

KARSONDAS MULJI

**Issued for the Karsondas Mulji
Centenary Celebration Committee,
Bombay.**

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DEDICATED
TO
THE SACRED MEMORY
OF
SIR JOSEPH ARNOULD, Kt.,

The noble Judge of the Supreme Court of Bombay, whose lucid judgment in the Maharaja Libel Case thoroughly vindicated the righteousness of the crusade, in the cause of Truth and Purity in religion, against the most immoral practices prevalent in the Vaishnava Sect of Vallabhacharya, waged so vehemently against heavy odds, with the help of a band of zealous and earnest reformers of all communities by

KARSONDAS MULJI

whose illustrious career, full of valiant deeds of reform, is described in the following pages.

**THE KARSONDAS MULJI CENTENARY
CELEBRATION COMMITTEE.**

KARSONDAS MULJI

A

BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY



BY

B. N. Motiwala,

B. A., LL. B.

FOREWORD

BY

Diwan Bahadur K. M. Jhaveri,

M. A., LL. B.

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PREFACE.

Hero-worship has been universally recognised as an essential ingredient in the nation-building process. Like all countries, India too has practised this quality. From ancient times Hindus have been worshipping their great religious heroes like Shri Ramchandra and Shri Krishna. It is a fortunate circumstance that Indians have this highly useful quality in abundance. What is needed, to suit the times, is merely to widen its scope. It is imperative to have our hero-worship extended to social, moral and intellectual spheres. The sad result of this one-sided development has been that in India biographical literature is poor. Till now, the biographies of the greatest Indians like Dadabhai Nowroji, Mahadev Govind Ranade and others have not been written as they ought to be. The late Mr. G. K. Gokhale intended to write the biography of his Guru, Ranade, but his poor health prevented him from doing so. In my humble way, I attempted to have a biography of the late Dadabhai written by an eminent Parsi Professor, and the late Mr. Gokhale had promised to revise it; but unfortunately untoward circumstances came in the way of the fructification of my cherished plan. This dearth of biographical literature accounts for the sad deficiency in our country of the existence of heroes in different walks of life. It is through biographies that young men can learn unconsciously the art of life. When such is the deplorable state of our people as a whole, there is no wonder if the Gujaratis, as a class, lag behind. Gujarat has had very few outstanding personalities. One of such was the late Karsondas Mulji. All Gujaratis should feel greatly indebted to the late Rao Saheb Mahipatram

Rupram for the short Gujarati biography of Karsondas. But for this, Gujaratis would have entirely lost every trace of the greatness of their great man. Even at present, this biography is not available. The dead great men are our precious treasures. They constitute the rich heritage of our country. But the careers of illustrious Gujaratis appeal to the imagination of the Gujarat youth in a much more impressive manner.

I do not know how far I have succeeded in my delineation of Karsondas's personality. I wish some Gujarati eminent man of letters had essayed this important work; but finding none in the field, I have ventured, with what result I leave the readers to judge. Gujarat sadly needs many Karsondases. My esteemed friend the late Sir Gokuldas Kahandas Parekh, speaking about Indians, before a session of the Indian National Social Conference, said: "I think it is generally admitted that our social edifice, as it exists, is not in good order. We are riddled by customs that prevent our physical development, that are the causes of many ailments and bodily infirmities that weaken our energies, lower our vitality and shorten our lives, by customs that prevent our intellectual development by placing obstacles in the way of acquiring learning and knowledge of arts and sciences and their application, and by customs which bring on moral degeneration by making us indifferent to the claims of justice, equality and charity, by narrowing the range of our sympathies and making us apathetic to the wretchedness and misery into which we find a large number of our countrymen and countrywomen steeped. The problem of the social reformers is to see how to get rid of these customs." If this version is true of Indians as a whole, it is in a far

greater degree true of the Gujaratis. We are a custom-ridden community, and we need to extricate ourselves from the tyrannical sway of unreasoning customs. India's urgent need is to have amongst us many men who will take upon themselves the rôle of the breakers of chains of useless, harmful customs which retard the growth of all-round national progress. Karsondas was one of such iconoclasts.

It is again a sad thing to notice that, unlike men of other countries, Indians in different walks of life, do not leave behind them sufficient biographical material for their relatives or friends or admirers to weave out of the same, connected life-stories of their heroes. In this respect, the late Dadabhai Nowroji was an illustrious exception. Public workers, in the interests of the forward progress of humanity, should not fail in this matter.

