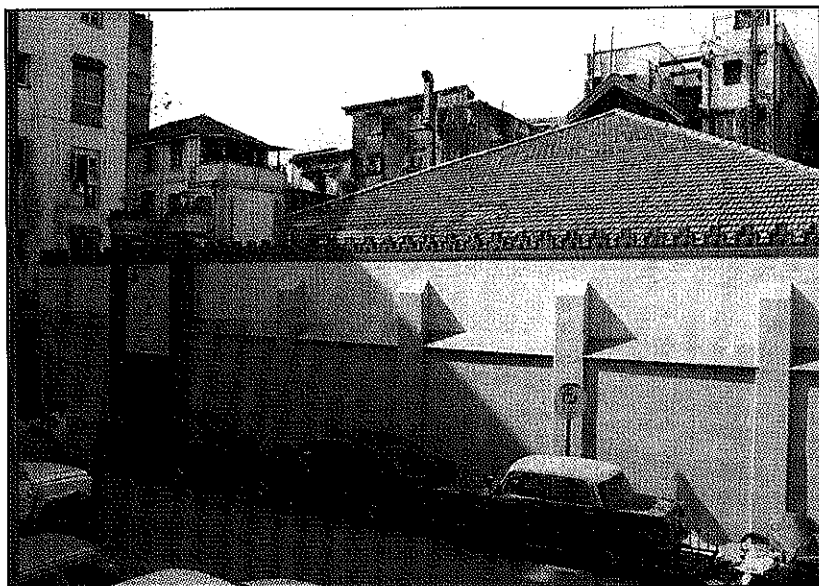


**A BRIEF HISTORY
OF
BANAJI LIMJI AGIARY
(1709-2000)**

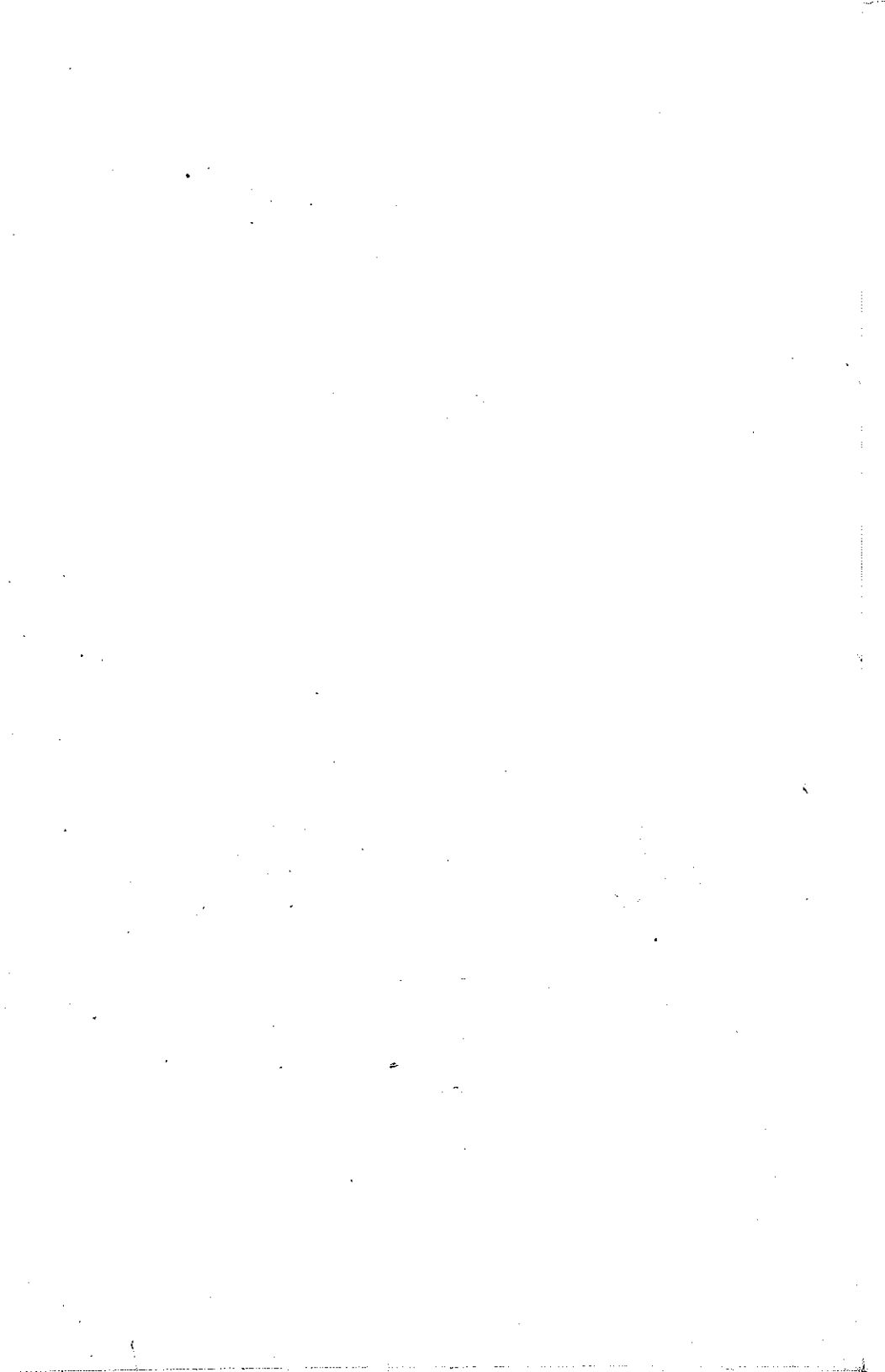


by :

