diploma was conferred on him by the Native Education Society. He joined the firm of his august grandfather Seth Faramji Cawasjee Banaji. Later on, he joined in partnership with his cousin, Maneckji Nanabhoy and opened a branch at London. Only a year before a crisis set in his business and he lost much of his fortune, he distributed nearly Rs.3,00,000/- (giving a cheque of Rs.5,000 to each of his invited guests) - among his bosom friends invited to a sumptuous dinner party on his birthday. He supplied the deficit of nearly Rs. 5,42,000/- which would have upset the plan of building the much used Faramji Cawasjee Institute, Hall and Native General Library, out of the public funds raised to perpetuate the memory of this great philanthropist. He was a J.P. and a delegate of the Parsee Matrimonial Court and a trustee of Cawasjee Byramjee Atash Behram, Banaji Limji Agiary and many other public institutions. He did many charities, for instance, Rs.10,000/- for founding a University Fellowship, Rs.80,000/- towards Calcutta Cyclone for relief of those who had suffered.

CAWASJEE DADABHAI RUSTOMJI BANAJI

PP, Vol. VII, pp. 144 He was the father of Seth Kharshedji Cawasjee Banaji. He was the managing trustee of the Banaji Atash Behram. He increased its fund considerably by thrifty administration and spent a part of it for gahambars for co-religionists. About a decade ago, he was the first to start

gahambars for Zoroastrian ladies and children. Thousands have availed of this benefit. He was earlier the Vice Consul of Iran. He passed away on 29th November 1933, Roz 24, Mah 3, 1303 A.Y. at the age of 87.

OTHER PROMINENT MEMBERS OF THE BANAJI LIMJI FAMILY :

Seth Cawasjee Jehangir Rustomji Banaji was a well-known Textile Engineer.

Seth Sorabji Shavaksha (Banaji), B.E. (1860-1934) was the first Indian Superintending Engineer in the Irrigation Branch of the United Provinces.

Seth Maneck Sorabji Banaji, F.C.R.A., F.N.F.A. (London) was a Corporate Registered Accountant, Prizeman and Honoursman.

Seth Nanabhoy Dhanjibhoy Banaji was a Scholar and a sharp shooter. He received "Long Service", "Proficiency" and "War" Medals during the First World War.

CONSTRUCTED A DOKHMA

Faramji's daughter Dinbai, who was only 19 years young, died after a brief illness of 12 hours on Roz Aspandad, Mah Adar, 1200 A.Y. The entire Banaji family was engulfed in grief. At Dinbai's uthamna, Faramji declared his intention to build a dokhma in her memory. Bai Bachubai, the widow of Seth Ardeshir Dadiseth, donated 3568 square yards of land for the dokhma at Mumbai. The dokhma was consecrated on 3rd May 1832 on Roz Aspandad, Mah Adar, 1201 A.Y. according to Zoroastrian customs. Before the dokhma was consecrated, it was kept open for non-Parsis as well as foreigners to have a glimpse of the dokhma.

HISTORY OF BANAJI ADARIAN AT CALCUTTA

Parsi Dharmasthalo - pp. 85 **Account of Consecration of Seth Rustomji Cawasjee Banaji Daremeher at Calcutta**

Rustomji Cawasjee Banaji had a new daremeher built at Calcutta in his memory for the use of the Parsis residing there. The daremeher was consecrated on Roz 17 Mah 1 Kadmi era 1209 A.Y. i.e. 16th September 1839 A.C. and the Atash Adarian Saheb was enthroned. The construction of the daremeher is

praiseworthy. It is built at a good location. Surrounding the daremeher are single storey chawls with shops on the outer side. It is estimated that Rs. 1 lakh was spent in building this daremeher. One day prior to its consecration, all Parsis of Calcutta and their children, around 125 of them, were given new clothes.

At 10 a.m. in the morning on Sarosh Roz, the Atash Adarian Saheb was ceremoniously enthroned. Everyone felt happy. A jashan was held as per religious tenets. After the jashan, Seth Rustomji declared that the daremeher was built according to the Zoroastrian tradition of Kadmi sect. A separate estate has been created for its maintenance. The heirs of Seth Rustomji will have the right to spend for the daremeher out of the income generated from the estate. A chawl has been constructed along with the daremeher for meals to be served for gahambaras on auspicious occasions. New utensils have been provided and kept in the agiary for the purpose. A rest house for Parsi travellers has been provided and all these to be used for the activities of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman.

Seth Rustomji's son Manekji presented a shawl and Rs.Ten as ashodaad to each of the thirteen mobeds in Calcutta. All those assembled were served lunch in the afternoon where a simple meal was served which included sugar, bananas, curd, fish, eggs, etc. A toast was held to the throne of Atash Adarian, to the family of Seth Rustomji Cawasjee and to all the sethias. All Parsis in Calcutta celebrated this day happily like New Year's Day. The establishment of a daremeher gave great satisfaction to the Parsis in Calcutta.

The following tablet in Gujarati is affixed in this daremeher:

"With the help of Dadaar Ahura Mazda, this Atash Adarian was established by Seth Rustomji Cawasjee Banaji at Calcutta for the people of the Zoroastrian religion to offer prayers. The Adarian was enthroned according to the tenets of the Mazdayasni religion during the third year of the rule of Queen Victoria of England on Roz 17 Sarosh, Mah 1 Farvardin, Kadmi 1209 A.Y., Monday 16th September 1839."

This adarian is closed since the last few decades and the sacred fire shifted to D. B. Mehta Anjuman Atash Adaran at Calcutta.

HISTORY OF BANAJI ATASH BEHRAM

ADARIAN IN BOMBAY

Before consecrating the Banaji Atash Behram, the three brothers Faramji, Kharshedji and Rustomji Banaji had an adarian consecrated at Karelwadi, Charni Road in memory of their late father Cawasjee Byramjee Banaji and mother Jaiji Cawasjee Banaji. All the religious rituals and jashan ceremony were performed by Dasturji Bejonji Rustomji (Bejandarü). The Adarian was consecrated on Roz Behram, Mah Farvardin, 1214 A.Y. Kadmi i.e. 17th September 1844. (Shehenshahi Roz Ashishvangh, Mah Aspandad, 1213 A.Y.) It is said that the three Banaji brothers desired to consecrate a Kadmi Atash Behram in the near future. Hence they had the Adarian consecrated first.

The sacred fire of this Atash Adaran is located in a room adjoining the sanctum sanctorum of the Atash Behram. The entrance to it is from the main Hall.

CONSECRATION OF BANAJI ATASH BEHRAM

Parsi Dharmasthalo - pp. 114-115 *Bombay Courier*, Tuesday 25th November 1845

A Card

M/s. Framji, Cursetji and Rustomji Cawasjee and Dadabhai Rustomji beg to intimate to the European and Native Community that the New Church, lately erected by them in Girgaum, and called "Atush Bahiram" will be consecrated on Saturday, the 13th December and that from Wednesday, the 26th instant, until Friday the 5th December, the building will be kept open for the inspection of the public. After the latter date Parsis only will be permitted to enter the church.

The church is situated behind the remount stables and faces Backbay.

* * *

Bombay Courier, Friday 5th December 1845.

Notice

Saturday the 13th instant, being the day appointed for the consecration of the New Church erected by them, M/s. Faramji Cursetji and Rustomji Cawasjee and Dadabhai Rustomji, would respectfully solicit the favour of the European and Native Gentlemen granting leave to their Parsi Clerks and Servants on that day, in order to permit of their attendance at the ceremony.

Bombay, 2nd December 1845.

* * *

SETH CAWASJEE BYRAMJEE BANAJI ATASH BEHRAM (KADMI) is situated at :

Address : Thakurdwar Road, Mumbai - 400 004
Tel. No. : c/o 208 5873
Mode of Transport : Taxi / BEST Bus / Train (W. Rly.)
Landmark : East of Charni Road Rly. Station (WR)
Date Consecrated : Roz Sarosh, Mah Khordad, 1215 A.Y.
13th December 1845 A.C.
Visiting Hours : 5.30 a.m. to 9 p.m.

A Marble Tablet (in Gujarati, above the entrance door of the Main Hall) :

"The sacred fire was enthroned according to the tenets of Mazdayasni faith in this auspicious building in memory of the late Seth Cawasjee Byramjee Banaji Limji and his wife Bai Jaibai by their children Faramji, Kharshedji, Rustomji and grandson Dadabhai Rustomji at Bombay city for all Zoroastrians to offer prayers. Roz 17 Sarosh, Mah 4 Tir Kadmi 1215 A.Y. Samvat 1902 Magsar Sud 15 Saturday 13th December 1845 A.C."

