The Heritage of the Jewish Communities of India

The Bene Israel Community
The Baghdadi Jewish Community
The Pardesi Jewish Community
The Malabari Jewish Community of Kerala
The Jewish Communities of Mizoram & Manipur - (Shevet/Tribe Menashe)
The Erstwhile Jewish Community of Goa - (Anusim)

By
Nissim Moses
Historian-Bene Israel & Genealogy Research
President Indian Jewish Heritage Center
India The Only Country in the World

* Where the Jews Never Experienced Anti-Semitism.
* The First Refugees to ever arrive were Jews—About 375-175 B.C.E.
* Where The Jews had Total Religious Freedom.
* Where Hebrew Was Revived and Taught as an Official Second Language in the National Education System, Schools, Colleges & Universities from Books Written by Local Jews, and had A Chair for Hebrew Studies in Bombay University, Prior to the Creation of The State of Israel.
* Where Christians (Both Protestant & Catholics) were involved in the revival of Judaism, The Hebrew Language & the Education of Jewish Children without fear of conversion.
* Where Jewish Teachers taught in Catholic Schools and received Papal Gold Medals for excellence in Teaching.
* Where a Catholic College Holds an Exhibition on the Holocaust—St. Xavier's College, Bombay.
* Where a local Indian Language (Marathi) & Culture has been Internationalized by Jews.
Map Showing Location of The Past & Present Dispersed Locations of the Various Jewish Communities of India

Location of Jewish Communities

Indian Ocean

Map Showing Location of The Various Dispersed Past & Present Locations of The Various Jewish Communities of India

Slide Copy Right - Nissim Moses: Historian-Bene Israel Heritage and Genealogy Research
Dr Garcia De Orta & The Anussim Jews of Goa

Bombay Castle- 1st Building on Bombay Islands-Headquarters of Western Naval Command – INS Angre- Residence of the Governor of Bombay for 120 Years- World Maritime Heritage Site

Courtesy David Yehezkel

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Nissim Moses: Historian
Bene Israel Heritage and Genealogy Research
Sir David Sassoon (Center) & his son Sir Albert Sassoon & some of the Bombay Presidency Monuments & Institutions Established by them

Scion of the Baghdadi Jewish Community

Nissim Moses - Historian
Bene Israel Heritage and Genealogy Research
Masina Hospital was The Sassoon's Mansion residence called Sans Souci, "No Worries". 

The Institutions Established By the Sassoon Family in India

David Sassoon Library & reading room, Fort Mumbai
Jacob Sassoon High School, Byculla, Mumbai
EEE Sassoon High School, Byculla, Mumbai
David Sassoon Hospital, J.J. Hospital Premises, Byculla, Mumbai
Masina Hospital, Byculla, Mumbai
Magen David Synagogue, Byculla, Mumbai
Kennest Eliyahoo Synagogue, Colaba, Mumbai
Sassoon Dock, Colaba, Mumbai
Elphistone Technological School, Parel, Mumbai
The Gateway of India
The Bank of India, Fort (head office), Mumbai
The David Sassoon Reformatory and Deaf school, Matunga, Mumbai
The Victoria Garden and Albert Museum (today's Rani Baugh)
Ohel David Synagogue, Pune
Sassoon Hospital, Pune
Lady Rachel Sassoon Dispensary, Pune
David Sassoon Vridha Ashram, Pune
Monuments Symbolizing Baghdadi Jewish Heritage in Calcutta - Courtesy of Mr. Rangan Datta
The First Arrival - Abt. 375 BCE
The Malabar Jews

The Second Arrival – The Pardesi Jews - The Expatriates of The Inquisition - Abt. -1500 CE.

The Three Pictures above show The Synagogue of The Malabar Jews Chennamangalam-Kerala showing the Exterior & Interior - Courtesy Prof. Jay Waronker-USA & Dr. Shalva Weil- Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Pictures to the right and below show the Pardesi Synagogue in Cochin and the two of the several pictures of paintings showing the advent of the Pardesi Jews to India & their reception by the Maharaja – Pictures From Internet

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The Torah Scrolls in the Synagogue & Museum

Picture to left Courtesy of Moshav Nevatim

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Nissim Moses - Historian
Bene Israel Heritage and Genealogy Research
Silver Torah Crown
Gold Torah Crown
Silver Torah Crown

Period 19th Century or early 20th Century

Additional Unique Artifacts Set-1 of The Malabari Jewish Community of Kerala, India

Courtesy of - The Jerusalem Index of Jewish Art, The Center for Jewish Art, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem - Through The auspices of Dr. Ariela Amar
Gold Torah Case with Gold Crown

The Rimonim – Pomegranates on the Sefer Torah Casing

Silver & Gold Torah Reader’s Pointer

Additional Unique Artifacts Set-2 of The Malabari Jewish Community of Kerala, India

Courtesy of - The Jerusalem Index of Jewish Art, The Center for Jewish Art, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem - Through the auspices of Dr. Ariela Amar
Three Examples of Beautiful Parochet

