

JULY 1972

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NEWS & VIEWS. SWEET SOP

Managing Editor : P. B. WARDEN, M. S. (Bom.). D. P. M. (Bom.)

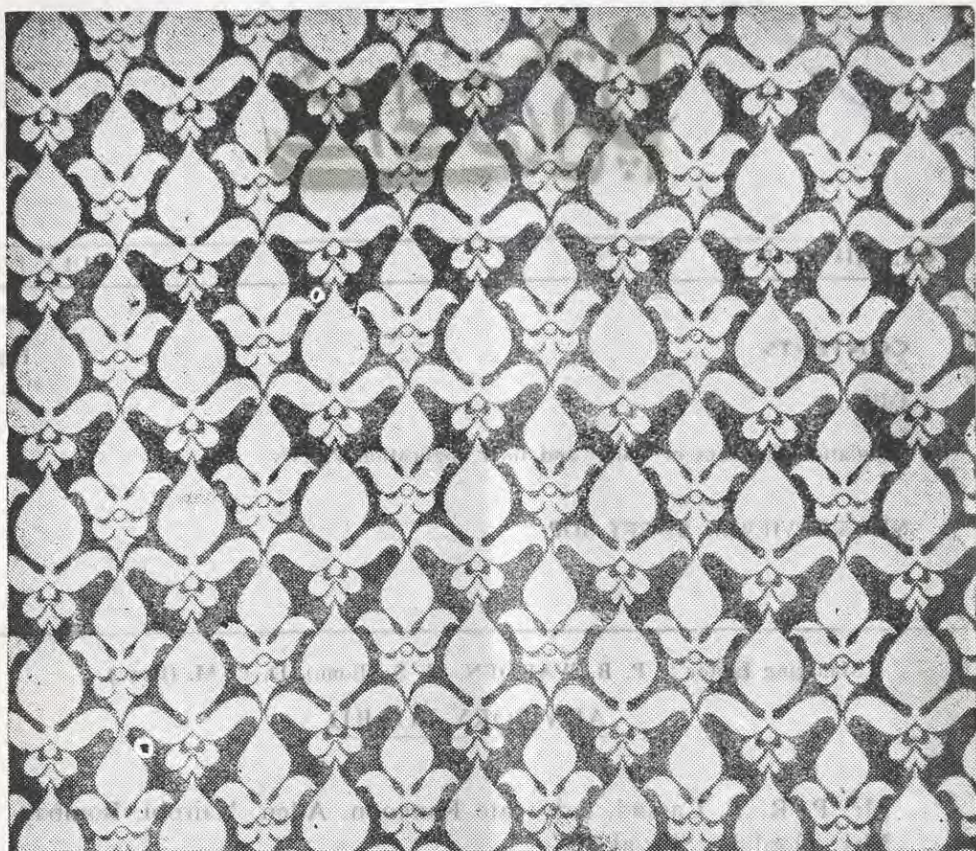
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Yearly subscription for 12 issues: Rs. 6/- for Inland; Sh. 12/6 for U K; and \$ 2/-for U S A
Single Copy: 50 Paise

Office Address: Opposite Anjuman Atash-Baharam,
(21-Jagannath Shankarshet Marg, Bombay-2. BR

Published and edited by Editor-Proprietor P. B. Warden from 621-Jagannath Shankarshet Marg, Bombay-2 BR, and printed at Kaleid Art Printers, 5-B, Shalimar Industrial Estate Matunga, Bombay-19 and mimeographed at 621-Jagannath Shankarshet Marg, Bombay-2. BR.

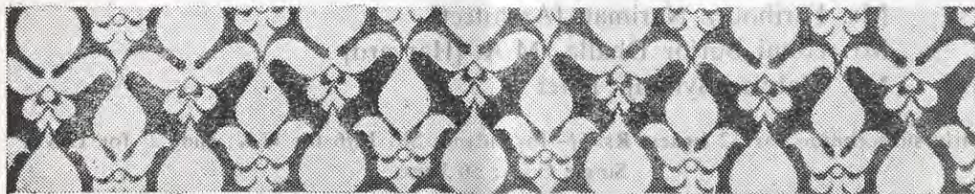


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EDITORIAL

When the EDITORIAL was under preparation the following letter reached me. Looking to its urgency the entire letter is reproduced in the place of Editorial.

