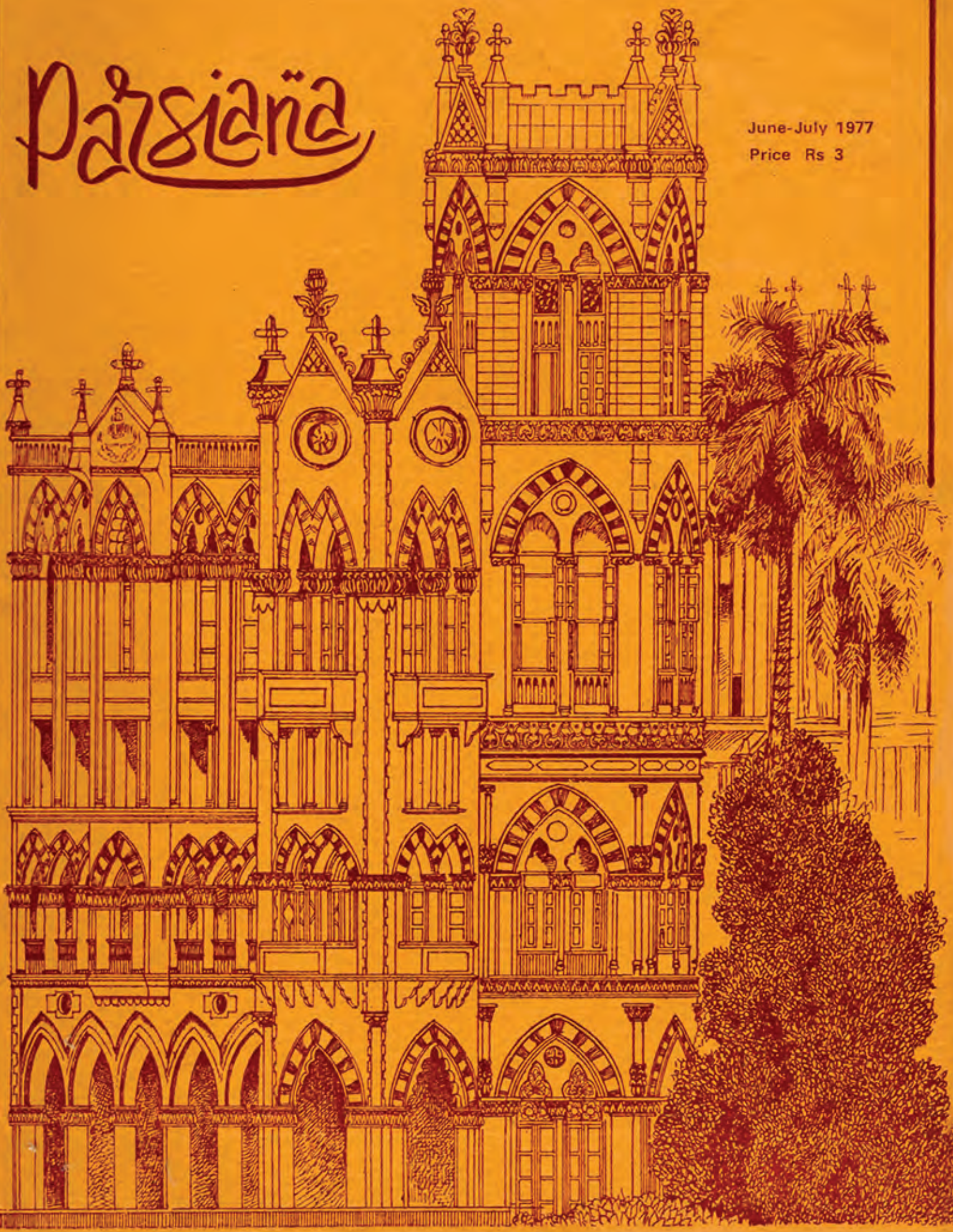
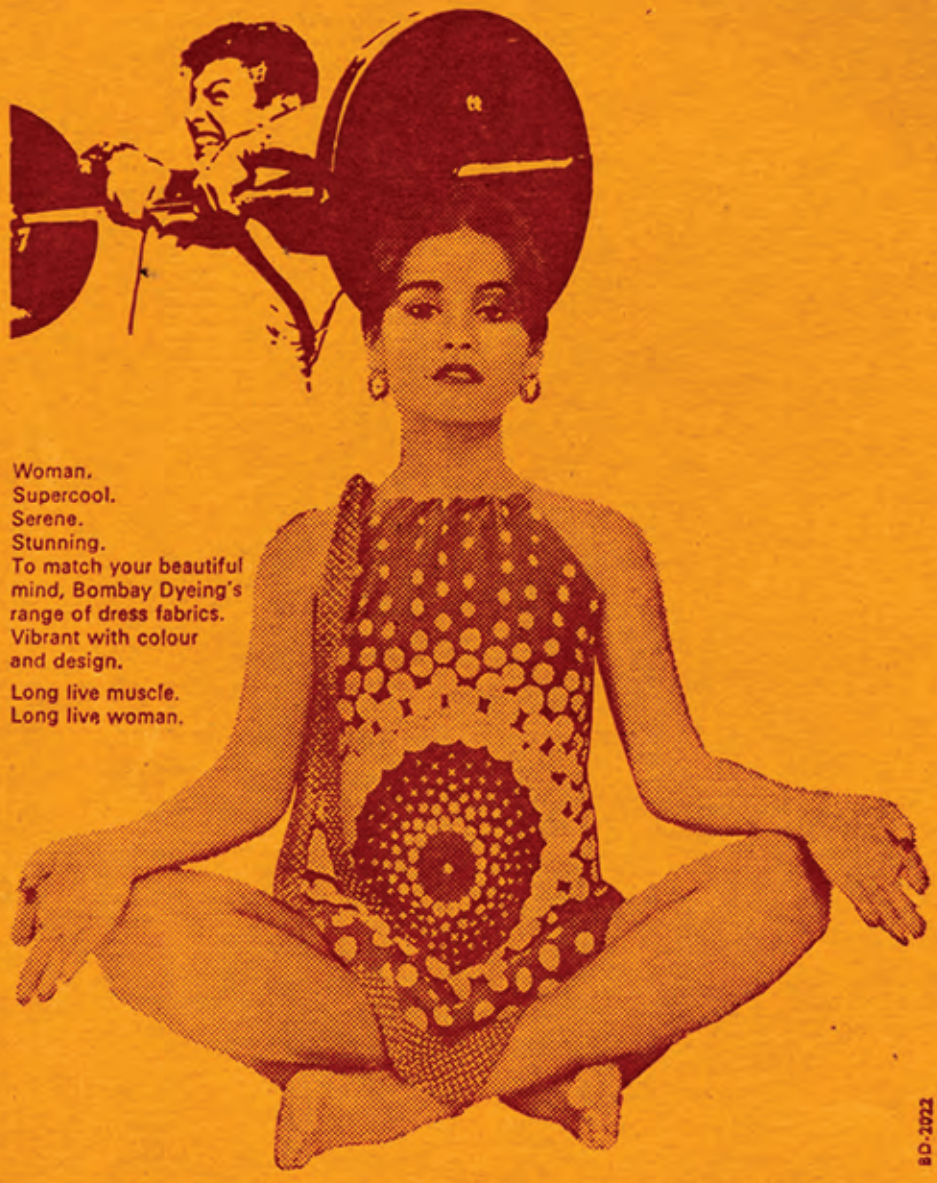
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Parsiana

