

# TRUE FACTS ABOUT PARSIS' MIGRATION TO INDIA

Dr. Kersey Antia, Feb 20, 2019; updated Apr 30, 2019

It is not only the Iranians who settled on the eastern coast of India for the silk trade but there were also many Indians settled in Iran, according to Michael Morony.<sup>1</sup> The largest group called the Zutt (possibly Zaat?) was brought to the Gulf Coast during the reign of Behram V (420.38), who also invited 4000 Indian musicians called black Luris, to Iran and dispersed them all over Iran. There were also another east Indian group in Iran called Sayabija who lived along the gulf coast and Indighar who were mostly Indian mercenaries living in eastern Kerman. They all served in the Sasanian army at the time of the Arab conquest but were captured and converted to Islam. They formed their own military unit in Basra. The Zutts were known for their water buffaloes and rice cultivation. (I wonder if these Zutts?) belong to the same group of Indians that later came to be known as Gypsies whom the Muslims enlisted in their army for their skills in making military equipemnt. Thus there were settlements of Indians in Iran too, possibly even on a larger scale than the settlements of Parsis in India.

Rev. James Moulton also finds it difficult to accept *Kissah-i-Sanjan* at its face value. However, it is quite obvious that those Zoroastrians who were already settled in India for trade found it wiser not to return to Iran. As they had to keep close contact with Iran even for trade purposes, they may have advised their close relatives and friends to seek refuge in India to escape persecution. Rev, Moulton notes:

The great Danish Orientalist N. L. Westergaard in his edition of the Avesta, suggested doubts as to this poetic record. It may well have been the profits of trade, not persecution, that brought the Parsis to Western India. The distinguished Parsi scholar, M. G.K. Nariman, stoutly urges the same view. It is outside our purpose in this work to discuss purely historical questions: we chronicle the difference and pass on. The authority quoted for the story of the migration is a work called *Kissah-i-Sanjan*, written about three centuries ago by a priest of Naosari. It is to be feared that it can hardly be regarded as a first rate authority until the materials on which the poet based his record are known and found ancient. The matter is under discussion, and there are excellent authorities, especially

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1 *Iraq After the Moslem Conquest*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1984, pp. 271-2.

Dr. Modi, in favour of the tradition. But pending decisive confirmation, it is not worth our while to reproduce the story or discuss it. The only point of early history we need set down is that the Parsis still date events by the regnal year of their last king, Yazdegard, who fell in A.D. 651. The epoch is A.D. 631, so that the present year (1916-17) is A.Y. 1286. Naturally this epoch is not used in ordinary everyday practice.”<sup>2</sup>

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2 *The Treasure of the Magi*, Oxford University Press, London, 1917, pp 122-3.