For one year eejashne-vendidad religious rituals were performed for consecrating the Atash Behram under the leadership of Dasturji Jamshedji Edulji JamaspAsa (of Shehenshahi sect) and Dasturji Bejonji Rustomji (Bejondaru of Kadmi sect). Vada Dasturji

Bejonji Rustomji of Kadmi sect offered the first buoi. It is said that 16,000 Parsis were present at the celebrations. The Banaji brothers spent Rs.1.5 lakhs for consecrating the Atash Behram.

PP, Vol. I, pp. 456 A separate fund for Kadmi Gahambar and Jashan was established. A trust deed was executed on 7th January 1854. The fund is known as Cawasjee Byramjee Atash Behram Gahambar Fund.

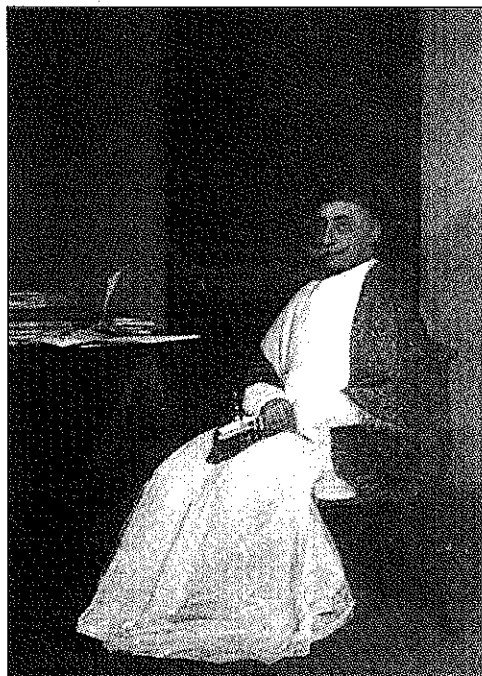
PP Vol. 1, pp. 466 On Roz Sarosh Mah Tir (Kadmi) 1215 A.Y., 13th December 1845, Faramji, Kharshedji and Rustomji Cawasjee Banaji and Dadabhai Rustomji Banaji had an Atash Behram consecrated in memory of their father late Seth Cawasjee Byramjee Banaji and mother Bai Jaiji, according to Kadmi tradition at Karelwadi, Girgaum, Mumbai, on the seashore.

A large gathering of Zarthostis from Mumbai and upcountry places participated in the ceremony. The enthronement ceremony started exactly at 8.30 a.m. when two mobeds walked with swords in their hands and one mobed holding a mace, and two mobeds holding the ladle ("*chamach*"). Behind them were five mobeds carrying the sacred fire in a silver afarganyu. The afarganyu was covered, over which there was a silver shield. A mobed held an open silk umbrella over it. Behind them were Dasturs, Mobeds and Behdins, all marching at a slow pace respectfully. Thereafter, the sacred fire was enthroned and a jashan ceremony was performed. Those assembled participated in a meal.

The Bombay Samachar of 14th December 1845 carried a report about the above function.

Seths Faramji, Kharshedji and Rustomji Cawasjee Banaji and Dadabhai Rustomji Banaji published an announcement in the *Bombay Samachar* on 13th November 1845 and *Mumbaina Chabuk* of 3rd December 1845 inviting all Dasturs, Mobeds and Behdins of Mumbai and India to participate in the jashan for enthroning the Atash Behram. They also published an announcement in both the papers of 27th November as also "*Bombay Courier*" of 25th November stating that those non-Zoroastrians who wish to see this building may do so till 5th

(Continued on page 29)



**SETH FARAMJI
CAWASJEE BANAJI**

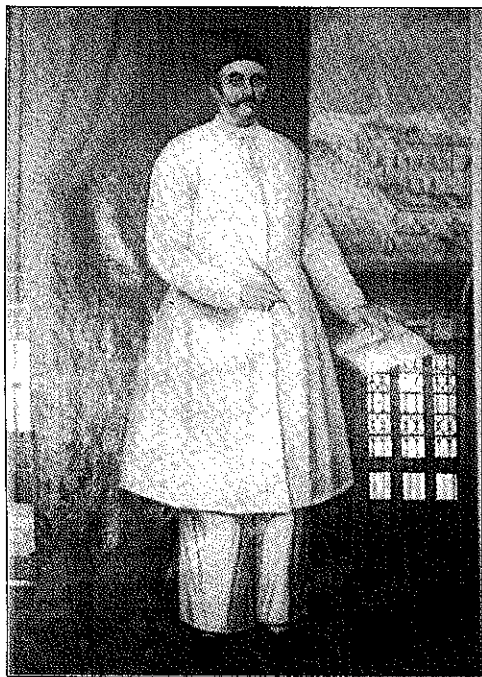
Born : 5th June 1767
Died : 12th Feb. 1851



**SETH KHARSHEDI
CAWASJEE BANAJI**

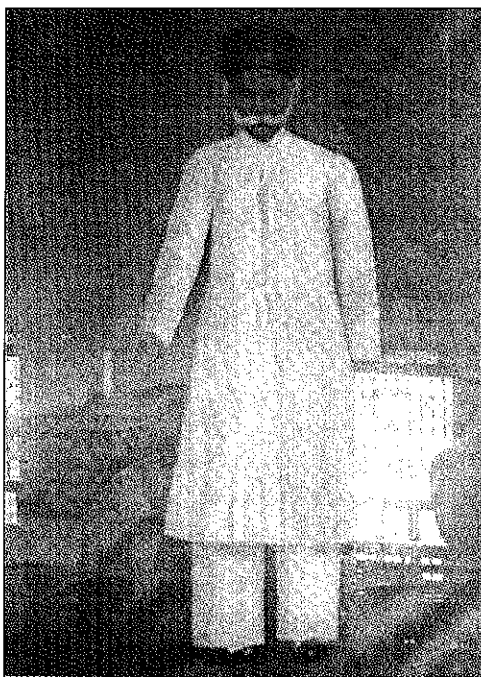
Born : 18th Jan. 1790
Died : 4th Dec. 1847





**SETH RUSTOMJI
CAWASJEE BANAJI**

Born : 17th Oct. 1791
Died : 15th April 1852



**SETH DADABHAI
RUSTOMJI BANAJI**

Born : 2nd March 1811
Died : 13th March 1890



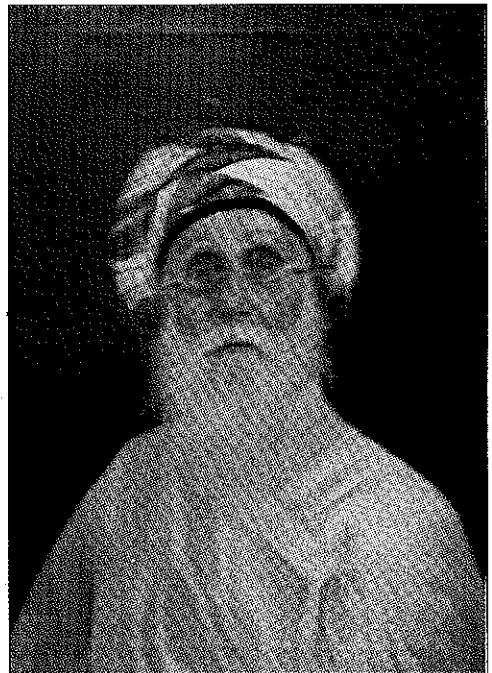
**DASTUR MULLA FIROZ
BIN MULLA KAUS**

The Vada Dastur of Kadmi Sect.

Born : 6th July 1758

Died : 8th October 1830

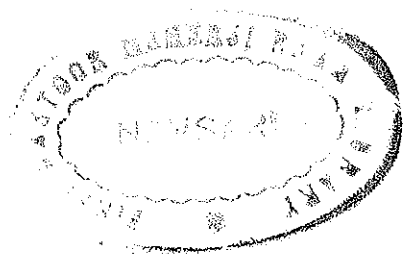
The headdress he wears was the first of its kind introduced by him as a distinctive headgear for a Kadmi dastur. It was afterwards adopted by other Kadmi Parsis.



**DASTUR KHURSHEDJI
BEJONJI MAKIHATANA**

Born : 1822 A.C.

