

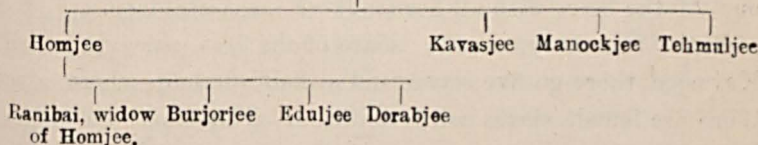
A PARSEE DEED OF PARTITION MORE THAN 150 YEARS OLD: A FORM OF SLAVERY REFERRED TO THEREIN*

Read on 27th February 1901.

President—LIEUT. COL. G. WATERS, I.M.S.

The document, which I propose submitting before the Society this evening, is an old deed of partition in a Parsee family of Surat. It is dated Kartuk vad 3, Savant 1892. So it is about 155 years old. It is a deed of partition between the heirs of a Parsee gentleman named Nowrojee Kersâsjee Homjee Unwâlâ. From the document, we can determine the following genealogical tree of heirs:—

Nowrojee Kersâsjee Homjee Unwala.



The distribution of property takes place among the three living sons of Nowrojee and the widow and three sons of his deceased son. The widow, Ranibai, is called अरुना , a word which draws our special attention. It seems to be used in the sense of housewife. The word अह्वर्य , as now used, means a gentleman.

The distribution of property took place in the presence of Desâi Rustomjee Tehmuljee. The chief Desâis of Newsari in those times generally took a part in the private settlement of family disputes about property.

Four gentlemen were appointed as arbitrators to go into the family accounts and settle the shares.

The most important part of the property of the deceased which is divided by this document is his slaves. The words of the document are:—

ગોલામ વગેરે જે અસતેદાદ નુરોજીની હતી તે વાંટી લીધી તેહેની વીગત. પર-
થમ ગોલામ કોલીના સરખા ભાગ કરી લાંબવા તાખી લીધી તેહેની વીગત.
i. e. The details of the property of slaves, etc., which be-
longed to Nowrojee, and which is divided. At first, the details
of the slave Kolis, who were equally divided and lots drawn.

Then follow the names of the slave Kolis who go to the lots of the different heirs.

To the share of the heirs of the deceased son, go three slaves and a half; of these three and a half, one is male and the rest two and a half are females. The name of the half slave is ગંગડી. She is considered as half slave, because one Nusherwanjee Dadajee Khurshedjee is mentioned as the possessor of the other half share in this woman (નુરોરવાંનજી દાદાજી ખુરશેદજી સાથે અરધો અરધ છે). Again, she goes to the lot of one of the heirs with all her (પારીઆં *i. e.*) children.

In the same way, to the share of the first surviving son Kavasjee, there go five slaves and a half, among whom also there are female slaves with children. The slave by name Lalee, who is termed, as it were, half a slave, is shared by this heir and by the above-mentioned heir. The deed is signed on the left, as usual in the Indian documents, by the sharers of the property, and on the right by eleven witnesses.

Now the question is what are these ગોલામ (golams) or slaves? What is the form of slavery referred to herein?

It is a kind of slavery that was prevalent to a great extent in Gujerat about 100 years ago, and is still prevalent, they say, to a small extent, in a modified form, in some of the Native States. Large agriculturists or *zamin্দારs*, *i. e.*, proprietors of land, had in their service a certain number of people, generally of the tribe known as Kolis. They were fed and clothed by their masters. When they grew up, they were even married by their masters, if they served them long and faithfully. In return,

they undertook to serve their masters in their fields or at home, to look after the cattle, or such other work. The children of such servant were also considered to be bound to serve their parents' masters, because they were brought up by them. In times of famine and distress when others died of hunger, the masters considered it their pious duty to feed these slave-servants and their families. Any dereliction of duty on the part of their masters in feeding these slave-servants, in times of distress, like the famine, freed them from the obligation of any longer serving their old masters. These slave-servants formed, as it were, a part and parcel of the family property. So, on the death of the head of the family, they were divided among the heirs, as other ordinary property, chattels or goods of the household. This deed of partition divides among the heirs such household things as jars, utensils, grinding stones, etc. Together with these things, it divides the slave-servants among the heirs.

To the shares of two heirs, there go half a slave-servant, *i.e.*, half a share in a particular slave-servant. What was meant in such a case, was this: that the slave-servant served one master for one half of a day, and the other master for the other half. The responsibility of feeding such a slave-servant was also proportionately divided among the two masters.

This particular kind of slave service, leads one to ask whether any particular kind of such or any other form of slave service was known to the ancient Iranians of the Avesta times. We find that in the Avesta itself there is not a single trace of any form of slavery. Slavery as an institution came into existence much later. In the divisions of all classes of men referred to by the Avesta, slavery has no place at all.

With these few remarks I give here the text of the document:—

वांठणीआं नुरेणञ्ज डेरशाशाञ्ज होमञ्ज उनवालाता जेरा छ मार ते
 मध्ये आं. होमञ्ज नुरेणञ्जनां वारेस आं नरनेरञ्ज होमञ्ज ता.
 आं. ज्मिदलञ्ज होमञ्ज ता. आं. दारायञ्ज होमञ्ज ज्मि बाध ३) तरञ्ज

૧ અત્ર	મતુ	૧ અત્ર	સાક્ષી.
૧ આં. ટેહેમુરજી નવરૌજી	મતુ.	શાખ સરવે ભાગીઆ રજીઆત.	
		૧ આં. ખમાજી મરનુઅજી	શાખ
		ધની હજુર સહી.	
		૧ આ. દારાખ નોરારવાનજી	શાખ.
		૧ આં. ફરેદુન માણિકજી	શાખ.
		૧ આં જમરૌદજી હેમજી ભાઈ	
		શાખ ધની રજીવાત.	
		૧ રોહિરીઆર અંધાર નોરૌજી	
		શાખ ભાગીઆ સરવે હજુર.	
