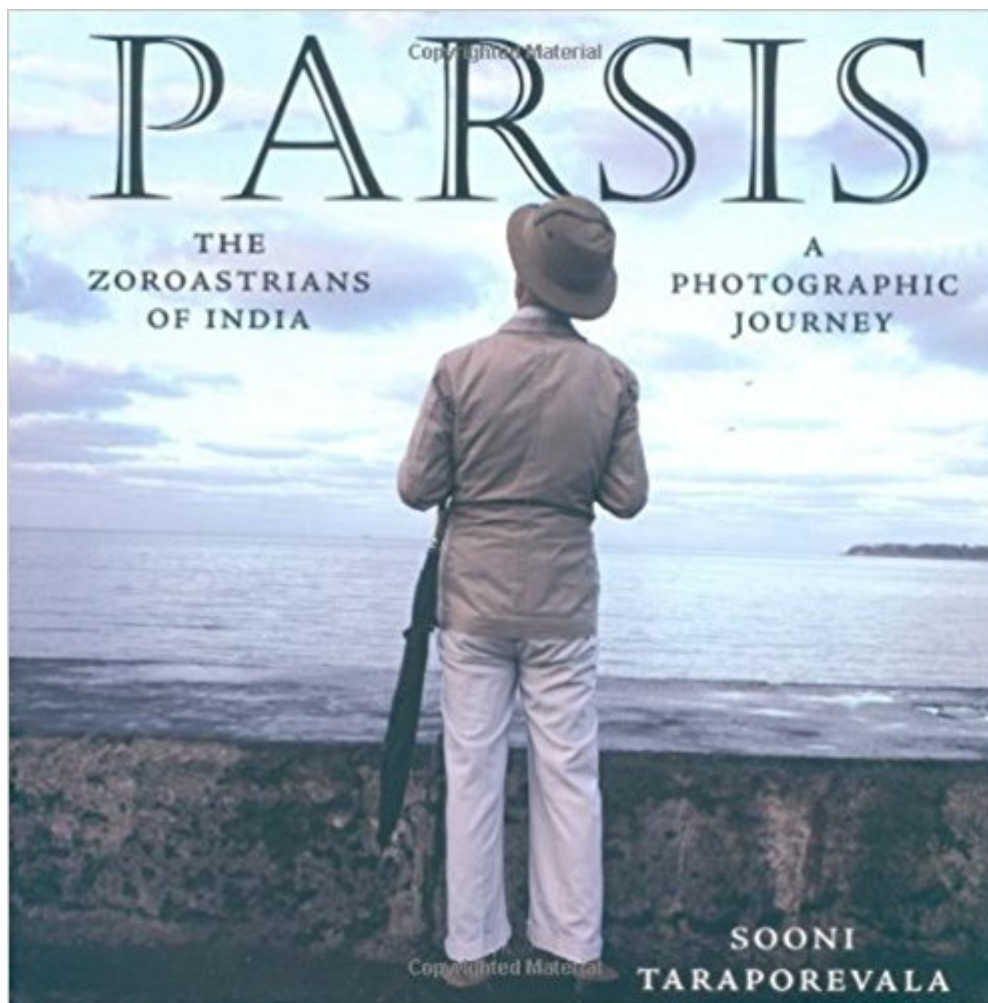




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Parsis: The Zoroastrians Of India: A PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY



Synopsis

The result of a 20 year labour of love, photographer and screenwriter Sooni Taraporevala's *Parsis: The Zoroastrians of India* offers a rare insiders view of how the Parsis, a religious and ethnic minority of India and the South Asian diaspora who follow the religion of Zoroastrianism, endures today. Unesco recently celebrated 3000 years of Zoroastrian culture. Today, the Parsis are a proud but often misunderstood religious minority, small in number but significant in influence - the community has produced many well-known leaders and artists, including the world-renowned conductor, Zubin Mehta; the late rock singer Freddy Mercury, of Queen; and the international award-winning author, Rohinton Mistry. As a people, the Parsis are a highly literate and educated people, comprising one of India's most wealthy and urbanized communities, yet they are also the smallest - and they also follow what many would consider Stone Age rituals: perhaps most notably, leaving their dead out in specially designed open air towers for vultures to devour. The words and images in Taraporevala's unique book chronicle, for the first time, the faces, voices, and unique culture of the Parsis - a community of intense contradictions. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a big book of street and interior photography in Bombay, India. (The author spells the city thus, rather than the official Mumbai.) The focus is on the religious minority the Parsis, who honor the ancient prophet Zoroaster or Zarathustra. Zoroaster was from somewhere in eastern Iran, as

best as anyone can tell, and the Parsis in this book indeed look more Persian than they do like their Aryan/Dravidian compatriots, to this admittedly untrained eye. The author approvingly includes a neat quote by Friedrich Nietzsche in the introduction: "People have never asked me, as they should have done, what the name Zarathustra precisely means in my mouth, in the mouth of the first Immoralist; for what distinguishes that philosopher from all others in the past is the very fact that he was exactly the reverse of an immoralist. Zarathustra was the first to see in the struggle between good and evil the essential wheel in the working of things." The story of the author's family, temple, and home life is interesting enough, but the book is rewarding on sheerly photographic merits alone. The familiar urban India of crumbling concrete, colorful shutters, thronging streets, and hole in the wall shops is vividly reproduced here. It is oddly refreshing to not have India's poverty on display--we know it exists, but that's not the point of this book. The people herein range from the wealthy to the shopkeeper class. It is not, as similar books by non-Indians are prone to be, a cavalcade of exotica. Some of the uniformly excellent photos include these: A deaf, wizened grandfather shouting at a fountain pen repairman. An abandoned, one-room temple, still with its devotional portraits and wall clock, inhabited only by a crow on the ceiling fan.

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