

# EUROPEAN VIEWS OF PARSIS IN ZANZIBAR

Dr. Kersey Antia, Jul 7, 2020

What John Hinnells reported about the Parsis in Zanzibar also shows that the English held the Parsis in high esteem, even far off in Zanzibar, and so the relationship was not just one way but quite mutual.

An American traveller, Osgood, to Zanzibar in 1854 commented on the Parsis there:

Than a Parsee, can be found no more faithful and enduring friend, no more assiduous catch – and at the same time liberal squanderer – of money, no more skilful merchant or mechanic...a handsome man.

Burton provided another account of Zanzibar Parsis in 1857.

The late Seyyid was so anxious to attract Parsees who might free him from the arrogance and the annoyance of 'white merchants,' that he would willingly have allowed them to build a Tower of Silence, and to perform uninterrupted, all the rites of their religion.

In a farewell function, Basil Cave, Consul General, commented in 1908:

I am struck by the large number of Parsee gentlemen in the official, legal and mercantile worlds with whom we have come into contact, and whom, happily we have been able to count as friends.

Ethel Younghusband commented in 1908:

By far the most superior of the natives of India who have come to Zanzibar are the Parsis, mostly from Bombay. They are a most interesting people, quite different in nearly every way from the other children of India. They are to be compared with, very much lighter in colour, most of them being as light as the people of Southern Europe and some even lighter...

Parsees generally are noted for their kindness, generosity and benevolence towards others less well off than they are; they build many public institutions and subscribe liberally to funds for any worthy object. They attain their position

by hard work and good business faculties, perseverance being one of their strong points...

Such adulatory comments about Parsis” observes Hinnells, “even when living far away from India are noteworthy.

In 1903, the Parsis were successful in appealing to the German government to include them into the same jurisdiction that was granted to the Europeans.

In 1963, when a new regime came into power after a brief revolution, the new president pleaded over a radio broadcast not to harm the Parsis, because of their contributions to the development of Zanzibar. (*Fezana Journal*, Winter 2005, p. 2).