Died : 6th August 1908



**Statue of
SETH FARAMJI CAWASJEE
BANAJI**

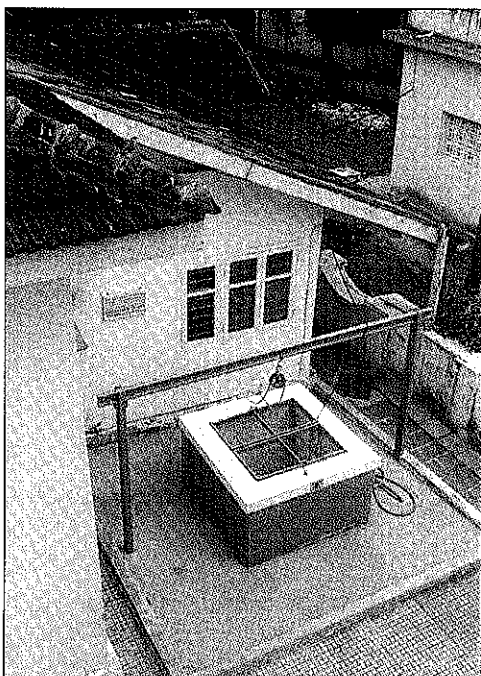
Under a bell jar in a corner of
the Atash Behram

courtesy:

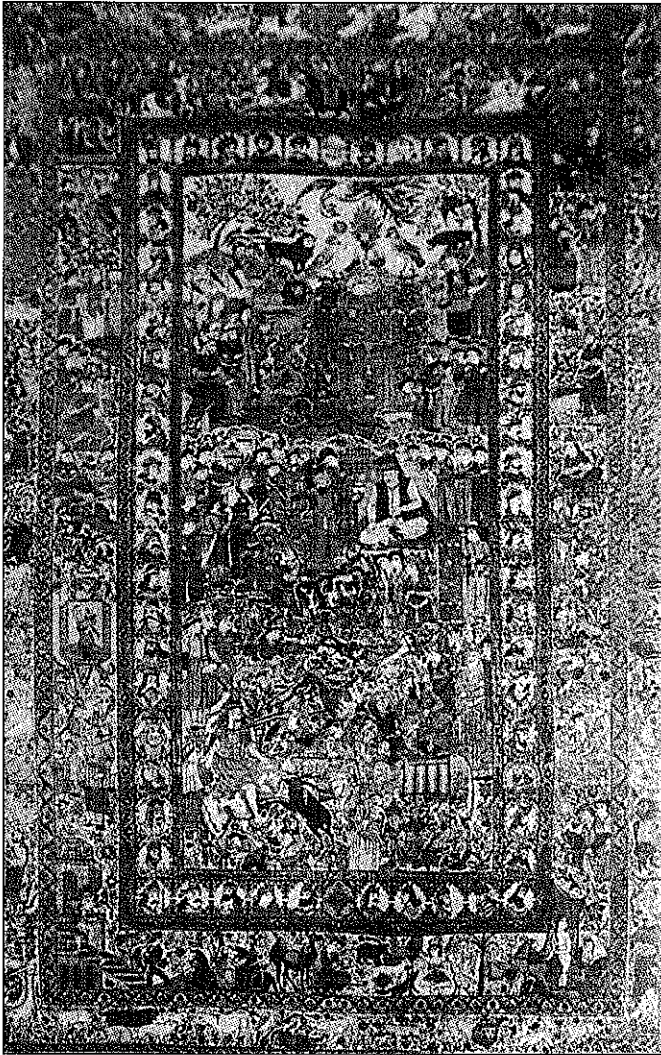
Parsi Statues

by Marzban J. Giara

A WELL

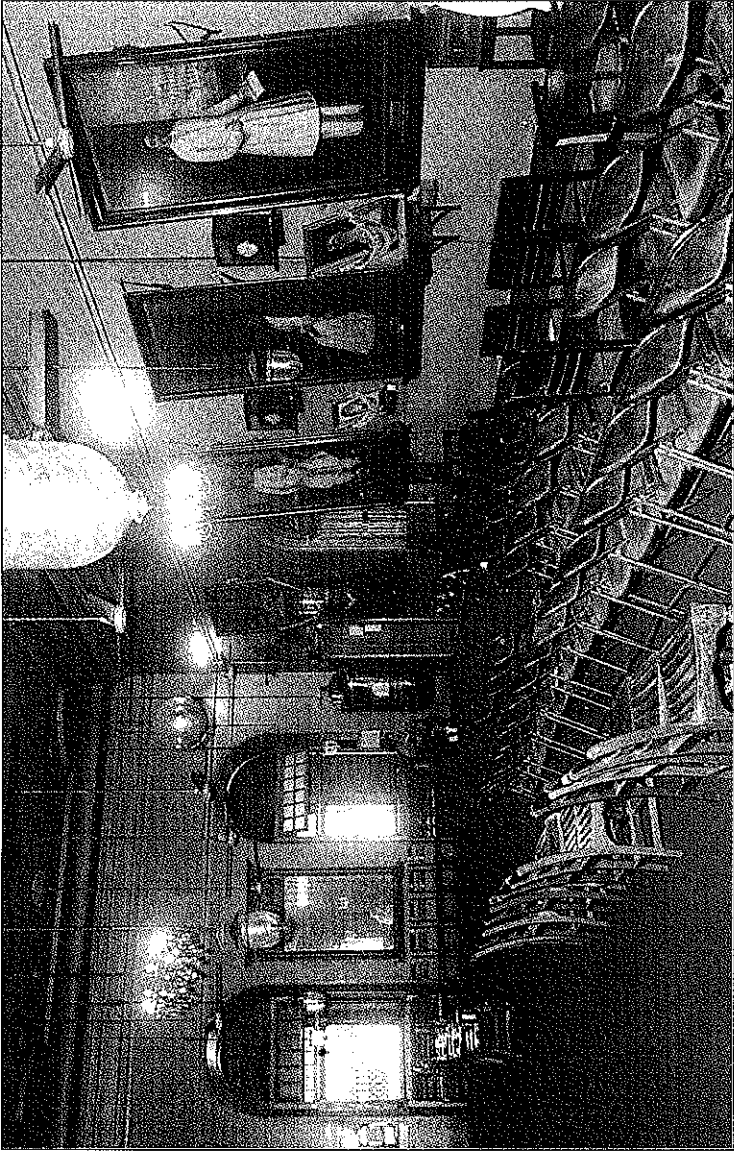


**A HISTORICAL PERSIAN CARPET IN A GLASS FRAME AT THE
ENTRANCE OF THE BANAJI ATASH BEHRAM**



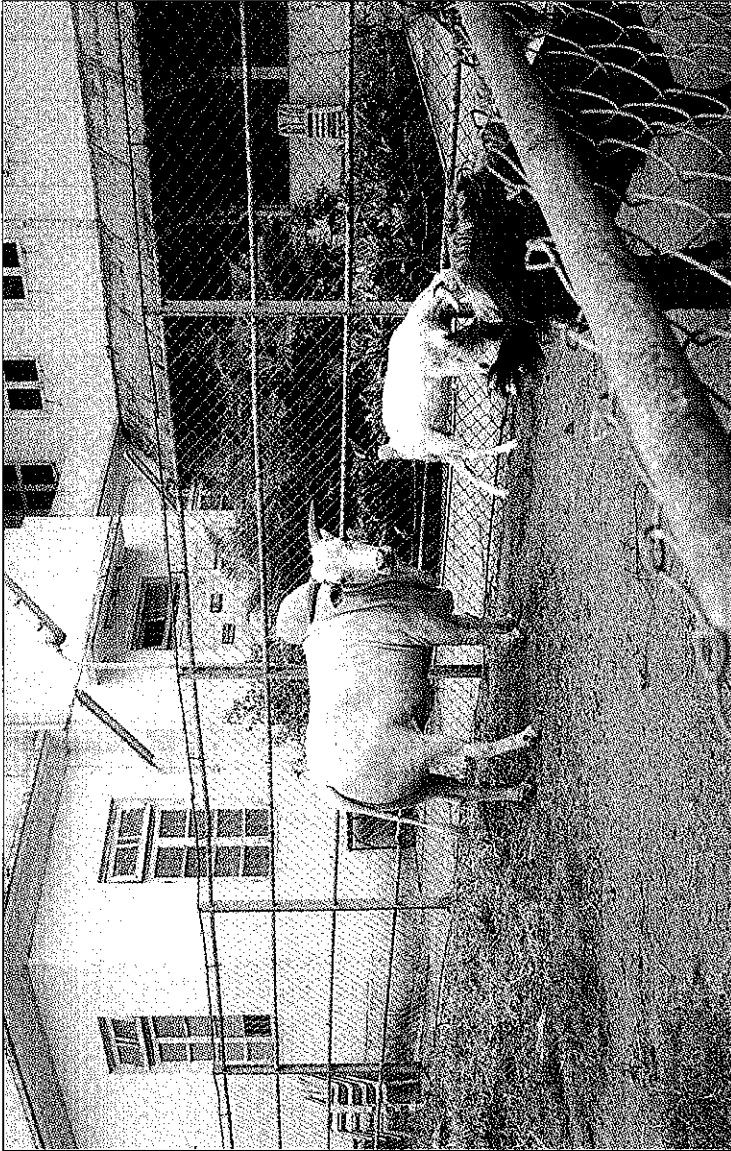
Inscription on marble tablet below the large carpet
(in Gujarati and English) :