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For a few tense days, it seemed as though the Third World Zoroastrian Congress would amount to little more than a three hundred thousand rupee extravaganza studded with speeches on past and present glories. The Congress's executive committee had virtually decided, at a stormy meeting on 13 July, to scrap the controversial fifth subject which would have dealt with issues such as the children of Parsi women who marry out, the ban on non-Parsis paying their respects to the dead and the status of non-Parsi spouses. But at the follow-up meeting held 16 days later, it was voted to keep the fifth topic as planned. What brought about the change of heart is not known, as the committee meets *in camera*, but the possible boycott of the Congress by progressive *anjumans* in India and abroad, proved a crucial deterrent.

To ensure the success of the Congress, it is essential that community members attend in large numbers and make their points of view known. Aside from the lectures, workshops have been scheduled where all delegates can participate.

The subjects are: the priestly class—its present condition and future uplift; economic uplift of Zoroastrians; religious education for the younger generation of Zoroastrians in India and abroad; the problem of education for Zoroastrians in the present set-up; social and cultural survey of Zoroastrians in the recent past and suggestions for the future; the setting up of an organisation to provide a link between World Zoroastrians and continuity of action after each World Zoroastrian Congress.

Of the six subjects, four were discussed at the last World Congress held in Bombay in 1964, and of the 72 recommendations passed on that occasion, barely five or six have been implemented. Yet, it does not hurt to discuss relevant issues once every 13 years or so, for constructive dialogue leads to—well, more constructive dialogue, and hopefully, someday, constructive action. Cynics will do well to note that almost eight years after the 1964 Congress, the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India came into being. This time, the main objective will be the formation of a world body. Fees for delegates are Rs 50 and for spouses, Zoroastrian and non-Zoroastrian, Rs 35; anyone under 30 years can attend as an observer for Rs 20. Those in a position to contribute more, may attend as patrons for Rs 1,000 (spouse included); vice-patrons, Rs 500 (spouse included); member of the reception committee, Rs 250 and spouse Rs 150. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be served to all participants during the appropriate intervals. The Congress is scheduled for 5, 6, 7 and 8 January 1978, with the inauguration at the Birla Matushree Sabhaghar Hall and subsequent sessions at the Taj Mahal hotel.

All cheques should be made to, 3rd World Zoroastrian Congress and sent to The Jt Hon. Secretary, Executive Committee, 3rd World Zoroastrian Congress, c/o Office of the Parsi Punchayet Funds and Properties, 209 Dr D. Naoroji Road, Bombay 400 001.

'In the grim dark days of the Emergency, as we sat together unable to comprehend the fate of our beloved country, there was little we could do except pray.' So began a note issued by Khorshed and Kekoo Gandhy of the Chemould Art Gallery, to attend a thanksgiving *jashan* on 16 April at the Petit Fasli Agiary, to celebrate the end of independent India's darkest chapter. The Gandhys, like many other patriotic members of the community, contributed their time, money and effort in the cause of freedom, at the cost of being ostracized by the various artists and art institutions who derived most of their inspiration from the wine cellars and bank accounts of the Congress caucus.

But while the community had its share of patriots, it is with deep regret and shame that one notes that the Bombay Parsi Panchayat which claims to represent the largest number of Parsis, chose not to oppose the government, not to remain impartial but to felicitate instead, one of the leaders of such a regime.

Whatever the merits or demerits of Shankarrao B. Chavan, the reception held by the trustees of the B.P.P. at the Sir Cowasjee Jehangir Public Hall on 29 March 1976, to felicitate him on completing a year as Chief Minister of Maharashtra, smacked of rank opportunism. At a time when people were being held in jail without trial, when freedom of expression and the right to life itself was denied, should the seven trustees have jeopardized the community's interests by siding with a morally bankrupt dictatorship?

It is true that other organizations like the Bombay Parsee Association, also passed a resolution applauding the proclamation of Emergency and partook of the infamous festivities on that day, but then, the B.P.A. does not claim to speak on behalf of the Bombay community. On the other hand, the Panchayat claims to be not only the custodian of the community's funds and properties, but also the conscience-keeper of the community. In this case, it failed in both respects.

An editor, like any other person in a position of authority, should not hold on to office indefinitely. After sometime, there is the danger that his decisions may not be based on merit alone, but also personal considerations. When we took over *Parsiana* from Dr Pesi Warden in June 1973, we would not have thought twice about publishing material such as 'The Pateti Papers' (*Parsiana*, Dec.-Jan. '77). But four years later, it was a decision one agonized over, consulted others and then with reluctance, published. One knew it would cause offense, strain relations and demoralize the trustees, all of whom are personally known to us—some from childhood—and have viewed the magazine sympathetically, lending it both subscription and, advertising support. And yet, forming friendships with those in power is the death knell of a journalist. He must by definition be a critic, a watchdog of the public's interest, a guardian of individual liberties. In the case of *Parsiana*, where the editor, proprietor and publisher are one and the same person, the danger of compromising principles is far greater.

Also in the course of the last

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four years, try as hard as we may, we have been unable to make the magazine a self-sufficient venture or to publish it on schedule. Aware of both these implications, in December, we signed an agreement with the Diners Club India Private Limited to publish their bi-monthly magazine, *Signature*. Negotiations began with Kali Mody and were finalized with the Aggarwal family, after Mody sold his maior shareholdings to them. As *Signature* will be, hopefully, a more viable proposition commercially, its greater earning capacity will help subsidize *Parsiana*.