Marzban Jamshedji Giara

and

Dr. Viraf Minocher Dhalla



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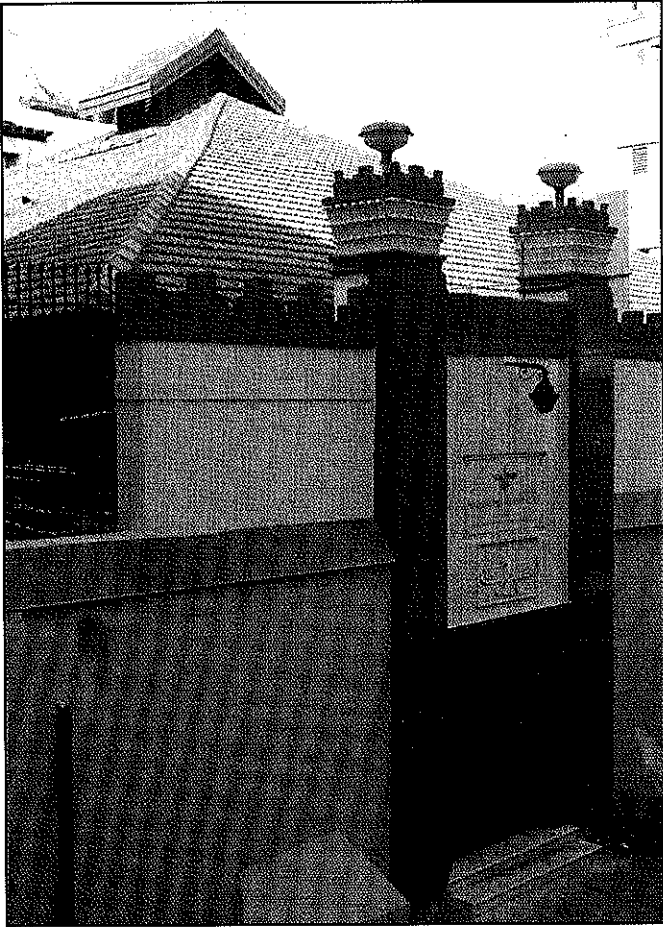
and

Dr. Viraf Minocher Dhalla

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Front view of the Banaji Limji Agiary

**Dedicated
with respect and devotion
to
The Sacred Atash Padshah
of
Banaji Limji Agiary**

PREFACE

The Banaji Limji Agiary is the oldest surviving Adarian consecrated in the city of Mumbai in the year 1709 A.C. As the Agiary enters its 292nd year today the 26th April, 2000 (Mah Adar, Roz Adar, Sal 1369 A.Y.) and the revered Fire is reenthroned after the completion of repairs / renovation to this Agiary, the trustees to commemorate this event have great pleasure in bringing out this small booklet which narrates its history.

On this auspicious occasion the trustees take the opportunity to thank our Lord Ahura Mazda, all the donors big and small and everyone who have given their contribution in whatever way they could to successfully and satisfactorily complete the renovation and restoration of the oldest Agiary in Mumbai.

May the Sacred Fire of our Adarian keep glowing in our midst and may it always shower blessings on our dear Parsi community.

Trustees
Banaji Limji Agiary

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Banaji Limji Agiary and its Founder Seth Banaji Limji

The Agiary's founder, Banaji Limji (1654-1734), was the son of **Limji Rustomji Aspandyarji Asaji** who, according to the Parsi Prakash (Vol 1, page 844-845) was an akabar (leader) of the Parsi community in Surat. A man of adventurous spirit, Banaji left his native place, Bhagwa-Dandi in Surat district, and along with his younger brother **Naoroji Limji**, came to Bombay in 1690.

Initially Seth Banaji Limji joined the East India Company in Bombay in order to obtain perfect training and experience to carry out his trade in India and abroad. He started a firm in Bombay in the name of Banaji Limji. He traded with Madras, Malabar Coast and even with Pegu in Burma, which he visited personally. He owned a number of ships and became very rich within a short period of time. The four flourishing ports in Western Gujarat in those days were Bharuch, Sumali (including Bhagwa Dandi), Sana (Sachin) and Sanjan.

As a businessman he flourished and, while the Parsi Panchayet in Bombay was still in its formative stage, he rose to the status of Davar (dispenser of justice). Seth Banaji Limji was considered a Merchant Prince and played a prominent role in the building of this beautiful city of Bombay. Besides holding the status of a Davar (dispenser of justice) he was also a Treasurer and was holding the funds of the Parsi Anjuman.