*Presented to the Zoroastrian community in sacred memory
of the deceased in Badhni's family by Jehangirshah Nanabhai
Badhni, Nishan-e-Taj (Order of the Crown of Persia, Iran) on
Roz Hormazd, Mah Farvardin, 1338 A.Y., 29th August 1968.*

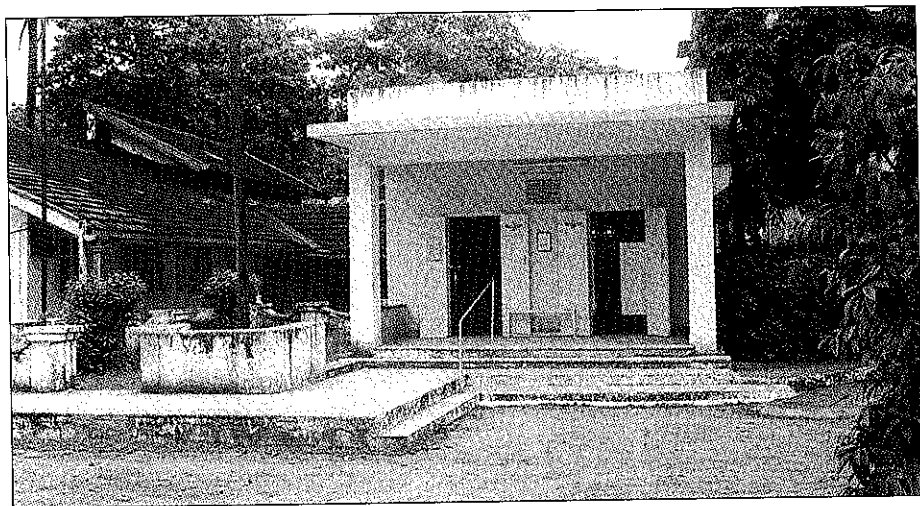


THE LARGE MAIN HALL HAVING CHAIRS TO SIT ALL AROUND

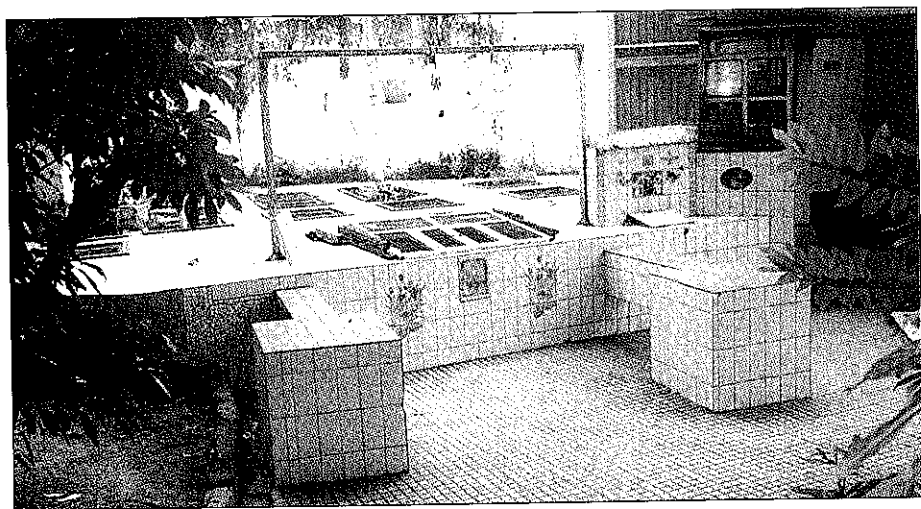
PASTORAL CENTER PANA TUNA
NAVSARE



THE VARASYO OR SACRED WHITE BULL



SHED FOR ABLUTIONS AND KUSTI RITUAL



A LARGE WELL IN THE ATASH BEHRAM COMPOUND

December 1845, till which date the building will be kept open for viewing. They also announced in the Bombay Courier of 5th December urging English and native employers to grant leave to Parsis so that they can participate in the consecration ceremony of the Atash Behram. The building was completed under the direction of Naoroji and Khurshedji Rustomji Engineer.

PP Vol.1, pp. 562 14th February 1851 - At the uthamna of Seth Faramji Cawasjee Banaji it was declared that for the maintenance of the Atash Behram, the villages of Kanjur and Vikhroli are given. The annual income of these two villages is about Rs. 2,500/- from which the regular expenses of the Atash Behram may be met. Besides his widow and daughter contributed Rs. 1,200/- to the Atash Behram's Kadmi Gahambar Fund.

PP Vol.1, pp. 772 4th November 1858 - At the uthamna of Bachubai, widow of Seth Faramji Cawasjee Banaji, Seths Sorabji Pestonji Faramji, Naoroji Nanabhai Faramji, Byramjee Nanabhai Faramji and Hormusji Pestonji Faramji, together contributed Rs. 4,100/-. Out of this amount, a permanent house was to be built for the residence of Atash Behram's dastur. The house was built at considerably greater expense than the above sum.

Dastur Minocherji JamaspAsa writes about the grand building of the Atash Behram and describes its environment in Persian verse.

Meaning that "In the just rule of Empress Victoria and Governor George Arthur, the work of the Atash Behram building has been completed at the expense of the four Seths at Girgaum in Mumbai. That place is not merely a monument but a place where God's mercy descends, as also the farohar and ameshaspands, where the splendid fire of the truthful, good religion is enthroned. This place of worship of God refreshes the body and gives joy. This royal palace having sea breeze is so constructed that by seeing it, one would forget a garden. The suffering patients gained health by its blessings, its large hall in appearance resembles the royal court. The hall is adorned with colourful chandeliers. In that hall are spread intricately woven carpets, and colourful pictures are hung. This palace is a specimen of heaven on earth where many stars stand and pay obeisance to it."

Dastur Minocher Edulji writes about the consecration ceremony of this radiant Atash Behram in Persian verse, which means, "These Kadmi mobeds consecrated various types of fires by rituals under the care of Dastur Bejandaru and the directions of Dastur Jamshedji descended from JamaspAsa family. The Atash Behram Saheb was ceremoniously enthroned with great respect and status by these mobeds in Havan Geh of Roz Sarosh, our Mah Khordad, Tir month (Kadmi)."

Dastur Minocher Edulji completes his writings with blessings for the Banaji brothers and their nephew who established the Atash Behram in Persian verse meaning: "O Almighty God! Keep the Seths establishing the Atash Behram with respect, status and long life. Keep their heirs happy and comfortable. Whatever they desire from you, may you fulfil with your blessings."

"Minocher who prays from the heart, showers these four Seths (Faramji, Kharshedji, Rustomji and Dadabhoy) with pearls. As long as this radiant building lasts, the people of the world will be pleased to read my prayer I am the son of Edulji, the son of the late Darab, that Dastur Darab is the son of Dastur Jamshed, the illustrious son of the late Dastur JamaspAsa."

"O Lord! Always keep these Seths in splendour and respect!"

Some interesting anecdotes before consecrating this Atash Behram: Dastur Jamshedji introduced a new tradition among the mobeds of the Kadmi sect, for which there arose difference of opinion. Dastur Jamshedji had to endure a lot. The Kadmi mobeds used to practice their profession with a "varasiaji" and its "vares" (hair) as "varse kadim". But before starting the rituals at Banaji Kadmi Atash Behram, Dastur Jamshedji used the new "varasiaji" and had a new nirangdin performed with its "vares" (hair). Thereafter the rituals of the new Atash Behram commenced. This new practice created differences of opinion among the Kadmi mobeds resulting in its split in two groups. Later, an understanding was reached and the Atash Behram consecrated as per Kadmi tradition.

Dastur Jamshed passed away at the age of 59 at Bombay on 30-10-1874. The Banaji brothers were saddened. At his uthamna,

they requested the Anjuman to prefix his name with the word 'Dastur' in public ceremonies. This request was accepted and his name is remembered even today in public jashans and 'dhupnirang'.

GAHAMBAR FUND :

PP, Vol. V, pp. 315 16th March 1916 - At the uthamna of Bai Maneckbai, daughter of the late Seth Faramji Cawasjee Banaji and the wife of the late Seth Dadabhai Rustomji Banaji in 1845 A.C., both Seths, Faramji and Dadabhai, had established a fund by setting apart Rs.4000/-. The late Bai Maneckbai desired that the poor people should be fed and kept satisfied. The Banaji family added to the fund and its Trustee Seth Cawasjee Dadabhai Rustomji thriftily spent only for jashan, out of this fund. Hence the fund increased to Rs. 2 lakhs. Later Seth Cawasjee appointed five other trustees to administer the fund. Out of this fund, at first the Trustees founded a gahambar fund and started gahambars for males, but as there were many such gahambars for males, later they started gahambar for ladies and children in the compound of the Cawasjee Byramjee Atash Behram. This year, 7000 ladies and children availed of the benefit and this gahambar has become very popular in the community. (Kaiser-e-Hind of 19th March 1916).

