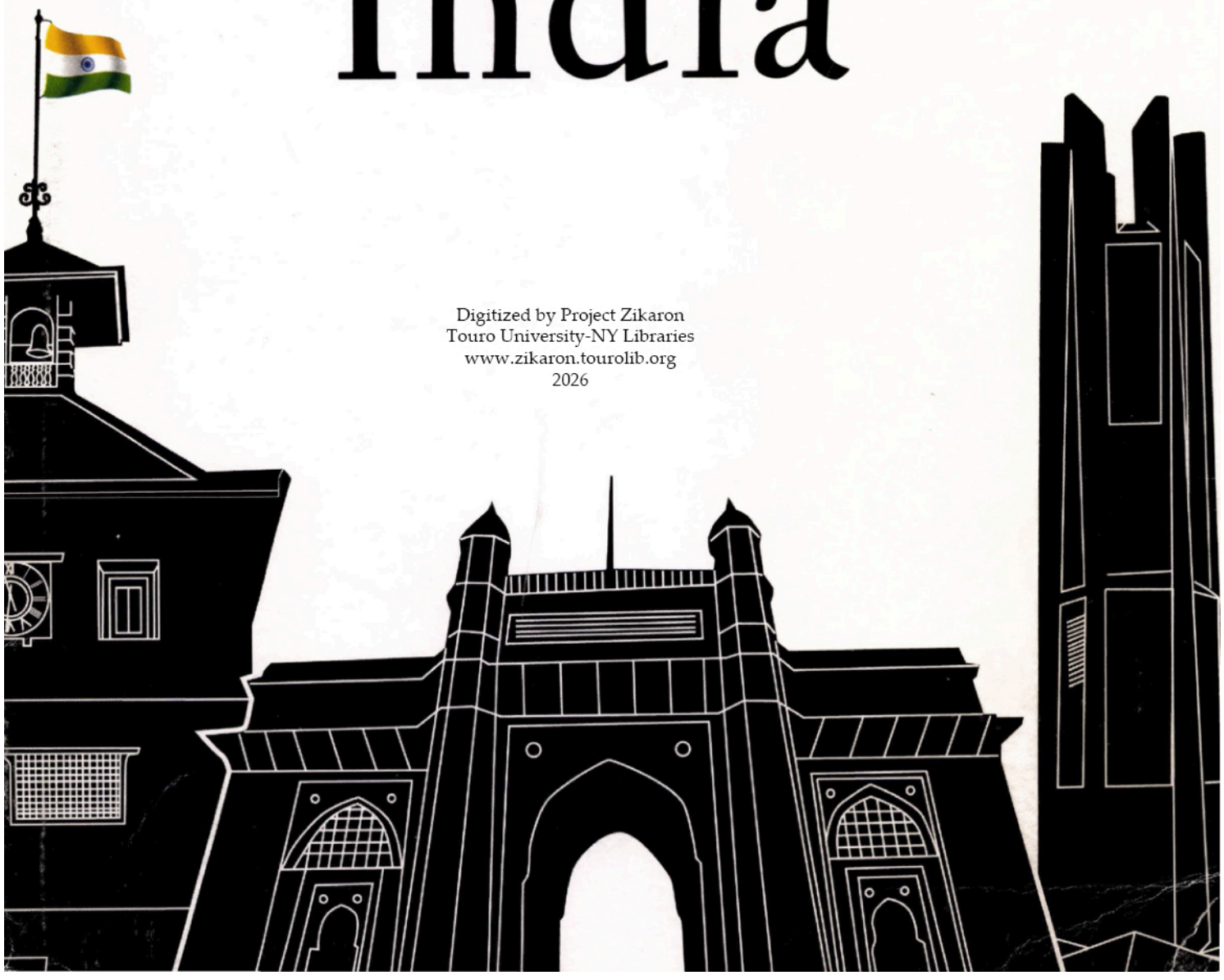
Jewish Landmarks of India



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This book is dedicated to :

Sir Elly Kadoorie
1865 – 1944
the
Philanthropist

Sir Elly Kadoorie's motto was: *"Wealth is a sacred trust to be administered for the good of society".* The famous Indian poet Sir Rabindranath Tagore is said to have influenced Sir Elly's philosophy on philanthropy and education.



Sir Elly, knighted in 1926, was a businessman and philanthropist of Iraqi Jewish origin. In the late 1870s, he travelled from Baghdad to Bombay to work for the Sassoons, before establishing himself in the Far East. He went on to gain success in his various business ventures, including hospitality and electricity. He built non-denominational schools and hospitals in India, Iran, Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, France, Portugal, England and China and was the first to provide educational facilities for girls in many parts of the Middle East. In 1932, Sir Elly generously funded the renovation of the Israelite School in Bombay, which became the Sir Elly Kadoorie School. The school is still in existence today. In Hong Kong, Sir Elly's brother, Sir Ellis, founded the Sir Ellis Kadoorie School for Indians. It was the first school in Hong Kong to introduce Hindi and Urdu languages.

✡ JEWISH LANDMARKS OF INDIA ✡

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FOREWORD

Buildings, like expensive wine, acquire value with time. Born from tradition, they mark a culture and signify a moment in a particular time and place. Libraries, places of worship and centres of education – all house activities, which require specific sites and buildings in which to develop. It is for this reason that buildings stand as a testimony to our history.

Unfortunately, many historic Jewish landmarks in India have suffered from neglect. Some have disappeared altogether due to natural degradation, whilst other familiar landmarks and historical edifices in the country are slowly but inexorably being wiped out under the rapid onslaught of urbanisation. A few landmarks, however, still continue to fulfil the functions for which they were designed.

The architecture of a city reflects its citizen's needs in a way no other form of art expresses. It is the most complete and accurate witness to the material and spiritual conditions of an age. The preservation of these buildings is therefore the concern of every Jew living in the country. Unfortunately, history is often neglected – it is not a focal point of most people's lives. The Jewish community is only a drop in the vast ocean of Indian culture. This fact, however, does not absolve us of our indifference and negligence towards the rich heritage left by our forefathers.

Like any other nation, India is made up of a fascinating diversity of people, culture and landscapes. Despite its preoccupation with agriculture, commerce and industry, India remains a premier intellectual centre; and under its conspicuously Western veneer flourishes a variety of indigenous linguistic-regional traditions. In short, it is a multifunctional nation which houses a pluralistic society representing all the religions not only of India but also of the whole world.

India also displays other physical and spatial contrasts, both in terms of the urban mosaic and in terms of the urban – rural spectrum. Thus a journey from the city centre in south Mumbai to the suburban expanse in the north is not merely a matter of covering a physical distance of thirty to forty miles; it is a journey from a noisy and crowded central business district to the idyllic rural landscapes long associated with India.

The idea of this present publication was encouraged by Ms. Noami Gryn, who was visiting India to shoot a documentary on Indian Jews for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in 2009. She requested an earlier edition of Jewish Landmarks for her research, but alas only photocopies remained. This prompted her to approach the Hong Kong Heritage Project (HKHP) who thought it appropriate to chronicle Jewish Landmarks all over India. I am grateful to them for their support and co-operation and also wish to thank our local contributors for their valuable inputs in terms of the writing and research.

All current photographs included in this revised edition were taken by professional photographers on a series of exhausting trips. Photographing new reincarnations of old sites in India and drawing maps and diagrams to retrace the country's past has been an enlightening and rewarding experience indeed.

As I look back over the last two editions of this publication, I am happy to report that we have added new Jewish Landmarks, such as the Evelyn Peters Jewish Community Centre and Sassoon House, and there has been considerable development of three synagogues namely the Shaar Hashamaim of Thane, the Tiphereth Israel and Magen Hassidim Synagogues in Mumbai.

This book features not only Jewish landmarks, but also the significant contributions made by Jews towards the development of India. These contributions, whether financial or humanitarian, have left their impression in the hearts and minds of the local populace. This book is dedicated to those pioneers who left an indelible print on the sands of time.

Jewish Landmarks of India chronicles their glorious past and uncertain future. The purpose of this book is to create awareness and instill a sense of pride in us for now and posterity. We hope you enjoy reading this book as much as we have enjoyed creating it.

Elijah S. Jacob
Country Manager
AJDC - INDIA

ADVENT OF JEWS IN INDIA

Indian Jews are an ancient community made up of Bene Israelis (the largest community), the Cochinis and the Baghdadis.

THE BENE ISRAELIS

The Bene Israelis are the oldest Jewish community in India, having arrived two thousand years ago and constituting about 90% of the Jewish population in the country today. They have always lived in harmony with their fellow religionists and freely practice their religion today.

The Bene Israelis claim to have descended from the "ten lost tribes" of Israel; their ancestors having escaped by sea from the persecution of the Greek overlord Antiochus Epihanes in the year 175 B.C.E., landing shipwrecked on the shores of Navgaon. The Bene Israelis subsequently settled in Konkan, adopting the local customs and the native Marathi language. They worked in the oil pressing and agricultural industries, and due to their observation of the Sabbath (the day of rest), they were known as Shanwar Tellis (Saturday Oilmen). Although the Bene Israelis were said to have lost all their holy books in the shipwreck, forgetting all prayers except "Shema Yisrael", they observed the Sabbath and major Jewish festivals and practised circumcision.



Oil Press in Revdanda, Konkan village

Towards the middle of the 18th century, there was a gradual influx of Bene Israelis into Mumbai from the neighbouring Konkan villages. This was mainly due to the development of the transport system and the growth of employment opportunities in the army with the advent of British rule, as well as a tolerant religious climate under Governor Gerald Aungier. The Bene Israelis were known for their valour and fighting spirit which distinguished them from other soldiers in the British Army.



The Gate of Mercy Synagogue, Mumbai

One such Bene Israeli soldier was Commandant Samaji Hasaji Divekar - Samuel Divekar. In one of the wars fought by the British against the kingdom of Mysore in south India, he was captured along with other British Indian soldiers. The King of Mysore, Tipu Sultan, who was a Muslim, was about to order Divekar's execution when his mother intervened, saying that the Bene Israelis are referred to in the Koran as the Chosen People of the Almighty. After being spared, Samuel Divekar decided to thank the Lord by building a synagogue. He built the first Bene-Israel synagogue in India in 1796. It was named "Shaar Harahamim" (Gate of Mercy) Synagogue, and is situated at Samuel Street in Mumbai.

Soon after the Shaar Harahamim Synagogue was built, four synagogues were constructed and the community enjoyed a resurgence of congregational worship. Many Bene Israelis came to Mumbai to enlist in the army, whilst others took to government service. In 1875, Samuel Haeem Kehimkar founded the "Israelite School" (renamed the Sir Elly Kadoorie School in 1934) to provide education for the youth of the community.

The Bene Israelis excelled in the Army, the Navy and the Air Force both before and after Indian Independence in 1947.

They held high positions in various government departments, and many were doctors, lawyers, engineers, writers, educators, architects and social workers – indeed a vast array of professions that made up the rich social fabric of this community. Dr. E. Moses, himself a Bene Israeli, was Mayor of Mumbai in 1937.

At the time of Indian Independence, the entire Bene Israeli community in the country stood at approximately 20,000 persons. However, the number significantly dropped within a few years of the establishment of Israel in 1948, due to systematic immigration to this newly established state. Today, the Bene Israeli community in Mumbai, Pune, Ahmedabad, Calcutta, Cochin and Delhi, stands at around 5,000.

Jews first came to Thane in the 16th century. Most served in the army, giving gallant service under the great Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj who created an independent Maratha Kingdom in the 1600s. Many Jews gained employment in the GIP railway project constructed during British rule. The railway track from Thane to Mumbai was completed in 1853, and the Parsik Tunnel connecting Thane and Kalyan, was constructed at a later date. Many Jews who worked in Thane settled there after retirement, thus increasing the numbers in the community. Jews lived with their religious neighbours in harmony, understanding and co-operation.

In 1879, the Jewish community of Thane pooled together their resources and built a beautiful stone synagogue.



Thane Synagogue before redevelopment

THE JEWS OF COCHIN

A large community of Jews settled on the Malabar coast almost two thousand years ago, with the first Jews arriving in Cranganore in the 1st century.



Chennamangalam Synagogue - Kerala

Evidence of this extensive settlement is recounted on two copper plates which are today housed in the Paradesi Synagogue, Cochin. Their exact date of origin is unknown, with some estimates dating the plates to the 4th century.

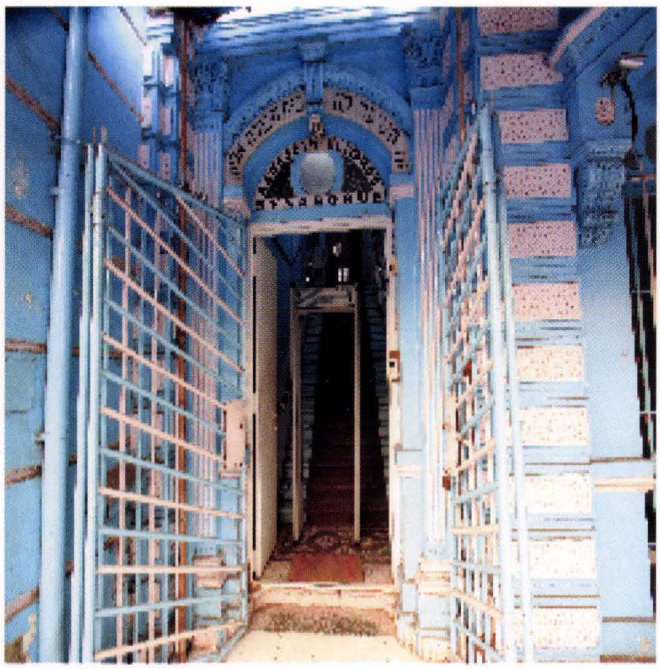
The Raja of Cranganore once used these copper plates to grant Jews the right to live and trade in the village of Anjuvannam, where they lived until 1524. The Jewish community in Cranganore came to an end after the war with the Moors broke out, and settled in the territories ruled by the Raja of Cochin.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Jewish emigrants from Cochin published Hebrew prayer books for the Bene Israels in Mumbai. Notably, Rabbi Hayyim Joseph Hallegua, a member of a prominent Cochin family who had moved to Mumbai, was instrumental in publishing the Marathi translation of the Passover Haggadah for the Bene Israelis in 1846. The leaders of the Cochin Jewish community maintained close contacts with the Jewish communities inside and out of India. Cochin Jews are credited as being pioneers of the Hebrew printing press in India. In Mumbai, they were engineers and technocrats in textile and allied industries, whilst others were teachers. Today, this community has dwindled considerably and there are just a few families left in Cochin, consisting of 44 Jews. In Mumbai, only a few individuals can trace their roots to this community.

THE BAGHDADI JEWS

In the late 18th century, Jews from Arab countries and Iraq arrived in India. Coming mostly from Baghdad and therefore called "Baghdadi Jews", these Jews also hailed from other parts of Iraq, as well as Persia (Iran), Syria and Yemen. This community came to India following persecution in their countries but also for commercial gain; many were to become

highly successful traders. In 1832, David Sassoon (1792 - 1864) fled persecution from Daud Pasha of Baghdad, arriving in Mumbai from Bushire in Persia and pioneering the Baghdadi Jewish immigration to India. The Sassoons, known as the *"Rothschilds of the East"*, would become Mumbai's largest mill owners in the 1920s. They played a major role in the industrialisation of Mumbai and provided the city with two Mayors.



The Keneset Eliyahoo Synagogue

In 1861, the Sassoons built the Magen David Synagogue in Byculla, south Mumbai, as well as many other cultural and civic institutions. David Sassoon's eldest son, Albert Sassoon, established the first of the large scale textile mills and constructed the Sassoon Dock at Colaba. Albert also contributed to the construction of the Elphinstone Technical School and provided financial support to a local Jewish school.

In 1867, Elias Sassoon (1820-1880) founded the firm E. D Sassoon and Co. His son, Sir Jacob Elias Sassoon (1844-1916) expanded his father's business by building a large textile company comprising silk mills and India's first dye works. The company was instrumental to the development of the cotton textile industry in western India. In 1916, the Jacob Sassoon Mill, India's largest mill, employed 15,000 workers. In Mumbai, Sir Jacob's philanthropic activities included building the Western wing of the Institute of Science and the Keneset Eliyahoo Synagogue at Fort, Mumbai. Today, Baghdadi Jews run small businesses in the commercial and educational spheres and the Sassoon Charity Trust looks after the poor and the destitute in the community.

Presently, as per the latest trends in demographics, there are approximately 5,000 Jews remaining in India.

Microscopic as the Jewish community of India is, they have made a contribution to the economic, cultural and social development of the country, and are proud of their Indian heritage, traditions and culture. To the credit of the tolerant spirit of India, there has been no discrimination of any kind against Jews. India is a country in which there is no anti-semitism. Indian Jews serve as ambassadors of goodwill and peace between India and Israel.

* * * * * *

JEWISH ACHIEVEMENTS IN GOVERNMENT

Member of Legislative Assembly :

Sir Victor Sassoon 1920

Presidents of Bombay Municipal Corporation :

Sir Sassoon David, BART, J.P ..... 1921 – 22

Mr. Meyer Nissim, M.A. J.P ..... 1929 – 30

Mayor of Bombay Municipal Corporation :

Dr. Elijah Moses, M.D., J.P ..... 1937 – 38

* * * * * *

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V. Historical Background of the Settlement of the Baghdadi Jewish community in Bombay by Madame Sophie Kelly.

VI. Kerala Jews : a Vanishing Tribe? by R.K. Raju.

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MUMBAI - A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Mumbai, formerly known as Bombay, is the capital of the Indian state of Maharashtra. Gardens, shops, statues, monuments, resplendent old buildings and the city's people make Mumbai not only beautiful but also fascinating. It is a place where one can glimpse the old and the new simultaneously, where old forms of transport and modern vehicles run side by side and slums and skyscrapers coexist in the same arena.