Unfortunately for India, people's interest in social reform has considerably fallen. This is not a desirable state of things, when we know that the ground to be covered in the social field alone is too vast. For national uplift, progress in all directions is quite necessary; and to accelerate the progress, which at present is very slow, we need many young men of character and of burning enthusiasm. To fire the hearts and minds of young men to come forward for discharging their social obligations is essential; for this, we need to present before them lives of great Indians of thought and action in different spheres of life. Our dead heroes, the fruits of whose pioneer labours we are enjoying at present, need better treatment at our hands. The late Karsondas Mulji was specially an asset of the Gujaratis. He lived his short life

virtuously and utilized his talents to the best of his power in the position in which he was placed. His life was a beacon light in those dark times. He was truly educated, and he utilized his education to the best advantage for the good of his community. Like an honest debtor to his country, he most honourably discharged his debt, by consecrating selflessly his energies to the progress of his motherland. It is with a view both to preserve the memory of the great and good Karsondas, and to kindle the latent burning fire in the hearts of young Gujaratis that I place this book before YOUNG GUJARAT, being the result of my study of one of Gujarat's great sons.

Some years ago, the Hon. Mr. G. A. Natesan had requested me to write a short sketch of Karsondas's life for his series of Indian Reformers. At that time, I had made some preparation, but was not fortunate enough to complete the same. The movement to celebrate Karsondas Centenary again inspired me to do my duty, as an humble admirer of Karsondas, by presenting before the English-knowing Gujaratis, a study of Karsondas's life and career. My revered father, the late Mr. Narondas Culliandas Kirparam, was a friend and admirer of Karsondas. I find his name as one of the eight signatories of the public Address given to the late Karsondas Mulji, in 1863, on behalf of the "Buddhi Vardhak Hindu Sabha". I deemed it my sacred duty to present to the Centenary Celebration Committee the result of my humble labour. I am very much indebted to this Committee for having kindly accepted my offer of presenting the manuscript of this book to them for publication, and to its Chairman, Diwan Bahadur Krishnalal Mohanlal Jhaveri, for writing a Foreword.

I have mentioned in Chapter III that I failed to secure from any one a single original letter written in Karsondas's own hand. However, since those words were written and printed I was fortunately able to secure from Rao Saheb Maganlal Dalpatram Khakkhar a letter written by Karsondas to his friend, the late Rao Saheb Dalpatram Khakkhar, in his own hand, a facsimile of which is printed in this volume.

I also express my thanks to Mr. P. G. Kanekar, who has, at considerable pains, helped me in revising and correcting the proofs of this book.

The chapters of this book constitute a series of Centenary lectures. The first chapter, however, gives a bird's eye view of the whole life of Karsondas and was published as a pamphlet at the time of the Centenary Celebration. The other chapters deal in detail with the different aspects of Karsondas's career. The incidents of Karsondas's life are so handled as to present before the young readers, an art of life, which they can learn easily when it is presented in a practical way. I have attempted to present this study of a great man's life fully trusting that its perusal will inspire present-day young Indians, especially Gujaratis, to follow Karsondas's example. "The true heirs of a great man," as Renan says, "are not his kinsmen in blood, but those who continue his work."

The all-round progress of India is slow; to make it speedy, our country greatly needs the presentation of life-stories of great men as is done by Messrs. Watts and Co., London.

May many Karsondases rise in my country, is my fervent prayer to God!

Cullindas House,
The Ridge, Malabar Hill. }
Bombay, 10th September 1935. }

B. N. MOTIVALA.

FOREWORD.

The celebration of Karsondas Mulji's Centenary served many useful purposes. One of them was the delivery of a comprehensive series of lectures on his life and work by Mr. Motivala, who had studied the subject with an enthusiasm worthy of the cause to which Karsondas had devoted all his too-short life. It is these lectures which now appear in book-form. They practically state everything worth knowing about him.