Little is known about the early history of the Banaji Limji Agiary. This Agiary was first consecrated on Roz Adar, Mah Adar 1078 Y.Z. i.e. June 25, 1709. A.C. by the late Seth Banaji Limji. It is interesting to know how, after the agiary was consecrated, Seth Banaji Limji acquired the neighbouring

property. The then Governor of Bombay, Hon. William Aislabie ordered Captain John Tyler to carry out a public auction of a property in possession of the Captain, known as "Chauri Wadi" in which were 84 trees. The public auction was carried out and Seth Banaji Limji purchased the property by paying 380 Zirfin Coins amounting to Rs. 328-8-8. This agreement for property with the East India Company is dated 3rd April 1712 in the name of his younger brother Seth Naoroji Limji. Hence, this property in those days came to be known as "Adarian Wadi". This Agiary is said to enshrine the oldest Sacred Fire in Bombay. At present, the lane facing Seth Banaji Limji Agiary is known as "Banaji Street". Opposite the Agiary is located the Banaji Mansion which was donated by Sir Dinshaw Mañockji Petit, 1st Baronet. A street on the left side of the Agiary at the end of the Banaji Street is known as "Cawasji Patel Street". It was here where **Seth Cawasji Rustomji Patel** owned a mansion. In this mansion resided an Hon'ble Governor of Bombay in the past. At present this site is partly occupied by Blitz office. The Hon'ble Governor of Bombay in those days used to move about in a gorgeous vehicle drawn by two bullocks, known as "Ekka-ni-Gadi".

At the time when Seth Banaji Limji acquired this property for his Agiary, the city of Bombay was made up of seven islands (Heptanesia). The sea was very near to the Agiary and people loved to stay in Bombay, which was having a very pleasant climate. A vacant plot of land adjacent to the Agiary was also purchased later on by Seth Banaji Limji in the name of his younger brother Seth Naoroji Limji.

Seth Banaji Limji's younger brother **Seth Bomanji Limji** was also an akabar (leader) of the Parsi community in Surat from 1740-1742. He played an important role in the construction of the Anjuman's Tower of Silence for Parsis of Surat.

Seth Banaji Limji and his generations to follow have played a leading role in constructing and establishing Atash Behrams, Agiaries, Tower of Silence, Wells, Fountains, Public Halls, Colleges, Schools, Madressas, Hospitals, Dispensaries, Gymkhanas, etc. In the initial stage of forming of our Parsi Panchayet in Bombay, the Constitution, Rules, Regulations and Policies for functioning of the Parsi Panchayet at the same time solving of various problems facing the Parsi community were carried out at Banaji Limji Agiary. Banaji Limji died at the ripe old age of 80 (Roz Behram, Mah Dae 1103 Y.Z. i.e. July 30, 1734) having lived just long enough to celebrate the Agiary's Silver Jubilee. Even today, all Panthaks of Parsi community take his renowned name in all the religious ceremonies of Parsis in the name of Behdin Banaji Behdin Limji.

Above the entrance to the Main hall is a tablet in Gujarati :

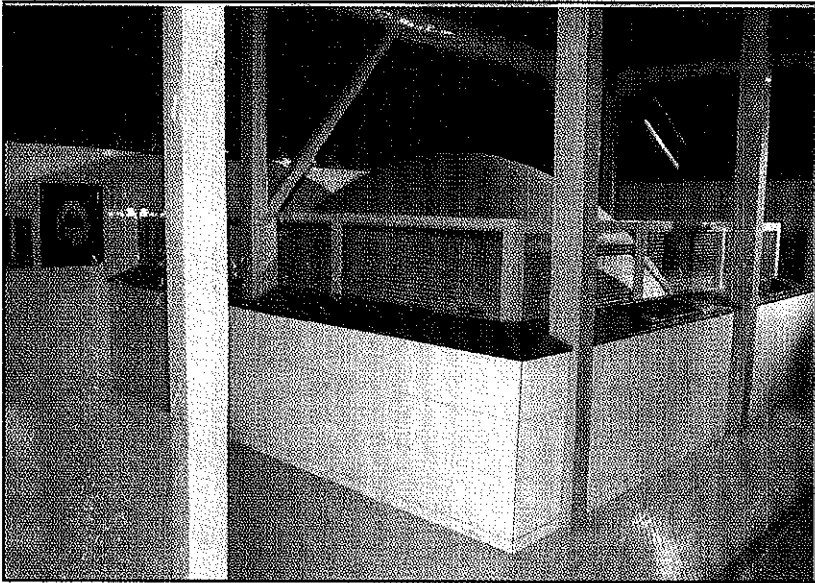


The above tablet in Gujarati is translated in English as under :

“This ancient daremeher was consecrated on Roz 9 Mah 9 Shahenshahi era 1078 A.Y. 25th June 1709 A.C. by the late

Seth Banaji Limji. As its condition deteriorated, several gentlemen of Banaji family raised a fund among themselves and had it newly built and the old adaran saheb reenthroned on Roz 20, Mah 7 Shahenshahi era 1214 A.Y. 15th April 1845 A.C."

The Banaji Limji Agiary is very Sacred to the Parsis. This is the only unique Agiary in Bombay where the Gumbaj (with holes provided) above the Holy Sanctum Sanctorum having the Sacred Fire is within the Agiary building. The smoke from this fire then escapes from a chimney.



The Gumbaj (with holes provided) above the Holy Sanctum Sanctorum having the Sacred Fire which is within the Banaji Limji Agiary building.

