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Nana Jagannath Shankarseth

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Why is in news? Mumbai Central station could be named after Nana Jagannath Shankarseth: who was this social reformer celebrated as ‘architect’ of Mumbai?

The Maharashtra cabinet on March 13 decided to ask the Ministry of Railways to **rename Mumbai Central station after Nana Jagannath Shankarseth.**

Mumbai Central, located in the heart of the city, is used by several important local and long-distance trains, including Rajdhani Expresses, daily.

About Nana Jagannath Shankarseth:

Nana Jagannath Shankarseth (February 10, 1803-July 31, 1865) was a **social reformer, educationist, and philanthropist.**

He is often described as the **“architect” of Mumbai** (then Bombay).

He made extremely valuable contributions in terms of both ideas and money to multiple sectors, to lay a strong foundation for the city.

He was born in a wealthy Brahmin family in Murbad in Thane district, Shankarseth took the responsibility of running the family business at an early age after his father passed away in 1822.

Shankarseth was greatly **inspired by the legendary merchant and philanthropist Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy.**

As a social reformer and community leader, Shankarseth earned the goodwill of both Indians and the British.

Significant contributions:

Education:

Shankarseth was deeply committed to the **growth and spread of education in Bombay**, and **donated land owned by his family for educational institutions.**

Like many social reformers of his age, he believed that Indians could progress through education.

He also worked for the **education of girls and women.**

Shankarseth founded the **Native School of Bombay**, which was renamed first as the Bombay Native Institution, and then as the Board of Education. Finally, this institution evolved into the **prestigious Elphinstone College.**

It is the **same institution** where, the well known **Balshashtri Jambhekar, Dadabhai Nauroji, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar** were the students during Nana's period.

Later, even **Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Lokmanya Tilak** had attended the Elphinstone College for studies.

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When the **Students' Literary and Scientific Society** first opened their girls' schools, Jagannath Shankarsheth contributed much of the necessary funds, despite strong opposition of some members of the Hindu community.

There is an interesting anecdote about Nana Shankarseth's role in **laying the foundation of medical education** in Bombay.

The then Governor of Bombay, Sir Robert Grant, wanted a medical college in Bombay of the kind that existed in Calcutta (Kolkata) and Madras (Chennai); however, he passed away before the proposal was endorsed by the East India Company.

At a public meeting held at Town Hall to pay tribute to the late Governor, Shankarseth suggested that the medical college should be named after him.

Grant Medical College in Mumbai is one of the **oldest medical institutions in South Asia**.

Museum, Temples:

Shankarseth was among the wealthy donors who helped promote **Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum in Byculla**, which was designed by a famous London-based architect.

The **Bhawani Shankar Temple** near Nana Chowk was Shankarseth's tribute to his late mother Bhawanibai Murkute.

He also built a Ram temple.

Railways:

The first train in India ran between **Boribunder and Thane** on April 16, 1853.

The 34-km project was undertaken by the Great Indian Peninsular Railway Company.

The committee that gave the project impetus included Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy and Nana Shankarseth.

Political:

The **Bombay Association** was the **first political organization in Mumbai** founded by Jagannath Shankarsheth on 26 August 1852.

Various members were Sir Jamshedji Jeejeebhoy, Jagannath Shankarsheth, Naoroji Furdunji, Dr. Bhau Daji Lad, Dadabhai Naoroji and Vinayak Shankarshet.

Sir Jamshedji Jejiabhai was the **first president** of the organization.

In 1861, he became the **first Indian to be nominated** to the **Legislative Council of Bombay**.

In 1862 he became the **adviser of governor of Bombay** presidency.

Conclusion:

Successive governments of Maharashtra have paid tributes to Shankarseth on his birth and death anniversaries.

About a decade ago, on the initiative of the Shiv Sena, there was some discussion around building a memorial for Shankarseth at Indu Mills in Shivaji Park. However, the proposal did not progress.

A bust of Shankarseth has been installed at Antop Hill. However, not much has been done beyond this to honour his memory.

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