

Parsis. The Zoroastrians of India. A Photographic Journey.

By Sooni Taraporevala

by Niloufer Venkatraman | Man's World | October 2004

(Good Books, 2004; The Overlook Press)

With the census result having just declared that the Parsis of India are down to 69,601 from the last count at over 76,000, this new edition of Sooni Taraporevala's well researched book is particularly significant. It is a sensitive portrayal of the Parsis of Mumbai through photographs, interspersed with history, interviews, conversations and dialogue. For "outsiders" (as the Parsis are inclined to privately refer to non-parsis) this is an interesting and rare glimpse into the every day lives and the religious practice of a community that has remained extremely private and somewhat secretive of its traditions. Taraporevala addresses with balance all the crises facing Parsis today, focusing on their central quandary-their continued survival as a community. However, the discussions are overshadowed by the book's greatest appeal-its striking photographs accompanied by powerful captions. It's a relief that this book deals with the lives of ordinary people and does not focus excessively on the rich and famous. Newly resurrected for the general public after its first release in 2000, this is an excellent book to have (not just for the coffee table) for anyone who has ever lived in Mumbai, known a Parsi, or is interested in the fascinating world of unique ethnic communities.

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