It was the good fortune of a pious mobed who is serving the Agiary for a very long period; on two occasions he saw Holy Spirits within the Sacred Agiary. As we come out of the Agiary, we experience a peculiar feeling - like having our spiritual batteries recharged at the altar of Ahura Mazda. The entire Agiary exudes an old-world charm combined with

a tranquil and spiritual atmosphere. In the afternoons, save for the occasional chirping of birds, one is engulfed in pin-drop silence. **Late Ustad Behramshah Naoroji Shroff (1858-1927)** also used the Agiary for giving various philosophical lectures on Ilm-e-Khshnoom. **Seth Sorabji Nanabhoy D. Banaji** played an important role here. It appears that when the Agiary completed 250 years in 1959, a large number of lectures on Ilm-e-Khshnoom were held in the Agiary premises during the time of **Ervad Phiroze Masani** and **Jehangir Chiniwalla**.

The Government recognized the institution as a Historical Monument of national importance, according to an unnamed press clipping reproduced by the Calcutta Gavashni (June-July 1989). The recognition, placing the Agiary on equal footing with the Prince of Wales Museum and the Victoria Terminus, is said to have been recorded in the relevant gazette.



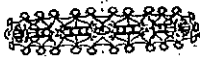
The interior of the newly renovated Banaji Limji Agiary

Explanation of the design of the tapestry in the Adarian hall

The canopy has been designed with abstract, graphic & numerical representations.

The whole concept has been conceived as a piece of art.

- The raised platform with carpet denotes the earth - "zaam".
- The canopy above the raised platform represents the sky.
- A devotee offering obeisance at the altar of "Atash Padshah" is now within the cosmic plane.



AHURA MAZDA



SPENTA MAINYUSH



ANGRE MAINYUSH

"Ahura Mazda" - occupies the centre spread on the canopy - coupled with the timeless Angre Mainyush and Spenta Mainyush in a never ending battle of supremacy - A devotee is reminded of this duality that lies within himself.



Spenta Mairiyush is assisted by the Seven Ameshaspands (Archangels) on either side.



Together they are flanked on the longer side by the 33 Fareshtas.



Ahunavairya



& Ashem Vohu.

Therefore symbolic motifs of 21 and 12 respectively align themselves on the shorter side of the canopy.

The fravashis dot the entire universe rejoicing at the great event.



Note : All motifs are derived out of art work, sculptures and bas relief from Achaemenian & Sassanian Dynasty.

TAPESTRY DESIGNED BY PORUS MASTER, ARCHITECT

Seth Banaji Limji and his descendants

Seth Banaji Limji had three sons : Seth Byramji (Davar) (1681-1753); Seth Manekji (Davar) (1690-1775) and Seth Limji (1705-1757). After Banaji's demise, his eldest son Behramji (1681-1753) ascended the seat of Davar. However, on account of frequent absence from the country on long and arduous voyages, he relinquished his seat in favor of his brother, Maneckji. Seth Behramji Banaji Limji along with his brothers Maneckji and Limji were looking after the affairs of their firm. Seth Behramji increased his firm's foreign trade. Seth Behramji died in 1753 at the age of 72 years. His eldest son was **Nanabhoy (Davar) (1718-1788)**.

Seth Maneckji looked after their business affairs and with the status as a Davar (dispenser of justice) till his end played a leading role in the affairs of the Parsi Panchayet. Seth Maneckji was an akabar (leader) of the Parsi Panchayet. He looked after the affairs of Banaji Limji Agiary single-handed. As far as his business is concerned, besides "Prem" he purchased two more ships "Carter" and Ganjavar". The leading businessmen in Gujarat at that time were known as Voharas. Seth Maneckji was also known as a Vohara. Seth Maneckji died in 1748. His will was signed by two Voharas among whom one was Seth Behramji, his brother. Seth Maneckji's youngest brother Seth Limji Banaji died on 3rd October 1775 at a very young age of 52 years. **After Maneckji's death, the status of Davar went to Seth Behramji's eldest son Seth Nanabhoy (1718-1788)**. After Maneckji's death in 1775, his son Cooverji (1725-1815) and grandson Dossabhai (1763-1835) managed the affairs of the Agiary.

Seth Cooverji and Seth Dossabhai were running two separate firms and they started trade with Poona. Seth Dossabhai Cooverji Banaji played an important role in appointing able and learned Dasturs and Mobeds for his Agiary. He was himself wearing priestly clothes. He looked

after the affairs of the Agiary very well for 42 years. During Dossabhai's tenure as administrator, the Agiary reached the pinnacle of its glory. It gave the community some of the most learned and capable yozdathregars (full-fledged priests). **Dasturji Jamshedji Edulji Bahmanji Jamaspasa (1788-1847)** was the head priest of the Agiary and under him the Agiary almost became a madressa (seminary). Requests poured in from all over the country to depute pucca yozdathregars for consecrating fire-temples and dokhmas in places outside Bombay. In 1824, **Sardar Bahadur Sorabji Ratanji Patel of Poona** invited Jamaspji Edulji Bahmanji Jamaspasa of the Banaji Agiary, with the permission of the Parsi Panchayet, to consecrate an agiary and dokhma in Poona. He was later appointed Head Priest of Poona. Seth Dossabhai died on 8th October 1835 at the age of 72 years.

It was Ahura Mazda's wish that the second son of Seth Banaji Limji, Seth Maneckji Banaji Limji (Davar) and their descendants were destined to play an important role in looking after the affairs of the Banaji Limji Agiary.