The new venture will absorb initially, the attention of the older *Parsiana* mafia, but we are happy to note that newer, less cynical but equally capable people, will manage *Parsiana*. Dr Rustem Colah who loans us his administrative skills, garnered from many years in the world of pharmacology, will undertake the onerous responsibility of publisher and printer, which includes dealing with law suits, non-payment of bills, complaints from the various ministries, etc. Sharing the responsibility for the libel suits, physical assaults and mail bombs will be Shirin Patel, who after a seven-year study and work stint abroad, has returned to the fold. Until she strays again, Shirin will be editor.

Yours truly will hover in the background, changing the occasional typewriter ribbon, filling water bottles and penning a few words now and again, to ensure the magazine a modicum of disrepute.

SHARE THE GOOD NEWS

On 10 July 1976, Dr Phiroz and Dolly Dastoor celebrated the *navjote* ceremony of their sons, Farahad and Zubin in Montreal, Canada.

The initiation into Zoroastrianism of Farahad was performed by *Ervad* Dr Jehanbakhsh Bagli and of Zubin, by *Ervad* Jal Panthaky. The ceremony was also graced by *Ervad* Nauzer Kotwal and *Ervad* Kersi Bhedwar (in spite of their other occupational commitments, these four gentlemen are ably looking after the religious needs of the Zoroastrians in Montreal).

After the completion of the *navjote* ceremony in Avestan, Dr Bagli recited the English interpretation of the *kusti* prayers with the children, to enable them to appreciate the significance and importance of their commitment to the Zoroastrian religion. This was the first time in Montreal that the *navjote* ceremony was partly performed in English.

Perin and Soli Pardiwalla celebrated the *navjote* of their daughter, Shehnaz on 31 July 1976 at the Holiday Inn, Toronto, before a large gathering of friends and relations. The initiation ceremony was performed by *Ervad* Kobad Zarolia and was graced by *Ervad* Boman Kotwal. For the benefit of the large number of Canadian non-Zoroastrian friends attending the ceremony, Dr J. Bagli explained the significance of the ceremony in English. This was greatly appreciated by all.

A band and a magic show entertained the guests to an evening of dancing which also included a dinner of Canadian and Indian cuisine.

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Readers' views are welcome on any subject of interest to the community and should be sent to The Editor, Readers' Forum, Parsiana, G.P.O. Box 892, Bombay 400 001. Letters are subject to editing for reasons of space and clarity.

'The Pateti Papers'

Is it necessary to wash dirty linen in public ('The Pateti Papers', *Parsiana*, Dec.-Jan. '77)? Whatever the differences in our community and society, they should be kept within ourselves. *Parsiana* is read by all communities in all parts of the world; what will they think of our mentality when they read the childish arguments among the Trustees of the Parsi Panchayat of Bombay, who are supposed to be the Fathers of our community?

Ms D. J. NALLADAROO
Madras

In the midst of all the Trustees' verbosity ('The Pateti Papers,' *Parsiana* Dec.-Jan. '77,) discussion on the real issue, thanking the Chief Minister, was relegated to third place. It would be worth considering why the single holiday of the community was dropped at all, in the first instance, for all these years, and whether the thanksgiving ordeal will have to be undergone annually.

PROF. P. D. SUNAVALA

'The Dawn of the Federation'

Members of the different *anjumans* and *panchayats* of India are rarely elected by the community members of that place. Some were elected years ago and they continue to hold the office without limitation of time, even if they are found unfit for the position. The body of the Federation should include learned *dasturs*, scholars, lawyers, industrialists and journalists who have lived their life as true Parsis and are elected by the members of the community of that particular section which they represent. They should not be self made leaders nor be chosen by a small group of an interested section. The present body of the Federation comprises fully of such leaders. In the past also, many such Federations were formed and have now vanished because of their corrupt motives.

I congratulate the *anjuman* leaders of Udwada and Navsari for showing their moral courage and refraining from joining such a Federation. Some lessons can be learnt from the recent political election in India. Only decisions, taken by members who are elected by the whole community, can be acceptable.

KERSI R. AMROLIA

'A Federation First'

In your article, 'A Federation First,' ('Zoroastrian Associations, India', *Parsiana*, Dec.-Jan. 77), it is stated that one of the achievements of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India resulted in the Bangalore Anjuman 'revising the salaries of the priests substantially.' I should like to clarify this.