The Editor,
Parsiana,

The Parsi Zoroastrian Association,
1, Saklat Place,
Calcutta 13.

August 18, 1972.

Dear Sir,

We have been reading with great pleasure and interest the various letters and articles which have been appearing in Parsiana, Kaiser-i Hind and Jam-e Jamshed about the duty of the Parsi Community to invite Mr. Jatindra Mohan Chatterji to Bombay and to felicitate him publicly for his signal services to the cause of Zarathushtrian studies.

As has been pointed out earlier, Mr. Chatterji is now eighty-four years old, and though generally in good health, is quite unable to make the journey to Bombay to receive in person the warm affection of his many admirers on your side.

You will be happy to know that the D. B. Mehta Anjuman Atash Adaran of Calcutta will be completing sixty years of its existence on 13th October 1972 and a two-week programme of its Diamond Jubilee Celebrations is being arranged in the second half of October. On this occasion, it has been decided to allot an evening specially to felicitate Mr. Chatterji, and messages gifts received on that occasion will be presented to him.

As many of Chatterji's admirers outside Calcutta have expressed a desire to associate themselves with any expression of gratitude to him, we wish to approach them, through your journals, to send us, if they so wish their messages and/or gifts for Mr. Chatterji, which will be gratefully received, duly acknowledged and passed on to him.

Whilst on the subject, it will not be out of place to enlighten your readers about the work of this learned man.

After the publication of Chatterji's first translation of the "Gatha", published by the late Mr. Ardeshir N. Bilimoria of Navsary, about thirty-five years ago, Mr. Chatterji virtually dropped out of sight of the Parsi Community and our Association has had the happy privilege of "rediscovering" him about ten or twelve years ago. Since then, we and some others like Mr. Mahyar Byramji Patel of Bombay have been actively "re-presenting" him to those interested in Gathic studies, and thanks to the munificence of several generous people, we from Calcutta have published the undernoted works by Mr. Chatterji:

1) "The Hymns of Atharvan Zarathushtra"

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2) "Atharvan Zarathushtra. The Foremost Prophet"

A reprint, with about 100 extra pages of the 'Introduction' mentioned above.

3) "Message of the Gatha-as Reflected in the Masnavi of Moulana Jala-ud-din-Rumi."

4) "Gospel of Zarathushtra-in the Words of Moulana Jalal-ud-din-Rumi" **In Print.**

These books have achieved much distinction in the world of scholarship.

About five years ago, the Parsis of Calcutta had organised a special function at the Anjuman Atash Adaran and publicly thanked Mr. Chatterji, and presented to him a shawl and a silver salver, suitably inscribed, as a mark of our esteem and affection for him.

The function that is intended to be organised in October 1972 will be on behalf of the entire Parsi Community and the messages, gifts and contributions requested may please be sent to:

Mr. Rustam T. Saklat,
4-A, Auckland Square
Calcutta-17.

Yours faithfully,
THE PARSİ ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION,
J. R. Mehta
for R. T. Saklat
President.

PARSI POPULATION STATISTICS AND THEIR PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS.

Parsi Community in India has shrunk to less than one hundred thousand and according to the latest 1971 statistical figures. Women are slightly in excess by 1640 in a total of 91,266 Parsis broken up into 44803 males against 46,443 females.

Of the total of 91,266 the majority, only 72266 are in Maharashtra with preponderance in Bombay alone. Poona may be ranking second with about 4000 and the rest distributed in small pockets in different towns.

The Parsis are a purely urbanised race sharing the amenities and loaded with their handicaps and year after year more and more get caught into this spider's web. More and more people from Gujarat are migrating to Bombay, selling off their land and houses, leaving them no way of escape in the event of any calamity overwhelming Bombay city and depriving themselves and their families of any chance of change of environment so necessary for mental health.