Banaji's family is divided into Shehenshahis and Kadmis. It was **Dastur Jamasp Dastur Hakim**, an Iranian Zoroastrian, who came to Surat and informed Parsis there that there was a difference of one month between Zoroastrians of India and Iran, which ultimately resulted in Shahenshahis and Kadmis. It was **Seth Kavasji Byramji Banaji (Dhodha) and Seth Burjor N.B. Daver** due to certain circumstances became Kadmis. All their descendants are Kadmis.

Seth Hormusji Ratanji Maneckji Banaji (1784-1865)

After Dossabhai's death, Hormusji Ratanji Maneckji Banaji (1784-1865) took charge. Under his leadership the cause of providing a new building to house the holy fire was espoused. The great fire of 1803 had caused much damage to the Agiary and destroyed several important records of the Banaji family and the Agiary. The holy fire was temporarily shifted to the

Bai Soonaiji Hirji Jivanji Readymoney Fire-temple at Gowalia Tank and funds for the Agiary were raised by contributions within the community and from members of the Banaji family. Approximately Rs. 23,000 were collected. Among the list of contributors one finds the names of Framji Kavasji Behramji Banaji and Khurshedji Kavasji Banaji who contributed Rs. 5,000 each; Seth Rustomji Kavasji Banaji and Seth Dadabhai Rustomji Banaji who jointly contributed Rs. 5,000; Maneckji Limji Kavasji Banaji and Seth Dinshaw Nanabhai Framji Davar (grandfather of Justice Sir Dinshaw Davar) who gave Rs. 2,500 each; and Hormusji Ratanji Maneckji Banaji and Framji Nusserwanji Patel who contributed Rs. 1,500 each. There were poorer sections of the community whose circumstances did not permit any substantial contributions in the form of money. Undaunted, they subscribed their mite in a novel manner by throwing into the foundation innumerable eggs and several hundreds of mugs of toddy. This was churned along with other construction material as an act of faith, to strengthen the foundation. The building was completed - it is the same one that stands there today - and was inaugurated on April 15, 1845 (Roz Behram, Mah Meher 1214 Y.Z.). Great festivity marked the day and the Banaji family was profusely thanked and feted. **Seth Framji Kavasji Banaji (1768-1851), the patriarch of the family,** presented Hormusji Banaji with a rich shawl before the members of the Parsi Anjuman. Even after construction, on which no pains or expenses were spared, there was a surplus of Rs. 11,034 out of Rs. 23,000 collected. This princely sum - in those days it certainly must have been a treasure - was deposited with the firm of Framji Kavasji Banaji. When Framji died in 1851, his widow **Bachubai** called a meeting of eminent Parsis and requested them to take charge of the money left in the name of the Agiary by her late husband who had been its sole custodian. It was then that the idea of forming a trust was mooted. The trust was eventually formed in 1901 and named Banaji Limji Agiary Fund. The Nanabhoy Banaji

Yajeshni and Gahambar Trust fund was endowed in 1875 for various religious and ceremonial purposes. **Seth Dhanjibhai Framji Patel** looked after the affairs of the Agiary and died in 1892 at the age of 69 years.

Seth Dadabhai Rustomji Banaji (1811 to 1890) solely looked after the affairs of the Agiary. **Seth Erachshaw Manekji Okarji Banaji (1844-1877)** was successful in solving various problems facing the Banaji family. Instead of paying more attention towards his Medical Studies, he devoted considerable time in looking after the affairs of the Agiary. He was also instrumental in preparation of a Trust Deed. The Fund in the names of the Trustees came to be known as Banaji Limji Agiary Fund amounting to Rs. 13,800/-. He was presented an address before his departure to U.K. for his studies. He died at a young age of 33 years.



*Seth Nanabhoy Dhunjibhai
Okarji Banaji*

Seth Nanabhoy Dhunjibhai Okarji Banaji (1842-1901) was the real guiding spirit of the Agiary. He along with his

paternal cousin **Seth Erachshaw Manekji Okarji Banaji** brought great prosperity to the Agiary. They started the Yzasneh, Gahambar and Baj Trust Funds. Seth Nanabhoy on the Uthamna day of his father **Seth Dhunjibhai Okarji Cooverji Banaji (1818-1883)** donated Rs. 500 and started the fund and appealed others to give donations. The support and assistance was also given in various ways by **Dastur Dr. Jamaspji Minocherji Jamasp Asana, M.A., Ph.D., D.C.L. (1830-1898)**. Seth Nanabhoy did his utmost to solve various problems facing the fund. He also created a Muktaad Fund in 1893. With his personality, tact and sincere hard work and his influence he gave tremendous service to Banaji Limji Agiary and to the Parsi community. Seth Nanabhoy died of a heart attack on 1st January 1901 early in the morning, the first day of the setting in of the 20th Century. His death Centenary will fall on 1st January 2001. During his lifetime, Seth Nanabhoy was able to purchase three properties from three separate persons for the benefit of the Parsi Community. In his name, the trustees purchased an empty plot on the East side for the Agiary's use.

