



Mumbai's Britannia & Co., a destination for Parsi cuisine, was founded in 1923 and is still crowded today with old tables covered with checkered tablecloths and a portrait of Mahatma Gandhi on the peeling-paint walls.

**T**O TASTE DHANSAK at the Ripon Club in Mumbai — whose version of the slow-cooked, densely spiced lentil, vegetable and meat stew is one of the city's greatest pleasures — you must come on a Wednesday, and you must be invited. Only members and their guests are permitted to enter, and membership is granted only to Parsis, the descendants of Persian Zoroastrians who set sail for India around 1,300 years ago. They were among the last remnants of an imperial dynasty that at its height commanded, according to some historians' estimates, as much as 44 percent of the world's population, reaching from the Indus Valley in the east to northern Africa in the west.

So you are reliant on the kindness of Parsis, who, as it happens, are known for their charity; their religion encourages both the creation of wealth and its righteous distribution. Last September, friends of friends in Mumbai introduced me to the gregarious Zarine Commissariat, a retired office manager, who took me one postmonsoon afternoon to this low-profile Gothic Revival building a short walk from the Bombay High Court, convenient for the many club members who are lawyers. The elevator is still equipped with its original hand crank; a sign warns passengers that they may ride it up but not down. It ascends with a shudder, and on the third floor, its door folds in like an accordion, and time stalls.

The dining room is long, a stately configuration of marble floors, Burma teak sideboards and walls of peeling paint in eggshell hues. Yellow spines of National Geographics gleam from glass-paned bookcases. A garland of marigolds rings a bust of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, who established the club in 1884 for Parsis who were "Western-cultured" and had spent time in England. The British themselves were excluded (to the consternation of the cricketer Lionel Tennyson, grandson of the poet Alfred, who visited in 1885), in part as a riposte to the colonial clubs whose infamous signs declared "No Indians and dogs allowed." Still, the Ripon Club has always been Anglophiliac in spirit, from its name — a homage to the progressive George Frederick Samuel Robinson, First Marquess of Ripon and Viceroy of India from 1880 to '84, who championed native Indians' rights — to the portrait of Queen Victoria that the writer V. S. Naipaul observed still hanging in the club secretary's office as late as 1975.

To the table come bottles of Pallonji's raspberry soda, Ferrari-red and heart-stoppingly sweet; crispy lengths of Bombay duck, the local name for lizardfish, caught in the waters off Mumbai, deep-fried whole and still succulent, not deboned and flattened as in other Indian traditions; and goat brain cutlets sheathed in prickly bread crumbs, insides creamy as custard. The dhansak awaits at the far end of the room, where a waiter stands stoically blank behind three silver-domed chafing dishes.

First on the plate is rice, a loose scoop of basmati steamed with whole spices and a touch of sugar, caramelized, for a hint of sweetness; it is incomplete without fried

onions scattered on top. Then there is the dhansak itself, here cooked with mutton, although the meat is secondary to the glorious sauce, uncompromisingly brown. It's made of several kinds of dal (lentils) — in the 2007 cookbook "My Bombay Kitchen," the American Parsi anthropologist Niloufer Ichaporia King prescribes a mix of pigeon peas, chickpeas, red lentils and mung beans — along with a meld of adu lasan (ginger-garlic paste) and three masalas, one spiked with a few chiles, the heat of which fortifies the other flavors. Adornments include rugged little kebabs and half a lime to add brightness, but what matters most is that pool of sauce. Soon the body grows leaden and you understand the purpose of the row of lounge chairs by the windows, with elongated arms over which to drape your legs as you nap. (Or otherwise: The chairs are nicknamed Bombay fornicators.)

But as the room fills with calls of greeting and gentle ribbing, the talk among the Parsis at my table turns to their community's decline. Their numbers in India have dwindled, from close to 115,000 in 1941 to just over 57,000 in 2011 (the date of the last nationwide census), with another 15,000 estimated to live in North America and a few thousand more around the world. (Measuring the population is tricky, as not all who follow Zoroastrianism, itself in decline, are Parsi, an identity that encompasses Persian ancestry and Indian origins along with the faith.) One of my dining companions was the 73-year-old Jehangir Patel, editor since 1973 of the English-language magazine Parsiana, which tracks Parsi births and deaths in India and abroad. In the Sept. 7, 2018, issue, 29 Parsis were reported to have died in August and only one was born. The Parsis do not rage over such facts. They chuckle, resigned to their doom and blame only themselves, for being both too conservative, discouraging conversion and limiting the definition of a Parsi to patrilineal descent — in effect, preferring extinction to dilution — and too liberal, believing in free will, even if it leads you away from the fold.