Gujarat ranks second and holds the Parsis population of 15131. The rest of the total Parsis are scattered in small groups in different parts of India constituting Parsi pockets of population holding on to their orthodoxy in customs and religious practices as their specific way of life. However there are no Parsis in Nagaland, Tripura, Laccadiv and other islands in the Indian Ocean and other out of the way areas within this sub-continent.

One noteworthy thing in the above statistics of the Parsis is the preponderance of females over males. This is a unique phenomenon amongst all the races and Communities in India who have just few more males than females. Hindus and Muslims have around 925 females to 1000 males. Sikhs and Buddhists have around 960 females to 1000 males. Amongst the Christians there is close proximity almost 990 and amongst Jains wider disparity around 940

females per 1000 males. One amateur statistician casually remarked that any race with excess of women cannot die out many must have migrated.

Now comes the mystery. What shall we do with cold, lifeless figures? Figures mean much or nothing as we can use them or turn them to our advantage or buy them as dead matter. Statistics came into existence as an aid to the state. That is its origin. The counting was originally done for the state to assess its fighting strength of males who could be harnessed for defence or conquest. Now statistics have acquired greater dignity and wider application for proper understanding of social problems of which economic sufficiency and housing are correlated and other urgent issues to be tackled by power in authority. Such power in authority is the Government of a country in general and other duly constituted bodies as subsidiaries. For us the Parsi Panchayat is such subsidiary, which must take up our problems and earnestly make efforts to solve them. But, please at present keep them out of your mind. At present they are busy up-setting the apple-cart and strewing aground all apples to make room in the cart for a bloated pumpkin, Mr. Bajan of Godrej Press, who is now limping with the crutches provided by Lady Jehangir and sympathetically supported on one side by one Mr. Erach Nadirshah and on another side by one Mr. Boman-Behram of ancient glory and modern mockery. Mr. Nadirshah Mullan as lone spectator of Panchayat's ignominy remaining inhumanly neutral exposing his timidity to resist the Lady and cuddling inaction as the concealed curse on the community's future.

What problems do these statistics suggest? The most apparent one as common-or-garden social workers see it is to increase the population and create facilities for married couples-in short, let more men marry and more women take husbands and trust to physiological mechanics. If marriage was such simple problem it

would not be a problem. Every era imposes its own will on marriage. That makes it a variable stable institution that will out-last all customs, usages and practices and cling to couples. If this was every thing solving housing problem will solve marriage problem. The whole thing will thus reduce itself to a sort of social mechanics and end in bliss as all fairy tales do. Marriage is a highly complex adaptation problem which grows in stature with developing economy and its unending demands. The old norms either do not hold good or do not secure the necessary respect and stability.

In one of the pictures Eddy Cantor came out with his characteristic wit. He said "Knee was at one time a joint, it is now an entertainment". Like everything else knees are looked at differently. Once marriage was procreation for social approval, now it is a recreation with social dignity. Don't think that you give a couple a flat and the community will proliferate. No! it won't. Non-sophisticated society lives for its group. Sophisticated society lives for itself, brushes aside disliked ideas as out-dated and lives differently from ways which they call out-moded. Women need not bear children though nobody else can. We are passing through that transition stage, which nobody knows where it will take a turn and what it will turn out to be. Just sit quiet for a few minutes in a corner and recall the number of couples known to be having their own homes, some even their own baby-car but no babies. They can afford running a car, running a home, entertaining guests and retailing cock-tail parties but they cannot afford growing a baby. It becomes an all time job and too strenuous and undertaking to please the grand-mas. Running a baby-car is good show and satisfactory but growing a baby is something soul satisfying, which once a couple has experienced it will willingly forgo all minor satisfactory pleasures to maintain a child that will give emotional richness to life.

Asker mother and her face will reveal her

richness. Then look at a woman who refuses to play her role of womanhood herself or in collusion with her husband. There you find the stamp of frustration-heart is empty, life is empty, soul is hungry but to compensate for all that there is a derisive smile on the face, which is self-deceptive and says to itself "unencumbered life is life". No! unencumbered life is vegetating existence-good but good for nothing. Nothing but an undefined mania for life pesters our hollow life.