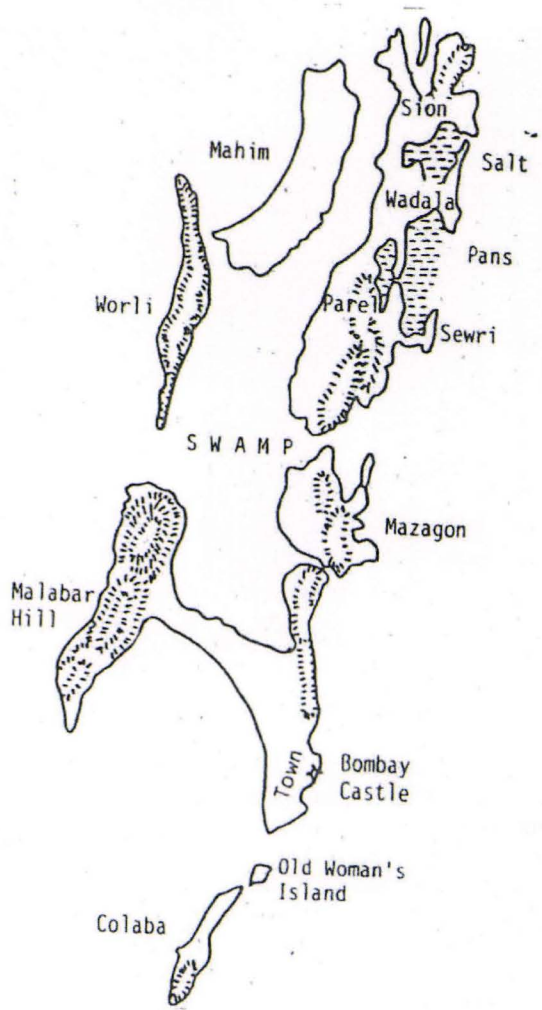
Mumbai is also a historic city. The earliest mention of Mumbai is in a manuscript written in Nevari script by a tantric dating back to the 12th century. Entitled "The Dharkarnava" and housed in Nepal's Durbar Library, the manuscript speaks of the shrine of Mumbadevi in Mumbai. At the time, Mumbai was a small island whose earliest inhabitants were fishermen.

The name Bombay was derived from "Maha Amba" or "Great Amba" - the name given to the goddess Bhavani. Later, the name was corrupted into "Bom Baia" by the Portuguese, meaning "Good Bay" and anglicised to "Bombay" by the British. The city was re-named Mumbai in 1995. During the past thousand years, Mumbai has been governed by Hindus, Mohammedans, the Portuguese and the British.

The Mughal Empire, founded in 1526, was the dominant power in the Indian subcontinent during the mid-16th century. Growing apprehensive of the power of the Mughal emperor Humayun, Sultan Bahadur Shah of the Gujarat Sultanate was obliged to sign the Treaty of Bassein with the Portuguese Empire on 23rd December 1534. From 1534 until 1549, Mumbai was leased to Mestre Diogo by the Portuguese, after which it was granted in perpetuity to Dr. Garcia Da Orta, the Portuguese Sephardic Jew and celebrated botanist who pioneered tropical medicine. The annual rent paid was the equivalent of Rs. 537.

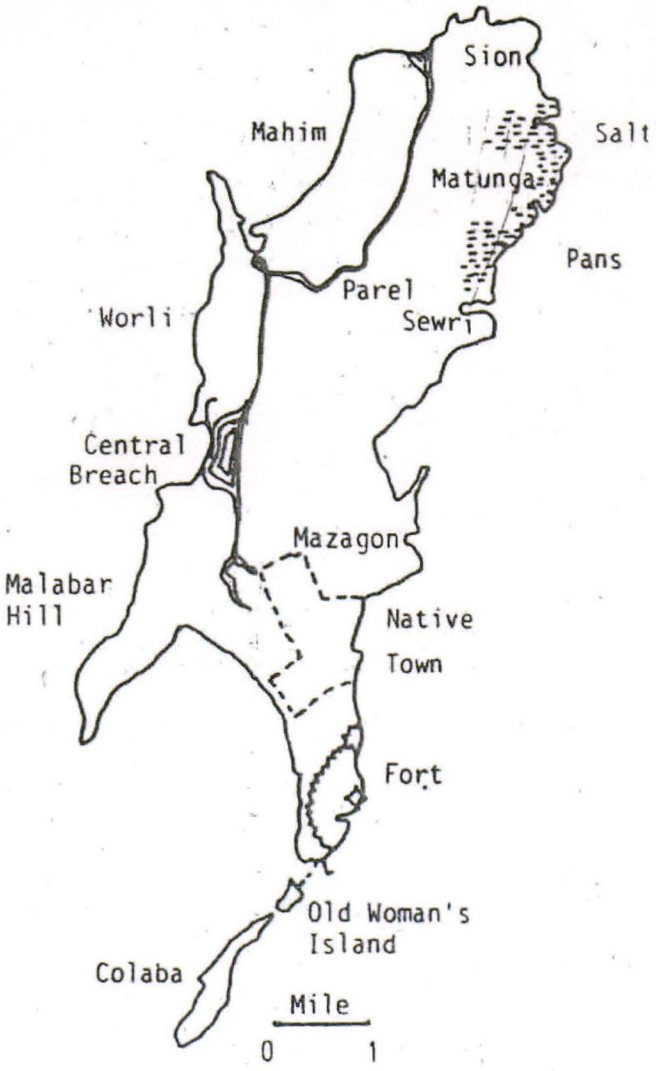
Mumbai was built on what was once an archipelago of seven islands: Mumbai Island, Parel, Mazagaon, Mahim, Colaba, Worli, and Old Woman's Island (also known as Little Colaba). On account of Mumbai's strategic position, natural harbour and the need for port facilities in Western India, British settlers arriving at Surat from the beginning of the 17th century soon realised Mumbai's value as a natural port.

The long standing British ambition to capture Mumbai was finally achieved in 1662, when a marriage treaty was signed between King Charles II of England and Princess Catherine Braganza of Portugal. The bride's dowry was the island of Mumbai, with *"All the rights, profits, territories and appurtenances whatsoever thereunto belonging"*. In the year 1668, the islands were leased to the British East India Company from the British crown for an annual sum of 10 pounds in gold. The move of the East India Company's headquarters to Mumbai from Surat in 1687 led to the decline of Surat as a principal trading centre. Gerald Aungier, the Governor of Mumbai from 1669 to 1677, is acknowledged as the pioneer of Mumbai's initial development.

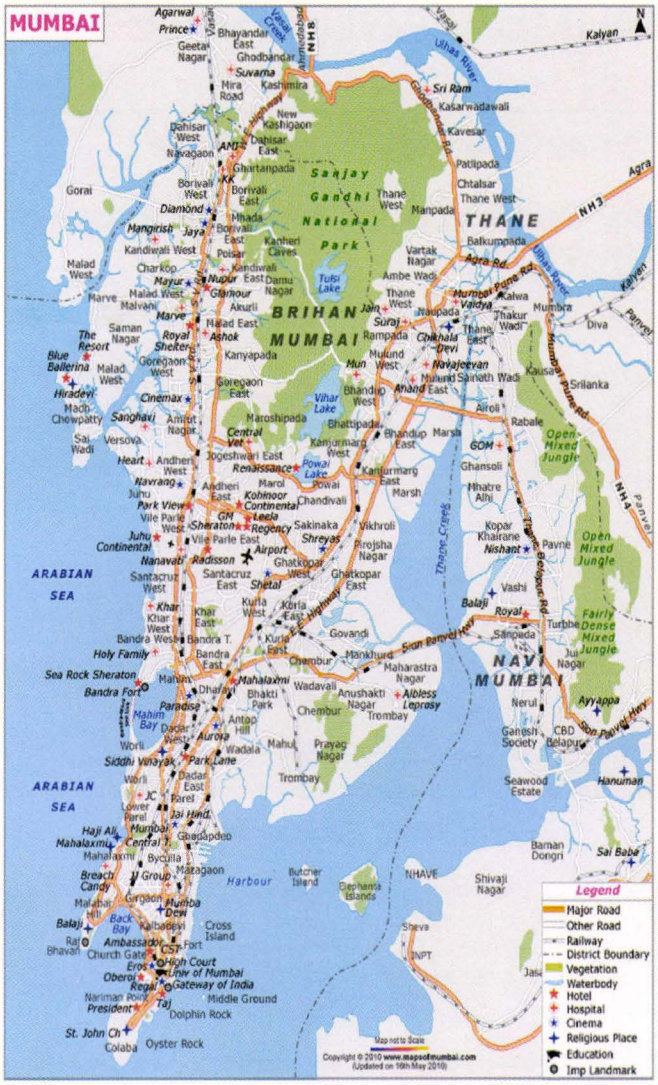


Bombay Island, about 1670

Modern science and technology also made their inroads into this tiny island city. The railway was opened in 1853 and the city was telegraphically connected with Calcutta in 1854 and with Europe ten years later.



Bombay Island, about 1815



Modern map of Mumbai

In 1858, following the First War of Independence in 1857, the East India Company was accused of mismanagement and the islands reverted to the British Crown. By 1862, the town had spread over the lands reclaimed through constructions of causeways and it is from this date we have the rise of the modern city of Mumbai. Under the British, Mumbai became a major port from where Indian goods were exported.

Today, Mumbai's urban expanse is considerable. The size of the city proper is small, but an influx of immigrants has led to suburban spillover northward to far-flung areas such as Thane, Vasai and Virar, which have all come under Mumbai's jurisdiction. Being one of India's major economic capitals, Mumbai continues to innovate and caters to the needs of different faiths and people from all walks of life.



Hutatma Chowk, Mumbai

MUMBAI AND THANE

Synagogues and Prayer Halls

THE 'SHAAR HARAHAMIM' OR GATE OF MERCY SYNAGOGUE

Situated at 254, Samuel Street, Mumbai – 400 003.



Gate of Mercy Synagogue Exterior

The Shaar Harahamim, also known as The Gate of Mercy Synagogue, is the oldest synagogue in Mumbai. Before the synagogue was established in 1796, the local Bene Israel community did not have the use of a synagogue for collective prayer.

Samuel Divekar, inspired by the Pardesi Synagogue built in Cochin in southern India in 1568, thought the Bene Israel community should also have a synagogue of their own and so he pioneered the construction of the *"Shaar Harahamim"* Synagogue.

The synagogue was finally completed on Samuel Street (named after Divekar) in May 1796. It was ideally located as the majority of Jews (around two thousand) resided in the vicinity on Samuel Street, Isaji Street (named after Samuel's brother, Isaac) and in Israel Mohalla (literally meaning "area where Jews resided"). The synagogue was therefore easily accessible to a sizeable congregation for daily worship.

The Divekar Family were responsible for the management of the synagogue during the early years. During this time, they acquired other properties from donations and from their own personal funds. The synagogue was subsequently rebuilt in 1860. From 1796 until 1889, synagogue affairs were controlled by Kammodan Muccadams (Presidents) and Choglas (Advisors). Advisors were elected by the congregation on the



Gate of Mercy Synagogue Interior

recommendation of the Muccadam, who managed the synagogue and settled disputes within the community. This system was very similar to the Panchayat form of governance found in Indian villages. From 1889 until today, the Managing Committee has been elected by general members at the annual election held in December. The Gate of Mercy Synagogue is a source of great pride to the Jewish community in India and abroad. The synagogue stands as a historical symbol to the religious aspirations of the Bene Israelis over 200 years ago, and has long been dedicated to the community in the wider spheres of education, health and social welfare.

THE SHAARE RASON SYNAGOGUE

90, Tantanpura St. Israel Mohalla, Khadak, Mumbai - 400 009.

The Shaare Rason Synagogue, originally known as the New Synagogue, is located a stone's throw away from the Gate of Mercy Synagogue. The New Synagogue was built from the



Shaare Rason Synagogue Exterior

voluntary contributions raised by a faction within the Jewish community who were unhappy with the management of the existing synagogue and so decided to establish their own.

In 1839, Mr. Samuel Jacob Divekar, Mr. Haeem Isaji Garsulkar and other Bene Israelis of Mumbai raised a sum of Rs. 2,725, with which they purchased a plot of land in December 1840. For three years after the purchase, the break-away group rented a room from Daniel Kehimkar Mistry, where they held religious services. The New Synagogue, later named the Shaare Rason was finally consecrated on 4th June 1843 in the present location at Tantanpura Street near Masjid Bunder.

THE MAGEN DAVID SYNAGOGUE

Situated at Byculla on Sir J. J. Rd., Mumbai – 400 008.

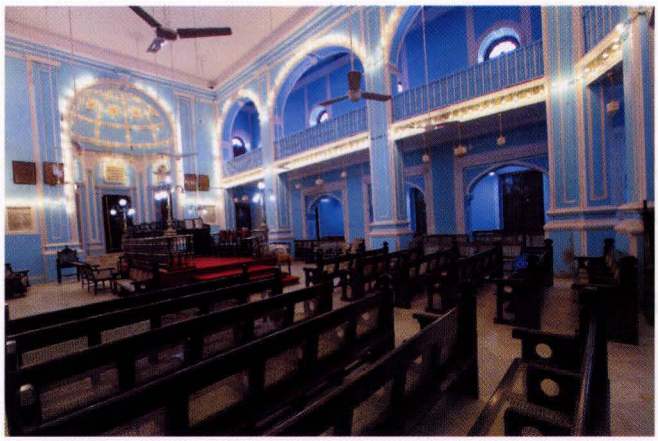
The Magen David Synagogue (Defender of David) is one of two synagogues built by the Sassoon family in Mumbai, the other being the Kenesset Eliyahoo Synagogue. An imposing building, the synagogue is notable for its Gothic character and its magisterial clock tower.



Magen David Synagogue Exterior

Completed in 1861, Magen David was built at the sole expense of David Sassoon, one of Mumbai's founding fathers, and was enlarged in 1910 by his descendent Sir Sassoon Bart to accommodate the growing Jewish population. The synagogue's ceiling lights were donated by Eugene Schildkrant of New York in 1956, in memory of his father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Schildkrant. The Magen David has an expansive Prayer Hall, with the upper gallery reserved exclusively for ladies. The synagogue today is managed by a group of Trustees belonging to the Sir Jacob Sassoon Charity Trust.

The Magen David Synagogue will be celebrating its 150th anniversary on 6th November 2011.



Magen David Synagogue Interior

THE KENESSET ELIYAHOO SYNAGOGUE

Situated near Jehangir Art Gallery Fort, Mumbai – 400 023.

Constructed in 1884, the Keneseth Eliyahoo Synagogue is one of the most beautiful and magnificent structures to grace the landscape around Mumbai's Fort area. The synagogue was built by Jacob Elias Sassoon and his brothers in memory of their father, Elias David Sassoon. Jacob Elias Sassoon purchased land from the Land Mortgage Bank of India, the total cost of which, including the synagogue construction, stood at Rs. 1,50,000.



Kenesset Eliyahoo Synagogue Exterior

The building was designed by Mr. D. E. Gostling C.E. and is painted in a beautiful light aquamarine blue that merges well with clear blue skies. The structure comprises two floors: the first floor consists of a spacious hall for men, and houses a unique Hechal for the Sefer Torahs. The carved wood of the Hechal reflects the craftsmanship prevailing in the days of the

British Raj. The second floor of the synagogue is occupied by a ladies gallery. The stained glass windows lend a touch of aesthetic class to the overall richness and grandeur of the interior. The building provides space for a community centre and school in the Habonim work room adjoining the synagogue.



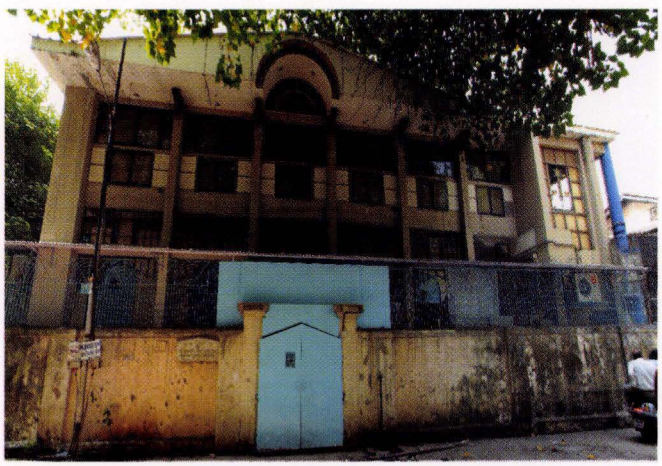
Kenesset Eliyahoo Synagogue Interior

The centenary celebrations of the Keneseth Eliyahoo Synagogue were held on 6th February 1985, attended by the former President of India, Giani Zail Singh. A commemorative stamp was issued by the Indian Post to mark the occasion.

THE TIPHERETH ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE

Situated at 92, Clarke Road, Jacob Circle, Mumbai – 400 011.

Although there were already two synagogues in existence in Mumbai, the Tiphereth Israel Synagogue was built due to an increase in the Jewish population at Jacob Circle and its neighbouring areas. In 1886, untiring and selfless social workers such as Mr. Benjamin Samson Ashtamkar, Mr. Solomon Benjamin Ghosalkar, Mr. Elijah Joseph Bhastekar and others initiated the Jacob Circle Prayer Hall in a rented building. A decade later, in 1896, the Prayer Hall was renamed The Tiphereth Israel Syangogue.



Tiphereth Israel Synagogue Exterior

The synagogue finally found its permanent home in 1923, when the "Rosh-Del Villa" was purchased for Rs. 35,600 following the collection of funds by Mr. Aaron Benjamin Kandlekar, who also donated Rs. 20,000 to its maintenance. The synagogue was consecrated on 23rd March 1924.



Tiphereth Israel Synagogue Interior

The synagogue was widely known as "Kandlekarranchi Masjid" in the local Marathi language, in acknowledgment of the noble and selfless service rendered by Mr. Kandlekar. The synagogue has never neglected the education of needy children and support for the poor, even when faced with the constrictions of a limited budget.

THE ETZ HAEEM PRAYER HALL

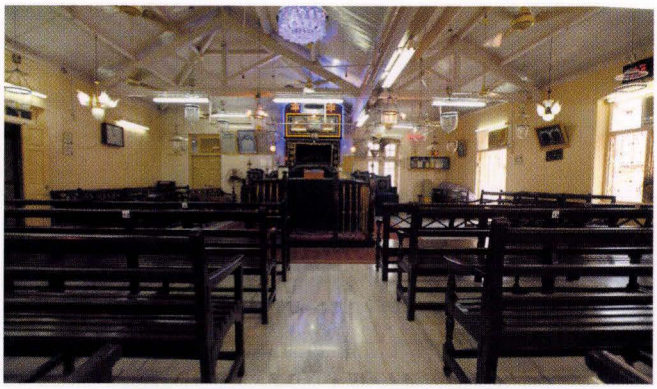
Situated at 19, Umerkhadi, Mumbai – 400 009.