Upstairs, on the fourth floor, the Ripon Club is empty. Sunlight slants through the windows and smokes on the green baize of the billiards table. But for the Parsis, it is already dusk. When a culture vanishes, it takes with it a singular vision of the world — a vision that for the Parsis is expressed in large part through their food and the labor and love devoted to it: its status as at once communal rite, historical record and private language. When a language

is no longer spoken, we lose not just words but possibility, a sense of what we are capable of, in our power to imagine and give names to the things that surround us and, through that naming, to change them.

So, too, when a cuisine is lost, erasing the ingenuity of the cooks who shaped it over centuries. An individual's time on earth is finite, but we trust in the momentum of history and the generations that follow; we are certain we will continue. How do you live, then, knowing that your grandchildren may be the last of their kind? Who will wear the *kusti*, the sacred cord around the waist, and feed sandalwood and frankincense to the temple fire? Who will make dhansak?

**O**NE OF THE WORLD'S earliest monotheistic religions, Zoroastrianism arose out of a revelation to a prophet called Zarathustra in Avestan (a language now dead but still used in the recitations of Zoroastrian priests, learned by rote). He is believed to have been born in northeastern Iran or southwestern Afghanistan, and might have lived at any time between 6500 and 600 B.C.; the Roman historian Plutarch places him five millennia before the Trojan War, while sacred texts cite a date two and a half centuries before the rise of Alexander the Great. Some scholars argue that Cyrus the Great, founder of the Achaemenid Empire in 550 B.C. — at that point the largest empire the world had ever seen — was a proto-Zoroastrian, although he did not impose the creed on those he conquered, which in retrospect may have been a mistake.

Today's small community of Iranian Zoroastrians (around 14,000 as of 2011) welcomes converts, but Parsis do not — a pity, because there's much that appeals about the religion right now, especially its tenets of tolerance and its early recognition of women as equal to men in moral agency, with a modern corollary of championing women's education and pursuit of career. According to Zarathustra's teachings, there is one god, Ahura Mazda, and two forces at war in the world, light and dark; the light, of God and of the illuminated human mind, is represented by the fire tended in Zoroastrian temples, never to be extinguished. The Zoroastrian mantra is *manashni, gavashni, kunashni*: good thoughts, good words, good deeds. But goodness does not require typical monastic asceticism. The opposite, in fact: Adherents must commit to engagement in the here and now, which includes embracing earthly delights, however fleeting.

The last of the Persian Zoroastrian empires fell to the Arab Caliphate in the seventh century A.D. Forced to choose between Islam and exile, many Zoroastrians fled, and several boats of refugees made it to the west coast of India in what is today the state of Gujarat. It is here that the story of the Parsis (the people from Pars, or Persia) begins,

For the Parsi community of western India, elaborate meals are a near-daily reminder of earthly pleasure — and, as their ranks diminish with each new generation, a bid to maintain one of the world's oldest culinary traditions.

By Ligaya Mishan Photographs by Anthony Cotsifas

# A Vanishing Feast

with food as an allegory for survival: As legend has it, the local Hindu ruler sent the newcomers a brimming cup of milk, to show that there was no room for more people in his kingdom; the Persians slipped in a spoonful of sugar, which disappeared, sweetening the milk without spilling it. This was a promise: They would assimilate and enrich India without altering its character.

Adaptation was key to their perseverance, and it remains the defining feature of Parsi food today — “a real magpie cuisine,” as King says, characterized by “gleeful borrowing.” From the Hindus: warm and musky spices and fondness for the seafood abundant along the Gujarati coast. From the Muslims, who took control of Gujarat at the end of the 13th century: an embrace of meat and viscera like lungs and heart, and the many ways to cook them. From the 16th-century Portuguese colonizers: the New World’s glory of chiles, potatoes and tomatoes. And from the British, who arrived in the 17th century: custard, soufflé and a somewhat stodgy fish-in-white-sauce recipe that Parsis improved with a slosh of vinegar.