Our Prophet has advised us to marry, One cannot be a true Zoroastrian without a spouse and without a spouse no life is complete without the total consummation unafraid of its consequences. God has devised Consummation for man and woman to learn to overcome inhibition which is thwarting life in all phases throughout entire life though in population explosion man will have to restrict family but not without first learning to overthrow inhibition and later learning voluntarily to reimpose it, which is what is meant by 'Ham do-Hamera do'.

n Dr. Homi Mehta of Petit Parsi General Hospital tells me that the number of delivery cases have gone down from 1200 to 550 per year. Can it be accident or design? First determine this and this and then build houses to increase Parsi population. Besides this, Dr. Mehta referred to V.D. invading the community.

From those who do not marry hardly anybody calls himself a misogynist (woman hater) and some odd one may declare himself a misogynist (Hater of Marriages). Both are usually fakes. Sorab Kalyan writes of a visitor to him who declared himself a Khudasa-nashi or Ehudaikhidmatgar (one to serve God) but foolishly added he hates the love of woman. Kalyan spoke to him of Jalaluddin Rumi, one of the greatest exponents of Sufism in terms of love in which God is the beloved and is the embodiment of universal love. The great Sufi told the man "If thy steps be stranger to Love's

pathway; Depart learn love and then return". The man bowed his head in shame. In Zoroastrian scriptures first comes "Ashem" (happiness to him through whom happiness to others. Happiness without love is unknown, and then comes "Yatha" (Almighty's way of rule through men of good-mind, who cannot be good without love). Married love is a diminutive Configuration of Love Universal that Ahura-Mazda has established and Lord Zarathushtra has pronounced as duty-as a matter of fact the 5th Gatha is a sermon on "How to be happy though Married".

Housing problem may be considered now. The posture of hope and the gesture of shame which the Panchayat assumes from time to time is an empty show. The Trustees say there is no money. What happens to lacs and lacs of Rupees pouring in year after year. Late Mr. Rustomji Sidhwa of Karachi some years back to help them find money from their own funds. He received no cooperation. The only answer and all the others got is "all moneys are ear-marked". All moneys of the Trusts are usually ear-marked. The Zest and earnestness of Trusteeship demand that they in consultation with the Hon. Charity Commissioner unearth the hidden treasures, make them free and use them to the benefit of the Community and not waste resources on men like Bajan and not permit Bajan to cripple resources. It is a shame. They may have land and there may be donors of open land. Mr. Nanabhoy Byramji Jeejeebhoy is a potentiality with his vast areas at Goregaon but people will have to build their own homes at their own expense. When things were cheap, houses were also going begging. Now the cost of land and construction are both prohibitive and beyond the means of the Panchayat. One construction has been erected at Goregaon but the moneys of construction were donated.

We must now promote schemes similar to those of the Catholic Church Authorities. They take 15 to 20 % of the estimated cost as the first instalment. Subsequent three instalments yearly are of

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around 10% of the cost. Further three instalments at 7½% of the cost and so on until by 20 years the cost is repaid in progressively diminishing amounts year after year with 6% interest to the Church. The buyer has option to pay off the full or any bigger amount earlier if he can afford to. Most of these flats are taken up by working class couples who earn and pay and finally own the premises. My inquiry reveals that quite a number of earning Parsi families in need of accommodation are ready to participate if such scheme be floated by some responsible institution. Community's moneys will thus be advanced and not spent out. Such colony may build blocks of varying sizes to suit the pockets of different income groups from Rs15,000 to Rs 45,000 each, which should be possible if land is donated. Mr. Nanabhoy Byramji Jeejeebhoy is our hope and may prove to be our salvation. Dr. Aspi Golwala has a couple of schemes along this line but the ground being expensive the cost must mount and it can suit only the upper income group.

As a corollary to the preceding scheme should be a scheme to make as many members of the community as possible better or bigger bread-winners. There is no organised scheme on the hands of the Panchayat to inculcate the spirit of independent industrial venture possible for our young men. Our entire education is book-work, chair-work, ledger-work-. No one is willing to see anything beyond the nose because no one is competent in any of the industries. But the world is moving on and industrialization is expanding with minor and major projects and we do not share the prosperity it creates all around us. Why that lethargy? it is not lethargy. It is ignorance.