The Etz Haeem Prayer Hall was instituted in 1888 by Mr. Haeem Samuel Kehimkar, the President, Secretary and Treasurer of the Israelite School which was later renamed the Sir Elly Kadoorie School in 1934.



Etz Haeem Synagogue Exterior

The Israelite School initially provided a room for the Etz Haeem Prayer Hall, which served as a centre for worship and also as an educational and social centre. The Prayer Hall also distinguished itself through its choir and by supporting the publication of books in Marathi regarding Judaism. The name 'Etz Haeem' means, appropriately, "Tree of Life".



Etz Haeem Synagogue Interior

In 1908, after Kehimkar's death, the Prayer Hall was moved to its present location in Umerkhadi. Today, the Etz Haeem Prayer Hall continues its many contributions towards needy Jews and the education of the Jewish community.

THE MAGEN HASSIDIM SYNAGOGUE

Situated at Agripada, Mumbai – 400 011.

The Magen Hassidim Synagogue was built close to Jacob Circle in 1904, eighteen years after the Tiphereth Israel Synagogue was built in the same area.

Some time after the inauguration of the Tiphereth Israel Synagogue, divisions arose within the congregation and a small faction decided to establish the Jacob Circle New Prayer Hall – a reference to the synagogue's original name back in 1886. The Prayer Hall would also be known as Dandoolkar's Prayer Hall because of the pivotal role Mr. Benjamin Samson Dandoolkar played in the hall's creation.



Magen Hassidim Synagogue Exterior

Land was acquired at Madanpura to build the synagogue, which was consecrated on 29th March 1931. A separate pavilion was built in the synagogue compound for weddings, receptions, cultural shows and social activities. The building was inaugurated in 1983.

Today, the Magen Hassidim Synagogue boasts the largest membership and congregation in Mumbai.



Magen Hassidim Synagogue Interior

THE KURLA BENE ISRAEL PRAYER HALL

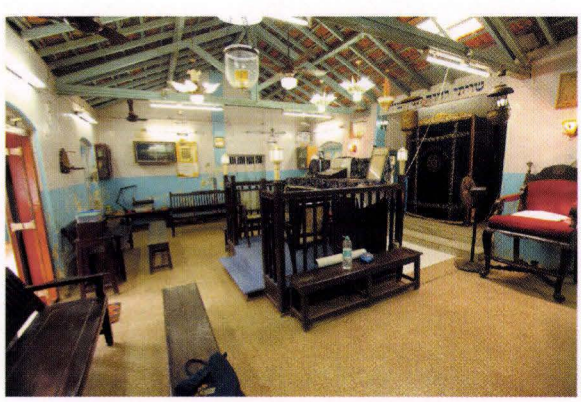
Situated at Jewish Colony, Kurla (W) Mumbai – 400 070.

Mr. Jhiradkar was the founding father of the Kurla Bene-Israel Prayer Hall. After Mr. Jhiradkar's death, Benjamin Shalom Sagaokar (Sagaoson) assumed his responsibilities. In 1943, the Old Court Building was leased to Mr. Sagaoson, who generously allocated the use of the hall for community prayer services. After Mr. Sagaoson's death, the hall was taken over by the Kurla Bene Israel Committee which held prayer services on Fridays and Saturdays. The lease of the Old Court Building was transferred to the Kurla Bene Israel Synagogue in 1958.



Kurla Prayer Hall Exterior

Today, prayers are carried out in the absence of a Hazzan (cantor). The Prayer Hall has proven itself as an important asset to the sizeable Jewish communities that reside in Chembur, Andheri, Ghatkopar and the Santacruz suburbs.



Kurla Prayer Hall Interior

THE RODEF SHALOM SYNAGOGUE

Situated at 23, Sussex Road, Victoria Gardens, Mumbai – 27.

The Rodef Shalom Synagogue (Pursuer of Peace) was established in 1959 by the Jewish Religious Union (JRU). The JRU was a progressive movement established by Dr. Jerusha Jacob Jhirad in 1925 to encourage meaningful worship and religious enlightenment.

Rabbi Hugo Gryn and his wife Jacqueline were pivotal to the establishment of the Rodef Shalom Synagogue. In August 1958, the couple received a donation from the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, with which the JRU purchased a section of Mathilda House. Built in 1907, Mathilda House was located in a predominantly Jewish area, and so was convenient for daily worship. The synagogue's architect Mr. Solly Reuben lent an aesthetic touch to convert the building into a peaceful place of worship, which was renamed Rodef Shalom.



Rodef Shalom Synagogue Exterior

Today, religious services are conducted both in Hebrew and English and sermons on ethical and biblical topics are delivered for children. Progressive Rabbis from the United Kingdom and the United States have visited the congregation, conducting High Holiday and Sabbath Services. The Rodef Shalom Synagogue also houses a Rabbi's flat and a Jewish Old Age Day Care Centre which is supervised by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in India.

SHAAR - HASHAMAIM "GATE OF HEAVEN" SYNAGOGUE, THANE

Situated near Civil Hospital, Synagogue Chowk,
Thane – 400 601.

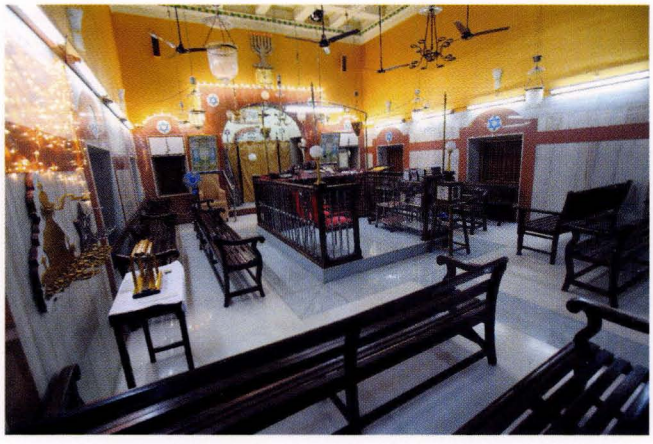
The Shaar Hashamaim Synagogue, known as the Gate of Heaven, is located just outside Mumbai and is the only synagogue in Thane. It was established on 29th December 1879 and consecrated a day later, on the first day of Chanukah. The Shaar Hashamaim Synagogue caters to all Jews residing in and around the Thane area – making this synagogue the centre of the community's activities.



Shaar Hashamaim Synagogue Exterior

Before the synagogue was built in 1879, Jews prayed in a bungalow in "Israel Mohalla" - behind today's Dhobi Ally. Today, the synagogue holds daily prayer services and Minyan is available on all Sabbath days and festivals.

The trustees and the management of the Shaar Hashamaim Synagogue work alongside the Jewish Eves Association and a Sephardic Jewish Youth Club meets on alternate Saturdays at the synagogue to organise festival programmes for young and old alike.



Shaar Hashamaim Synagogue Interior

Today, the synagogue is full to capacity during all religious high holidays and festivals, so much so that an additional pandal was built to accommodate Thane's growing Jewish population. The trustees further extended the synagogue to house a complete Jewish educational, cultural and social community centre, which was opened in 2009.

Educational Institutions

DAVID SASSOON INDUSTRIAL AND REFORMATORY INSTITUTION

Situated at Matunga (West), Mumbai – 400 016.

The David Sassoon Industrial and Reformatory Institution is the first institute of its kind created in India. Established in 1843 by Dr. Buist, the school was founded with the aim of reforming juvenile criminals through industrial arts. In 1856, the Managing Committee of the school applied to the government for financial aid.

At this time, the Sassoon Family offered Rs. 30,000 to provide premises for a juvenile reformatory on condition that the government contribute an equal sum to the interest of the deposit and also lend the services of an engineer. These conditions were met and hence, Dr. Buist's Industrial School was granted the much needed financial aid. Re-named the David Sassoon Industrial and Reformatory Institution for Juvenile Offenders, the school moved from its original location in Sewree to Matunga near the Western Railway.



David Sassoon Reformatory

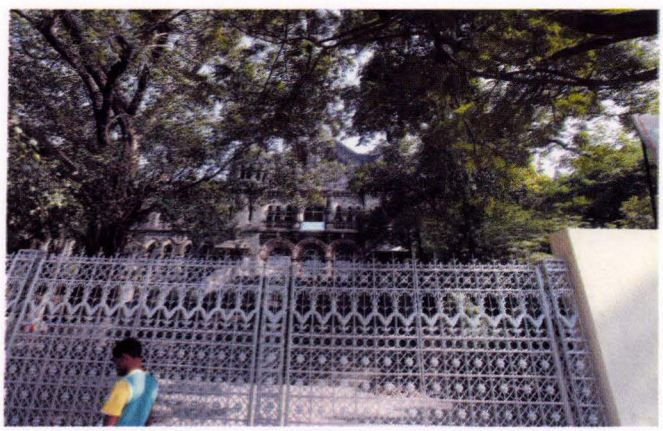
The Reformatory gave boys who had been convicted under the Bombay Children's Act, a vocation. They were given instruction in various trades such as carpentry, painting, brass moulding and tailoring, as well as tuition in English and Indian languages.

The Institution, still operating today, offers liberal education and vocational guidance in a range of occupational programmes, and provides spacious facilities such as dormitories, a dining hall, hospital, school, workshop and playground. Games and recreational camps are also organised. The Institution celebrates various religious festivals to banish barriers of caste, class and religion, enabling the children to live together as one large family.

THE ELPHINSTONE TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL

Situated at Mahapalika Marg, Mumbai – 400 001.

The Elphinstone Technical High School is an educational institution which gives vocational training and teaches a regular curriculum. The school was founded in 1872 as a branch of the Mumbai Education Society. The then Governor of Mumbai, His Excellency Sir Seymour Vesey Fitzgerald, laid the foundation stone of the Sassoon Building. The building was so named because of a substantial contribution of one and a half lakh rupees made by Sir Albert Sassoon, eldest son of David Sassoon, towards the total cost of the building. The building was designed by George Twigge & Malecay and has 32 classrooms and a large playground.



Elphinstone Technical High School

Besides teaching the official high school subjects, languages such as Sanskrit, Persian and French are also taught. A secondary training college was established in 1906 and the school also houses a vocational training centre.

SIR ELLY KADOORIE SCHOOL

Situated at Mazagaon, Mumbai – 400 010.

"Learning is an ornament in prosperity, a refuge in adversity and a provision in old age". This old proverb comes to mind when one speaks of the importance of education. In our own community, a group of dedicated workers felt the need to promote education among the younger members of the community. It was also necessary to equip them with the knowledge of Hebrew and the Holy Scriptures and Jewish history.

Mr. Haeem Samuel Kehimkar was a scholar who devoted his life to the education of Bene Israel children. To this end, he spearheaded the formation of the Bene Israel Benevolent Society in 1853. In 1875, he founded a Marathi and Hebrew elementary school – the Israelite School at Khadak, between Samuel Street and Israel Mohalla where many Jews resided. He was actively involved in the management of the school.



Sir Elly Kadoorie High School

Female students were exempted from paying fees, and scholarships were also provided. This encouraged Jewish parents to send their daughters to school, thus promoting female education in the Bene Israel community.

The school received grants from the Anglo-Jewish Association, the Gate of Mercy Synagogue, the Government of India, the Kadoorie Family and others. A building fund was established under the patronage of Lord Harris in 1898 and the inauguration of the Mazagaon site was performed in 1889 by Lord Sandhurst, the then Governor of Mumbai.

Miss Rebecca Reuben was a Principal of the school and was awarded the Padmashree by the Government of India for her services. She was the author of Ashoka Readers - a series of school books. She was academically gifted, coming first in the 1907 Matriculation Examination, and was associated with the progressive Jewish Religious Union.

By 1928, the school building was in a dilapidated state, and so it was necessary to construct a new building. Miss Reuben later approached Sir Elly Kadoorie, who gave a generous donation, enabling the construction of a new school which was later re-named the Sir Elly Kadoorie School.

Prior to Indian Independence, 95% of the student population were Jewish. However, after 1948, when the State of Israel was founded, many Jewish families emigrated, resulting in a rapid drop in the number of Jewish students. Today, admission is open to children from all faiths and communities, though preference is given to Jewish children.

The school enjoys a minority status, and the management committee consists of members of the Jewish community. In 2010, the school marked its 125th anniversary. Although there is a paucity of Jewish students, the school continues to uphold the principles of education, the very reason of its birth.

SIR JACOB SASSOON HIGH SCHOOL

Situated at Dr. B. Ambedkar Road, Nagpada, Mumbai – 8.

The Sir Jacob Sassoon High School was built after a magnificent donation by Sir Jacob Elias Sassoon. The construction of the school building was completed on 17th April 1903.



Sir Jacob Sassoon High School

Today, the school caters to students from kindergarten to junior college level, and is well-equipped with a science laboratory and library. The medium of instruction is English, with Hebrew taught as a second language. The curriculum includes Hebrew reading and prayers, Jewish history, law and Bible studies. The school observes Sabbath and Jewish holidays. Prizes and scholarships have seen instituted by Jewish patrons, and the school is financially supported by the Sassoon Charity Trust.

THE ELISHA EZRA EZEKIEL SASSOON SCHOOL

Situated behind Magen David Synagogue, Nagpada, Mumbai – 8.

The Elisha Ezra Ezekiel Sassoon School is an English medium school, with classes from kindergarten to S.S.C. The school is run by the Sassoon Charity Trust and caters to children of the Nagpada area. Today, there are approximately 645 students and 25 members of staff on the school roll, with only a few Jewish students.



E. E. E. Sassoon High School

THE INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE

Situated on Madame Cama Road, Fort, Mumbai – 400 023.

The Institute of Science is a world famous educational and research centre, and has provided a substantial contribution to scientific knowledge since its opening in 1925 by the then Governor of Mumbai, Leslie Wilson. Sir Jacob Sassoon contributed a substantial sum to the construction of the institute. The building was designed by George Wittet, consulting architect to the government.



Institute of Science Facade

Since 1925, the Institute has furthered scientific research, contributed to numerous scientific discoveries and published papers in international journals. Many national and international agencies have sponsored research projects under the able guidance of the Institute staff and outstanding graduates of the Institute are now teaching at various colleges in Mumbai.

Today, the Institute lives up to its objectives of being a centre of educational and research excellence, with its proud motto: *"It is Good to Seek The Cause of Things".*

ORT INDIA

Situated at 68, Worli Hill Road, Worli, Mumbai – 400 018.

The 'Organisation for educational Resources & technological Training' (ORT) is an international institute. In 1956, the Executive Committee of the World ORT Union opened a school in India, with the desire to promote vocational training amongst Jewish boys and girls. This school had a huge impact on the life of the community.



ORT India

The ORT Girl's School was established later, in 1970, in a beautiful building near Worli Seaface. The Girl's School offers two courses: secretarial skill and hairdressing and beauty care. Many girls attend morning schools or colleges and then take up afternoon classes at the ORT.

ORT India introduces young Jews to modern industry and high technology through its well-equipped computer laboratory. A Post-Graduate Diploma course in computing was instituted in 1988, whilst computer literacy courses are conducted for beginners, professionals and others alike. Presently, ORT India has a Jewish Resource Centre which produces kosher wine, chicken and challah for the local Jewish community. It also has courses in early childhood education and runs kindergarten classes for small children in its premises.

Hospitals and Medical Institutes

MASINA HOSPITAL

Situated at Sant Savta Marg, Byculla, Mumbai – 400 027.

What was once David Sassoon's majestic residence *"Sans Souci"*, meaning *"without worries"*, now stands as the Masina Hospital. Despite its very different function, the building today retains its air of opulence - the double staircase in carved oak imported from England is still intact. The building is one of the last surviving grand houses in this now densely populated area. Around 6,000 delegates and visitors of the fifth session of the Indian National Congress, held in December 1889, were housed in a large and picturesque structure built near Sassoon's grand mansion. The Masina Hospital today caters to all sections of society.



Masina Hospital

THE HAFFKINE INSTITUTE

Situated at Parel Village, Mumbai – 400 012.

The Haffkine Institute was originally established in Mumbai's Government House on 8th October 1896 as the Plague Research Institute. In 1904, it was re-named the Bombay Bacteriological Laboratory. In 1925, Lt. Colonel F.B. Mackie, the Laboratory Director, named the Institute after the famous Jewish bacteriologist Dr. Waldemar Mordechai Haffkine. Dr. Haffkine is credited with developing vaccines for the bubonic plague and cholera.



Haffkine Institute

The Haffkine Institute has two units; one for production and the other for research. The production activities of the erstwhile Institute were taken over by the Haffkine Bio-Pharmaceutical Corp. which is owned by the Government of Maharashtra and manufactures biological and pharmaceutical products. Approximately 90% of the pharmaceutical products go to the State Government and defence forces. Recently the Institute has undertaken an oral polio vaccine project.

The Institute houses the first Zoonosis (study of diseases that are passed on by animals to man) department in India, and maintains a large blood bank for research purposes, as well as a department of nutrition, a pharmaceutical division and an antibiotic plant. The Institute is recognised as a Reference and Training Centre by the WHO (World Health Organisation). The Institute has the oldest medical library in India; with 18,000 volumes and 200 periodicals.

SIR SASSOON DAVID HOSPITAL

Situated on the premises of J.J. Hospital, Mumbai – 400 009.

This impressive building was donated to the Sir Jamshedji Jeejeeboy Government Hospital Group by Sir Victor Sassoon in 1928, for use by the general public.

The hospital housed a free ward on the first floor for Jewish patients until 1958. During the Second World War, the Jewish ward was moved (one being reserved for ailing medical students) so that the main ward was placed at the service of injured British soldiers.

The hospital has since expanded and is of great service to the whole community today.



Sir Sassoon David Hospital (Part of J. J. Hospital)

Industries

SASSOON DOCKS

The Sassoon Dock at Colaba was established in June 1875 by Messrs D. Sassoon and Co. Originally a wet dock built on reclaimed land from the sea, the dock enabled large ships to discharge and load alongside a wharf. Albert Sassoon foresaw the importance of the construction of the Suez Canal and its influence on the development of the Mumbai harbour.