The Bangalore *anjuman* was contemplating enhancing the salaries since 1965, almost eight years before the formation of the Federation, but due to lack of funds, they were unable to do so. In 1976, during the Golden Jubilee of the Bangalore Agiary, the *anjuman* collected a large amount of money to augment the funds of the agiary, from donations and advertisements in the souvenir. From these funds the Trustees increased the salaries of the priests. The Federation in no way subscribed or contributed to this increase.

ERVAD NADIRSHAH UNWALLA
Panthaki, Bangalore Parsi Fire Temple

Our source of information was an article written by Furrokh S. Bamji in a booklet published in regard to the Federation meeting.

'What is the Parsi Dream?'

To 'What is the Parsi Dream?' most of the interviewees answered that Parsis want comfort and enjoyment in life. To eat, drink and be merry is their goal. However, many in the community live just beyond the borderline of poverty.

To say Parsis merely want to live in comfort is a slur on the community. Any intelligent school boy will say, 'I want to be a barrister, doctor, engineer, auditor. I want to make a lot of money, not to keep myself in comfort but to lead a helpful and useful rather than a merry life. This is the simple teaching of my good religion and I want to follow it.'

S. A. KALYAN

'Should We Switch to English?'

Through many changing governments, the Parsis absorbed social customs, language and usage, superstitions and religious sentiments of others around them. Under the British Raj our forefathers spared no pains to bring up their families in the British tradition. English became the second language of a large majority of cultured, well-to-do *shethias* and the laity. The influence of English became at times, greater than their mother tongue—Gujerati.

No wonder then, that many Parsis could express themselves much better in English than in Gujerati. This trend is visible in the Parsis who are, or were leaders in their own fields; Nani Palkhiwala, Homi Sethna, J. R. D. Tata, Field Marshal Manekshaw, Dadabhoy Naoroji, Pherozeshaw Mehta, Phiroze Sethna. Their expression was, and is always best in English. Now, compare this with the policy of having only Gujerati as the medium of instruction and communication.

I am not advocating the abolition of our mother tongue—the so-called Parsi Gujerati nor of *Shuddh* Gujerati. But the influence of English is still important. It is unlikely that you will find today, a Parsi from Gujerat being recruited into the Indian Administrative Service, Indian Audits, Indian Railways, the Foreign Services or any other important central government service, because young Parsis in Gujerat unfortunately, know very little English. Most of the important avenues are closed to them. Their field is narrow and they cannot expect to go in for advanced studies in any branch of education for lack of knowledge of English.

A large part of the blame falls on the Gujerat government for

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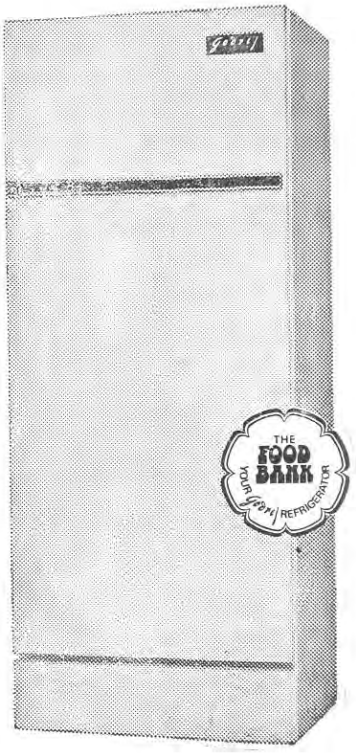
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stressing Gujerati as the medium for all studies for almost two decades. Parsis in Gujerat are the worst hit. In spite of such a curb on English, even non-Parsi parents are keen to get their children admitted to private English medium schools and colleges.

In a free and democratic India, parochialism and sectarianism do not pay. As the late Justice Nusserwanji Vakil, vice-chancellor, M. S. University, Baroda, said at a Parsi convocation, 'We must continue to be Indians first, Parsis next and have access to English as close to Gujerati as possible.'

ROHINTON K. PATEL
Surat

'Unfortunate Relics'

In the article 'Unfortunate Relics' Noshir Vajifdar complains that some of our prayers are repetitive and irrelevant.

Repetition, however, emphasizes supplication to promote spiritual progress. He next states that the following lines from *fravarane* are irrelevant—'May the chief priest (*Zaota*) recite the *Yatha ahu vairyo* and his associate (*Rathvi*) recite *atha Ratush ashatchit hacha frashva vidva mrute*.' They seem irrelevant because of the misunderstanding of the meaning and context of the word *Zaota* and of the word *Ratush*. *Zaota*, generally, is a spiritual teacher and *Ratush*, his disciple.