The cooking also remains true to its ancient Persian roots, with liberal use of dried fruits and nuts and an emphasis on the interplay between sweet and sour. Unlike their first neighbors, the Gujaratis, who are predominantly vegetarians, Parsis are incorrigible carnivores and have no food restrictions. “We eat everything,” says Jeroo Mehta, 92, the Mumbai-based author of “101 Parsi Recipes” (1973) and an advocate for offal; her cookbook presents three elegant approaches to sheep’s brain. Animal protein is so fundamental to the Parsi diet that even during the holy month of Bahman, when Zoroastrians are supposed to abstain from meat, they’re permitted fish and eggs.

Vegetables, on the other hand, are almost never eaten in isolation. While dhansak is typically made with spinach, eggplant and squash, the Mumbai-born, 47-year-old chef Jehangir Mehta of the New York restaurant Graffiti Earth believes that “not being able to see the vegetables” makes Parsis more likely to eat them. “There is nothing like a vegetable dish on our menu — or if there is, there will be an egg on it,” he says. Prowess in egg eating, at least three per day, is something Parsis boast of, and the phrase *per eeda* (“egg on top”), can be applied to almost anything: Eggs might be whisked and poured over okra, then steamed; broken into the hollows of sautéed fenugreek leaves and briefly sizzled, so the yolks still wobble; or simply fried over a bed of crushed potato chips.



Mumbai's Kyani & Co., its interior featuring engraved wood panels dating to 1904, is known for Irani cakes and baked goods.

**T**HE PARSIS KEPT their promise to the Gujaratis. They learned to speak the local language, stopped eating beef out of respect for the Hindus and didn't proselytize. In the 17th century, they started settling in Mumbai (then Bombay), when it was still just seven islands mired in a network of swamps. As merchants and intermediaries, they helped the British transform the archipelago into a city and acquired what would become some of its most valuable real estate. They spearheaded the Indian industrial revolution by building the first steel mills and textile factories; they built ships and launched the country's first airline; they used their wealth to endow hospitals, laboratories and schools. They were also the first to adopt the British game of cricket, and their extravagant musical theater productions paved the way for Bollywood. The Kolkata-born novelist Amitav Ghosh has argued that the Parsis “essentially created modern India.”

Yet this enormously influential minority, which constitutes less than .05 percent of India's population, remains largely invisible and inaccessible to the foreign visitor. In Mumbai, nonbelievers are denied admission to sacred Parsi sites, including the fortresslike Atash Behrams, holiest of the fire temples, in the seaside Marine Lines district, and the great circular Towers of Silence in Malabar Hill, the city's poshest neighborhood, where the Parsis have historically left their dead to be stripped by vultures, an act of purification. (Like the Parsis themselves, these sites and their traditions are under threat: Orthodox Zoroastrians fear that the sanctity of the temples may be compromised by an impending subway tunnel, and local vultures are dying out, poisoned by an anti-inflammatory drug given to the cows they feed on; without a reliable flock, Parsis have had to resort to solar mirrors to hasten corpses' decomposition — a method that takes longer and, during monsoon season, doesn't work at all.)

Nor is Parsi food widely available at the city's restaurants. The cuisine thrives in homes and during celebrations like a child's *navjote* (a Zoroastrian initiation akin to the Jewish bar and bat mitzvah) or the elaborate thousand-guest weddings that typically take place from November to March each year. The vast majority of these feasts are overseen by the indomitable Parsi caterer Tanaz Godiwalla, 49, who commands an army of day laborers 300 strong at the height of the season. She knows each by name. They are almost all men, Hindu and Muslim farmers who come down

function as plates. (As the leaves grow warm under the food, they release oils, adding both fragrance and flavor.) There is always delicate-fleshed pomfret fish, either in the form of *patra ni machhi*, thickly daubed with a coconut-and-green-mango chutney, then wrapped in a banana leaf and steamed; or *saas ni machhi*, submerged in white sauce with a dash of vinegar. Everyone wants the fish's tail — "What to do madam, there is only one tail per fish," a waiter says consolingly to a disappointed guest in Avan Jesia's 2012 novel "Tower" — so that's the only part

As the wedding unfolds, there might be a few in-between bites (the more, the fancier), such as *topli na paneer*, soft rounds of lunar-white cheese bobbing in whey, which the Mumbai-based food writer Meher Mirza describes as "blancmange crossed with mozzarella." Cardamom-scented *lagan nu kastar*, brought to a burnish in the oven, is offered as a palate cleanser; in some recipes it's studded with fat golden raisins and *charoli*, indigenous to India, buttery as pine nuts but with the evanescent sweetness of pistachios. Such a feast is repeated almost every night for five months



The crumbling crimson and robin's-egg-blue laminate booths of Mumbai's Yazdani Restaurant & Bakery, which has operated out of a cement hut since 1950; its signature *ladi pav* (an eggless bun) and other breads made in-house line the back wall.

from the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, inured to wielding 26-pound ladles and balancing 80-pound pots over open wood fires.