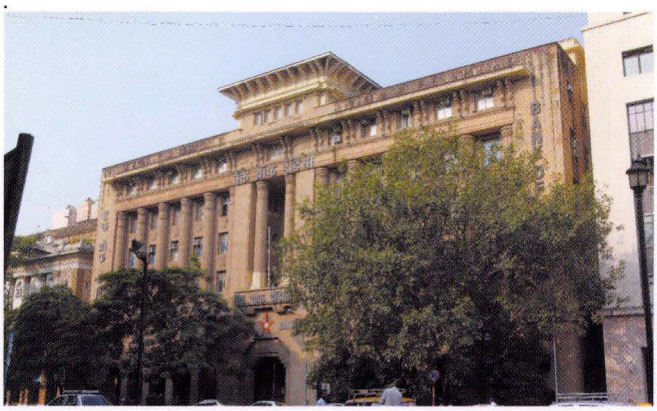
Sassoon Docks

The dock was later purchased by the government on behalf of the Port Trustees and was used for several years as a boat basin and landing place for troops. Today, the dock's primary use is for fishing. Excavated out of solid rock, the dock measures 645 feet in length and covers a water area of 3.5 acres. The entrance alone is 40 feet wide.

BANK OF INDIA

The Bank of India was founded by Sir Sassoon J. David who was the bank's first Chairman between 1906-1926. From modest beginnings, the Bank of India today is amongst the largest of India's nationalised banks. The bank has over 3,000 branches in India spread over all states and union territories. There are also 29 overseas branches and offices.

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Bank of India

SASSOON GROUP OF MILLS

Two mills existed in Mumbai in 1909: The Sassoon Mill and The Alliance Mill. The Alliance Mill was established in 1875 near Victoria Gardens as a joint stock concern, working with a capital of Rs.10,00,000. It was the largest mill in the Mumbai market with annual production of 70,000 lbs. The mill was formerly known as Sassoon Silk Mills which was merged with the Alliance Silk Mills in 1883.



Sassoon Group of Mills (now India United Mills)

Within the Jewish community, only three firms had taken an interest in the construction of mills. These three firms controlled 14 factories with 6,52,000 spindles and 13,000 looms. Messrs E.D. Sassoon and Co. were at the forefront of this empire, owning 11 factories containing 5,13,850 spindles and 11,400 looms.

SASSOON HOUSE

Sassoon House was inaugurated on 2nd January 2006 by the Consul General of Israel, Mr. Daniel Zohar Zonshine. The establishment of the hotel was due in large part to the vision of Mr. Solomon Sopher. The Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Eliyahu Yishai, visited the hotel after touring the Ohel David Synagogue. Sassoon House has eight rooms and is reserved specifically for Jews. All rooms have the "Mezuzah" on the doors and only Kosher meals are allowed to be eaten in the hotel.

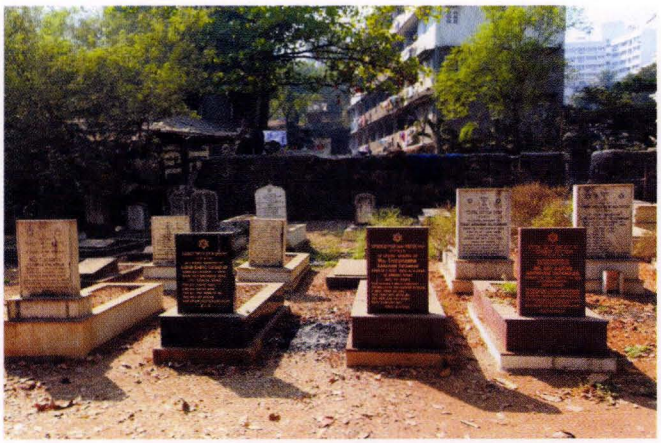


Sassoon House

Cemeteries

BANDRA CEMETERY

Situated at St. John Baptist Road, Bandra (W), Mumbai - 50.

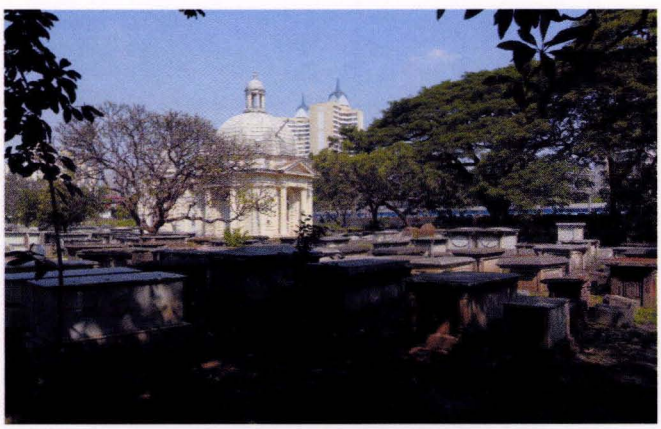


Bandra Cemetery

Situated in Bandra on a small plot of land enclosed by a low wall, this cemetery was dedicated to the sacred memory of the late Mr. Benjamin Nissim Elias of Calcutta. It was consecrated and opened on 23rd December 1945 and is still in use today.

CHINCHPOKLI CEMETERY

Situated between Byculla & Chinchpokli railway stations.



Chinchpokli Cemetery

The Chinchpokli Cemetery is very old. Whilst some of its graves have Hebrew inscriptions, others are almost half buried in the earth. Elias David Sassoon established this cemetery in January 1879 as a Jewish burial ground in memory of his beloved son Joseph, who died in Shanghai, China on 22nd December 1868. The cemetery still caters to Jews of the Baghdadi and Cochini community of Mumbai.

MAZAGAON CEMETERY

Situated on Dr. E. Mascarenhas Road, Mumbai - 400 010.



Mazagaon Cemetery

The Mazagaon Cemetery was in operation from 1898 to 1927.

WORLI CEMETERY

Situated on Dr. E. Moses Road, Worli, Mumbai - 400 018.



Worli Cemetery

This Bene Israel cemetery is situated on a road named after Dr. E. Moses - the first Jewish Mayor of Mumbai and has been in use since 9th January 1927. At present, the cemetery is nearly full and the Cemetery Affairs Committee are making efforts to acquire a new plot of land.

BENE ISRAEL JEWISH CEMETERY, THANE

Situated on Pokhran Road No.1, opposite J. K. Singhania School, Thane.



Thane Cemetery

Once located adjacent to the Eastern Express Highway, the Bene Israel Jewish Cemetery in Thane proves that Jews were present in the area 500 years ago. The cemetery was excavated during the massive road widening scheme of the Thane Municipal Corporation in 1998.

Today's Jewish Cemetery is situated on Pokhran Road No.1 on land donated by the late Subhedar Major Reuben D. Ashtivkar on 19th November 1879. For the last 120 years, this graveyard has been in constant use by the Jewish community.

To cater to the upkeep of the cemetery, the Trustees undertook to build a hall for funeral and religious rites at the cemetery for the benefit of the community. This hall was completed and declared open on 31st July 1996.

Library

DAVID SASSOON LIBRARY AND READING ROOM

Situated at M.G. Road, Mumbai University, Mumbai – 400 023.

In September 1847, the Bombay Mint and Bombay Government Dockyard set up the Bombay Mechanics Institute whose object was to acquire a library to establish a museum of Mechanical Models, Architectural Designs and Engineering and Mechanical Sciences, and to promote these subjects by lectures and discussions.

The Bombay Mechanics Institute was inaugurated by Sir Erskine Perry, the Institute's first President and the then Chief Justice of Bombay. In its early years, the Institute was housed in the old clock tower close to the entrance of the Government Dockyard at Marine Street, Fort. Later, the Institute was moved to a rented room in the Fort. In 1863, David Sassoon donated Rs. 60,000 to provide a more suitable building, which was complemented by a similar donation by the Imperial Government. The government also leased a plot of land measuring 1,485 sq. yards on a site at the Esplanade (at a cost of Rupee1 per year for a lease of 999 years), where the Institute now stands.



David Sassoon Library Facade

The foundation stone for the present Gothic style building was laid by Sir Bartle Frere on 21st February 1867, and the building was handed over on 24th March 1870. In later years, Sir Albert Sassoon would gift Rs. 4,500 for the provision of book shelves and furniture. In 1873, he presented a clock which today is the main feature of the front gable.

Library records show that throughout the years, most Mumbai Governors were patrons of the Institute, and even today, the Advisory Committee consists of several distinguished persons of Jewish origin. The library is democratically managed by a committee of twelve members elected annually. The library has a large and airy reading room. Treasured within its sanctum are a number of rare books on a wide variety of subjects. Besides enjoying the various amenities a modern library provides, members have the added advantage of a shaded garden with trees and flower-beds, which create a relaxed atmosphere conducive to reading.

Lectures on the city of Mumbai and the contribution of the Sassoon family to the development of the city formed part of the celebrations which marked the library's 140th anniversary in 2007. As the third largest library in the great metropolis of Mumbai, the library enjoys long opening hours.

The Gothic structure of the David Sassoon Library building has been listed for conservation by the Government of India.

Monuments

SASSOON CLOCK TOWER

The Clock Tower of Victoria Gardens was erected in 1864 by David Sassoon. The Palladian style tower is 67 feet high and was built at a cost of Rs. 51,653, of which Rs. 30,000 was contributed by David Sassoon. The tower's plinth is made from blue stone and Porbunder stone and decorated with terra-cotta ornamental panels imported from England. The four clock faces, four feet in diameter each, are forty-two feet above ground. To make way for the City Improvement Trust to build the Eastern Avenue, the tower was moved from its original site and re-erected in Victoria Gardens in 1926.



Sassoon Clock Tower

THE GATEWAY OF INDIA

Long before the "Gateway of India" was constructed, Mumbai itself was referred to as the Gateway of India. The Apollo Bunder, which had for centuries been the pier for passengers from all parts of the world, was the ancient landing place of aboriginal fishermen.

It was Lord Sydenham, the Governor of Mumbai, who suggested that a suitable monument be erected to commemorate the visit of King George V and Queen Mary of England in December 1911. A temporary plaster replica of the Taj Mahal was hurriedly constructed in anticipation of their arrival. The Gateway of India was completed at a cost of Rs. 2.1 million, which was defrayed by grants from the Central Government, Sir Jacob Sassoon, the Municipality and the Port Trust. Sir Jacob Sassoon, Baronet contributed Rs. 8,00,000 in 1912 for the erection of a superb sea-gateway in memory of the arrival of their Majesties on 8th December 1911.



Gateway of India

It was Lord Willingdon, Lord Sydenham's successor, who put the Gateway scheme into effect. The monument was designed by George Wittet, a government architect, and built between 1915 and 1920 on land reclaimed from the sea. It consists of a Central Hall with a great archway forming the entrance and side walls providing seating accommodation to visitors. A permanent pavilion provides a reception hall for important occasions. The Gateway was finally inaugurated by the Viceroy, the Earl of Reading, Sir Rufus Isaac (himself a Jew) on 4th December 1924.

Architecturally, the Gateway is a combination of Hindu and Muslim styles based on the 16th century work of Gujarat. The Gateway is constructed in yellow basalt obtained from the Kharodi quarries in the Thane district. The perforated screens in the arches come from the former princely state of Gwalior. In this modern day and age, the Gateway has become synonymous with the city of Mumbai.

HUTATMA CHOWK

Hutatma Chowk, formerly known as Flora Fountain, has witnessed a number of public demonstrations over the years. Most notably, some 106 persons lost their lives when the police fired live rounds into the crowds who had assembled near Flora Fountain during the Samyukta Maharashtra struggle on 12th November 1955. In memory of theses martyrs, a memorial was erected on 12th November 1962. Thereafter, Flora Fountain was christened Hutatma Chowk, which means Martyr's Junction. The name of Jewish martyr Mr. Joseph David Pezarkar features prominently on the memorial wall.



Hutatma Chowk

Statues

STATUE OF DAVID SASSOON

Situated at the Sassoon Library, Museum, Mumbai - 400 023.

A marble statue was installed in response to Sir Bartle Frere's suggestion that the eminent Jewish merchant and philanthropist, David Sassoon, be commemorated. The sculptor chosen for the task was Thomas Woolner.

As there were many individuals from various communities who wished to contribute to the statue fund, the Governor finally decided to launch a public subscription list which would also be open to those living outside of India. The Jewish communities in Persia and China responded to this call, together with local traders of different faiths. The statue was installed in the Sassoon Library in 1868 after Sassoon's death, in appreciation of his great philanthropy. The citizens of Mumbai also erected a marble bust of David Sassoon in the Victoria and Albert Museum at Byculla, to which the late philanthropist had presented an illuminated clock.



Marble Statue of David Sassoon

The public benefactions Sassoon made throughout his life amounted to a staggering Rs. 7,00,000 in 1864. The cost of his total charitable endeavours towards his co-religionists exceeded the amount of Rs. 30,000 yearly.

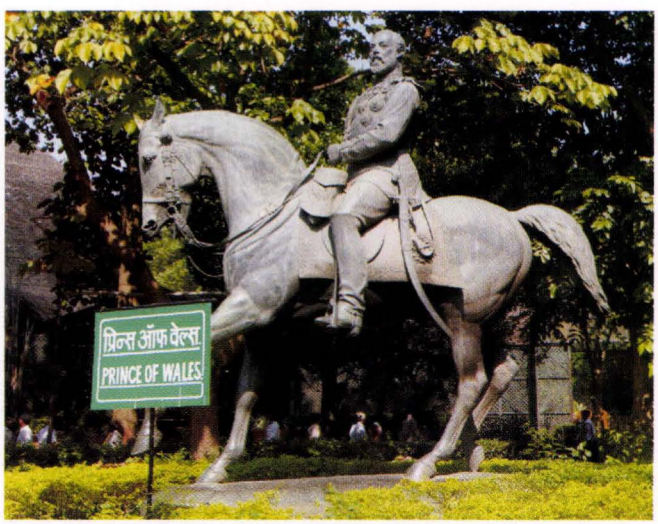
Sir Bartle Frere, then Governor of Mumbai, described David Sassoon as *"The first of our non-European merchants in wealth and respectability".*

THE PRINCE OF WALES – AN EQUESTRIAN STATUE

Situated at entry of Victoria Gardens, Mumbai - 400 027.

A bronze equestrian statue of Prince Albert (1841 - 1910) was sculpted by Sir Joseph Edgar Boehm and presented to the city of Mumbai by Sir Albert Sassoon in 1876, in commemoration of the monarch's visit. Prince Albert was later crowned King Edward VII in 1901.

Sir Boehm's statue was erected at the foot of Forbes Street and located in the centre of a wide road between the Mechanics Institute (David Sassoon Library) and the Keneseth Eliyahoo Synagogue. The statue gave the area its name - 'Kala Ghoda', meaning 'Black Horse', as the Prince is depicted riding majestically on horseback. In the absence of Sir Albert Sassoon, his brother Mr. Solomon David Sassoon invited the Governor, Sir Richard Temple, to unveil the statue at a ceremony on 26th June 1879.



Equestrian Statue of Prince of Wales

The statue stands tall and the Prince is dressed in the uniform of a Field Marshal, wearing the Order of the Bath and carrying a helmet. At the side of the granite base are two finely executed castings depicting scenes of his visit to Mumbai. The statue was moved to a prominent spot near the entry gate of Victoria Gardens.

STATUE OF THE PRINCE OF WALES

Situated at Museum Grounds, Mumbai - 400 023.

The statue of the Prince of Wales was sculpted by George Wade and presented by Sir Sassoon J. David. It was erected on the grounds of the Prince of Wales Museum to commemorate the visit of His Royal Highness to Mumbai in November 1905.



Statue of Prince of Wales

STATUE OF PRINCE ALBERT

Situated in Bhau Daji Lad Museum at Victoria Gardens, Mumbai - 400 027.

The imposing white marble statue of Prince Albert, Victoria's consort, was sculpted by Noble and erected by David Sassoon in 1864 inside the central hall of the Victoria and Albert Museum (now the Bhau Daji Lad Museum).



Statue of Prince Albert

Social Institutions

BAYITI (HOME FOR THE ELDERLY)

Situated on third floor of Hari Om Vrudhhashram, Plot No.16, Sector 13, Khanda Colony, New Panvel.

Bayiti, which means *'My Home'* in Hebrew, is a home for the elders of the Jewish community. It was founded by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in October 1996 thanks to a generous grant by the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation of the United States.



Entrance to Bayiti

The need for such a home became apparent when older members of the community were found living on the streets or in synagogue compounds, unable to fend for themselves. For years, Bayiti has given these individuals a secure home, as well as love and care through the community. Presently housing eight senior members, it is a wonderful spacious place full of warmth. All Jewish festivals like Hanukkah, TuB'Shvat, Pesach as well as Sabbath are celebrated with great festivity. The birthdays of all senior citizens are also special occasions celebrated with cakes and candles made by the residents themselves.



Bayiti Residents

BOMBAY FLYING CLUB

Situated at Juhu Aerodrome, Mumbai – 400 049

The Bombay Flying Club is the place where the history of Indian Civil Aviation began. The first aircraft to take off from the club was on 13th January 1929 at the nearby Juhu airport. Originally, the club had 127 members, of which 24 took to flying. At that time, the club had 12 aircrafts.



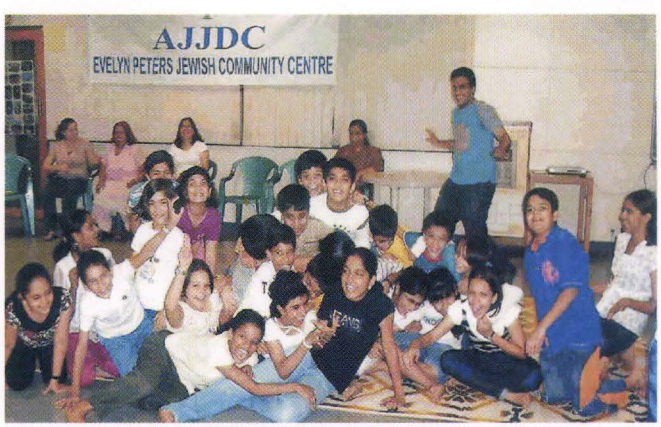
Bombay Flying Club

The first annual general meeting of the club was held under the chairmanship of Sir Victor Sassoon. He donated an aircraft and Rs. 9,000 towards the construction of a hangar. The Government of India also donated two aircrafts. Sir Victor Sassoon must be credited for bringing "air-mindedness" to the Mumbai Presidency. In the 1930s, the Bombay Flying Club was the only flying club in the world to undertake a cross-country international flight from Mumbai to London and back again, with four Tiger Moths participating in the venture. Today, the club has various divisions which work to overhaul engines, radios and instruments to cater to the various needs of aircraft users.