Zaota refers to the angel whose litany is recited, e.g. in *Sarosh baj*, *Zaota* refers to *Sarosh Yezed* and so on, while the *Ratush* remains the person who is praying. This is the interpretation of the late *Ervad* Pheroze Masani, who was not only an Avesta scholar but also a well known exponent of *Ilm E Kshnoom*. In all litanies, whether they are *bajs*, *nayaises*, *yashts*, or *Gathas*, the names of all the angels are in Avestan, whereas most of us are familiar with their Pazand names.

Further clarification of *fravarane* is that we are first introduced to it in *Sarosh baj* and thereafter, in all litanies. In it, the reciter asserts his belief in the religion, he next announces the time of the day i.e. *geh*, and praises its angels. Lastly, he extols the attributes of the angel of that particular litany and invokes that angel's help as *Zaota*.

MS A. N. BHARUCHA

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Nirang is obtained from the consecrated *varasya* and from other bulls maintained on a hygienic diet. The vessels which receive the bulls' urine are not only thoroughly scoured, but are themselves purified and consecrated; and the liquid is then sanctified for holy purposes, through the long, intricate, complex and exalted ritual ceremony and prayer service of the *Nirangdin*. Thereafter imbued by these prayers and blessings, it becomes an agent of purification. These are the tenets of traditional Zoroastrian observance and belief; but in this scientific age it seemed desirable to reinforce them with scientific proof.

In 1963, Dr Firoze M. Kotwal brought, for the use of the community in London, some *Nirang* by air from India which had been consecrated in a *Nirangdin* ceremony performed at the *Vadi Dar-e-Meher* of Navsari. Six years later I submitted a small quantity of this *Nirang* for chemical analysis to the London firm of Henner and Cox Ltd., analytical and consulting chemists, together with a control sample taken at that time from an ordinary bull on an English farm in Kent.

As was to be expected, chemical analysis failed to identify the unknown quality in the *Nirang* which would give a physical indication of its sanctifying and healing nature, for this quality necessarily transcends the physical; but the photographs

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taken in the strictly controlled conditions of a bacteriology laboratory of a London teaching hospital, showed the striking contrast between the two liquids. The control sample appeared distinctly contaminated with impurities, whereas the *Nirang* was flawless. This degree of purity is what I myself, as a priest, had faith in and looked for in the *Nirang;* but the evidence produced by this objective scientific inquiry may be of interest to the more sceptical.

DASTUR SOHRAB H. KUTAR
London

Pinching the Parsi Paisas

With the steep rise in the cost of living it is important that Zoroastrians be given guidance in handling their finances. There are many members of the community with wealth, by way of jewellery and property, who are worried about their future economic stability but do not know how to help themselves. They keep their accounts and shares of joint stock companies in single names and maintain current accounts instead of savings accounts. When they come upon difficult times, they have to sell their shares to afford weddings and navjotes. They pay high interest charges on overdrafts or loan accounts with nationalized banks instead of, for instance, turning to Parsi institutions such as The Zoroastrian Cooperative Credit Bank Ltd for help. Most of them lack knowledge of the safer and more lucrative schemes to invest in, like Life Insurance and Unit Trust, nor how to gain refunds of income tax.

Our forefathers became leading merchants and traders by joining *pedhis* (firms) as *munims* (cashiers) or *gumastas* (clerks) and thus gradually learnt the intricacies of trade and business. The trend nowadays is for old pensioners to enter the hectic world of business with no experience behind them. They immediately fall prey to swindlers and unscrupulous persons on the look out for gullible old people who can be easily tempted into squandering their hard earned savings on risky enterprises such as poultry farming and taxi plying. Also in the later years of life a person may find it more difficult to summon the required initiative and capacity for hard work, essential for running a successful business.

Institutions like the Parsi Panchayat should take responsibility in this matter and perhaps an organization such as a 'Financial Guidance Bureau' run by expert businessmen, should be set up.

R. A. KOTWAL

Lost Sheep

Parsis are looked upon with enormous goodwill, bordering on affection, by the vast mass of communities that surround them. Even their shortcomings are overlooked. Their contributions to various fields of life are impressive considering the small demands they have made on this country.