PP, Vol. VI, pp. 67 5th March 1922 - A Trust Fund was raised out of the amount contributed at the uthamna of the late Bai Maneckbai Dadabhai Rustomji Banaji. The Banaji family members contributed further amounts. This fund has increased to Rs.3.5 lakhs. Out of the income of this fund, a gahambar meal was arranged for Zoroastrian ladies and children today in the compound of the Banaji Atash Behram.

PP, Vol. VI, pp. 314 25th March 1927 - A large gathering of the Iranian Anjuman was held in the hall of the Banaji Atash Behram under the chairmanship of Mr. Dinshaw Jijibhoy Irani to express their views about starting the new year from 21st March. The meeting passed a resolution to consider the commencement of Dini Saal from Jamshedi Navroz as Hormazd Roz and Farvardin Mah. The resolution was passed at the meeting with only nine votes against.

PP, Vol. VI, pp. 408 21st March 1929 - The question of appointing Mrs. Piroja Sorabji Boyce as a trustee of the Banaji Atash Behram of Bombay came up before Justice Rangnekar at the Bombay High Court. The applicant trustees stated that a scheme was approved by the High Court that seven trustees instead of three handle the administration of the Atash Behram Trust. Thirty heirs of the late Faramji Cawasjee Banaji in a letter to the Advocate-General recommended that Mrs. Boyce be appointed. The Trustees of this Atash Behram state that only heirs of the Banaji family, as far as possible, should be chosen and Mrs. Boyce has descended from the family of Seth Faramji Cawasjee. The Learned Judge ruled, "I am convinced that Mrs. Boyce is fully competent to be a trustee of the said Atash Behram. I order that she be appointed a Trustee."

In 1945, a century rolled by since the enthronement of the sacred fire. Another 15 years passed by. After 115 years there arose a need for repairs and renovation of the sacred building. The sacred Fire of the Atash Behram was shifted in 1958 after 115 years. For several years Seth Shapoorji Pallonji Mistry used to donate Rs. 200/- per month for Kathi for the Atash Behram. After 1958 when the Albless building was constructed, the trustees stopped taking donations. In November 1959, the fire was shifted to the adjoining building. Mr. Jamshed Aga was the architect. Mr. Bomanji Mistri was the contractor. After repairs and renovation, the fire was re-enthroned with full religious rituals in its original place. The Ervad Sahebs performing the rituals then were: Meherjibhai Jamshedji Behramkamdin, Aspi Framroze Nalladaru, Framroze Ardeshir Behramkamdin and Sohrab Kaikhushru Nalladaru.

Ervad Noshir Pirojsha Behramkamdin and Ervad Pervez Dossabhai Nalladaru, the then boewalla sahebs of Dadiseth Atash Behram participated in the re-enthronement ceremony. Ervad Sohrabji Pestonji Asli took the lead in the rituals. The then managing trustee, Seth Kaikhushru Hormasji Cama took interest in all matters and carefully completed the work. Seth Shapurji Pallonji Mistry placed a red carpet in the Hall facing the fire.

Ervad Dr. Minocher Dadabhoy Karkhanawala, world renowned scientist with Bhabha Atomic Research Centre and religious scholar was also a trustee of Banaji Atash Behram from 1965 till he passed away in 1979.

Three decades later, the building was again repaired in December 1991. The fire was again shifted to the adjoining building and re-enthroned in the kebla^a room after renovation. The ladies' committee under the chairmanship of Mrs. Hilla Noshir Nagarwalla raised lakhs of rupees in a fund, out of which the building was repaired.

ORAL TRADITIONS

In the long and chequered history of this Atash Behram several oral traditions have been passed down by word of mouth. The devotees who claim that their visits have been rewarded with favours are unable to confirm whether the credit goes to the atash padshah or Jalbawa. They have experienced definite help. Internecine family disputes have brought many to seek solace at the Atash Behram.

Ervad Jehanbux Chithiwalla, a boewalla of the Atash Behram narrated the incident of his cousin's recovery after the doctors had given up hope as he was in coma after an accident. The cousin is now able to visit the Atash Behram himself. Ervad Faramroze Behramkamdin, another boewalla narrated two cases where wishes had been fulfilled. In one instance of house burglary, the thief and stolen amounts were traced. In another incident, the body of a boy suspected to have committed suicide was found. Help is also received in the form of right guidance, right approach or right insight. Parsis from various walks of life, all strata of society, young and old, all come to the Atash Behram. What is important is faith and a genuineness of feeling.

It is being said that a rich Hindu businessman used to come daily in his horse-drawn carriage and offer sandalwood at the gate of the Atash Behram. This businessman lost his money and his hope to survive in this world. He came before the outer gate and sought to be excused from visiting the Atash Behram daily.

He proceeded to Chowpatty to drown himself in the sea. Just then he saw an apparition of an angel in white dress. The angel advised him to desist from ending his life. The Hindu businessman returned home and started his business afresh. He again started offering sandalwood at the gate of Atash Behram every day. Such has been the power of this holy Fire.

In the main hall are a portrait of Prophet Zarathushtra, and life size portraits of the founders of the Atash Behram as also of Dastur Mulla Firoz, Dasturji Khurshedji Bejonji Makihatana and Dasturji Jamshedji Sorabji Kukadaru. There are also four large mirrors and three ancient clocks in the same Hall.

At the entrance of the Atash Behram is a scenic historical Persian carpet in a glass frame. Its artistry, choice of colours, and arrangement of kings and warriors is eye-catching.

HISTORICAL PERSIAN CARPET

This genuine carpet measuring 10 ft 4 inches (3:15m) long by 5 ft. 8 inches (1.78m) wide bearing hand-loomed artistic work in pure wool represents a masterpiece of fine art in colour with details executed on special order in the Lunar Year 1240, corresponding to about 1810 A.C. A glance at the carpet gives the onlookers an opportunity to study the history of Achaemanid, Parthian, Sassanid and Islamic dynasties with representation in pictures of some of their rulers, court-scenes and characters harmoniously covered in closely fine weave of the carpet. As is known, with the passing of centuries the historical events which followed wars and other happenings in old Iran brought an end to the grandeur and glory of the Zoroastrian monarchs with prominence and distinction of their very names.

The designer of this Historical Carpet, who possessed great moral courage despite restrictions at that time, being a patron of Zoroaster, selected from old Avestic literature as well as from Arabic and Persian books a few true stories and instructive legends to combine them skillfully with the portraits of ancient Persian Kings and complete the whole work in illustrative versions with vivid background depicting peculiarities and teachings, so that the carpet may remain for good a Persian Antique in the form

of a 'Living Tableau' covering diverse subjects in admirable manner. During the Islamic rule of Arabs in Persia with persecution of the followers of Zoroastrianism, religious books of Avesta and historical documents being burnt and destroyed by the enemy and stringent rules clamped down for their reproductions, this Carpet provides in itself the truth by disguising the original identity of a few personalities of the Zoroastrian faith with different dresses, head-garbs and scenery to misquote them.

It will be observed that the sixth border of the carpet portrays along with some Persian Shahs reigning before and during the period of making this carpet, many well known ancient zoroastrian monarchs, members of royal families and nobilities, chiefs and courtiers, heroes and heroines with their names in the seventh border deliberately set and indicated not in accordance with the reign and rank on account of powerful hatred and discrimination prevailing at that time against the Zoroastrians.

Looking horizontally in the sixth border of the carpet at the top from left to right are: Nader, Tehmasp, Sultan Esmail, Amir Taimur, Halakoo and Changiz. Following from this end perpendicularly downwards are: Yezdegard, Farokhzad, Azarmidokht, Poorandokht, Yezdegard II, Sherzad, Shiruyeh, Khosrow, Hormaz, Gobad, Balash, Firoz, Hormaz II, Yezdegard III, Behram, Shahpur, Behram II Narsi, Behram III and Hormaz III. Continuing horizontally at bottom from second right to left are: Shahpur II, Ardeshir, Askandar Dara, Darab, Homai, Bahman, Gushtasp and Lohrasp. Then following from left and perpendicularly upwards are: Kaikaoos, Kaikobad, Kaikhosrow, Gershasb, Zab, Afrasiab, Novzar, Minocher, Sindif, Shantur, Iraj, Faridun, Zahak, Jamshid, Tehmuras Hoshang, Shiamak, Kayomers and Karim.

