

# P is also for Pioneer



**Buttered Parsi.** Polson, the coffee company, began making butter to supply His Majesty's troops during World War I. The dairy was inaugurated by the Governor of Bombay

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The spirit of enterprise and innovation seems to have coursed through the tiny Parsi community ever since Bombay became a 17th-century trading hub under the British. Zoroastrians from Gujarat moving in to create a Parsi capital. Though indigenous industry jumpstarted with the Wadia family of master shipbuilders, it was lesser known Parsis rather than them, the Jeejeebhoy or Jamsetji Tata, who made pioneering contributions which significantly impacted everyday life.

Initiating steamer building at Mazagaon Docks in 1833, Ardeshir Wadia also offered fellow citizens a shining example by gas-lighting up his own home (situated on the vast stretch of present-day Lalbaug) in February, the following year. In The Times of India's August 30, 1842 edition, a subscriber described the unqualified success of oil gas-light debuting at the house of Framjee Cowasjee: "As it could perhaps be insinuated that the apparatus may have been procured from England and merely constructed here, I have the best authority for stating that not a single essential part of it was received from home. The whole furnace, etc. etc. were designed and executed on the spot."

To offset the unfavourable textile balance with England, Kavasji Davar set up the first mill, Bombay Spinning and Weaving Company, in 1854, recognising the local gains from spinning gins to work cotton grown on the spot. Pestonjee Bomanjee invented a critical screw for bailing cotton, while the three ('tan') Chhoi brothers training under Shanghai's expert weaver Chhoi, whose name they also took, pioneered silk production with the tanchhoi brocade sari. Pa-

tronised by leading engineers and contractors, Kavasji Pavri brought in the effective electric mortar mill. Behram Lalkaka laid the foundation of heavy chemical industries producing magnesium chloride. The chemical used by mills was earlier a German monopoly

Before the railway network, Cooverji Ardeshir was credited with ushering in transport lines and racing. He introduced passenger service and mail-contract lines from Poona to Satara, Mahabaleshwar, Kolhapur and Belgaum. From a family of coach-builders, Pestonjee Press presented rubber-tyred carriages to Bombay. Dr Bhikhaji Ghasvala, Fellow and Dean of the Bombay University and, uniquely, member of two faculties (medicine and science), became India's first chemical analyser in 1892.

Obstetrician Kaikhushru Dubash's Infants and Public Milk Supply Company revolutionised hygienic milk for citizens. Cultivating a taste for French coffee production in the entire East, PE Polson began churning pure pasteurised butter in 1931. This paved the path for Parsi Dairy Farm whose tradition of purity still reigns secure thanks to the founding Nariman family. If the

Olpadwala brothers became the first Indians to distil food essences, Dinshaw Pandole's Duke's soft drinks brand grew to boast yet another Parsi stronghold.

JRD Tata surprised the eastern horizon one 1932 October morn, flying his single-engine Puss Moth from Karachi to Bombay. Ardeshir Burjorji Godrej pioneered safe, lock and soap manufacture, with ballot boxes proving his last gift to the national movement. Fardunji Marzban launched the Mumbai Samachar on July 1, 1822, India's first newspaper and 16th oldest in the world.



**An ad for Jehangir B Irani, 'premier florist'**