Sometimes there are four or five weddings in a single night. Many take place in the banquet halls of the Parsi residential colonies known as *baugs*, some established by Parsi philanthropists as an affordable housing option for lower- and middle-class members of the community. Guests eat in shifts, sitting down at long tables while those waiting hover behind. Prep cooks turned waiters run back and forth with the food, spooning it onto fresh banana leaves that

that Godiwalla will serve, reserving the rest for making cutlets and stock.

Then comes chicken, perhaps deep-fried with a lacy crust or in a red sauce heaped with *sali* (matchstick potatoes that snap), or lamb in a creamy white sauce of coconut and cashews; and *pulao* with dal and kebabs, uncannily close to *dhansak* — but not quite: *Dhansak*, while delicious, is considered inauspicious for a wedding, since it is customarily served on the fourth day after a loved one dies, to announce that mourning is over. An egg dish might follow, or a collection of fried *offal*.

straight, yet no one tires of it. The whole point of a Parsi wedding, more than one Parsi told me, is to eat.

**A**KURI, A PARSIScramble of eggs and onions, appears on the breakfast menu at the Willingdon Sports Club in Mumbai, whose marble terrace overlooks a private golf course and whose membership rolls have been closed to new blood since 1985. Again, it's not open to the public; a friend will have to sneak you in.

More proletarian and arguably better meals may be had at the city's Irani cafes, dingy eateries equipped

with bentwood chairs, prominently posted rules (“Please do not argue with management”) and photographs of Zoroastrian bodybuilders. Some are more than a century old, like B. Merwan & Co. by Grant Road Station, where gingham shirts hang over the sink in the open kitchen and, hour after hour, cooks turn a rubble of mawa — milk boiled down until the liquids evaporate, leaving a sweet, creamy, craggy fluff — into tiny cakes, bronzed and cracked at the top and somehow dense and ephemeral at once,

disintegrating instantly in the mouth, like pound-cake called to a higher destiny.

Note, however, the distinction between Parsi, signifying those who trace their ancestry back in India 1,300 years (and who often speak Gujarati), and Irani, a term for Iranians — mostly Zoroastrian but some Muslim — who left Persia in the late 19th century (and speak Dari, an ethnolect of northwestern Iran, or Farsi). As the 34-year-old historian Simin Patel, daughter of Parsiana editor Jehangir, recounts in her

forthcoming book on Irani cafes, many of these more recent immigrants started selling chai from corner storefronts. (Popular lore has it that such spaces were cheaper to rent because Hindus deemed corners unlucky.) These informal canteens cater to a lower- and middle-class clientele and serve comfort foods that are part of the Parsi canon but also belong to Mumbai at large, like *brun maska*, crusty bread with the inner loft of a pillow, not so much buttered as sandwiched around butter; and *keema pav*, soupy minced lamb simmered with chiles, to be sopped up with a soft roll.

Irani cafes once numbered in the hundreds and were an integral part of city life, so much so that one of the most popular, Leopold Cafe, was targeted, along with Mumbai’s main commuter train station and the five-star Taj Mahal Palace hotel (itself founded by a Parsi), by Pakistani militants in the 2008 terrorist attacks. Now only a few dozen exist; their owners — grandsons of the original founders and “alpha males, tough guys,” according to Simin — are approaching their 80s and 90s. (At B. Merwan, the septuagenarian Bomi Irani still comes to work daily at 3 a.m., as he has for more than five decades.)

