

# GRAND OLD MAN OF INDIA



## **The Early Years:**

Dadabhai Naoroji was born in Bombay on 4th September 1825, the son of Maneckbai and Naoroji Palanji Dordi, a poor Athornan (priestly) Parsi family. At the age of 4, Dadabhai's father died and his mother was left the difficult task of bringing up the family, and she managed admirably. According to prevailing customs, she arranged the marriage of Dadabhai to Gulbai at the early age of 11. For the rest of her life, Maneckbai remained a close companion and mentor to Dadabhai. "She made me what I am" noted Dadabhai in 1901 when he gave an account of his early life in "The Days of my Youth."

Dadabhai became a scholar at the Elphinstone Institution (now Elphinstone College, Bombay) and had a brilliant academic career. In 1850 at the early age of 25, he was appointed Assistant Professor, and 4 years later, Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy at the Elphinstone Institution. Professor Orlebar of the college called him "The Promise of India". Dadabhai, being an Athornan (ordained priest), founded the Rahnumae Mazdayasne Sabha (Guides on the Mazdayasne Path) on 1st August 1851. The ethos of the Rahnumae at its inception was to restore the Zoroastrian religion to its original purity and simplicity. The society is still in operation in Bombay.

## **Visit to England:**

On 27th June 1855, Dadabhai sailed for England to join the first Indian business firm of the mercantile Cama family. In 1859, Dadabhai established his own business firm under the name of Dadabhai Naoroji & Co.

## **The London Anjuman:**

On 31st October 1861, an association was founded in the name of "THE LONDON ANJUMAN" and Dr. Dadabhai Naoroji was its Patron, Founder and First President.

## **Other Activities:**

During his time in England, Dadabhai endeavored to educate the British people about their responsibilities as rulers of India. He delivered speeches and published articles to support his opposition to the unjust and oppressive regime of the British Raj. In 1867 he helped to establish the East India Association of which he became the Honorary Secretary. The purpose of the Association was to keep Britain well informed of India's plight and needs and to secure fair treatment for India's people. This was his first political move and his colleagues were not slow in realizing his aspirations, echoing Professor Orlebar's sentiment as "The Promise of India".

Dadabhai presented to the British people the "Drain Theory", which put before them the facts and figures illustrating systematic bleeding of the wealth and resources of India. His ideas were put into a volume called "Poverty and UnBritish rule in India". This was a charge against the British Empire, and he asked for immediate appointment of a Royal Commission to look into the charges. Dadabhai was one of the members of the Royal Commission.

Dadabhai went back to India in 1869 but soon returned to England to give evidence before the Parliamentary Commission on Indian Finance. Dadabhai returned to India in 1874, having been appointed Dewan of Baroda State. He came back to England in 1886 with the idea of getting into the British Parliament to enable him to fight from within the system, and further the cause of his native country India.