

Baname Khuda!

Dear readers,

Andrew Carnegie, the noted American industrialist, was in Bombay many decades ago. He was quite impressed at the manner in which Parsis offered their prayers at the sea. He writes and I quote :

"This evening we were surprised to see, as we strolled along the beach, more Parsis then ever before and more Parsi ladies, richly dressed and winding their way towards the sea. It was the first of the new-Moon, a period sacred to these worshippers of the elements, and here of the shore of the ocean as the Sun was sinking in the sea and the slender silver thread of the crescent Moon was faintly shining on the horizon, they congregated to perform their religious rites."

"Fire was there in the grandest form, the setting Sun, and water in the vast expanse of the Indian ocean outstretched before them. The earth was under their feet and wafted across the sea, the air came laden with the perfumes of "Araby the Blest". Surely no time or place could be more fitly chosen than this for lifting up the soul to the realms beyond sense. I could not but participate with these worshippers in what was so grandly beautiful. There was no music save the solemn moan of the waves as they broke into foam on the beach. But where shall we find so mighty an organ or so grand an Anthem? How inexpressibly sublime the scene appeared to me, and how insignificant and unworthy of the Almighty seemed even our cathedrals made with human hands, when compared with this looking up through Nature unto Nature's God."

He continues : "I stood and drank in the serene happiness which seemed to fill the air. I have seen many modes and forms of worship --- some disgusting, others saddening, a few elevating when the organ pealed forth its tones, but all poor in comparison with this. Nor do I ever expect in all my life to witness a religious ceremony which will be so powerfully affect me as that of the Parsis on the beach at Bombay."