The poet sings of "Foot prints on the sands of time", which means that the shifting sands obliterate them in the course of time, and therefore, unless there are "reminders" in some form or other—in the form of centenaries, commemoration volumes, statues, pictures, etc.—of the individual leaving the "footprints" behind, the inspiration that should come from that individual's valuable life-work,—to "make our lives sublime"—would gradually fade away. And India cannot afford to do so, as in recent times there have been so few of such towering personalities, that the utmost efforts are necessary to keep the lamp of social reform work lit by them burning. Karsondas in his days was one such towering personality, why, even in the present times he would still be a shining light, because of the sterling qualities he possessed. They were such that with them he would have succeeded anywhere else than in Bombay and Gujarat. His fight against the forces of unrighteousness and corruption in the practice of religion was so cleanly fought that success was bound to come, in Bombay or elsewhere. He had the courage of conviction and the sincerity of a conscientious man, and that carried the day

for him. The following pages reveal on almost every page the insurmountable difficulties that faced the young reformer. Virile orthodoxy, immense wealth, questionable influences due to wealth and due to the then unholy headship of a very widely revered religious order, all stared him in the face, and but for the administration of even justice at the hands of a British Indian Court young Karsondas would have been swept off his feet and down a precipice, never to be able to stand up again.

When a reformer like Karsondas launches on a campaign of reform, he does not rest content with working in one direction only. Cognate branches thereof naturally fall within his purview: educational reform, widow remarriage reform and other equally important matters were therefore naturally taken up by him, and there too he met with a measure of success.

It is not the object of these few lines to anticipate what the writer has to say. For that the reader is referred to the contents of the book. The assiduity which the author has displayed in the achievement of his purpose will be apparent to the most casual reader. A due appreciation of the same and a determination to follow Karsondas's ideal will amply reward the labours of Mr. Motivala.

BOMBAY,
10th September 1935.

} KRISHNALAL M. JHAVERI

CHRONOLOGY

OF

KARSONDAS'S LIFE.

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 1832 | Born in Bombay on 25th July. |
| 1838
to
1843 | Studied in the Primary Vernacular School. |
| 1847 | |
| 1848 | Entered the Government Gujarati School and finished its course within 9 months. |
| 1848 | Married Valibai (first marriage). Entered an English School. Karsondas's mother's sister Prankore died; and his young aunt became a widow. |
| 1848
to
1851 | Studied in the English School. |
| 1852 | |
| 1852 | Valibai-Karsondas's first wife died. |
| 1853 | Commenced to write an essay on widow re-marriage; wrote articles on social subjects in the weekly paper "Rast Gofar" and in periodicals; and wrote an essay on "The Advantages of Foreign Travel" and read it before a public meeting of the "Buddhi Vardhak Hindu Sabha." |
| 1855 | Started the first cheap weekly paper called "Satya Prakash" or "The Light of Truth," and edited and managed it without any remuneration, for the benefit of the Hindus. |
| 1856 | Was appointed a member of the Managing Committee of the "Buddhi Vardhak Hindu Sabha." Got published 500 copies of his book called "Niti Sangrah". Was appointed Head Master of the English School at Deesa. On 27th December, an Address was presented to him by the Sabha. Gujaratis, for the first time, met and honoured Karsondas. |
| 1857 | Served for ten months as Head Master of the English School at Deesa. On 25th January, advertised for a Prize Essay on the subject of the relationship between a Guru |

- and his disciples. Married second time; but the second wife died within six months of marriage. In December, married for the third time. At Deesa, founded a Society called "Niti Bodhak Sabha"; and started a monthly periodical called "Niti Bodhak". Entrusted the editorship of the "Satya Prakash", during his absence, to Messrs. Mahipatram Rupram and Zaverilal Umiashanker.
- 1858 Worked for 9 months as the Editor of the "Rast Gofar." For nine months, entrusted the editorship of the "Satya Prakash" to Mr. Tribhowandas Dwarkadas, the Editor of the "Satya Dipak".
- 1859 First time published his book called "Niti Vachan" and dedicated it to Sheth Mangaldas Nathooobhai. Edited a Gujarati magazine from April 1859. Edited a paper called "Mumbaina Bazar" issued at the time of the departure of the China Mail from Bombay. Started with partners, a Chinese cloth shop, and continued the same for six years.
- 1860 Continued editing "Stri Bodh." Edited a paper called "Swadharna Bodhak tatha Pakhand Khandak" or "Adviser of our own religion and destroyer of false religion". Published his book called "Sanear Sukha". Commenced Gujarati-English Dictionary, on 21st October, 1860; wrote the famous article on "The Original Religion of the Hindus and the Present Heterodox Opinions". This article was the subject matter of the Maharaja Libel Case. Accompanied his friend Kavi Narmadasanker to a religious public discussion on the subject of "Hinda Widows and Hindu bhastras" with Jadunathji Brijratanji Maharaj of Surat. Continued editing the "Stri Bodh." Published two periodicals known as "Vidhwani Arji" and "Maharaj vishe Chabka"
- 1855 } Edited the "Satya Prakash," barring nineteen months,
to } and wrote in 198 issues of the Paper having 500
1860 } subscribers.
- 1861 Till May of this year, edited the "Stri Bodh." Edited the "Rast Gofar." Filed a suit against nine prominent Bhattias, known as the Bhattia Conspiracy Case. On 17th December, he won this suit. On 14th May of this year, Jadunathji Brijratanji of Surat filed a Libel Suit against Karsondas for his article named above, and claimed damages of Rs. 50,000. The "Satya Prakash" was amalga-