It’s not clear if their children will carry on the family business. Instead, people of neither Parsi nor Irani descent are trying to replicate the aesthetic of the cafes, notably at Dishoom, which opened in London in 2010 (and which has since added six locations throughout Great Britain), and at MG Road, which opened in Paris in 2014. Simin doesn’t see this as cultural appropriation — since 2013, she has consulted on Dishoom’s design, with its spotted mirrors, dangling electric wires and mood of sepia twilight — as long as the original cafes aren’t being glamorized, “because they weren’t glamorous,” she says. But even some non-Parsis have expressed reservations about the homegrown Indian chain SodaBottleOpenerWala, which opened its first outlet in 2013 in Gurgaon, a suburb of Delhi, and today has nine branches. (Its name is a play on the Parsi practice of taking surnames connected to professions, like Doctor, Reporter and, yes, the couriers known as Sodawaterwalas.) It’s slightly disconcerting to see a simulacrum so close to the original, the sleek, replicable model ready to push out the old and take its place. But is this the only way these traditions can survive? For dishes to last over time, must they transcend the culture of their birth, enter other kitchens and find a place on the tables of strangers?

**T**HE THREAT OF EXTINCTION, however wittily parried by the Parsis who face it, is no exaggeration. Among the peoples who have disappeared from the earth, along with their culinary traditions, are the Emishi of northern Honshu, Japan, whose traces faded out about a millennium ago. Others are critically endangered today: the El Molo, who live on fish caught from the now receding Lake Turkana in Kenya, and



Yazdani's retro bread-slicing machine, for loaves sold streetside in the bakery's front.



The counter at B. Merwan & Co., an Iranian cafe opened in Mumbai in 1914, where many order mawa cakes, made from concentrated milk.

whose population has been reported at fewer than a thousand; the Nukak Maku, who were driven out of their ancestral home in the Amazon jungle of Colombia by the country's decades-long civil war and in 2015 numbered less than 500; and the Bo tribe of India's Andaman Islands, with 52 members remaining as of their last counting, in 2010. Of the Shakers, an American religious community that demanded celibacy of its members and thus relied on converts to survive, only two are said to be left, and their culinary legacy — of simple, thrifty recipes that made use of nature's bounty, and of pioneering

techniques in preserving and canning produce — remains largely unknown.

In a hopeful sign, however, other decimated groups have rebounded. The population of native Hawaiians was barely 24,000 as of the 1920 U.S. Census but by 2013 had reached 560,000 nationwide, and traditions nearly erased under colonialism have seen a renaissance, notably in the embrace of precontact staples like poi (pounded taro root) and breadfruit. Theirs is just one of the cultures around the world that has begun resurrecting forgotten foodways in the past few decades, from

margi-na-farcha and lagan-nu-custard." The dishes are signs, a code that unifies, through which Parsis recognize themselves in one another.

**I**N AN UNDATED Pahlavi (Middle Persian) text from the Sasanian Empire (A.D. 224-651), a young nobleman whose family has fallen on hard times applies for a role at court and must prove his worth by answering 13 questions posed by the Zoroastrian king. Nine of them concern food. When asked what makes the best meal, the aspiring page says (as translated by the writer Shahrzad Ghorashian

indigenous North American tribes who lost their land in the 19th century and, hemmed in on reservations, became dependent on the heavily processed foods available as government rations, to young Cambodian chefs trying to salvage memories from before the Khmer Rouge genocide of the 1970s, when an estimated 1.7 million people — around a fifth of the population — died, including many elders whose minds were repositories of unwritten recipes passed down orally through generations.

Food is heritage, and cooking and eating it are daily acts of continuing, a means of preserving identity in even the most desperate and unspeakable of circumstances. During the Spanish Inquisition, "secret" Jews who had been forcibly converted to Catholicism still refrained from cooking on the Sabbath and made unleavened bread for Passover, despite the risk of being exposed by servants or neighbors; as recounted by David M. Gitlitz and Linda Kay Davidson in "A Drizzle of Honey" (1999), one woman was burned alive on the evidence of her having made a distinctly Sephardic stew of lamb, chick-peas and hard-boiled eggs, known as adafina. Later, during World War II, Jewish women in the Theresienstadt concentration camp, north of Prague in what is now the Czech Republic, recorded recipes on scraps of paper — both an act of defiance and a way of leaving a mark on the world. In the Canadian Parsi writer Rohinton Mistry's novel "Family Matters" (2002), one character suggests burying a time capsule so that history will remember the contributions of the Parsis after they're gone. First among its contents: "recipes for dhansak, patra-ni-machhi,



The exterior of Britannia & Co., with its board of daily specials. Bombay duck, the local name for lizardfish, is popular among Parsis.

on her Persian food website Aashpaz), “It is the meal you eat when you are hungry and in good health, when your soul is free of fear.”