Besides the above busts, several picturesque group of personalities are shown according to the custom of those days attractively costumed and impressively poised with clear views of birds and animals and plants and flowers, bushes and trees to give glowing representation of dignified stories and legends drawn out from old documentary texts, books of kings, Shahnameh Ferdowsi and other literary works comprising poems, verses and

epigrams of Iskandar, Shabour, Sani Kapour, Hafiz, Saadi, Nezami, Mani and Behzad. Hence, some of the striking scenes selected from those illustrated in the middle and the fourth border on all sides of the carpet are described with numbers as follows:

1. The great Zoroastrian monarch Jamshid with the flame of holy fire over his head as symbol of intelligence and foresight, while the bird Simorg for his strength and power, is seen seated on his throne surrounded by his court-ministers, Zal and Rustom, his subjects and defeated Dievs.
2. The Prophet Zoroaster is seen in one of his positions of meditation.
3. The court of King Anoshirwane Adl known for his impartial justice, is seen delivering a cow under dispute to its rightful owner.
4. Behram Goor is seen on a hunting mission with his Palizian favourite and a bodyguard, where he demonstrates his proficiency in pin-point shooting quite accurately on the beast-of-prey saying: "Be active first thyself, then seek the aid of heaven, because the Almighty helps him, who helps himself by moving steadily in the path of duty".
5. Prophet Zoroaster having predicted from his knowledge of astronomy the birth of a new king of Hebrews - Christ, after centuries a Zoroastrian monarch of old Iran was awaiting the truth of that prediction. So, to strengthen that story, this picture illustrates the astronomers bringing that news at its time to the Iranian monarch, who orders at once three of his Zoroastrian wise men called "Magi" to depart in the direction of the star with three gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to present them on his behalf to the newly born King saying: "Ahuramazda, the king of earthly kings and Overlord in heaven knows His spiritual course for the world".
6. Sanan in deep thought brings before his vision the face of his beloved and considering "Hope as the chief blessing of man" starts to drink heavily in next picture to her health in "Hope to win her soon thereby as his better-half, but Sanan's

stupidity leads to drink in excess to inebriety, which puts him in despair and grief giving a lesson: "Rule your passions, or they will rule you".

7. This is a heart rending story in four scenes which shows the fight between father and son - Rustom and Sohrab, unknown to each other, setting a lesson with raised hands by Rustom: "Ignorance is a dangerous and spiritual poison, which all men ought to shun".
8. King Khosrow watches at Shirin, a commoner, taking bath in open after her ride. He falls in love at first sight and sends message with his courtiers that he is ready to marry her at his palace despite the absence of royal blood in her saying: "I want to marry her, because her beauty is skin deep to me".
9. The legend of Laila Majnoon is demonstrated in this picture. Majnoon fallen deeply in love with Laila is seen pining away and though reduced to a skeleton requests Laila to become his bride, the acceptance of which may restore in him health and happiness. This being not achieved for a long time, Majnoon forsaking all worldly pleasures lives a secluded life with wild animals as his best and near friends, whose silent sympathy and prayer for his welfare makes Laila to meet and wed finally Majnoon saying: "As gold is tried by fire, so true love must be tried by pain".
10. Behram Goor is seen watching his consort lifting a cow on her shoulders and going up the stairs of their palace. Behram Goor asks, how she can carry such a heavy animal up and down the stairs? To this she answers: "Practice makes man perfect", because from the day of the birth of that animal, she had been shouldering the calf daily, thereby adding continuously to her strength, so that inspite of being a woman, she can stand ready at Behram Goor's side to defeat his enemy saying: "The most I can do for my husband, is to be his real friend in deed".
11. This is also another picture of Behram Goor in his advanced age, where he remembering and heartened by the above practical precept of his wife, goes to kill a dragon saying:

- "Let your courage be as keen, but at the same time, as polished and sharp as your sword".
12. This story is illustrated in three scenes in which Nemrood sitting on a throne carried by four vultures towards the sky to satisfy his evil desire to challenge the power of God, decides to kill all fish with his arrow, but the arrow returns to him after striking only one fish. So, Nemrood comes to his senses to accept in shame the Omnipotent's protection for all his created lives everywhere saying: "Nature is a volume of which the Great Lord Ahuramazda is the author".
 13. Once upon a time when Pooryae Vali was one of the champion wrestlers and a great hero for saving lives of many besides being an expert in pulling and controlling several vicious dogs by his teeth. A poor but intelligent youth having fallen in love with a princess, the youth was asked by the king in his court to win his daughter by wrestling with Pooryae Vali. Seeing the princess also deeply in love with the youth, Pooryae Vali sacrificed his championship by allowing the youth to win his wrestling match and made him marry the Princess with a saying: "All worldly joys grow less to one joy of doing kindness". To this the youth answers: "Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge".
 14. Queen of Shiba is seen sitting on her throne, where a letter from King Jamshid is delivered to her by a pigeon giving epitome as how to gain wisdom and justice, which may elevate her position and prestige among her own subjects saying: "The mind grows by what it feeds on, because knowledge is the treasure, but judgement the treasure of a wise person".
 15. This story is illustrated in two scenes, where riding on horseback, Shirin, before her marriage to Khosrow, was loved desperately by Farhad - a stone cutter shown in the upper picture engaged in carving the great mountain of Bisutoon saying: "Where there's a will, there's a way. Ahuramazda has made every man free and fit for his choice and work."

Present Trustees of the Banaji Atash Behram

1. Seth Kersi Minocher Gherda (Chairman)
2. Dasturji Dr. Kaikhusroo Minocher JamaspAsa
3. Seth Burjor Hormusji Antia
4. Seth Kersi Hormusji Dadinatha
5. Seth Hoshang Nadirshah Wania (Managing Trustee)
6. Seth Sorabji Hormusji Commissariat

Present Boewalla Sahebs

Joined service

Ervad Aspi Framroze Nalladaru	1-7-1946
Ervad Framroz Ardeshir Behramkamdin	31-1-1952
Ervad Sohrab Kaikhushroo Nalladaru	1-3-1954
Ervad Jehanbux Faredoon Chithiwalla	22-11-1988
Ervad Firoz Noshirwan Behramkamdin	6-3-1995

DASTURS OF BANAJI ATASH BEHRAM

1. VADA DASTURJI BEJONJI RUSTOMJI (BEJONDARU)

He offered the first buoi. He was originally from Surat. He came to Bombay from Surat along with his family. He did the work of mobedi under the capable scholar Vada Dasturji Mulla-Firoz of Dadiseth Atash Behram. All the religious consecration rituals of the Adarian, Dokhma and Atash Behram established by the Banaji family were performed at his auspicious hands according to Kadmi tradition. When the Banaji Atash Behram was consecrated, he worked along with Dastur Jamshedji Edulji JamaspAsa.

On Roz 17 Sarosh, Mah 1 Farvardin, Kadmi 1209 A.Y. 16th Sept. 1839, the Atash Adarian Daremeher at Calcutta was consecrated under his supervision. He had come along with his son Dastur Khurshedji who also participated in this consecration ceremony.

He must have come to Calcutta much earlier prior to the consecration of the Daremeher as can be found out from a volume on Yajashne and Vendidad ceremonies written by him in Zend and Persian. He completed the Vendidad volume on Roz Aspandaad Mah Aspandaad, Kadmi 1208 A.Y., 1st August 1839.

PP, Vol. I, pp. 645 Dastur Bejonji Rustomji - He was saddened by the wrong practices that had crept in our community. At the time of his death, he called his children and advised them to stop weeping loudly by women at the time of death and to perform the uthamna ceremony at dawn of the fourth day. He passed away on Roz 6 Mah 12 Kadmi 1223 A.Y. 28th July 1854 at the age of 75.

DASTUR JAMSHEDJI EDULJI JAMASPAASA

He was born in 1788. Initially he did mobedi at Navsari before coming to Bombay. He was proficient in religious ceremonies. He knew Sanskrit language. In 1821, after the death of his paternal uncle Dastur Rustomji Cursetji, he became the Dastur at the Banaji ancient daremeher. He served in this capacity till his death. The Bombay Parsee Panchayet sought his important guidance in many historic decisions (e.g. Can post mortem be performed on a Parsi corpse or not?) The Banaji Seths were ardent Kadmis, yet they sought the guidance and direction of Dastur JamaspAsa of the Shehenshahi sect at the time of consecrating the Atash Behram. This fact is evidence of his capability and high status.

During the time of Dastur Minocher JamaspAsa, the Christian missionaries used to criticize our religion. Dastur Minocher used to give his Christian adversaries convincing replies under the pen name "*Kalamkush*" in "*Mumbaina Durbin*".