In every age we must move with the times. In building residential colonies we then moved ahead of the times and now as if a sort of craving for such colonies has developed amongst our

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Community members. Something of a slogan passes around. "No Colony No Parsee" as if the colony is the panacea of all ills we are suffering from. We may build colonies and yet we may not get occupants for their want of capacity to pay rent. Colonies may be deserted if simultaneously avenues of income are not opened out. Despite subsidising, advancing loans for payment of arrears of rent there are a number of ejectment suits pending against Parsi occupants.

It is high time we now divert our mind from goody-goody Trustee doling charitee, The goody, the Trustee and the Charitee are all fast approaching the exhaustion point. We must now rivet our attention on creating money so that the fresh crop of entrepreneurs may prosper, employ more of our men in their industries - small scale, medium scale or cottage industries and thus arouse an atmosphere of diligence and prosperity. I have visited several Industrial Estates where I have found here and there a few Parsis and they are doing well. I have come by several educated young men with know-how who want to plunge into manufacturing line. They are in my mind healthy new generation. Some of them have small capital enough to get going but not much to sink into monthly rent at black level, with deposit insecure and facing black-mail every eleven month interval for pay more or see the door. These are the persons deserving timely help from the Panchayat. An Industrial Estate is a must for the community. It will fix our young men's attention on production of things and new wealth for themselves and those connected with them. It will open their eyes to a thousand and one items yet untouched. It is futile to agree that others have already entered the field. That would be a cry of despair. Would anybody say that youngsters born recently will have nothing to do on their own? Such would be a sad reflection on the

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part of the community. All those who had taken rooms in Industrial Estate earlier got them at 75 paise per square foot. Later ones got at Rs1/- per square foot direct or from middle men who made business out of it. As middle men thrived the rent went up to Rs1/25. Average areas occupied are around 500 sq.ft. each. Those who prosper may expand. Industrial Estates are privileged places with power, water and unrestricted working hours. Panchayat must build one such estate or take over at least ten such blocks for distribution on subsidised rent basis in the beginning and recover more and more till all amount spent on any block is fully recovered. Young men will get going. They will earn and pay rent outside for their residential needs. The clamour for residential colony will gradually fade out. The experiment will be proclaimed a success in course of time. The chances of its failure are small because each entrepreneur will be intensely earnest and not eating out our resources as one Bajan does under his protegee Lady Jehangir. She must understand that she owes her dignity and reputation to the community members who hold her in high respect, as I too do, except for her lop-sidedness in insisting on having Bajan thrust upon the lean resources of the community with fat pay license for unfair practices and no performance to his credit. Why I oppose Bajan is that he has done many unworthy things which I have recorded and brought to the notice of the Trustees with all the force at my disposal to be dismayed. Let his lapses and my dismay be brushed aside. They are all on record. The past is buried and may remain buried or can be unearthed any day but the future is the bull's-eye and the target. For ten blocks the Panchayat may have to deposit Rs.5,000 per month in early days and all that amount is partly recoverable from the beginning and fully recoverable gradually with growing prosperity of the younger generation. Expansion then may begin.

v What are the Panchayat doing? They put their commercial units in charge of some pet or favourite like Bajan, who knows nothing of his assignment. He has reduced profit from 80,000 a year to 20,000 a year - a clean loss of income of Rs60,000 per year and is making further losses of 40,000, 20,000 and 10,000 year after year with no prospects of success. Yet Lady Jehangir obstinately hails the performance as good show and some of our emasculated Trustees hands to permit such losses to mount. Punctiliously to keep the account of above losses accountant Mr. Bajan gets Rs15,000 per year, Mr. Dravid draws Rs 9,000 per year and an assistant in accounts gets Rs6,000 per year. It means to record a loss of 10,000 per year Panchayat maintains a staff of Rs 30,000 per year because it pleases Lady Jehangir to retain Bajan in the Panchayat at the cost of the community's Trust moneys, which do not afford a rise of 10 rupee note to someone deserving dole. Bajan eats the dole and Lady Jehangir takes the cake.