Parsi food has come far from its ancient origins, and is evolving still, even as its makers grow few. Back in New York at Graffiti Earth, Mehta, who rose to acclaim 15 years ago as a provocatively cerebral pastry chef at the city’s now-shuttered Aix, has quietly introduced a few dishes that nod to the pleasures of home: a dhansak-like braise of beef ribs with brown lentils; squid or scallops in a sweet-and-sour tomato sauce; and a Persian toast that is his take on brun maska, with a sly wink at Parsis’ penchant for whisky, pairing the bread with so-called butterscotch — in fact a butter-and-Scotch emulsion.

Halfway across the world, the 35-year-old Shezad Marolia, a Mumbai-born chef with a résumé that includes stints in the Merchant Navy and restaurants in London, is bringing a more straightforward update to Parsi food. He recently settled in the small, drowsy town of Udvada, Gujarat, just north of Mumbai — a holy town whose temple contains a fire believed to have been burning steadily for more than 1,300 years. Parsis make weekend pilgrimages here, some even buying second homes — modern condominiums that look jarring amid the crumbling bungalows with broken windows.

Marolia and his mother, Hilla, run the Sohrabji Jamshedji Sodawaterwalla Dharamshala, one of Udvada’s rest houses for religious travelers. While

accommodations are open only to believers, anyone is welcome to eat at the restaurant, Cafe Farohar. In September, I drove up with Farrokh Jijina, a Parsi journalist and the son of a part-time Zoroastrian priest. (The role of clergy is hereditary in Zoroastrianism, and not surprisingly, there’s a shortage; although Jijina was eligible to become a priest, he chose not to.) It was four hours from Mumbai, plus 30 minutes waiting for permits at the state line. As we approached the town, he gestured toward a shock of greenery by the side of the road, behind which lay a Tower of Silence. There, consignments of the dead are rare, he told me.

At Cafe Farohar, the food was startlingly fresh: scrambled eggs vivid with green garlic uprooted from the backyard; aleti paleti, an herb-strewn sauté of chicken livers, kidneys and lungs; and a glass of pristinely sour yogurt to be mixed with sev: skinny, crunchy strands of chickpea flour tossed with raisins and charoli, dusted in sugar and cardamom and given a flicker of rose water, scent deepening into flavor. Afterward, we walked through the empty Zoroastrian museum, turning the fans on and off in each room as we went, as I tried to absorb the stupefying amount of information crammed onto the wall placards. A paragraph on food noted that the sweetness of sev “reminds one to have a sweet nature.”

I was barred from entering the temple, so while Jijina paid his respects, I wandered the narrow streets alone, past hulks of houses appearing to hold their breath. Time was a stilled pulse. On the beach at the end of town, the sea ran caramel against sand like baked ink.

We returned to Cafe Farohar on the way out of town, at Marolia’s insistence: He said there was a dessert I must try: malido, a labor-intensive production of semolina and wheat flour mixed with eggs, sultanas, almonds and ghee, requiring constant, vigilant stirring until its texture approaches fudge. On its own, malido is rich enough, but here it was buried under ice cream and melted chocolate and presented seething on a cast-iron plate — a wink at a Mumbai trend from a few years back of “sizzling” brownies. It was an odd, if exuberant, punch line to the journey.

But there remains something defiant about such excess. I thought of dhansak and its heavy lake of sauce, repeatedly replenished from a seemingly endless buffet, and, so, too, the ritual of consuming the stew to break the fast after a loved one’s death — as if only such a rich, torpor-inducing dish could properly stun you and let you expand, freed from the vise of grief. It struck me suddenly that eating it in the midst of sorrow, or diminishment, was an extraordinarily optimistic act. To Jehangir Mehta, food is a way to pull people back from the brink and return them to the important business of life. “We don’t believe in mourning,” he said. “We believe in happiness.” Which is to say: We are still capable of pleasure. We are still here on earth. ▣



The entry hall of the Ripon Club; established in 1884, it's one of Mumbai's last-standing members' only Parsi clubs.  
The portrait is of Sir Jamsetji Jejeebhoy, Baronet, who served as president there from 1910 to 1931.