PP, Vol.II, pp. 414 **Ervad Rustomji Dadabhai Bhappu**, aged 57, passed away on 10th May 1872. In 1844 he came from Surat to Bombay and was engaged in the consecration of the Seth Cawasjee Byramjee Banaji Kadmi Atash Behram. Since 1846, he started a school at Cawasjee Patel Street, Fort, to teach Parsi children Zend Avesta and Gujarati. He ran this school till his passing away.

2. DASTUR FARAMJI BEJONJI

PP, Vol.III, pp.154, He was the brother of Dastur Khurshedji Bejonji. He was the elder son of Dastur Bejonji Rustomji. He was appointed the Dastur of the Banaji Atash Behram in 1854 on the death of his father. He did not take part in any public function.

(Athornan Namu Page 496) He served as a dastur for 31 years. He passed away on Roz 4 Mah 11 Kadmi 1223 A.Y. 18th June 1885 at the age of 67.

3. DASTUR KHURSHEDJI BEJONJI

PP, Vol. IV (1909) pp. 225 His ancestors hailed from Surat. He studied Persian, Zend and Pahlavi languages there. He came to Bombay along with his father and brother Dastur Faramji. In 1845 the father and sons consecrated the Banaji Atash Behram of which Dastur Bejonji was the first to be appointed dastur. After him, Faramji was appointed dastur. He was succeeded by Khurshedji Bejonji as dastur. Five years before consecrating the Banaji Atash Behram he had been to Calcutta to consecrate the Banaji Agiary along with others.

Athornan Namu pp. 134 - Dastur Khurshedji Bejonji was appointed the dastur of Banaji Kadmi Atash Behram on Roz 6 Mah 11 Kadmi 1264 A.Y. 20th June 1885.

In 1893 the consecration of the Kadmi-Shehenshahi Anjuman Atash Adarian at Poona Camp was carried out under his supervision. He led his whole life as a true religious leader. He earned the love and respect because of his good nature and his radiance. Dastur Khurshed Bejonji Makihatana was the last Kadmi dastur of Banaji Atash Behram. He died on Roz Zamyad Mah Aspandad (Kadmi) 1278 A.Y. 6th August 1900 at the ripe old age of 86.

4. DASTUR KAIKHUSROO JAMASPJI JAMASPASA

Athornan Namu pp. 101 He was the first Shehenshahi Vada Dastur to be appointed for this Kadmi Atash Behram on March 9, 1916. He passed away on Roz 16 Sarosh, Mah 10 Dae, 1285 A.Y. 23rd June 1916 at the age of 50 within three months of his receiving this unprecedented honour. (Also refer PP Vol. V, pp. 314)

REMEMBRANCE OF JALBAWA ON MONDAY EVENING

Every Monday evening is an important occasion at the Banaji Atash Behram. It is believed that a holy person called Jalbawa is present at that time. There are several stories prevalent amongst our community, such as the presence of Dasturji Kukadaru in the Kookadaru Hall of the Anjuman Atash Behram. In the Kadmi Atash Behrams in Surat and Mumbai it is believed that, by offering of sandalwood during the Aivisuthrem geh on Mondays, and remembering Jalbawa, results in successful completion of intended action. A silhouette of First Dastur Meherjirana is visible in the "kebla" room of the Navsari Atash Behram. It is considered auspicious to view this silhouette.

Every Monday evening before the commencement of Aivisuthrem geh, a large gathering of hundreds of devout Zarthustis offer sandalwood to the Atash Padshah and participate in Hum Bandgi (mass prayers). They believe that remembering Jalbawa on this day and time results in their wishes being fulfilled. This has increased the faith of the younger generation. It is believed that Jal, the palladin Rustam's father (of Shah Nameh fame) was a pious man. Invoking his name helps devotees to fulfill their desires.

Who is Jalbawa? Where did he originate from? Why is he remembered on Monday evenings? There are no answers to these questions. Yet, there is faith in the power of his name and many have had their wishes fulfilled. On Monday evenings, the room adjoining the "kebla" room is packed with devotees. The faithful humdins come here even from the distant suburbs of Mumbai. It is believed that they certainly get divine help. The boewalla sahebs also add to the faith of the humdins by supporting this story by various examples.

Yes. It is true that Jalbawa must be belonging to the Kadmi sect because the same scenario is witnessed at the Seth Pestonji Kalabhai Vakil Kadmi Atash Behram at Surat on Monday evenings. There is no portrait of Jalbawa, no history, only the remembrance of his name. He ought to have been a righteous man like Homaji, who became a martyr. Aivisuthrem geh is an auspicious time to

revere Sarosh Yazad, the guardian angel at night. This faith is present in the hearts of devout Zarthushtis. If a righteous man such as Jalbawa publicly or secretly minimises the hardships of the faithfuls and helps in their good wishes being fulfilled, which gives him a place in their hearts and they remember him, what objection could anyone have?

The Varasyo or The Sacred Bull : A white bull known as the Varasyo is brought into the temple where the nirangdin ceremony is to be performed. A single black hair on the body disqualifies it for being used as a sacred bull. The word varasyo comes from the Avesta word 'vareca' meaning hair, because the hair of this white bull is used symbolically in the Yasna ceremony. A metallic ring used in the ritual is known as "*varas ni viti*", i.e., the ring with the hair. The hair of this sacred bull is put round the ring.

The Parsis have such white bulls in their principal towns- Mumbai, Udvada, Navsari and Surat. The Varasyo is useful for two purposes. One is, as described above for its urine, which, together with that of other ordinary bulls, is consecrated. The second purpose is the use of its varesa i.e., hair which is used in the Yasna liturgy to serve as a kind of hair sieve. This use is referred to in the Visparad (Karda X, 2: varasai Haomo angharezanaï. i.e. the hair to pass, as through a sieve, the Haoma juice). This bull is not used for any domestic purpose. On its death, all the liturgical services, wherein the varesa or hair is used, are stopped in the town or towns. Another white bull is immediately sought out and consecrated. Until it is consecrated, all the necessary Vendidad, Yasna and Visparad ceremonies in which its hair is used cease to be performed in the town, and are directed to be performed in other towns which have their separate white bulls.

Layout of Banaji Atash Behram : This ATASH BEHRAM was the third one to be consecrated at Bombay in 1845 A.C. It is a **KADMI ATASH BEHRAM**. The temple site is adjacent to one of Bombay's busiest roads but has a large well-maintained garden, which cuts off most of the traffic noise. There is a building block for the priest's residence adjoining the temple building above which is the Gahambar Hall.

**Tablet in the renovated gahambar hall
on first floor above Priests' Quarters:**

"This gahambar hall and its building was repaired and renovated from the munificent donation of Rs.10,00,000 (Rupees ten lakhs) given by Mr. Nariman Kaikhosrow Dubash in sacred memory of his late parents the renowned surgeon Dr. Kaikhosrow M. Dubash and Gulbanoo, his late brother Maneck Dubash and his late maternal aunt Khorshedbanoo M. Sanjana."

Well : The temple well is located on the north west side of the temple building. It is within a walled enclosure which has PAVIS furrowed on its flooring. This enclosure has a palm tree and a pomegranate shrub within and there is a door on the North East side for people to come in from outside. A flight of steps leads to the temple's plinth level from where the temple corridor can be entered through a side door. PAVIS reach the well from the URWISGAH of the temple.

Ablution and KUSTI Enclosure : A new structure has been made for this purpose opposite the porch. A square room has been divided in the centre to form two ablution areas - for men and women. A sink has been placed at the end of each of the rooms for ablutions. Even though built very recently, the space provided for the KUSTI ritual is very small, therefore most men walk to the well and perform their KUSTI ritual or come outside this structure for KUSTI.

TABLET ON THE WALL OF KUSTI PADYAB ENCLOSURE:

"In loving memory of my dear departed parents and brother Mr. Framroze Rustomjee Boyce, Mrs. Goolbai Framroze Boyce and brother Mr. Jalbhoy Framroze Boyce donated by Khurshedjee Framjee Boyce. Date 7th November 1984."

Temple Entrance : This temple building has a projected entrance forming a porch. A flight of steps leads to the external verandah where a lot of people sit in the mornings and evenings. The verandah which is formed over here is much smaller in comparison to the other temple verandahs which are normally along one

whole side of the temple building. The high plinth has two spaces where people can sit.

Corridor : Instead of the verandah, this temple has a corridor running on all four sides of the temple. The corridor has large French windows, which begin from the ground level. These windows have shutters at two levels with a ventilator on top. A wooden bench is placed in the niche which is formed. The windows are symmetrically placed opposite walls. The centre of the North Eastern façade has the entrance porch of the temple and the centre of the South Western façade has a door leading to two curved flights of steps which leads to the garden. Many a times this corridor space is used to carry out minor rituals and religious services. A pair of PAVIS is grooved on the flooring of the corridor from the URWISGAH door to the side door near the temple well.

