



BHARUCHA, SHERIARJI DADABHAI

BHARUCHA, SHERIARJI DADABHAI, Parsi scholar, born at Broach in 1843. His father, Dadabhai Furdoonji, the Panthaki of the Hamavara Dar-e Mihr at Broach, was well versed in Persian and religious matters and was a major influence on his son's career. As a youth Sheriarji studied Persian and Arabic.

His Persian verses attracted attention as a result of which he came down to Bombay in April, 1861, and began the study of Pahlavi under K. R. Cama. He also learned English, French, German, and Sanskrit and was exposed to Latin and Greek. Along with K. E. Kanga, T. D. Anklesaria, E. K. Antia, and J. D. Nadirshah, Sheriarji joined the Sir J. J. Zarthoshti Madressa founded in memory of the late Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy; he studied and taught there and wrote for *Zarthoshti abhyas* (Zoroastrian studies). He taught at the Mulla Feroze Madressa, which was functioning since 1854. He received the Sir J. J. Z. Madressa Gold Medal, and was appointed a Fellow. He left the Madressa in 1870 and in 1871 joined the Elphinstone College, passing the F.E.A. in 1874; but ill health and writer's palsy prevented him from completing his B.A.

His independent and radical views on the Zoroastrian religion and his propagating of reformist ideas caused increasing controversy, but Cama helped him financially and encouraged him to advance his studies, and he taught Persian at two Bombay schools. He won the prize of the Zarthoshti Din-ni Khol Karnari Mandali (Society for the promotion of research in the



Zoroastrian religion) on the subject of the Pahlavi text *Pand-nāma ī Ādurbād Mahraspand*. The religiously radical Rahnumae Mazdayasnan Sabha (Religious reform society) appointed him to write on the ceremonies of the dead in Zoroastrian scriptures, with his own commentary. He completed this work, considered his best, in 1884, after ten years of prolonged study of the manuscripts in the libraries of Navsari, Surat, and Broach. The Society eventually published his book *Rististan* in 1917, after his death. In 1877 he was appointed teacher of Avesta, Pahlavi, Persian, and Sanskrit at the Sir Cowasjee Jehangir Zarthoshti Madressa in Navsari, where he taught religious studies to the practicing priests of the Vadi Dar-e Mihr, and to their children. His many pupils included Erwad Cursetji E. Pavri and Erwad Kavasji E. Kanga (qq.v.). He lectured in Navsari until 1885 and was held in high esteem by the local laity.

The Rahnumae Sabha then employed him to deliver lectures and sermons and to write a series of books on the Zoroastrian religion. Opposition to his views intensified, as they became increasingly liberal under the Sabha's influence, and he was jeered at as its paid servant. For eleven years he delivered a series of lectures, some of which raised bitter controversies and arguments within the community. In 1896 he was appointed librarian of the Mulla Feroze Library, which post he resigned due to failing eyesight three or four years prior to his death. In 1898 the government appointed him a fellow of Bombay University, where he was an examiner in Avestan and Pahlavi. He supported K. R. Cama during the Zoroastrian calendar (q.v.) controversy, played a leading part in the debates, and in 1909, after the death of Cama, became the president of the Zarthoshti Fasli Sal Mandal. During the evening of his life, he prepared *Lessons in Avesta and Pahlavi Pazand* for the [Bombay Parsi Panchayat](#), and edited the Sanskrit writings of the Parsis compiled by Neryosangh Dhawal and other priests. During the last years of his life he was criticized for his reformist views that the Zoroastrian religion was not meant for a particular fold but was open for all, irrespective of color, caste, and creed, being called upon to give his views in the Parsi Panchayat case of 1906 (Sir Dinsha M. Petit & Others . . . Plaintiffs vs. Sir Jamsetji Jeejeebhoy & Others . . . Defendants).

Although frail in health, he had a powerful and alert mind. He was kind and simple, and carried out his duties with no ambition for recognition or fame. He was of a very touchy temperament and must have keenly felt the diatribes against him, but he managed to preserve a calm exterior. Even though he was offered the dasturship of the Dadyseth Atash Bahram and was twice pressured to become dastur of Broach, he declined the offers and never performed any



priestly functions once he left Broach. He died on 2 September 1915.

His major works published in Bombay include: “Brief Sketch of the Zoroastrian Religion and Customs” (a paper prepared for the World Parliament of Religions, Chicago, 1893; 2nd ed., Bombay, 1903; 3rd ed., Bombay, 1928). *Collected Sanskrit Writings of the Parsis*, pts. 1-6, 1906-33; *Lessons in Avesta*, pts. 1-3, 1907; “Dasatir, Being a Paper Prepared for the Tenth International Congress of Orientalists held at Geneva in 1894 A.C.,” 1907; *Lessons in Pahlavi-Pazend*, 1908-09; *Avesta-English and English-Avesta Dictionary*, 1910; *Pahlavi-Pazend-English Glossary and English-Pahlavi-Pazend Glossary*, 1912. In Gujarati: *A Brief Outline of Avestan Grammar Compared with Sanskrit*, 1863; *Some Exalted Characteristics and Works of Holy Zartuxsht According to the Gathas*, 1887; *Zoroastrian Ethics*, pts. 1-7, 1889-1910; *Pand Nameh Adurbad Mahraspand*, 1869; *Selected Patets*, 1899; “Intercalation Should be Made Every Four Years,” 1909; “Every Zoroastrian Should Become an Honest Reformist,” 1901; *Songs from “Zoroastrian Ethics”*, 1911; *Rististān-Zoroastrian Funeral Rites*, 1917; *Expenses Incurred on Performance of Proper and Improper Ceremonies for the Dead*, 1901; translation of the *Dādestān ī dēnīg* (in collaboration with Erwad T. D. Anklesaria), 1926; *Soul and Farohar*, 1933; *Three Important Stages in Life: Birth, Marriage, Death*, 1934; *Selected Passages on the Iranians from Al-Biruni’s Book, with Comments*, 1940.

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(Kaikhusroo M. JamaspAsa)