

Mesrovb J. Seth, Father of Indo-Armenian Historiography

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Mesrovb J. Seth is a well-known figure among students of the history of the Armenians of India, but very little has been written about this dedicated amateur historian whom we may call, without much exaggeration, the Khorenats'i of the Armenians of India. Born in New Julfa, Iran in 1871, Seth went to study at the Armenian College of Calcutta and spent decades of his life researching and composing his monumental work *Armenians in India*, first published in 1897 and again in a much expanded version in 1937, two years before his death. Seth's history, despite its antiquity and numerous shortcomings, remains a foundational text for Indo-Armenian history that has yet to be surpassed by a work comparable in breadth and comprehensiveness. This paper will provide an overview and evaluation of the life and work of Mesrovb Seth, focusing in particular on the two publications of *Armenians in India* in 1897 and 1937 and placing them in the context of the author's body of work. It will explore the question of Seth's motivation and intended audience in producing this work and how this may have changed in the forty years separating the first and final publications. Seth was driven to write *Armenians in India* both by his deep love and curiosity for the history of this "once-flourishing" diasporan community and by his desire to inspire patriotic consciousness among the Armenians of India by reminding them of their glorious past. He was also motivated by a desire to draw British attention to the Armenians of India and to the Armenian plight as a whole. Seth first published the book in the wake of the Hamidian massacres and dedicated the book to British prime minister William Gladstone for his condemnation of the anti-Armenian atrocities. By highlighting the ancient and colorful history of the Armenians, their success in India and the role some of them played in helping the British establish themselves in India, Seth hoped to increase the prestige and position of the Armenians in the colonial hierarchy in British India and spread pro-Armenian sentiment for the benefit of his compatriots in the Armenian homeland.

Bio: *Martin Adamian is a first-year PhD student at UCLA's Department of History studying under the supervision of Dr. Sebouh D. Aslanian. He received his bachelor's degree in history from UCLA in 2021. His research will examine links between Armenian communities in India, Russia and the South Caucasus in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, with a specific focus on the Madras group of Armenian merchant-intellectuals, their political and intellectual activities, and their connections with the Russian and Georgian states directed towards the establishment of an Armenian state or autonomy.*