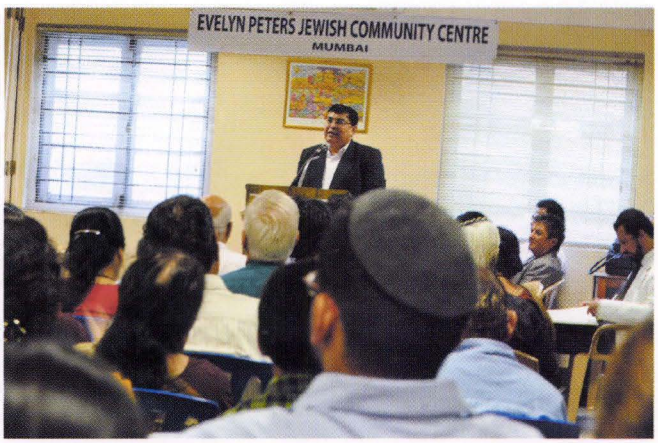
THE EVELYN PETERS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTRE (EPJCC)

Situated at Ruparel College, Matunga (West), Mumbai - 16.

The Evelyn Peters Jewish Community Centre (EPJCC) is the first and only Jewish community centre in India. It was established in 1999 by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's former Country Director for India Ms. Evelyn Peters and named in her honour. In 2004, the EPJCC moved to its present location at Ruparel College. The EPJCC is a place where rich and poor, religious or secular, are equally welcome.



Day Camp for Children



Global Day of Jewish Learning at EPJCC

The EPJCC looks after the social, cultural and spiritual enrichment of its members. With this in mind, the EPJCC continuously strives to create programmes for all age groups. Jewish education has been greatly enhanced with the establishment of the EPJCC.

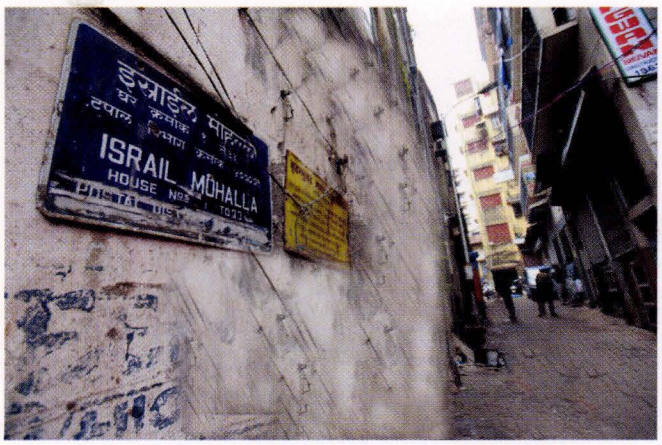


Anniversary Celebrations - Intergenerational Programmes

Two of the values emphasised by the EPJCC are community responsibility and Tzedakah. Through interactive activities, young and old alike learn more about Judaism, which helps strengthen their Jewish identity.

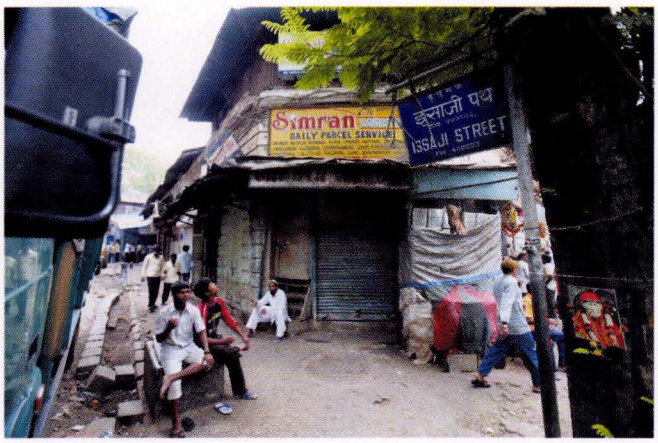
Streets in Mumbai named after Jewish Personalities

ISRAEL MOHALLA



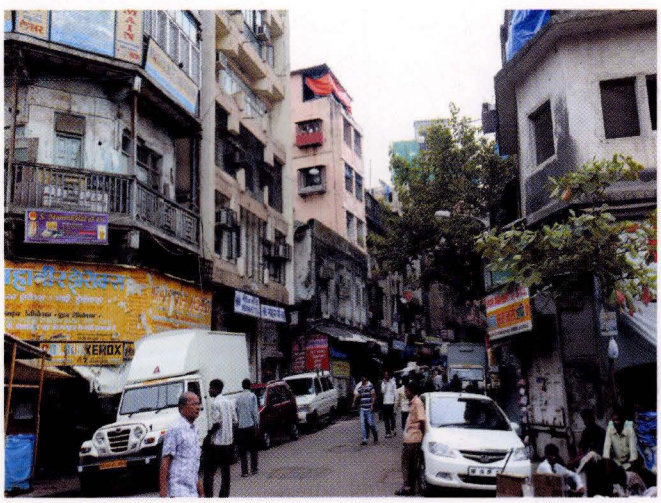
A number of Bene Israelis owned buildings in this Mohalla (locality). This street is very close to the *"Share Rason"* Synagogue.

ISAJI STREET



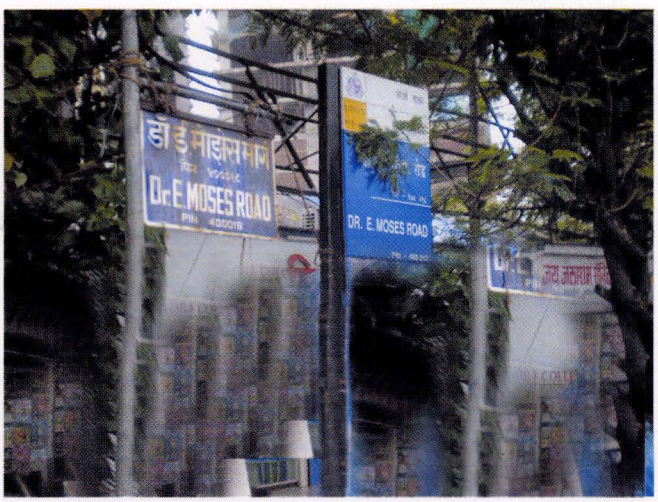
This street is named after Isaji (Isaac), brother of Samuel Divekar, the founder of the first Bene Israel synagogue in Mumbai.

SAMUEL STREET



Samuel street is named after Mr. Samuel Ezekiel Divekar, who constructed the Gate of Mercy Synagogue in 1796, which is also located on Samuel street.

DR. E. MOSES ROAD



This road is named after Dr. Elijah Moses, M. D., J. P., the first Bene Israel Mayor appointed to the Bombay Municipal Corporation in 1937 - 38. The Bene Israel Jewish Cemetery is also situated on this road.

NAVGAON CEMETERY



Navgaon Memorial

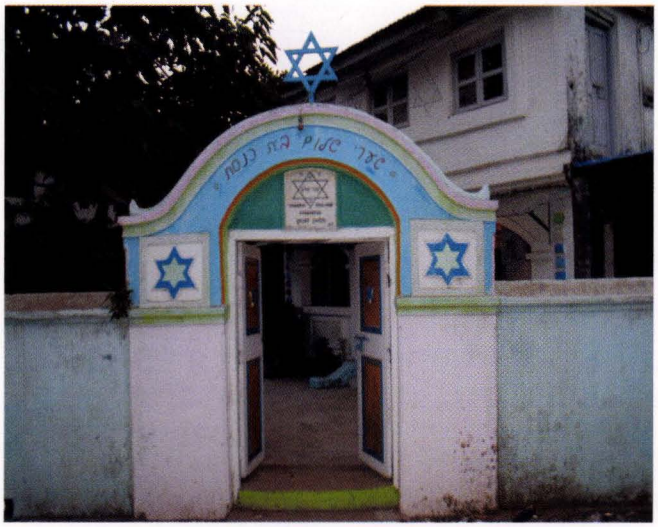
The Navgaon Cemetery, located near the Bhoreshwar Temple, is over 2,050 years old. The cemetery came about during the reign of King Solomon, when a ship carrying Jewish families sank opposite the Konkan Coast. Unconscious bodies drifted from the wreckage to the nearby coast, and on hearing the news, the local population prepared to burn the seemingly dead bodies. Miraculously however, some were still alive, and were rescued by the villagers. The corpses of those who had perished were burnt and their ashes buried locally. There were originally two tombs commemorating the dead, but today a memorial stands in their place. At present, 26 tombs can be seen, with signs of many more around them.



Jerusalem Gate

The entrance gate of the cemetery is called the "Jerusalem Gate" and was recently renovated on the initiative of Mr. Noah Massil, President of the Central Organisation of Indian Jews in Israel, who collected generous donations from Bene Israelis in 1997.

SHAAREY SHALOM SYNAGOGUE, BORLI



Exterior of Borli Synagogue

The Shaarey Shalom Synagogue was established in 1791 thanks to a donation of Rs. 1,400 by Mr. Shalom Isaac Sogavkar Mistry and his wife Mrs. Simhabai Sogavkar.

The synagogue was renovated 100 years after construction, in 1891. Repair of the ladies gallery, office premises and installation of electricity was achieved due to the efforts of the President Mr. Daniel Eliyahoo Sogavkar and the Honorary Secretary and Trustee Mr. Michael Eliyahoo Sogavkar and thanks to the financial contribution of community members. Donations were collected by Mr. Shellim Joseph Massil, and centenary celebrations were held on Sunday 9th May 1965.



Interior of Borli Synagogue

OR LE ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE - NANDGAON



Nandgaon Synagogue Exterior

The Or Le Israel Synagogue was established in 1866. The nearby Nandgaon Cemetery houses about 50 old tombs, but the names are not decipherable.

MAGEN ABOTH SYNAGOGUE, ALIBAG

A small synagogue was built in Alibag in 1840, when Hakham Shelomo Shurabi brought together retired army officials from the Bene Israel community to collect local donations. Some years later, the synagogue was in need of major repairs and so donations were again collected, which led to the construction of the present synagogue in 1910.



Magen Aboth Synagogue Exterior

The synagogue was completed under the supervision of Mr. Moses Samuel Wakrulkar and Mr. Solomon Aaron Charikar, and constructed according to the architectural design of Mr. Samuel Solomon Mazgavkar.

The names of the donors are commemorated on marble slabs inside the synagogue. The inauguration ceremony was held on



Magen Aboth Synagogue Interior

25th December 1910, at which almost 1,000 people were present. During the celebrations, the synagogue was renamed "Magen Aboth" which means "a shield of ancestors". Centenary celebrations were recently held on 26th December 2010.

HESSED-EL SYNAGOGUE- POYNAD



Hessed-El Synagogue Exterior

The Hessed-El Synagogue in Poynad was inaugurated on 31st December 1933, thanks to donations by local community members. The major donor was Mr. Haeem Ezekiel Penkar from Bandra, Mumbai. Today, the synagogue is closed and taken care of by Mr. Moses Nagavkar and his mother who are the only Jewish residents in Poynad.

The Poynad Cemetery is known as the New Settlement Cemetery and built on a plot of land owned by the Navgarkar family. The cemetery houses 8 tombs. The Rege Company maintains the site of Gadkar's tomb, which dates back to 1860.

BETH – EL SYNAGOGUE, PANVEL



Panvel Synagogue Exterior

The Beth-El Synagogue was opened for prayers 162 years ago on the auspicious day of Shavout 5609 (17th May 1849), at a time when around 250 Jewish families were living in and around the local area of Panvel. Today, there are only 15 Jewish families left in the area, but these families come together to celebrate religious festivals. Due to the synagogue's old age, the building is dilapidated and in urgent need of repair. Members of the existing management committee have taken up this issue, and proposals are currently being drawn up to rehabilitate the building. The Panvel Cemetery is located near the Israeli Talav, and houses many old tombs dating back to 1796.

BETH-EL SYNAGOGUE, REVDANDA



Revdanda Synagogue Exterior

The Beth-El Synagogue was first built in 1842 as a result of contributions from the local congregation. The synagogue was subsequently enlarged by the synagogue development fund and dedicated on 18th May 1877. The centenary celebrations were held on Sunday, 28th December 1941. A celebration was held on the 27th February 2011 to mark the renovation of the synagogue building.

BETH-HA-ELOHIM SYNAGOGUE, PEN



Pen Synagogue Exterior

The Beth-Ha-Elohim Synagogue Bene Israel Synagogue was built using funds donated by Ms. Divekar, with other members of the community contributing construction materials. For instance, brothers Mr. Hashkel Aaron Penkar and Mr. Soloman Aaron Penkar donated cement, whilst Mr. Aaron Reuben Pezarkar donated 21 wooden benches. Construction work was finally completed in 1864, and a beautiful synagogue was henceforth located on Israel Lane. Today, Mr. Samson Solomon Penkar is the caretaker and Chairman of the synagogue.

PEN CEMETERY



Pen Cemetery

The Pen Cemetery is one of the oldest Jewish cemeteries in the area, and contains tombs dating back to 1700. Of the 200 tombs located in the cemetery, most belong to the Penkars and senior army officials. The three graves located outside the cemetery's gate are likely to disappear in the near future as the land now belongs to the railway authority. Around 50 - 60 Jewish families used to live in Pen, but today, only three remain.

SHAAR HA TEFILAH SYNAGOGUE, MHASLA



Mhasla Synagogue Exterior

Before the Shaar Hattefilah Synagogue was built in 1863, the Jewish community of Mhasla made use of a rented house for prayer services. As the community grew in size, it became clear that a separate built-for-purpose Prayer Hall was desperately needed. The ruler of Janjira, Khan Bahadur Shalom B. Israel, approved the construction of the Prayer Hall and allotted land and sanctioned the use of half-price government wood, for which the community was deeply grateful.



Mhasla Synagogue Interior

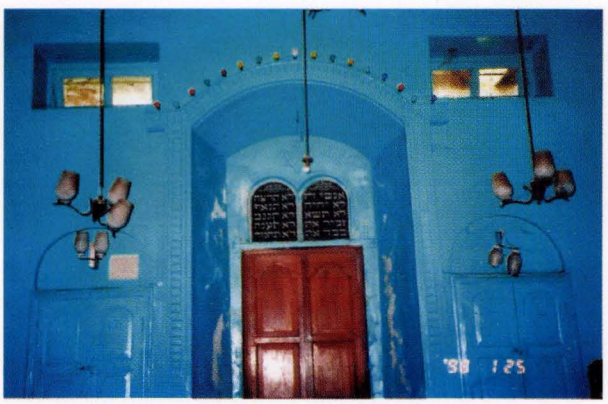
The first Prayer Hall built on this land was very basic, and was used by the community for some 14 years. A further extension was deemed necessary, as the hall was increasingly used for weddings as well as prayers. Once the land extension was granted, a more solid structure was built, which became today's Shaar Hattefilah Synagogue. Most of Mhasla's Jewish community immigrated to Israel, or moved to Mumbai, and so today's Mhasla congregation is small. However, under the sage guidance of Mr. Abraham Reuben Galsurkar, Mr. Shalom R. Galsurkar, Mr. Binyamin R. Galsurkar, Mr. Jacob Abraham and others, many international visitors from India and Israel often visit the synagogue to say their prayers.

KENESSETH ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE, TALE



Tale Synagogue Exterior

Known as the Tale Prayer Hall, this synagogue was first built in 1849 as a simple wooden structure which unfortunately burnt down in 1852. The synagogue was rebuilt with stone walls in 1876. In 1956, the synagogue was completely renovated as a result of the work of the synagogue's executive committee members, who launched a fundraising drive. Many Jewish well-wishers contributed to this fund. The synagogue was designed by the carpenter Mr. Benjamin Ezekiel Mashilkar and included many improvements such as a ladies gallery. At the time of inauguration, the synagogue was renamed the "Kenesseth Israel".



Tale Synagogue Interior

By the 1960s, only 10 Jewish families lived in Tala, amongst a population of 5,000. These families slowly emigrated to Israel and in 1974, the last Jewish family left the area. Thereafter, the synagogue was handed over to the local Gram Panchayat for use as a library.

KERALA

The first Jews arrived in Kerala in the 11th century BCE, during the reign of King Solomon. They exported ivory, apes, peacocks, sandalwood and spices from Kerala to Israel. It is believed that sandalwood from Kerala was used in the construction of the First Temple, and King Solomon's ivory throne was made with ivory imported from Kerala. Trade relations between Kerala and Israel continued to flourish and grow over time.

Following the destruction of the temple in 72 CE, and the city of Jerusalem in 130 CE, there began an exodus of Jewish refugees to the West Coast of Malabar. Approximately 10,000 Jews settled in the ancient port of Cranganore (Kodungallor in Malayalam) during this period. The ruler of Kerala, Cheraman Perumal, welcomed these migrants and gave them land and trade privileges. They lived in four villages around Cranganore. Today, only two traces of these settlements remain: Joothakulam in Cranganore and a tomb in Paloor. Although glimpses of the past can still be seen through Jewish folk songs sung at weddings or festivals, no historical records of any sort prior to the 10th and 11th centuries exist in Kerala.

As the power of Cheraman Perumal diminished, dissensions amongst Jewish leaders arose. Sammothiri Raja of Calicut (located to the north of Cranganore) took advantage of this situation and formed an alliance with the Moors who came to Kerala in the 10th and 11th centuries. Under Moorish influence, Sammothiri Raja drove the Jews out of Cranganore. The Jews consequently moved south and settled in five centres in Central Kerala in the 13th and 14th centuries. This exodus continued when on a Shabbat night in 1524, the Moors overran the Jewish settlement of Anjuvanam and burned down the synagogues, driving the remaining community out of the city. Folk songs describe this day as the second 'Shiriya' (Tisha-Be-Av).

Besides the five centres in South Kerala, other small Jewish communities including the seven "Yogams" (congregations) of Malabari Jews and one community of Paradesi Jews were established. Although the exact population of these settlements is unknown, a census in 1839 reported that approximately 1,500 Jews lived in these areas. By the early 1940's, this number had grown to around 2,500.

As these settlements were developing, disaster struck. In 1662, the Portuguese invaded Cochin, a city in Kerala, and drove the Jews out of the city, burning down the Paradesi Synagogue as well as other synagogues in Mattancherry. Every book and religious object was destroyed. In 1663, the Dutch defeated the Portuguese and took control of Cochin. They helped the Jews return to the city and would provide them with religious prayer books from Amsterdam, some of which have survived until today.