Main Hall: The main hall is a large rectangular space with French windows on three sides abutting the corridor. The inner North-Eastern wall has a door and window each, for the prayer hall and the URWISGAH. All the windows opening in the corridor are large French windows. They are placed opposite the corridor windows which open to the outside. A lot of devotees sit and pray in this hall when the prayer hall does not have enough natural light reaching it.

ANTEROOM : This fire temple does not have an anteroom before the prayer hall.

Prayer hall : The prayer hall is a small rectangular room on one side of the sanctum sanctorum, which can be entered from the main hall. The ATASH BEHRAM acts as the main source of light as the light coming in from the openings is very little. So the devotees who want to recite their prayer from the prayer book go and sit in the main hall, which is better lighted. The prayer hall has three doors on three of its sides - one for the sanctum sanctorum, another for the priest's room and one to the main hall. There is a window next to the main hall door and another next to the priest's room door. A window opening between the main hall and prayer hall is only observed in the KADMI ATASH BEHRAMS.

Sanctum Sanctorum For The Atash Behram : It is a square room with openings on one side only. The door is on the northwestern wall with two windows on either side. The four walls do not face the cardinal directions, as they are approximately 25° off. This sanctum is different from all other ATASH BEHRAM sanctums as it has the prayer hall and openings on one side only. The southeastern wall has niches made for placing the ladles and other religious implements. Two large bells hang in opposite corners. The sanctum sanctorum is so dark that at most times the dome is not visible except when the boewalla priest tends the fire and offers sandalwood.

Urwisgah : The URWISGAH of this temple is a square space, which can be entered by the devotee either from the corridor directly or from the main hall. The priest's room has direct access to this room. On one side of this URWISGAH is placed the ATASH DADGAH. It is separated from the ritual tables by a low brass railing. PAVIS are grooved on the floor for placing four ritual tables. This URWISGAH is smaller compared to the other ATASH BEHRAM temples and does not have a low central wall dividing it into two parts. The wooden false ceiling has vents made for the smoke to escape. During the MUKTAD days, the URWISGAH is used for the MUKTAD rituals. Additional stone-top tables are placed inside for keeping the silver flower-vases.

Priest's Room : The priest's room is formed by the space between the prayer hall and the corridor. It functions as an office for the temple complex as well as a resting-place for the priest on duty. It can be entered from the prayer hall of the ATASH BEHARAM. At one end there is a door leading to URWISGAH. A narrow steel ladder in this room leads to the false ceiling and the dome above the sanctum sanctorum. Most of the religious implements are stored in this room, as the temple does not have storage in the same building.

Cupola Room : The false ceiling above the prayer hall and URWISGAH form the cupola room for the temple. The hipped roof above has Dormer windows, which act as vents for smoke. This space can be reached from the priest's room through a steel ladder. Occasionally the Boewalla priests come up to clean the dome's surface and the smoke vents of the URWISGAH.

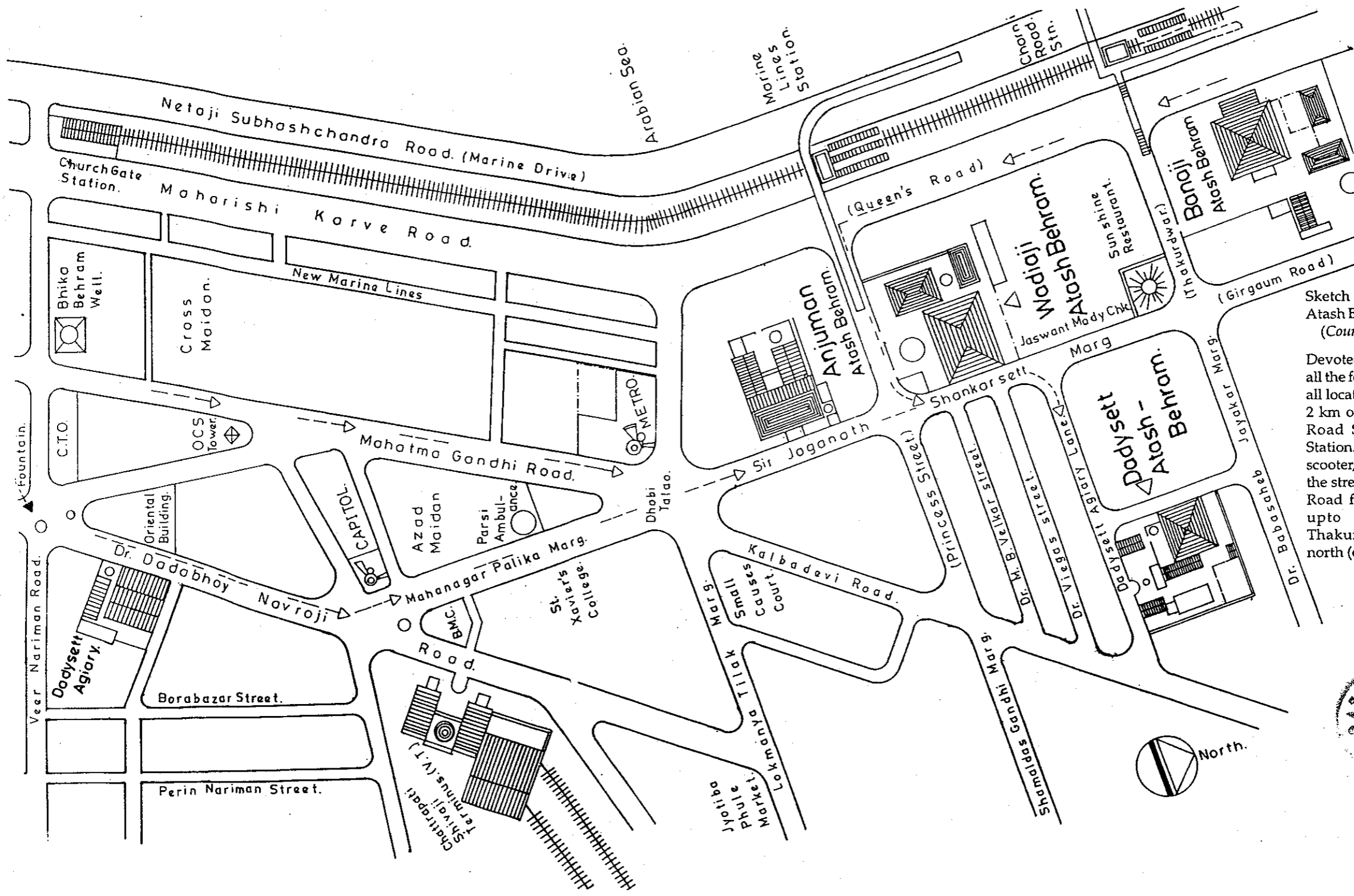
Dormitories, Storage, Services: The housing for priests is in another building adjoining the temple building, so additional dormitories are not provided. The storage for fire wood and other services are also in that building.

Shed for the Bull : The shed for the bull is opposite the temple building. This temple owns a white bull and the shed is used for the bull.

Décor: This temple building does not have much décor on it, inspite of being one of the recent ATASH BEHRAM buildings. All along the exterior wall, small fluted pilasters are made between the window openings.

All the wooden windows are painted with vertical stripes of white and the stone plinth has mortar gaps painted. The fluted pilasters, the paint on the windows and plinth stones give the building a modest décor from the exterior. All the window openings in the interior of the building are arched and recessed to accommodate a small wooden bench for sitting.

Movement Path : After the ablution and KUSTI ritual, the devotee climbs up a flight of steps to the temple verandah. Some go to the temple well for their KUSTI ritual and enter the temple corridor from a small side stairway. From the verandah one enters the corridor which goes around the temple on all four sides. The URWISGAH can be entered from a door in the corridor on the side of the main entrance. The corridor forms the major movement path for all spaces in the temple building. The main hall is reached by going around the building and entering through a door in the centre. The main hall has two doors at opposite ends of its longer side, one for entering the prayer hall and another for entering the URWISGAH. The prayer hall has a door leading to the priest's room. So the priest's room has a direct access to the prayer hall and the URWISGAH. A pair of PAVIS are grooved on the floor of the corridor between the URWISGAH and the temple well, which are used whenever the well is to be consecrated by pouring in a potion made in the URWISGAH.



Sketch Map showing route to Four Atash Behrams and Dadayseti Agiary (Courtesy : Jamshed Z. Sethna).

Devotees can take a walking tour of all the four Atash Behrams as they are all located within a distance of about 2 km of each other between Charni Road Station and Marine Lines Station. For those proceeding by car, scooter, taxi it is important to note that the stretch of Jagannath Shankerseth Road from Wadiaji Atash Behram upto Sunshine Restaurant at Thakurdwar is one way south to north (except for BEST buses).