Parochet- A Rectangular Sheet of Cloth Richly embroidered in gold & silver threads originally made by a Bride as a wedding skirt (lungi). When the person dies it is used as a coffin upper cover (without coming into contact with the coffin or the body). After that the Family remakes the skirt into a Parochet & donates it to the Synagogue as a Heichal Curtain. Synagogues have many of these, some used for special occasions like Simchat Torah, Yom Kippur etc. A Very Unique Custom still practiced by the community in Israel Courtesy of - The Jerusalem Index of Jewish Art, The Center for Jewish Art, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem- Through the auspices of Dr. Ariela Amar.
North East India-1: Jews Of Mizoram

A Community Recently discovered and recognized by Rabbi Avishai to be of Jewish Descent and in the process of being reconverted to Judaism

Pictures Courtesy of His Excellency Mr. Ephraim Dowek 1st Ambassador of Israel to India & Sarah his Wife & Mr. Thanglom the community leader & some of the community members

A Community Recently discovered and recognized by Rabbi Avishai to be of Jewish Descent and in the process of being reconverted to Judaism
A Second and rival community of Jewish Descent in North East India- Both Mizoram & Manipur Jews Claim to be from the Tribe of Menashe- Arriving in India From Central Asia through the Himalayas. Picture shows the Talit & bag hand woven by the community draping Ambassador Dowek & Sarah.
The Jews of Shevet (Tribe) of Menashe in Israel-From both Mizoram & Manipur
The Highlighted Area is the Original Location of the BIs In India. They arrived near Navgaon, just south of Alibagh & then spread over this region. NB: B.J. Israel in his book has Located most of the villages related to the Ben-Israel surnames. The Total Land Area highlighted is Approximately 2500 Sq. Km.

The first migration took place to Bombay, then the rest of India & Finally to Israel and other places in the world.

In 1890 they were approximately 12,000 in number, In1953, 35,000 In number and today they number approximately 90,000 Plus all over the world.
The Exterior & Interior of Three Bene-Israel Synagogues-
Left-Magen Hassidim-Bombay,
Middle-Magen Aboth-Alibagh,
Right- Beit Elochim-Pen
The First Four Professors involved with Revival of Hebrew & its Teaching & its establishment as a Recognized 2nd Language of Study in the National Education System of a Country. This was at all levels i.e. Matriculation, Collegiate & University Levels in Bombay Presidency & University. All were Fellows, & Examiners & Occupied the Chair for Hebrew Studies in Bombay University. The Teaching was started from 1830 & in Bombay University from 1870 to 1998 when it was closed for lack of students. They were followed by Other Bene Scholars. Note this Occurred Prior to the Creation of the State of Israel. In no other country have the Jewish Communities (even with much larger population of Jews) have they been able to achieve this.
The Meeting of Bene Israel Community Members with Dignitaries

Solomon Jacob (Payne) Penkar With David Ben Gurion & Al Schwimmer

Vice Admiral Samson with Pandit Nehru

President Nasser & Vice Admiral Samson

Provost Marshal Michael Samuel with the Shah of Iran

Mira Aaron Jacob Mehndrekar with I.P.M. Indira Gandhi

Advocate General Ellis Jhirad Swearing in the 1st Chief of Naval Staff

Michael Samuel with Queen Elizabeth & Prince Phillip

Shalom Abraham with President Zakir Hussein

Sophie Moses with Lady Linllitgow wife of Viceroy

Nissim Moses with President Ephraim Katzir
Lt. Gen. Russell Mordecai -PVSM, AVSM


Vice Admiral B. A. Samson

Wg. Cmdr Isaac Ezekiel

Flt. Lt. Lloyd Sassoon

War Hero

Brig. David Abraham

Advocate Gen. Ellis Jhirad

Lt. Col Joseph Jhirad

War Hero

Col. Oliver Hyam

Col. Reuben Jacob

Maj. Jonathan Menachem Kolet

Provost Marshal Michael Samuel

Bene Israel Officers of the Indian Armed Forces
Viceroy, King’s & Indian Govt. Commissioned Officers of The Bene Israel Community From a Bygone Era

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Nissim Moses- Historian
Bene Israel Heritage and Genealogy Research
Bene Israel - Padmashree Award Winners

Dr. Jerusha Jhirad - Medicine

Prof. Dr. Nissim Ezekiel Talkar - Poet

Dr. Reuben David Dandekar - Wild Life Conservation

Prof. Dr. Nissim Ezekiel Talkar - Poet

Prof. Dr. Esther Abraham Solomon
Receiving The Padmashree From The President of India

Bene Israel - Padmashree Award Winners
Bene Israel Educationists & Scholars in Various Fields
Bene Israel Freemasons & Grand Masters

Bene Israel Welfare Organizations

Two competing Bene Israel Welfare Organizations in British India.

Note some of the persons are common to both Organizations.
The Bene Israel Connection To The Holyland

First two Pictures Courtesy
Kamarlekar Family

Pictures above courtesy of Capt. Dr Aaron Joseph Bamnolkar & Israelite Journal

The two pictures on lefty
Courtesy Noah Masil

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