The formation of the State of Israel in 1948 came as a blessing to the Malabari Jews, whose living conditions had rapidly deteriorated after the First World War. This community refused to change with the times, either rejecting secular school education, or, for the few who were educated, dismissing jobs outside of Jewish establishments because of religious restrictions. The State of Israel provided a welcome home where they could continue these practices unabated.

Although the Maharajah of Cochin treated his Jewish subjects well, the advent of popular government in Cochin saw these rights and privileges gradually taken away. Jews were no longer allowed to sit on the Cochin Legislative Council and government schools and organisations that had previously allowed Jews to take the Sabbath holiday dismissed this practice. Next, the quota of Jewish admission to schools and colleges was slashed. It was against this background that Aliyah to Israel (the return of the Jewish people from the exile of the Diaspora) commenced. Migration from Cochin started in 1949, and by the late 1970's, there were less than a hundred Jews left in Kerala. Today, there are only 50.

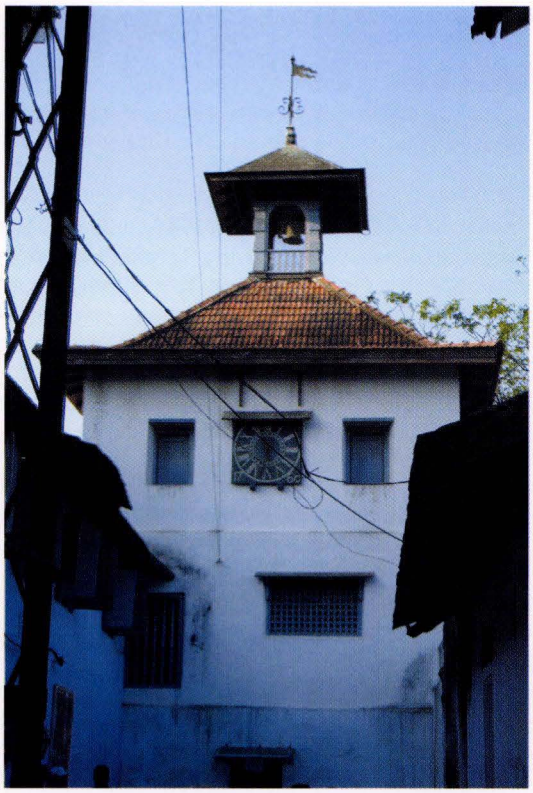
The synagogues and cemeteries in the five Jewish centres in Kerala, still exist today.



Entrance to Cochin Jewish Cemetery

PARADESI SYNAGOGUE

The best known synagogue in Cochin is the Paradesi Synagogue in Mattancherry which dates back to 1568. Conveniently located in the city's picturesque Jew Town, the synagogue is a popular destination for both foreigners and locals alike.



Paradesi Synagogue Exterior

Most Jews attend services at the Paradesi Synagogue. Although there are synagogues scattered in smaller towns and villages outside Cochin, almost all of them have fallen into disuse and are not fully functional.



Paradesi Synagogue Interior

CHENNAMANGALAM SYNAGOGUE

The Chennamangalam Synagogue in Cochin, which dates back to the mid-19th century, is not the oldest of the community's synagogues. However, its close proximity to a Hindu temple, a church and a mosque makes it a fitting candidate to highlight the coexistence of different religions.



Chennamangalam Synagogue Exterior

This synagogue was therefore selected by the Indian Government's Archeological Survey in 2005 for partial restoration and is currently being maintained as a heritage site.

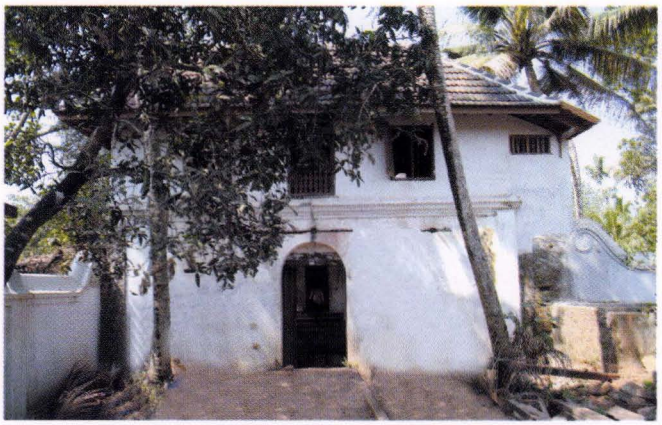


Chennamangalam Synagogue Interior

PARUR SYNAGOGUE

The Parur Synagogue, built in a distinctive architectural style in 1616, is perhaps the most striking of the Cochini community's synagogues.

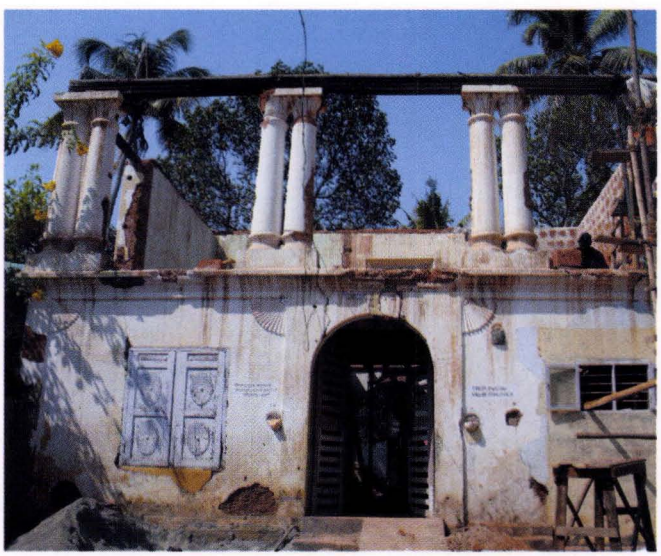
Located on Jew Street; the entrance of the Parur Synagogue is demarcated by two stone pillars. Pillars were erected by the Maharajah to signify the point beyond which non-Jews would not pass on Shabbath, so as not to disturb prayers within the synagogue.



Parur Synagogue Exterior

When the majority of Jews in Parur left, ownership of the Synagogue was passed to non-Jews in the area. Concerned that this jewel of Cochini Jewish heritage might be lost, the remaining members of the community joined together to buy the building back from its new owners.

The Parur Synagogue is currently being restored as a heritage site with the help of the Indian Archeological Survey .



Renovation of Parur Synagogue

THEKUMBAGAM SYNAGOGUE

The Thekumbagam Synagogue was built in 1580 in Ernakulam. It was closed in 1955 when most of the local Jews emigrated to Israel. The synagogue is maintained by the Association of Kerala Jews.



Thekumbagam Synagogue Exterior

KADAVUMBAGAM SYNAGOGUE

The Kadavumbagam Synagogue in Ernakulam was originally built many centuries ago, but later redeveloped.



Kadavumbagam Synagogue Exterior

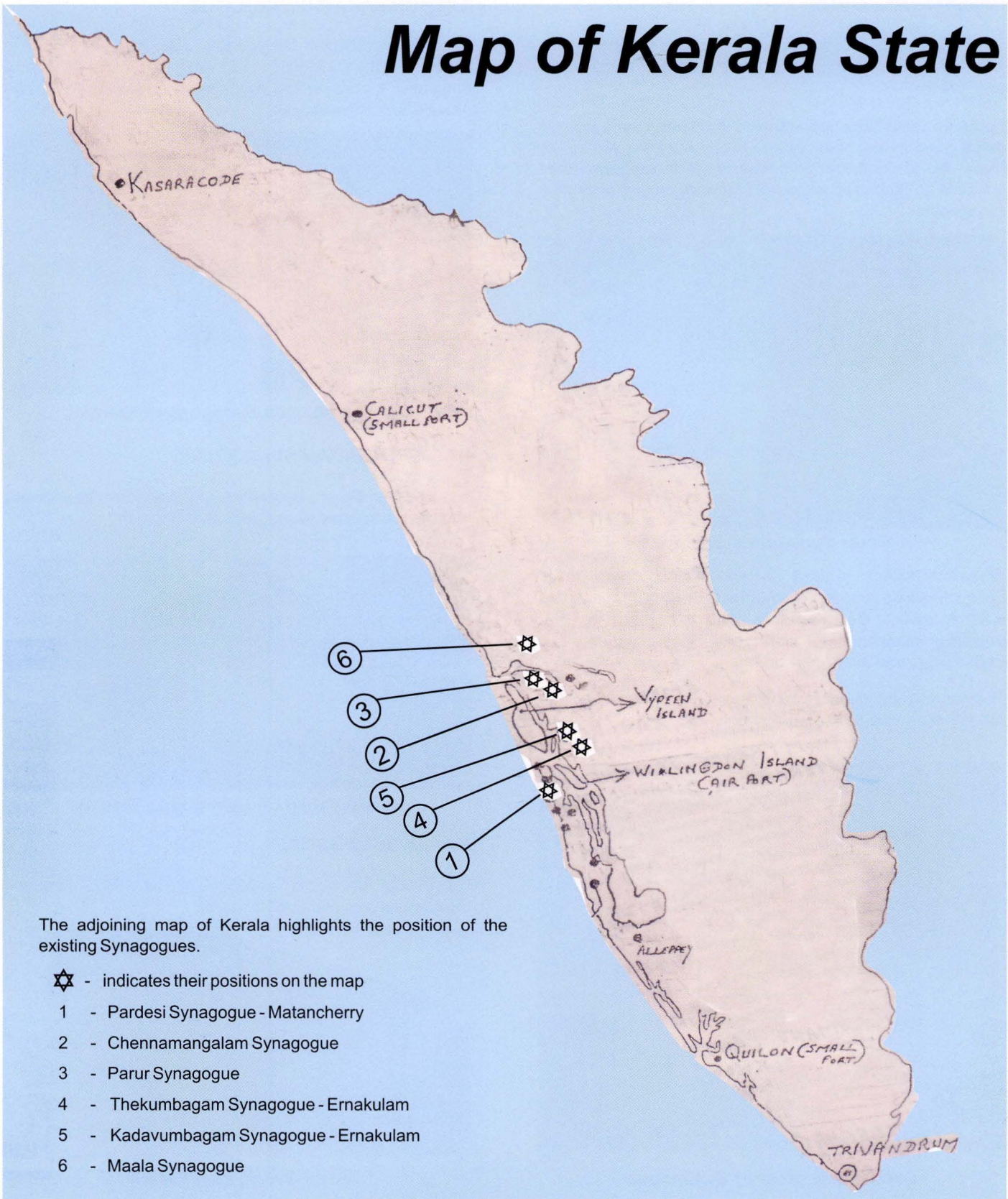
MAALA SYNAGOGUE

Built in 1597, the Maala Synagogue closed in 1955, when the local Jewish community left for Israel.



Maala Synagogue Exterior

Map of Kerala State



The adjoining map of Kerala highlights the position of the existing Synagogues.

✡ - indicates their positions on the map

1 - Pardesi Synagogue - Matancherry

2 - Chennamangalam Synagogue

3 - Parur Synagogue

4 - Thekumbagam Synagogue - Ernakulam

5 - Kadavumbagam Synagogue - Ernakulam

6 - Maala Synagogue

CALCUTTA



Nahoum Bakery established in 1902 in New Market

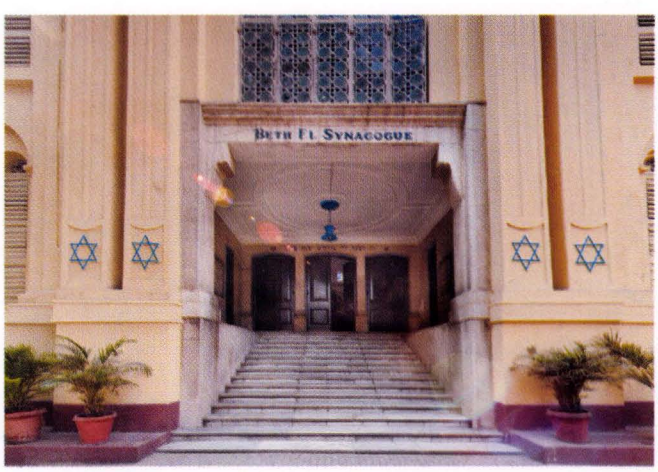
The history of the Jewish community of Calcutta began in August 1798 with the arrival of Shalom Cohen. The town was then a little over a hundred years old and the opportunities for trade with the expanding British colony and the declining Mughal Empire were great. Shalom Cohen, a merchant from Aleppo, then part of the Ottoman Empire (now in Syria), traded in such diverse commodities as cotton yarn, indigo, ivory, dates, coffee, copper and coral. It is said that he became the Court Jeweler to the Nawab of Awadh.

As Shalom Cohen's business grew, he began sending for family members from Baghdad and Aleppo. Encouraged by such fabulous opportunities, others too settled in Calcutta and by the time of Cohen's death in February 1836, the Jewish community had grown to around 300 persons.

The mantle of leadership of the community then fell to Shalom's son-in-law, Moses Dwek Cohen. He was considered the real driving force behind the establishment of the Calcutta Jewish community. Under his guidance, the rules governing the affairs of the synagogue were drawn up in August 1825: the first official document of the Calcutta Jewish community. He was elected the first president of the community, and as an Honorary Rabbi and Minister (mohel and mekkadesh), was to guide the Jews of Calcutta in religious matters from 1825 untill his death in 1861.

As the community grew, more institutions were required to meet its needs – schools and synagogues were established towards the end of the nineteenth century. Though the Jewish community in Calcutta contributed substantially to the social, economic and cultural fabric of the city, their numbers were never very substantial. It has been estimated that the population of Calcutta was at its highest at 5,000 souls around 1942. This figure also includes the refugees who came to the city from Burma (Myanmar) as a consequence of the Japanese invasion.

The exodus of the Jews from Calcutta began after Indian Independence and the founding of the State of Israel. Today, there are only a few who remain: a reminder of a sojourn of over two hundred years.



Entrance of Beth El Synagogue

ELIAS MEYER FREE SCHOOL AND TALMUD TORAH

Situated at 50, Bowbazar Street, Calcutta.

Established in 1882 by the wealthy merchant Mr. Elia David Joseph Ezra to provide a religious-secular education for sons of indigent parents, the "Elias Meyer Free School and Talmud Torah" has gone through several name changes. Originally known as "Ezra's Benevolent Institution", it taught Hebrew and Bible studies in addition to secular subjects. Breakfast and lunch were provided on a daily basis to the students; a set of clothes and shoes was given annually. On the death of the benefactor in 1886, the school was passed on to the community and thereafter run by an elected body. For two decades it became the Talmud Torah Institution. In 1907, Mr. Ezra A. Arakie became the Honorary Secretary and it was mainly through his efforts that the school survived.

A further name change to "Jewish Free School, Talmud Torah" was necessitated by a misunderstanding of the term "Talmud Torah" by a British Director of Public Education who presumed it to be one of the many Indian dialects. By then, the school was co-educational and had an enrolment of 100 students. The medium of instruction in the Hebrew Department was Arabic. In 1922, the school ceased to be co-educational; the girls were transferred to the Jewish Girls' School.



Entrance of Elias Meyer School



Elias Meyer School

The school had operated from rented properties in Bowbazar Street and shifted its location in 1909 and again in 1919. The present premises were gifted in the 1920's by philanthropist Mr. Elias Meyer. In recognition of his generosity, the school was named after him.

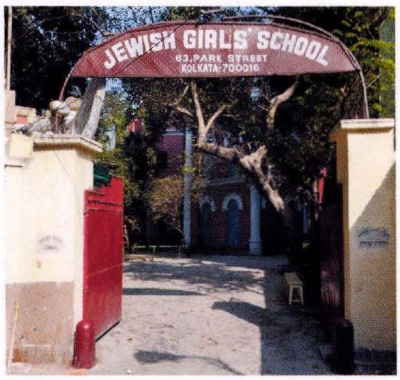
Enrolment fell with the exodus of the members of the community from the 1950's and by 1970 admission was opened to all. In 2010, the school had about 1,000 boys studying for the ICSE and ISC Board examinations, none of whom are Jewish.

THE JEWISH GIRLS' SCHOOL

Situated at 63, Park Street, Calcutta.

Originally called "The Jewish Girls and Infants School", the Jewish Girls' School was established in January 1881 on Ezra Street by Mr. Moses de Jacob Abeasis, an immigrant from Tunis, under the patronage of Mr. Elia Shalome Gubbay and Mr. Elia David Joseph Ezra. The objective of the institution was to inculcate *"A thorough knowledge of Hebrew religious principles together with English education."*

On the first day of opening 18 pupils enrolled: within a year enrolment had risen to 108. No tuition fees were charged for children from financially disadvantaged families; they were also provided with free stationery and lunch.



Entrance of the Jewish Girls' School

In 1884 the school moved to more spacious premises, and by 1929 it had shifted again to its own building opposite the Beth-El Synagogue. In 1908, it was upgraded from a 'middle' to a 'secondary' school and the first candidates appeared for the Junior Cambridge Local Examinations in 1912.



The Jewish Girls' School Exterior

In 1937, the Jewish Women's League set up a Jewish Girls Hostel for the children of indigent parents which became the boarding department of the Jewish Girls' School. The school moved to its present premises in 1955.



The Jewish Girls' School Interior

As the numbers of the Jewish community of Calcutta began to dwindle due to emigration in the 1950's, there was a significant reduction in enrolment. By then, the school had garnered a reputation for its excellence in teaching and it was decided to open admission to all. There have been no Jewish girls in the Jewish Girls' School since the 1960's.

Today, the school -- fully equipped to handle both science and arts streams -- prepares over a thousand pupils for the ICSE and ISC Board examinations.

NEVEH SHALOM SYNAGOGUE

Situated at 9A Indra Kumar Karnani Street, Calcutta.

By the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the growing number of Jewish immigrants from Aleppo and Baghdad made it necessary to move religious services out of the homes of the leaders of the community, and into larger premises. In November 1825 a large house was purchased for this purpose, with the first service taking place on 16th June 1826. Under the leadership of Moses Dwek, who also officiated as the 'paquid', the community had taken out a mortgage and it was only when the full amount had been repaid – five years later – that the synagogue received its name. In April 1826, the synagogue was officially named Neveh Shalome (Abode of Peace) *"In thankfulness for the harmony and concord then existing in the community"* and as an expression of hope for the continuance of this peace.



Entrance to Neveh Shalom Synagogue



Neveh Shalom Synagogue Interior

Further purchases -- in 1841 and 1843 -- extended the property of the synagogue. Major repairs and alterations were made in 1881 to one of the buildings but the migration of a number of the congregation to the newer synagogue, Bethel, and the dilapidated condition of the other buildings belonging to the Neveh Shalome Synagogue led to their demolition in around 1875.