- mated with the "Rast Goftar." Published an English magazine about Maharajas, and a Gujarati magazine called "Reform and Maharajas". Published a book called "Hinduno Asal Dharam Kem Choothayo" or "How the Ancient Religion of Hindus Degenerated" written by some other person.
- 1862 Published both in Gujarati and in English, reports of the Maharaja Libel Case. Published the Gujarati and English Dictionary and dedicated it to his friend Sheth Karsondas Madhavdas. Edited the "Rast Goftar." On 25th January, 1862, The Maharaja Libel Case against Karsondas and Banina commenced; was heard for twenty four days before the Full Court, and on 22nd April, on the main plea of Justification, it was decided in favour of Karsondas. Dr. John Wilson entertained Karsondas for the bold stand he took in the cause of Truth and Purity in the Maharaja Libel Case.
- 1863 On 13th March, left Bombay for England. Before his departure the "Buddhi Vardhak Sabha," some Khoja gentlemen and ten Editors of Vernacular papers and periodicals presented to Karsondas, public farewell Addresses. The Khoja Address was accompanied by a purse of Rs. 1,000. At another meeting of friends and admirers, a purse of Rs. 8,000 was presented to Karsondas for the benefit of his family. At the end of September, owing to poor health Karsondas had to return back to India. For two months in this year edited the "Stri Bodh."
- 1864 Karsondas suffered much in the share speculation mania, but was saved through the intervention of his Parsi and European friends. Published in Gujarati an introduction to his "Travels in England."
- 1865 Translated Sir Bartle Frere's speech on "Female Education" in Gujarati, and had it published in a pamphlet form. Published an enlarged second edition of his book on "Niti Vachan" without any dedication. Published his monumental work on "The Sect of Maharajas," in English.
- 1866 Published his another monumental work in Gujarati called "Travels in England". Commenced to write a big work on Vedio Dharma and religious books after the Vedas, but could not complete it, and hence published, as much as was written, in a book form. Toured in

- Kathiawar, and stayed for a month in Rajkote to prepare himself for the political mission to England in connection with the chronic dispute between the Shravaks and the Palitana Durbar. Received Rs 6,000 as a donation from Government for publishing his work on his Travels.
- 1867 In March, went to England a second time, but returned before winter to India. Published his book called "Kutumb Mitra". Published second edition of "Travels to England." In December, 1867, under the Political Agent of Kathiawar, the State of Rajkote was placed under Karsondas's charge as Assistant Superintendent. On 18th November 1867, was appointed a Member of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.
- 1868 Published the second edition of "Sansar Sukh", and the second edition of "Gujarati into English Dictionary." Started the "Vignan Vilas" periodical. Continued the administration of the Rajkote State. On 29th December 1868, was nominated as a Fellow of the University of Bombay.
- 1869 Got a Sanskrit Drama called "Pakhand Dharma Khandan Natak", translated in Gujarati and had it published with his own Preface. Continued the administration of Rajkote.
- 1870 Continued the administration of Rajkote till March. In April, was appointed as Special Assistant in charge Limree, on a monthly salary of Rs. 500. Published the first part of his book called "Nibandu Mala." Received Addresses from the Rajkote Durbar Lady, from the people of Rajkote and also from the educated people of Rajkote. Effected a reform in the Baniya Mahajan of Rajkote, whereby the Mahajan passed a resolution to allow Baniyas to travel to foreign countries without any caste interference.
- 1871 On 2nd May, brought about the first Kapole Baniya widow-remarriage. Continued the administration of Limree. Died 28th August at Limree at 9 A. M.