Seth Cooverjee Nanabhoy Dhunjibhoy Banaji (1867-1922)

Seth Cooverjee belonged to the well-known Banaji family of Bombay. After finishing his school education, he entered the piece-goods business in 1892 in partnership with Mr. Kashinath and carried on successfully till 1908 under the style of Kashinath, Cooverjee & Co. In later years, the partnership was dissolved and Seth Cooverjee continued the business under the name of Cooverjee & Co., and through sheer tact, talent and keen business instinct, he soon made his firm a flourishing concern. Seth Cooverjee was a trustee of several agiaries, a God-fearing and a Religious-minded man, and though inclined towards orthodoxy, he was never slow to realize the advantages of progressive views. The bi-centenary of the Adarian was celebrated in 1909 with much gusto and Cooverji Nanabhoy Dhunjibhoy Banaji spent a lot of money

repairing the existing structure. The credit for installing electric fittings including lights and fans at a cost of Rs. 1,200/- in 1930 goes to **Seth Hormusji Nanabhoy Dhunjibhoy Banaji**. In 1917 a house near the Agiary was purchased by Seth Cooverjee Nanabhoy Dhunjibhoy Banaji for Rs. 3,300/- from the Nibhav Fund for the use of poor Parsis and handed it over to the Trustees. He also presented a sum of Rs. 25,000/- to the Agiary Maintenance Fund. From this amount, a house opposite to the Agiary was purchased at a cost of Rs. 15,000/-. The remaining amount was invested in Government Promissory Loan @ 3.5%. On the whole he gave Rs. 35,000/- in charities, a very kind hearted gentleman. He died in 1922 leaving the management of his firm to his youngest brother **Hormusjee (born 1880)** to whose ability, energy and keen commercial acumen, its subsequent prosperity is largely due. He was also connected with the management of several Agiaries. Messrs. Cooverjee & Co. who were Cloth and Silk Merchants, were having their shop next to Mangaldas Cloth Market, Bombay.

According to Burjor Banaji the holy fire was shifted once before 1900 - to the Langrana Agiary in order to facilitate repairs.

Seth Sorabji Nanabhoy Banaji succeeded Seth Cooverjee Nanabhoy Dhunjibhoy Banaji. He was a Managing Trustee of the Agiary for 30 years and added much to the Trust for various ceremonies of the Agiary.

Seth Hormusji Nanabhoy Banaji was President and looked after the affairs of the Agiary in 1959. He made many important changes in the affairs of the Agiary for 37 years and collected from Parsis a total amount of Rs. 1,35,000/- to carry out certain permanent ceremonies in the Agiary on behalf of those Parsi families who had contributed the amount. He did much for the welfare of the Parsi community and was always ready to receive suggestions from Parsis and implement them.

Present Trustees

The present trustees of the Banaji Limji Agiary are :

- 1) Mr. Burjor Rustomjee Banajee, Sr. Trustee
- 2) Mr. Dady Kaikhushroo Banaji, Sr. Trustee
- 3) Mrs. Bachamai Rustomji Wadia, Sr. Trustee
- 4) Mr. Adi Burjor Banajee, Trustee
- 5) Mr. Jamshed Dady Banaji, Trustee

and

the trustees of the Banaji Limji Yejeshne, Gahambar and Jashan Funds associated with the Agiary are :

- 1) Mr. Burjor Rustomjee Banajee, Sr. Trustee
- 2) Mr. Dady Kaikhushroo Banaji, Sr. Trustee
- 3) Mrs. Bachamai Rustomji Wadia, Sr. Trustee
- 4) Vada Dasturji Meherjirana Kaikobad Dustur of Navsari, Sr. Trustee
- 5) Mr. Adi Burjor Banajee, Trustee
- 6) Mr. Hoshang Nadirshaw Wania, Trustee
- 7) Mr. Jamshed Dady Banaji, Trustee

However meetings of the Banaji Limji Agiary are attended as well as decisions on all the matters pertaining to the Banaji Limji Agiary are taken by all the above named trustees collectively.

Mr. Pervez M. Rustomkhan is the Hon. Legal Adviser on all matters of Banaji Limji Agiary and its properties.

The Genealogy of four of the Present Trustees of Seth Banaji Limji Family :

Banaji Limji (Davar) (1654-1734)

|

Manekji (Davar)
(Second son) (1690-1775)

|

Cooverji
(Eldest son) (1725-1815)



* Dadibhoy
(Second son)

* Ukarji
(Third son)

* Faramji
(Only son)

* Dhunjibhoy
(Second son)

* Pestonji
(Fourth son)

* Rustomji
(Fourth son)

* Dadibhai
(Second son)

* Burjor
(Only son)

* Manekji
(Kaikhushroo)
(Third son)

* Adi

* Dadi
(Only son)

* Jamshed
(Only son)

* Derezaar

Past and Present Panthakis (Head Priests) Since 1918

One of the present mobeds of the Banaji Limji Agiary Ervad Homi Dastur and Mr. Eruch D. Mistry, a patron of this Agiary have cited the names of the past panthakis (head priests) who have served this agiary.

- 1918 – 1928 : Three Panthakis in partnership
1) Ervad Ardeshir Dastur
2) Ervad Homi Antia
3) Ervad Pirojshaw Garda
- 1928 – 1941 : Ervad Minocher Billimoria
- 1942 – 1943 : Two Panthakis in partnership
1) Ervad Jehangir Mulla
2) Ervad Desai
- 1943 – 1946 : Two Panthakis in partnership
1) Ervad Darabsha Kutar
2) Ervad Pirojsha Bamji
- 1946 – 1984 : Ervad Framroze Behramji Panthaki

The present Panthaki (Head Priest) Ervad Godrej Ratanji Panthaki has been associated with the Banaji Limji Agiary since 1961 performing various ceremonies and has taken over as Panthaki (Head Priest) since 1984. At this moment the trustees of the Banaji Limji Agiary take this opportunity to record their deepest gratitude to Ervad Godrej Panthaki for having kept up the strictest religious traditions whilst performing all ceremonies and also for the over all upkeep of this ancient institution.