Services from the 'old' Neveh Shalome shifted to the impressive, newly-constructed Maghen David on its completion in 1884, and the old Neveh Shalome building, scheduled for demolition, ceased to function as a synagogue. However, a year later, services were resumed by a section of worshippers, resulting in an inter-synagogue dispute that lasted for over 30 years. In June 1910, the old Neveh Shalome was dismantled. The 'new' Neveh Shalome was consecrated in March 1912.

With the exodus of the Jewish population from Calcutta in the 1950's, congregations dwindled. The community was no longer able to support three synagogues in the city. In April 1987, the Neveh Shalome closed its doors, and is today no longer used for religious purposes.

BETHEL SYNAGOGUE

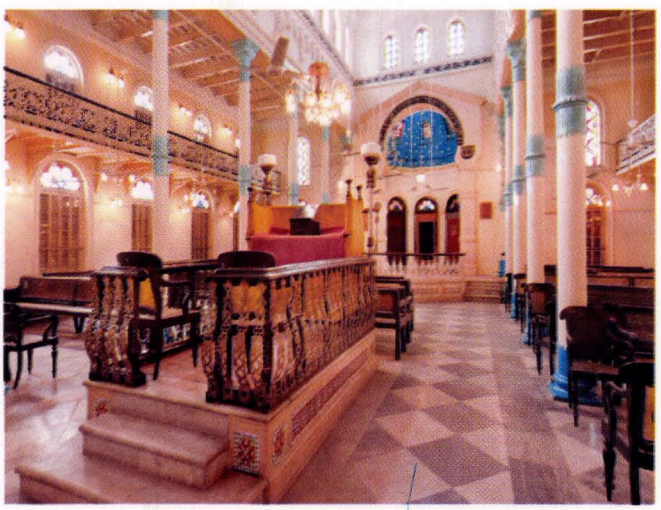
Situated at, 26/1, Pollock Street, Calcutta.

The first purpose-built synagogue in Calcutta, Bethel, was a gift to the Jews of Calcutta from two prominent city merchants, Mr. Ezekiel Judah and Mr. David Joseph Ezra. The foundation stone was laid on 9th September 1856 by Mr. Moses Dwek,



Bethel Synagogue Exterior

acknowledged leader of the community, whose efforts led to the establishment of the synagogue. The synagogue was originally called Neveh Shalom, as the intention was to replace the dilapidated existing synagogue of the same name with the new structure built a few hundred meters away. Thus, for a while, the 'old' Neveh Shalom co-existed with the 'new'. Some time after, it was renamed; in 1874 it was referred to as Bethel in a local Hebrew-Arab publication of the time.



Bethel Synagogue Interior

In 1885, and again in 1894, the synagogue was renovated by community elder and philanthropist, Mr. Elia Gubbay at a personal cost of Rs. 1,00,000. The synagogue was extended by one-third and the Ark room was widened to contain the increasing number of Torahs. The interior was modified to provide a feeling of gracious space. The ceiling was raised and the bulky columns streamlined. High set stained glass windows embellished the sides of the building. The ladies section was made more spacious, with a recessed balcony.

The Bethel Synagogue has been declared a Monument of National Importance and is protected by the Archeological Society of India.

MAGHEN DAVID SYNAGOGUE

Situated at 109A, Canning Street, Calcutta.

The Maghen David Synagogue was built by Elia David Joseph Ezra in memory of his father David Joseph Ezra and dedicated on 11th September 1884. As Calcutta's third synagogue, the Maghen David was constructed to accommodate the then growing Jewish population of Calcutta. Designed in the Italian renaissance style, it is the largest synagogue in the East, capable of seating three hundred women and four hundred men.

With its red brick exterior, the building stands out in the crowded area which today is the trading centre of the city. It is possibly the only synagogue with a steeple and clock tower. Above the marbled entrance, an ornate mosaic arch is inscribed with Biblical verses.

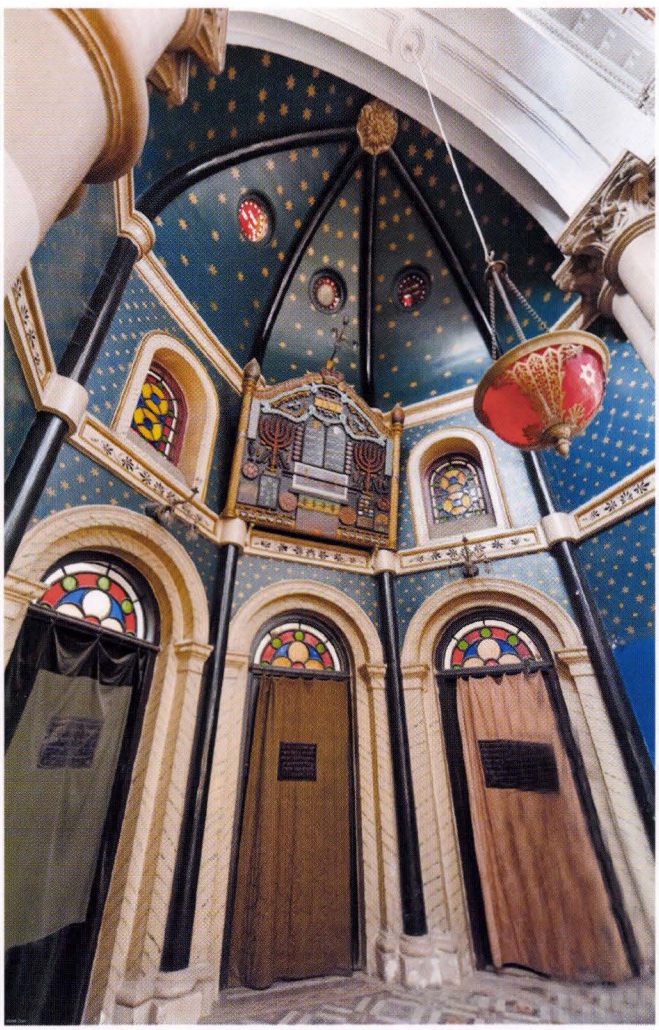
Scriptural lines are also inscribed on the arches of the 18 stone pillars that flank the ninety-two foot long and thirty-three foot wide main hall, with the pulpit in the middle. The marble used for the floors was imported from Italy.

At the western end of the synagogue, a raised semi-circular platform is bounded by a bronze balustrade imported from London and inlaid with patterned custom-made Spanish tiles. This is where weddings and circumcisions were performed. Beyond the platform is the Hekhal Hakkodesh, which once held as many as 80 Torah scrolls. The domed ceiling at its entrance has a representation of a starry sky.

Maghen David is declared a Monument of National Importance and is protected by the Archeological Society of India.



Maghen David Synagogue, Exterior



Hekhal of Maghen David Synagogue

THE JEWISH CEMETERY

Situated at 45, Narkeldanga Main Road, Calcutta.

The Jewish Cemetery is the oldest Jewish institution in Calcutta. Its foundation date is indeterminate but the earliest decipherable grave reads 13th February 1836.



Burial Hall at Calcutta Cemetery

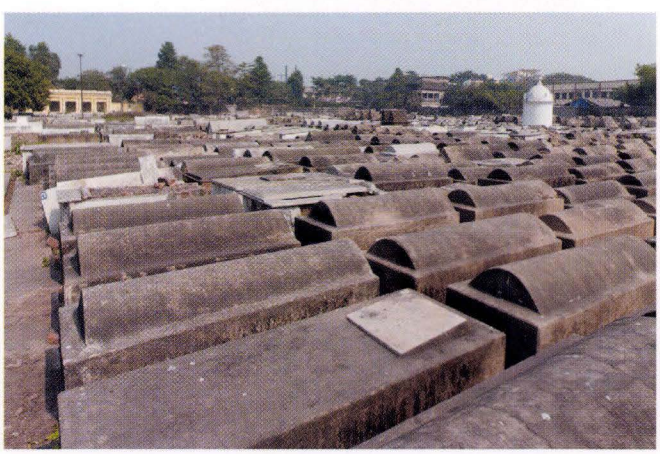
The Jewish cemetery was established following the death of a member of the Jewish community in Calcutta. As there was no communal land to bury the deceased, Mr. Shalom Cohen, the founder of the community, approached one of the princes in the city for a piece of land. The Nawab immediately offered a large plot as a gift. Cohen declined the offer, pointing out that according to Jewish law, payment had to be made for land used as a burial site. He took his ruby ring and presented it as settlement for the land.

In 1879, it was necessary to enlarge the cemetery and so an adjoining plot was donated by Mr. Elia Shalom Gubbay, a leading member of the community. More land was acquired in 1899 and again in the 1940's. The Prayer Hall was erected in 1921, as gift from Mrs. Gala Gubbay in memory of her father.



Genizah in Calcutta Cemetery

Though this was not a tenet of religious law or custom, in practice there was a distinct area where the Kohanim should be buried. Subsequently other sections of the cemetery were marked out for other Jewish communities – Bene-Israelis, Cochinis, Ashkenazis – a practice that has been discontinued with the dwindling of the size of the Jewish community in Calcutta. The administration of the cemetery today rests with the Oseh Haised (Hebrew Burial Board), constituted in 1891.



Graves in Calcutta Cemetery

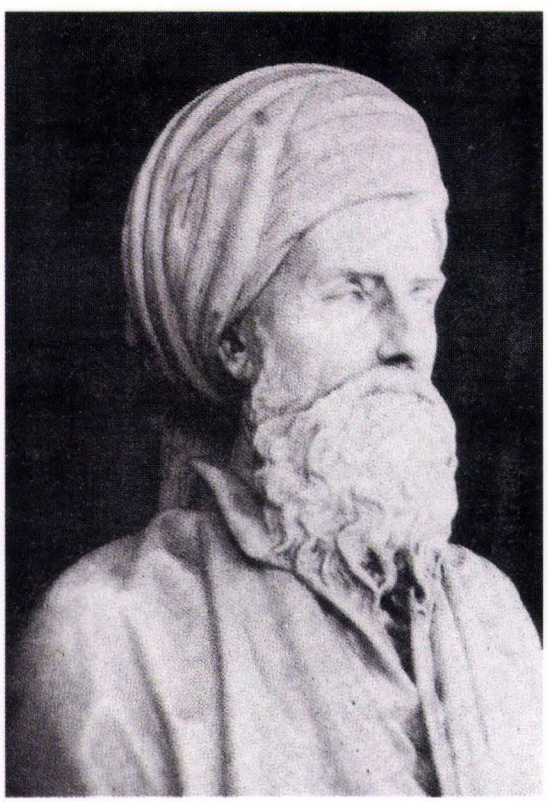
PUNE

The first advent of the Bene-Israels in Pune (then known as Poona) was referred to by Mr. W. Sinclar of the Bombay Civil Service, who wrote :

"There were no Bene Israels in the Deccan region under the Maratha Government. It is a curious instance of the sort of official emigration that goes on under our British Government that the whole Jewish Colony in the town of Poona traces its origin to a single inspector of Police. After him came a few of his own family and then others; and now they number in the second generation about 200 souls. Of these, some are government writers (clerks), some pensioners of the native army, and a good many carpenters; they call themselves 'Bene-Israel's'."

As mentioned in the quote above, the first Bene-Israel settlement in Pune can be traced to the appointment of Subedar Abraham David Charikar of the 3rd Regiment, Bombay Native Infantry, as Assistant Superintendent of Police in 1863.

The Baghdadi Jews, on the other hand, came to Pune much earlier, with the arrival of David Sassoon in 1832. Today there are around 200 Jews living in and around Pune.



David Sassoon - the Great Jewish Philanthropist

OHEL DAVID SYNAGOGUE



Ohel David Synagogue Exterior

The foundation stone of Ohel David Synagogue was laid in 1862 after generous donations by David Sassoon, the Jewish merchant prince of Mumbai. He died in Pune on 5th February 1864, before he could see the completion of his two projects, and was buried in the grounds of the synagogue in a special enclosure to the east. The Ohel David Synagogue was opened in 1867. The synagogue is a beautiful red brick building that has a ninety feet high tower with a chimney clock surmounted by a spire. Known as Lal Deval, the synagogue is located in the military cantonment area.

David Sassoon's mausoleum is located about 20 feet in front of the Ohel David Synagogue.



Ohel David Synagogue Interior

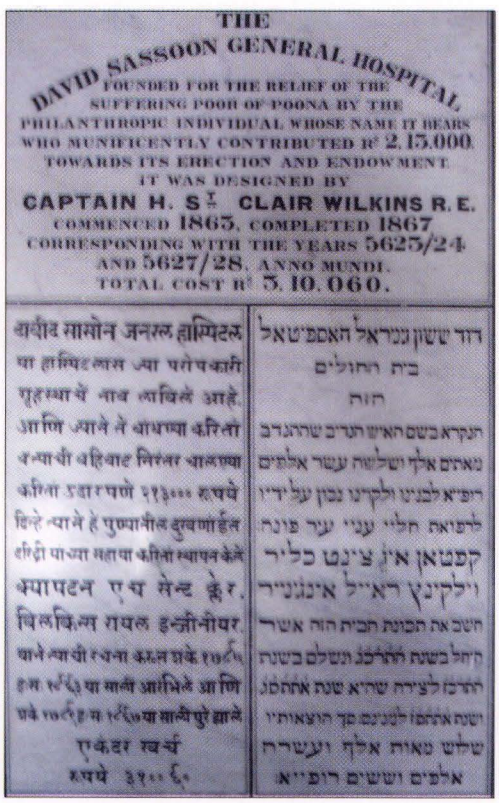
SASSOON HOSPITAL



Sassoon Hospital

The Sassoon Hospital occupies extensive grounds near the Pune railway station. The foundation stone of Sassoon Hospital was laid in 1863 and the hospital was finally opened in 1868. In earlier years, the hospital maintained a special ward for Jewish patients undergoing treatment, the diet being kosher.

Dr. Zakir Hussain, the then President of India (May 1967 to May 1969) visited the Ohel David Synagogue and placed a wreath on the tomb of David Sassoon on the 10th December 1968 to mark the centenary celebrations of Sassoon Hospital.


THE
DAVID SASSOON GENERAL HOSPITAL
FOUNDED FOR THE RELIEF OF THE
SUFFERING POOR OF POONA BY THE
PHILANTHROPIC INDIVIDUAL WHOSE NAME IT BEARS
WHO MUNIFICENTLY CONTRIBUTED R$ 2,15,000
TOWARDS ITS ERECTION AND ENDOWMENT
IT WAS DESIGNED BY
CAPTAIN H. SINCLAIR WILKINS R.E.
COMMENCED 1863, COMPLETED 1867
CORRESPONDING WITH THE YEARS 5625/24
AND 5627/28, ANNO MUNDI.
TOTAL COST R$ 3,10,060.

Foundation Stone of Sassoon Hospital

THE FOUR BENE ISRAEL PRAYER HALLS

The Bene Israelis built four Prayer Halls around Pune:

1. The Pune Bene Israelis Prayer Hall was established by an orthodox Bene Israel from Pune, the late Subhedar Major Bahadur Daniel Rahamin Talkar.

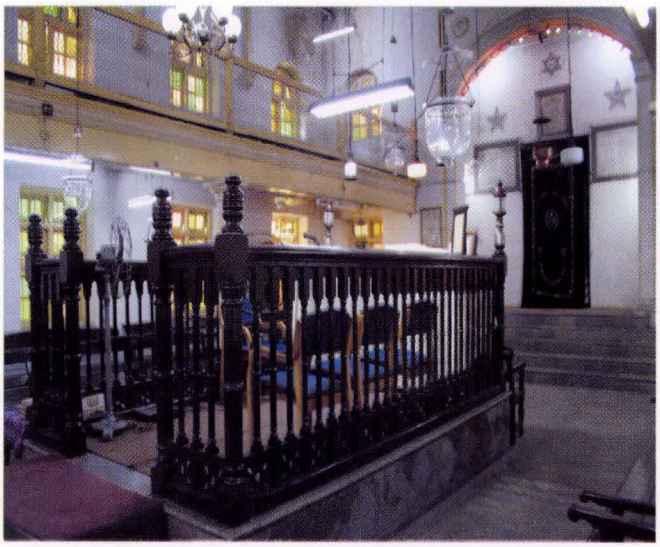
2. Mr. Abraham Samson Talkar established Hebrath Beth Yakob Prayer Hall on the first floor of his own house. The first marriage took place in 1916 when the two sons of the late Mr. Jacob Killekar of Karachi married the two daughters of the late Khan Bahadur Joseph Borgaonkar.

3. The late Subhedar Major Solomon Balaji Jhiradkar built the Jhiradkar Prayer Hall where Succath Shelomo Synagogue stands at present.

4. The fourth Prayer Hall was founded by the late Mr. Isaac Shalom Ghosalkar. It was situated near the Rasta Peth electric power house.

SUCCATH SHELOMO SYNAGOGUE

In 1915, a project to build a Bene Israel Synagogue in the city was mooted by the local Bene Israel community and in 1916, the Jhiradkar property was acquired as the most suitable site for this purpose. The foundation stone was laid on the 28th December 1919, and the synagogue was opened on the 21st May 1921. The name Succath Shelomo was given to the sacred edifice in grateful appreciation of the donors Mr. Solomon Aaron Bhonkar and his wife Mrs. Sarah Solomon, who contributed the largest amount towards the cost of the building.



Succath Shelomo Synagogue Interior

THE PUNE JEWISH READING ROOM AND LIBRARY

The Pune Jewish Reading Room and Library was first established on Rasta Peth near the Succath Shelomo Synagogue. Opened on 1st January 1887, the library was reorganised in March 1924, after which it was supported by a yearly grant-in-aid from the Pune Municipality. The library was founded by Mr. David Elizer Koletkar and its first President was the great community worker, Dr. Khan Bahadur Judah Hyam Mhashilikar. After his death, his son donated his large collection of Judaic books to the library.



Succath Shelomo Synagogue Exterior

Although functioning successfully for a century, catering to Jews and non-Jews alike, the library was demolished due to a road widening scheme, and the books were moved to the Succath Shelomo Synagogue. Sadly enough the library has since become defunct.



