



## KUKADARU, JAMSHEDJI SORAB

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**KUKADARU, JAMSHEDJI SORAB** (b. Surat, 26 May 1831; d. Bombay, 4 October 1900), Parsi Zoroastrian priest. Kukadaru was born in Surat (Gujarat, India) but spent most of his life in Bombay (modern Mumbai). He was known for his simple and ascetic lifestyle and for paying extremely rigorous respect to priestly purity rules. He spent the larger part of his time in prayers and rituals. Although he was a mere ritual priest, as of 1862 he was publicly addressed as Dastur (High-priest; see Patel, II, p. 62).

Kukadaru served as chief instructor at Seth Jijibhai Dadabhai Zand Avesta Madressa in Bombay from its inception in 1863 until it was closed down (Patel, III, p. 804). In 1872 he complained to the [Bombay Parsi Panchayat](#) that he had advertised his plan to publish an edition and translation of the *Dēnkard* in five volumes, but that this plan had been subverted by the trustees' decision to entrust this work to Dastur Peshotan Sanjana (1857-1931, see [SANJANA, DASTUR DARAB PESHOTAN](#)). His request to make him a collaborator of Sanjana was turned down by the trustees (Desai, p. 67).

As a learned priest, Kukadaru lectured on religious and social issues (Patel, II, pp. 95, 692) and contributed religion-related articles to the magazine *Yazdān parast* which was published between 1868 and 1889 (Patel, II, p. 246; III, p. 804). Moreover, he published two booklets—*Kho-lāsāe āfrinagān* (Explanation of the Āfrinagān, 1864) and *Hekāyate āfrinagān* (Facts about the āfringān,



1866)—taking a stance in the controversy that was raging among the priests about the prayers to be recited within the *Āfrinagān* and the *Jāšān* (q.v.) rituals (Patel, II, p. 62). He was also involved in other controversies and legal cases.

Kukadaru was a reputed astrologer. He was renowned for his spiritual powers, in particular with respect to healing and divination. He is reported to have prophesized several events (including the death of certain persons) and outwitted a Muslim *pir* (spiritual master) who had challenged him.

Dastur Kukadaru was a member of the managing committee of the Anjuman Atash Behram temple in Bombay during the time of its construction (Patel, III, p. 654). He was publicly thanked for his generous donation of Rs. 8,500 towards the building of the temple. In commemoration of his efforts, the main hall on the ground floor of the Anjuman Atash Behram bears Kukadaru's name. In his commitment to this project, he lined up with the Jamasp-Asa family against the Sanjanas, as the latter were in charge of the already existing Atash Behram temple that followed the same (Shenshai) calendar (see [CALENDARS iv.](#)).

Possibly as an explanation of how a modest ritual priest could have procured such a large amount of money, the legend started to circulate later that it was the power of his prayers that had materialized gold. Posthumously, Dastur Kukadaru rose to become one of the most famous priests in Parsi history. Rituals on the occasion of his anniversary are performed on popular demand to this day, and a bust of Dastur Kukadaru (showing him bespectacled, wearing a beard and a priestly turban) is one of the most popular iconographical materials within the Parsi community. Prayer in front of his image is said to bring the fulfillment of one's wishes.

Kukadaru's posthumous fame was further reinforced when he began to appear, in the form of a light-aura, to Ervad Nadirshah Aibara (1933-89), another ritual priest. Dastur Kukadaru would transmit prayers to Aibara who would then hand over these ritual prescriptions to his clients. The powerful "vibrations" of these prayers have reportedly "healed" thousands of Zoroastrians. After the death of Aibara, this tradition was continued by his widow (Kreyenbroek and Munshi, pp. 259-66).

From the gifts that devotees wanted to present him, Aibara started the Dastoorji Kookadaru Memorial Fund, which eventually sponsored the consecration (in 1990) of a new fire-temple in Sanjan (Gujarat), the reputed



landing-place of the Parsis at the Indian west coast. This is the one and the only Parsi fire temple named in the memory of a priest (Dastoorji Kookadaru Dar-e Mehr). As a priest-saint and posthumous ritual healer, Dastur Kukadaru is a unique figure in the history of modern Zoroastrianism (Stausberg, III, pp. 123-25).

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