Past and Present Priests (Mobeds)

The Mobeds who served the Agiary for long periods are:

Late Ervad Faramroze B. Panthaki (1945-1983)

Ervad Sorabji R. Gowadia (1945-1974)

Ervad Nariman N. Panthaki (1945-1969)

Late Ervad Noshir S. Asli

Ervad Jal Pohowalla

Late Ervad Sheriar S. Gowadia

Ervad Maneck A. Jijina (1947-

Late Ervad Shapurji A. Jijina (-1970)

Late Ervad Manecksha B. Bharda (1947-1974)

Late Ervad Jehangir B. Panthaki (1946-1965)

Late Ervad Jehangirji Kotwal

Ervad Kobad M. Gowadia (1953-1980 and 1997-)

Ervad Yezdezard Sorab Panthaki (1957-1983)

Late Ervad Bhikhaji R. Jijina (1982-1990)

Late Ervad Rusi R. Jijina

Ervad Homi D. Dastur (1990-1993, 1994-)

Ervad Cawas Khurshedji Charna (1953-1958)

Ervad Rustomji Bomanji Sahiyar

Present Full-time Mobeds :

Maneck A. Jijina

Homi D. Dastur (Jamasp Asa)

Kobad M. Gowadia

Rusi P. Kanga

Hoshang R. Jijina

Ashtad A. Rawji

Other Famous Members of Seth Banaji Limji Family

Descendants of Byramji (Davar) Banaji Limji (1681-1753)
The eldest son of Seth Banaji Limji :

Seth Kavasji Byramji Banaji Limji (1740-1834), was the 5th and the youngest son of Seth Byramji Banaji Limji. His son consecrated the Kavasji Byramji Banaji Atash Behram (Kadmi) in his memory.

Seth Framji Kavasji Banaji (1786-1851)

He was the eldest son of Seth Kavasji Byramji Banaji Limji. He was one of the greatest of Bombay's scientific agriculturists and the efforts he made on his estate at Powai, in Salsette, earned for him the title of "Lord Leicester of Western India". He was one of the founders of the Bombay Times, now the Times of India, a promoter of the old Bombay Bank, 1840, and a Director of the G.I.P. Railway, in 1844. In him the Parsis lost an enterprising and industrious Sethia and the Bombay Presidency a good and a great man.

Seth Rustamji Kavasji Banaji (1792-1852)

He was the younger brother of Seth Framji Kavasji Banaji. He was the owner of Howrah and Princess Docks. He did much for the prosperity of Parsis in Bengal and gave lakhs of rupees in charity.

Seth Kharsetjee Kavasji Banaji, J.P. (1790-1847)

He was one of the active and enterprising Parsi merchants of China and England, his firm owning six sailing vessels. He constructed the great buildings at Colaba and in 1830, he became owner of the Goregaum Estate, in Salsette, which he greatly improved. He was one of the twelve Justices of the

Peace first created by Government in 1834. He was a trustee of the Parsi Panchayet. When Kharsetjee died in 1847, a Bombay English newspaper came out 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 Rustomjee Kavasji Banaji (1792-1852)

Rustomjee Kavasji was the youngest brother of Seth Framji Kavasji with whom he carried on business till 1807, and in 1812 first went to Calcutta and settled in that city with his family in 1838. He was known as 'The Enterprising Merchant Prince' of Calcutta. He went to China twice on business and also to Madras and Ceylon. In 1819, he opened the firm of Rustomjee Turner & Co., and eight years later, a branch in China. In 1837, along with some other partners, he bought the Calcutta Docking Company, founded the Sun Insurance Office, and established a Cotton Screw and a Paper Manufactory at Calcutta. His and his son's firms owned in all 27 ships, 15 of which were chartered by the British Government during the Chinese War. He also founded an Agiary at Calcutta. He was one of the twelve Justices of Peace created by the Calcutta Government in 1835. 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.'

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 Sohrabji Pestonji Framji

He was a brilliant scion of the Banaji family, and was a grandson of Framji Kawasji Behramji 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, and in 1840 A.D., he got the 'West Scholar' diploma conferred on him by the Native Education Society. He joined the firm of his august grandfather Seth Framji Kavasji Banaji. Later on, he joined in partnership with his cousin, Maneckji Nanabhoy and opened a branch in 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 Framji Kavasji 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 Kavasji Behramji 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.

Seth Byramjee Nanabhoy Framji Banaji (1840-1901)

He was a grandson of the well-known philanthropist Seth Framji Kavasji Banaji. With rare skill and ability and by his business acumen, 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 and the French line.

Other prominent members of the Banaji Limji Family were:

Seth Limji N. Banaji, Bar-at-Law who was Bombay High Court's first Parsi Prothonotary and Ecclesiastical Registrar.

Seth Cowasjee 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.