Noar Memorial Hall

NOAR MEMORIAL HALL

Following Mrs. Ratanbai Joseph Kamerlekar's donation of a large plot of land in Rasta Peth to the Succath Shelomo Syangogue, the Bene Israel community of Pune decided to build a hall on the site. This project received donations from the Noar Memorial Trust of Mumbai of Rs. 30,000 (after which the hall is named) and a handsome donation from Mr. & Mrs. Nawgaonkar in their will. Today, the hall is rented out to Jews and non-Jews and is a valuable source of revenue for the Succath Shelomo Synagogue.

JEWISH CEMETERIES

Two cemeteries exist in Pune today; the first is situated in the military cantonment area (now closed) and is named Babulbund Bene Israel Cemetery due to the plentiful babul trees. This burial ground was given to Bene Israelis who served in the British Regiment and the graves date back to 1745. The second cemetery is located in Koregaon park, and is still in use today. The eastern half of the cemetery is used by Baghdadi Jews, whilst the western half is reserved for the Bene Israelis.



Jewish Cemetery at Koregaon Park

JEWISH STREET NAMES

Three streets in Pune are graced with Jewish names: "Sassoon Road" is named after the famous merchant prince, David Sassoon. "Synagogue Street" adjoins the Ohel David Synagogue from which it is named and "Nathan Road" takes after Mr. Nathan, a sitting member of the Military Cantonment Board.

GUJARAT

The Bene Israel Jews came to the districts of: Ahmedabad, Baroda, Surat, Surendranagar, Rajkot and Kutch around the year 1857, mostly to work for British-run services such as railways, textile mills, postal services, factories and to enrol in the army.

At the turn of the century, a house in Bukhara Mohalla, Khamasa was donated by the Erulkar family for use as the Magen Abraham Synagogue, which was built in 1933 in Ahmedabad. At that time there were 800 Jews and around 300 families living in Gujarat.

Slowly the number of Jews decreased, as most emigrated to Israel, America & Canada. Today, there are about 50 Jewish families in Ahmedabad. This community greatly contributed to education in the region - there are still many English medium schools run by Jewish families today. In the past, Jews worked as heads of various institutions including mills, medical colleges, electricity companies and the police department.

The Jewish graveyard near Jubilee Mills in Ahmedabad was donated to the community by the late Mr. Joseph Solomon. A new graveyard was constructed on the Vishala side of the river Sabarmati thanks to the efforts of Mr. Ralph Best.

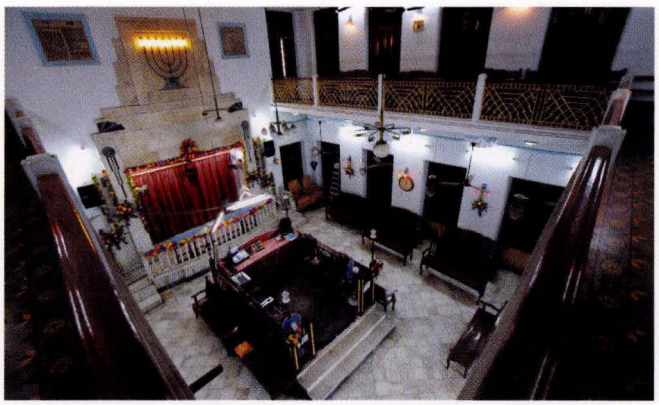
Today the community is active yet small, and the Magen Abraham Synagogue continues to serve as a centre of activity for the Gujarat Jews.

MAGEN ABRAHAM SYNAGOGUE, AHMEDABAD

The history of Bene Israels in Gujarat dates back to 1848, when a pioneering group of Jews led by Dr. Abraham Benjamin Erulkar arrived from Mumbai to Ahmedabad. Dr. Abraham established a prayer room in his home for the benefit of this small community. Later, in 1906, Dr. Abraham's son, Dr. Solomon Erulkar and his congregation built a Prayer Hall in the Pankor Naka area of the walled city.



Magen Abraham Synagogue Exterior

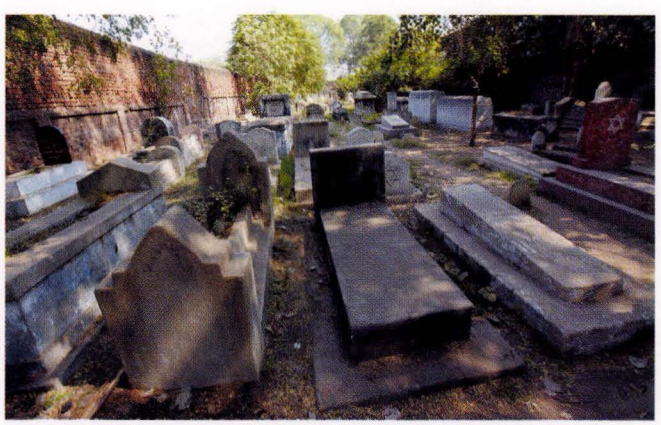


Magen Abraham Synagogue Interior

In 1934, the Magen Abraham Synagogue was built near the Khamasa gate. During the time of British India, this synagogue was the only place of worship serving the entire Northern part of India beyond Mumbai, until a Prayer Hall was established in New Delhi in 1956. The synagogue celebrated its 75th year Diamond Jubilee in 2009. To mark this occasion, the Gujarat Postal Department released commemorative postal envelopes.

OLD JEWISH CEMETERY AT DUDHESHWAR, AHMEDABAD

Burial land for the Jewish community, outside the walled city of Ahmedabad, was donated by Mr. Solomon Joseph Dandekar in 1876. Dr. Abraham Erulkar was buried there in 1890, and the cemetery was in use up to the end of the 1990's.



Old Jewish Cemetery

NEW CEMETERY NEAR VISHALA, AHMEDABAD



New Jewish Cemetery

As a result of petitions to the State Government and the untiring efforts of Mr. Ralph Best and his family, the State Government of Gujarat allotted land for burial purposes which adjoined the graveyards of Muslim and Christian communities near the Vishala open air village restaurant. The cemetery was consecrated in May 2001 and is still in use today.



Nelson's School, Maninagar

The total number of students has now reached over 4,000. They give free education and books to needy Jewish children. Preference is given to Jewish staff appointments where possible. The Shahpur branch, being in a Muslim area, caters mostly to Muslim students.

NELSON'S GROUP OF SCHOOLS



Nelson's International School

Nelson's School was established by Mr. Sam Menashe Haeems and his wife Florence in Maninagar, Ahmedabad in 1965. Due to the hard work and tenacity of this dynamic duo, a new branch of the school was opened in Shahpur (in the heart of the city). Both were fully fledged schools with classes ranging from pre-primary to Std. XII. A third branch of the school was later established in Uttamnagar, Maninagar. These three schools offer subjects ranging from Science, Arts and Commerce.



Nelson's School, Shahpur

THE CLASSICAL ENGLISH AND GUJARATI PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The Classical English and Gujarati Primary Schools were established simultaneously in the year 1965 at "Samuel Cottage", Beherampura, Ahmedabad-22, in answer to the need for excellent educational facilities at a modest rate. More than a hundred students enrolled within the first week, and thereafter there was an ever increasing demand for admission.



Classical School

A new branch of the institution was opened at Gordhan Bhavan Bhulabhai Park, Ahmedabad, thanks to the dedication of the Samuel family. The schools have progressed and blossomed with the student body now standing at 700. The guiding principle for this institution is discipline, whilst the objective has always been "high educational standards" coupled with "all-round development" of the students.

Since their inception, the schools have won inter-school competitions in the dramatics, fancy dress, folk-dance, drawings, elocution and storytelling disciplines.

LITTLE FLOWER HIGH SCHOOL

The Little Flower High School was founded by Sophie Samson Samuel with the support of her family members in the year 1964. Originally, only 30 students were enrolled with the Junior and Senior Kindergarten classes taught in the Ashok Nagar Club.

Yvonne Shah, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Samson, continues the family legacy. She started work as the School's Principal in 1988 and is still in this position today.



Little Flower High School

Presently the school teaches from playgroup till Std. XII with approximately 3,000 students managed by Mr. Samuel (Director) and Ms. Yvonne (Principal) 100 staff and 20 non-teaching staff.

The school has proved itself as a cradle for excellence - achieving 100% results in the Gujarat Board Examinations.

REUBS HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL

Reubs Higher Secondary School was founded in 1969 by Mrs. Y.D.R. Dandekar and Mr. I.D.R. Dandekar. It began as a kindergarten school and gradually developed into a fully fledged secondary school, teaching Arts and Commerce for the Gujarat Secondary Board Examination. The student body today stands at 1,500.



Reubs High School

Situated in a suburb of Ahmedabad, Reubs is one of the oldest Jewish schools in the district. This eco-friendly school was also the first school in Ahmedabad to have a "smart class", and is today a High-Tech digital next-generation school. Apart from education, the school trust has also published three books for Indian Jews, including the title "The Advent and progress of the Bene Israel of India".



Reubs Kindergarten School

THE BEST PRIMARY, HIGH & HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS, AHMEDABAD

The BEST School was established in June 1958 on a very modest scale, with just 30 students ranging from Nursery to Standard second. Originally, the medium of instruction was English, under the enthusiastic guidance of Ms. Queenie and Mr. Ralph Best. As classes gradually increased, so did the school building.



BEST School, Ahmedabad

Students first took the Secondary School Certificate Exam in 1968. The Higher Secondary section was established in 1977. At present there are four divisions - each from Nursery to the Tenth Standard. The Higher Secondary section has four divisions each, two for Science and two for Commerce. The total number of students today stands at over 4,000.

Today, the BEST School is a government recognised co-educational English Medium School following the Gujarat State Educational Board Syllabus.

CONTRIBUTION OF PADMASHREE REUBEN DAVID TO THE CITY OF AHMEDABAD

Reuben David was a pioneer of the Kamla Nehru Zoological garden. He was also active in helping the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation build the Chacha Nehru Balvatika (a unique children's paradise) and the Natural History Museum. After his death, the Natural History Museum was named after him.



Bronze Bust of Reuben David

Reuben was known as the gentle animal keeper of Ahmedabad and is recognised as having created one of the most remarkable zoos in Asia. In the early 1950s, he developed a near natural habitat for animals, birds and reptiles by creating a distinct style of zoo architecture. He planted numerous trees in and around the zoo. This green zone "zoo complex" encircles Kankaria Lake.

The zoo is today known as the Kamala Nehru Zoological Gardens and houses a children's park known as Chacha Nehru Balvatika as well as the Reuben David Natural History



Chacha Nehru Balvatika

Museum. Reuben was well known for breeding mugger crocodiles and flamingos and also for capturing birds and animals, which may have strayed into human habitation, such as the Maninagar panther and man-eating crocodiles.

He regularly contributed to the International Zoo Year Book, which documented the successful breeding of animals at the Ahmedabad zoo, and was known for teaching animals of opposite temperaments to live peacefully together, such as unlikely friends Montu the lion and Tommy the dog.



Kamla Nehru Zoo

The book 'The Asiatic Lion" was co-authored by Reuben along with retired Gujarati chief conservator of forests, M. A. Rashid. The book was published after Reuben's death by India's Department of Environment in 1991. Reuben was also an advisor for Sundervan, a nature park established by the Nehru Foundation, as well as Indroda Park in Gandhinagar.



Reuben David Natural History Museum

A bronze bust of Reuben is housed in his old log cabin office overlooking the Kankaria lake. The bust was made in 1962 by famous sculptor Sankho Choudhuri and later cast in bronze by Kanti Patel. The plaster copy is housed at the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation City Museum. Reuben was awarded the title of Padmashree by the Government of India in 1975, which was followed by other accolades such as the Vishwa Gurjari award, Rotary award and Dadhichi award.

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high

Where knowledge is free

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments

By narrow domestic walls

Where words come out from the depth of truth

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way

Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit

Where the mind is led forward by thee

Into ever-widening thought and action

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake

– Sir Rabindranath Tagore

NEW DELHI

The presence of Jews in Delhi goes back many centuries, even before the British colonial era. When the capital of India shifted to Delhi, Jews were present in the vital railway, defence and central government services. During the Second World War, there was an influx of British and American troops and services in New Delhi for Jewish soldiers were conducted by army chaplains. A few German and Polish Jews, who escaped the Holocaust, also settled in the city.

JUDAH HYAM SYNAGOGUE

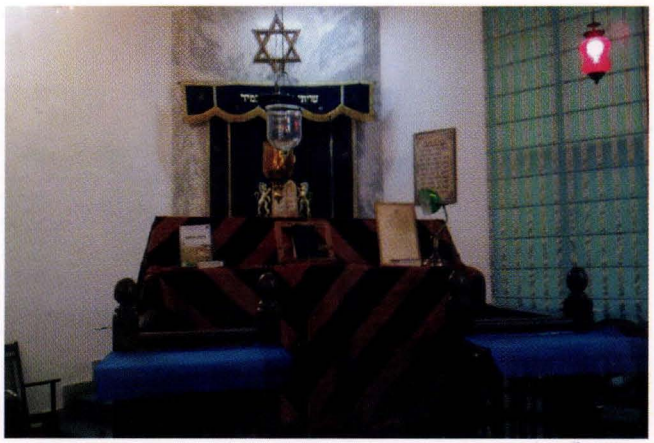
Situated at 2, Humayun Road, New Delhi - 110002.



Judah Hyam Synagogue Exterior

To cater to the growing religious, social and cultural needs of the community, the Jewish Welfare Association was formed in 1949 on the initiative of Mr. Ezra Kolet, Mr. Joshua Benjamin Bhonkar, Mr. Baruch B. Benjamin and Mr. Jacob Solomon: the Station Master of the Delhi Railway Station. This close-knit organisation decided that a Prayer Hall and community centre was needed. The foundation stone was laid on 12th February 1956 and the building was constructed at a total cost of Rs. 23,695 and dedicated on 2nd September 1956.

Dr. Rachel Judah made a substantial donation in memory of her father Dr. Judah Hyam, and so the Prayer Hall was named "Judah Hyam Hall" and later sanctified as a synagogue. The hall was designed by Mr. Joshua M. Benjamin who at that time was the Chief Architect to the Government of India and Secretary of the Urban Art Commission. A Sefer Torah was donated by the Knesseth Israel Synagogue of Minneapolis, through Mr. Leo Gross. Another Sefer Torah was donated by the Federation of Jewish Agencies of Greater Philadelphia.



Judah Hyam Synagogue Interior

An Annexe to the synagogue was constructed on 26th December 1979 to house a library and an inter-faith study centre. In order to promote goodwill and understanding among all religions, it has a well stocked library of books on all religions and sacred scriptures. People of all faiths and religions are encouraged to use the books of this library.

With the opening of the Embassy of Israel in 1993, the synagogue became a centre of Jewish activity for those diplomats and their families. Since inception, Judah Hyam Synagogue has hosted many distinguished visitors including former Israeli Prime Minister Moshe Sharett, former Israeli Prime Minister (now President) Shimon Peres, Lord Greville Janner and violinist Yehudi Menuhim.

The Honorary Secretary of the synagogue, Mr. Ezekiel Isaac Malekar, voluntarily conducts services and has taken care of the library, inter-faith study center and the synagogue itself for the last 25 years. General J.F.R. Jacob, the Governor of Goa and Punjab, is the President.

On Delhi's Humayun Street and near Judah Hyam Synagogue is a Jewish Cemetery. There are about 150 tombs here, the oldest tomb dates back to 1934.



Jewish Cemetery in New Delhi

NOTES

THE HONG KONG HERITAGE PROJECT (HKHP)

The Hong Kong Heritage Project (HKHP) was founded in 2007 by Sir Michael Kadoorie, Sir Elly's grandson, with the aim of preserving heritage and promoting a general interest in history. It is apt therefore, that the HKHP has chosen to sponsor the Jewish Landmarks of India.

This book is as much a story about the importance of heritage preservation to a community's identity, as the history of a small group of Jewish immigrants achieving success for themselves and for India as a whole. Told in a dynamic and readable fashion, through original and previously unseen photos collected by a group of photographers from 2010 – 2011, the Jewish Landmarks of India unifies the history of the Jewish community of India and secures a Jewish perspective to India's proud narrative.

The original aims of the HKHP were to acquire, collate and make available to the public documents, photographs, film and testimony relating to the history of the Kadoorie Family, its business and charitable work in Hong Kong and elsewhere.

As time went on, the HKHP grew to be not just the history of the Kadoorie Family, but a lens or window through which the wider history of the community could be told, and part of its heritage preserved for future generations. Today, the HKHP works on various initiatives to promote heritage preservation including youth education programmes, public exhibitions and publications.

For more information on the Kadoorie Family, their Jewish heritage and the HKHP, visit our website at: www.hongkongheritage.org.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE (AJDC, INDIA)

Established in early 1960 to support and oversee relief work amongst the poor and needy in India, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC) has worked diligently in aid of the poor, destitute, homeless and orphaned. The AJDC has also brought about a renaissance of religious, cultural and social life to Jewish communities across India.

Although AJDC staff numbers are small, the team is dynamic. They are guided in their work by representatives from the seven local Jewish communities who constitute the Advisory Committee. Besides setting up a home for the elderly – 'Bayiti', AJDC has introduced the unique concept of social formation groups, such as: The Golden Age Group, The Rosh Chodesh Women's Group, The King Solomon's Business Club and Youth Groups. Other activities include cash and medical camps for Jews in Konkan villages, medical services for the poor and medication and hospitalisation for the sick and needy.

Some of the most popular activities are its numerous informal Jewish educational programmes and camps for different age groups. These promote social interaction amongst community members by supporting Jewish holiday celebrations in co-operation with local synagogues and Jewish organisations. The AJDC has an open Judaic library of over 4000 volumes held in the Evelyn Peters Community Centre in Mumbai and has supported other Jewish libraries at ORT (India) in Mumbai and in the local synagogues at Thane, Ahmedabad, Pune and Cochin.

Consolidating its work in informal Jewish education, AJDC has provided essential community services such as Shechitah Kashrut and Sifrut training, Matzah baking under rabbinical guidance and the Buncher community leadership training project. Religious articles such as Tallitim, Mezuzot, Tefillins and Siddurs are also made available to community members at nominal rates.

In its quest to promote greater dialogue and awareness of community issues, the AJDC organises an annual "All India Jewish Community Seminar" and periodic "Community Building Forums" attended by representatives of synagogues and organisations from the local Jewish community. Various programmes and services in community development have all played a significant role in reinforcing Jewish identity in India.



THE JEWISH LANDMARKS OF INDIA IS A JOINT VENTURE OF HKHP AND AJDC (INDIA)