A MARRIAGE LIMERICK.

There was a young fellow from Dice
Who remarked: "I think Begamy's nice;
If one is a bore
Try two, three or four,
For the plural of spouse is spice.

NEWS & VIEWS.

SWEET SOP.

Congress Parliamentary Party in its recent seating started a talk of control on prices of essential commodities-specifically sugar, cereals and cloth. All the high and mighty were present including Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Ministers with portfolios. The burden of the song was control prices-increase the number of fair price shops from the present number of 125,000 to whatever it may be and spread the aroma of service to the nation. The only snag that came up before the meeting was the problem of shady transactions in these shops to such an extent that Shri Azad wanted an inquiry to be made in their working.

Where two parallel currencies are operating-namely the Government currency and the black money currency the angel face shop-keepers have a hard time remaining angelic, particularly where there is insatiable demand and unsaturated black-money-bags ready to open out and share the contents.

Somebody pointed out an anomaly that prices of cotton were falling and prices of cloth were rising which the innocents on the round table could not understand. In their perennial absent-mindedness they could not recall that they are playing to the gallery by offsetting any advantage with new loads of excise, income-tax and much vaunted welfare by wage revisions and amenity provisions as exhibitions of triumphant vanity, without helping the labour or the industry. Industry just forks out more money and the labour pays out more prices in a merry-go-round of the black market circus. The desperate public stays in distress.

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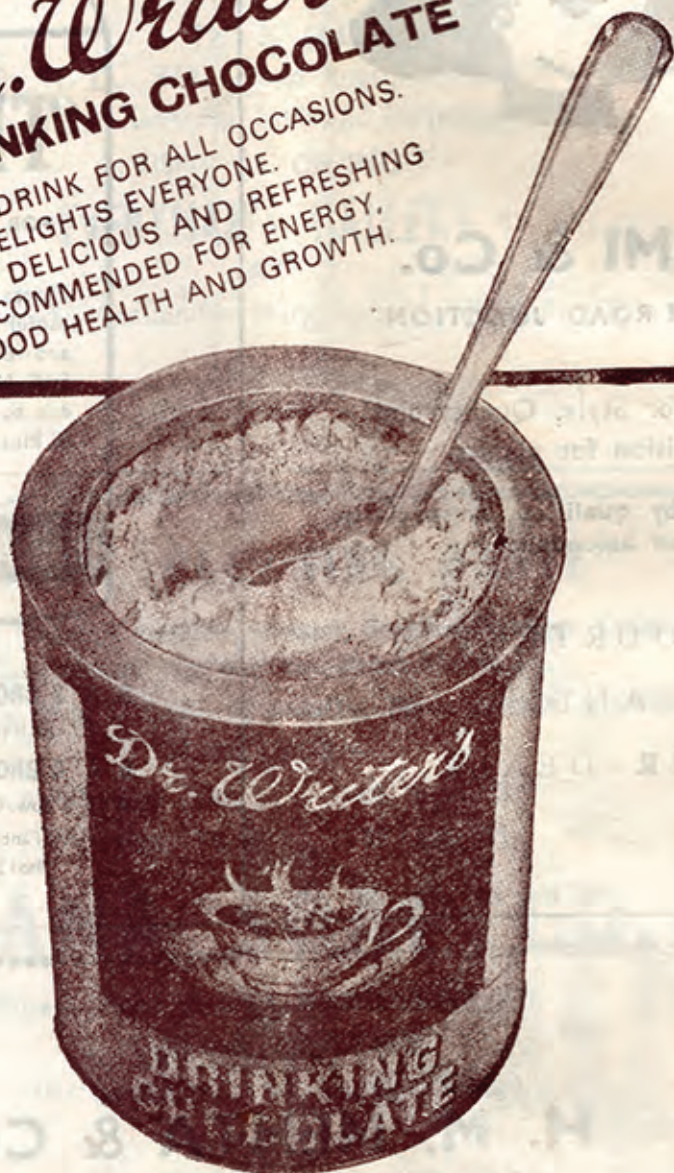
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