Seth Banaji Limji Family and Their Relationships with Other Famous Parsi Families

Seth Nusserwanji Rustomji Byramji Banaji Limji (1752-1806) married Seth Hirji Jiwanji Kukaji Sui Readymoney's daughter Sunaiji. Their eldest son Seth Jehangir Nusserwanji Banaji was adopted by Seth Hirji Jiwanji Kukaji Sui Readymoney, hence he changed his name to Seth Jehangir Hirji Readymoney. Now, Seth Hirji Jiwanji Kukaji Sui Readymoney's third daughter Bhikhaiji married Seth Khurshedji Ardeshir Dadibhai Nusserwanji (Dadyseth). Their eldest daughter Meherbai married Seth Jehangir Hirji Readymoney. Their eldest son was Seth Hirji Jehangir Hirji Readymoney while their second son was Sir Cowasjee Jehangir, Kt., C.S.I. Seth Jehangir, the grandson of Seth Hirji Jehangir Hirji Readymoney and the grand-nephew and adopted son of Sir Cowasjee Jehangir, Kt., C.S.I. became Sir Cowasjee Jehangir, 1st Baronet and married Dhunbai, the daughter of Seth Ardeshir Hormasjee Bomanjee Wadia (1812-1882) the Co-Founder of Seth Hormasjee Bomanjee Wadia Atash Behram. Now Seth Hirji Jiwanji Kukaji Sui Readymoney's second daughter Jeewanai married Seth Navroji Rustomji Dadabhoy Nadirshah (Sui). From the above we can observe the link among four famous Parsi Families: Banaji, Readymoney, Dadysett and Wadia.

It is interesting to note that Seth Dadibhai Nusserwanjee Dadysett (1734-1799) established the first Kadmi Fire Temple (Dadysett Atash Behram), in 1783 A.C. while Seth Ardeshir Dadibhai Dadysett (1755-1810) established Dadysett Agiary in Fort, Mumbai, in 1803 A.C. The above four famous Parsi families are also linked in various ways with other famous Parsi families of Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, Baronet, Sir Dinshaw Manockjee Petit, Baronet, Seth Jeejeebhoy Dadabhoy, Seth Framji Bhikaji Panday, J. R. D. Tata and other famous Parsi families.

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Appreciation

The Trustees of the Banaji Limji Agiary are extremely thankful to the following Donors who have donated Rs. 10,000/- and above towards the Repair Fund of the Seth Banaji Limji Agiary :

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We the Trustees of the Banaji Limji Agiary are also thankful to all the anonymous donors who have put in their donations in the Repair Fund Box of the Agiary.

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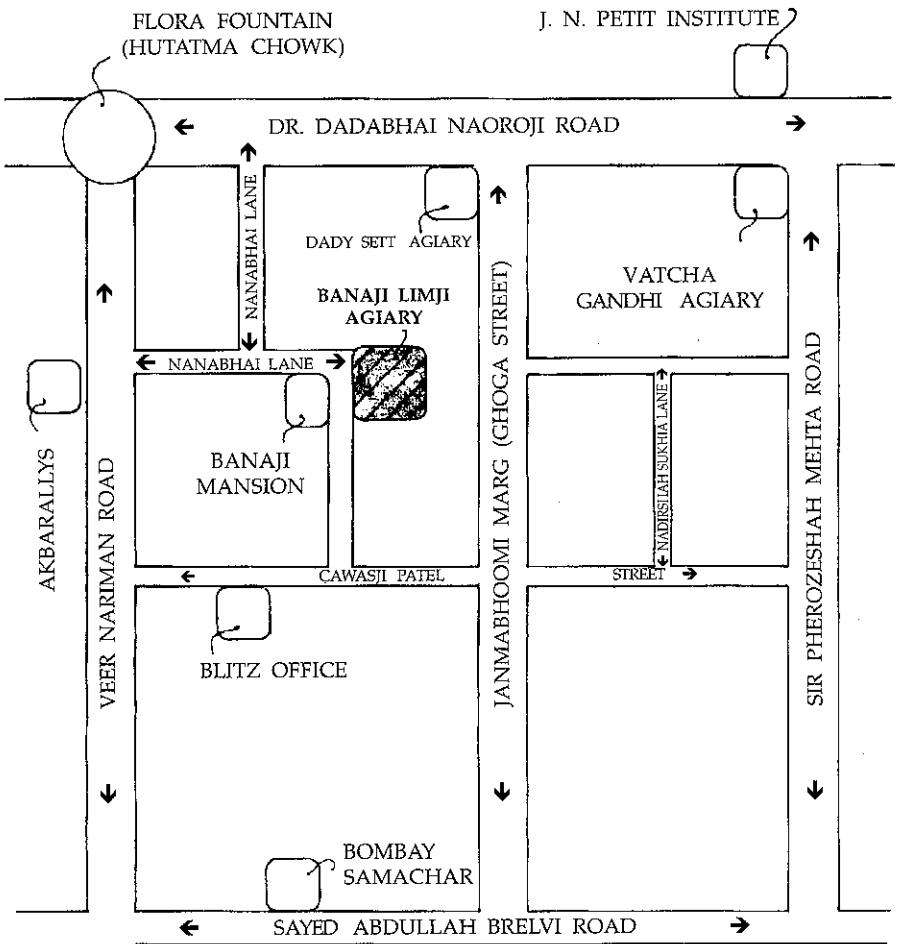
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