



**SACHI, The Society for Art and Cultural Heritage of India,
& The Cultural Integration Fellowship present**

**JEWISH COMMUNITIES
IN COCHIN & MUMBAI:
Caste and Racial Stratification
Among God's Chosen People**

**A presentation by
Ken Blady**



Jews of Mumbai, circa 1900

The Indian Jewish community has shrunk considerably in recent years. Today, the largest community of Indian Jews live in and around Mumbai, numbering less than 5-6,000.

Almost all of the Cochin Jews, an influential community of business merchants, emigrated to Israel starting in the 1940's. There are now just over a dozen Jews remaining in Cochin.

Built in 1568, the still functioning synagogue in Cochin, is beautifully maintained. This historic building is the oldest surviving synagogue in the former British Empire, now declared a National Heritage and protected monument.

Myths surround the origins of Jews in India. They may have begun their migration to the Indian sub-continent as far back as King Solomon's times (1000 BCE). Isolated from the rest of the Jewish communities in the world, the tiny Jewish minority in India adopted many local customs and was influenced by Hindu social codes. For millenia, Jews found a safe haven in India.

Ken Blady will survey the history and ethnological aspects of various types of Jewish communities that co-existed uneasily in Mumbai and southern India. Several rounds of immigration of the Jewish diaspora both into Kerala, a southern Indian state, and the Maharashtra Coast of West India, led to a diversity among the Jews in Cochin and in Mumbai. The relations between these distinct groups of the Jewish communities are sometimes explained as affected by the Indian caste system. Each community regarded the other as "outsiders". Only in the mid-20th century, did different Jewish communities in India slowly start to accept one another.

**Sunday, June 3, 2:00 pm
Free Admission**

**Cultural Integration Fellowship
2650 Fulton Street (3rd & Fulton)
San Francisco, CA 94118**

Ken Blady, educator and author of *Jewish Communities in Exotic Places*, earned a BA in History from UC Berkeley and an MA from California State University, Hayward. He also attended Yeshiva and Rabbinic Seminary in Chassidic Brooklyn. Blady is a lecturer in Jewish History at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles. He was recently featured in the History Channel documentary, *Operating Magic Carpet* on the airlift of the Jews of Yemen.

For inquiries, call 925.256.1317

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