Their undoing has been that they have stood apart from the mainstream of life in India. Many of them have adopted a western mode of life, thus alienating themselves from the culture of this country. Their nostalgia for their original homeland and infatuation with western culture have created a void. They lack a base, both cultural and emotional, from which to function. This is so because of their inaptitude at assimilating Indian culture, which they often look down upon. They still consider themselves exiles, emigres, orphans of a calamity long forgotten. They feel they are culturally uprooted and refuse to adjust to the changing times. They, alas, have not savoured the treasures India has to offer in intellectual, religious and spiritual spheres. Their social mores are a mere veneer, not an assimilation of the nation's cultural milieu. If they shift to other countries, mistaking them for fresh fields and pastures new, they will only be unwitting victims of a greater sense of insecurity. They will be throwing away a valuable inheritance for the preservation of which their forefathers travelled long distances and braved untold privations.

It is lamentable that the numbers of the Parsi community are dwindling. Economic factors are considered among the plausible reasons for this decline in population. Be that as it may, there may be other greater and more powerful psychological undercurrents for this tragedy. The Parsi penchant for ease and luxury, and their failure to merge with the country's pattern of life are cumulative causes which adversely influence the community's subconscious. To rediscover this country as their own, to live in it, and live for it, or to spread their own ancient religion may bring them a sense of fulfilment and belonging which they have never experienced so far.

It will be a sad day for India if this colourful and lovable community were to dwindle and vanish from this land, which has given it shelter and made it, its own.

A. N. BHAT

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Sorabjee: Fundamental freedoms

Cases and Causes

One of the gains of the Emergency has been the Janata government's nomination of the noted lawyer and civil libertarian, **Soli Sorabjee** to the post of Additional Solicitor General of India. The 47-year-old Bombay based lawyer, fought long and hard for fundamental freedoms during Ms Indira Gandhi's 19-month reign of terror.

'While some eminent counsel chose to look the other way, Soli consistently championed the citizens' cause, often at great risk to himself and sacrifice in terms of a lucrative practice, notes a news item in the Calcutta daily, *The Statesman*, written by its Managing Director Cusrow Irani. Sorabjee served as a counsel for and then as a director of the paper which was one of the few national dailies, besides *The Indian Express*, to defy the censors. 'He was there to oppose the absurd order of the Commissioner of Police, Bombay, banning the holding of an indoor meeting of lawyers to discuss the ambit of the citizens' rights during the Emergency. Citizens including journalists, imprisoned without cause found in him a willing advocate. He was the first to challenge the mindless orders of the Chief Censor and his minions, designed to terrorize and intimidate those running journals and newspapers. His unbroken record of successes in court in all these cases is a tribute as much to his legal acumen as to his courage and faith in the final triumph of decency. If his book, *The Law Of Press Censorship in India*, is now obsolete, no one has done more than he to achieve the obsolescence.'

Born and bred in Bombay, Sorabjee matriculated from St Xavier's School in 1946, ranking first in English in the then province of Bombay. An economics graduate from St Xavier's College, he went on to earn his law degree from the Government Law College where he secured the Kinloch Forbes Gold Medal for Roman law and jurisprudence, in the final law examination. He started his practice in the chambers of Sir Jamshedjee Kanga, where he was initially attached to K. H. Bhabha. Sorabjee enrolled as a senior advocate of the Supreme Court in 1971 and has since fought in most of the crucial constitutional cases involving fundamental rights. He specializes in human rights in international law and has attended and spoken at several international law conferences.

For his 22 years as an 'impartial, fearless and frank administrator of justice', **Jal H. A. Vakil** was honoured by the Bombay Metropolitan Magistrates' Courts Bar Association on 30th November last year, when his portrait was unveiled at the Esplanade Court. An additional chief metropolitan magistrate, Vakil retired from the Bench after a 30-year career.

'You always maintained the highest dignity and the best decorum in your court,' noted the resolution passed by the association. 'No lawyer or litigant ever left your court with an impression that he has not fully been heard in the matter.'

Reputed for his meticulous examination of evidence and patient hearing, Vakil matriculated from Bharda New High School and studied arts at St Xavier's College and law at the Government Law College. As a law student his debating skills won him the Sir Harisingh Gour trophy for the college and the best speaker cup at the All India Debate in 1939. After his Advocate examinations, he read initially in the chambers of Sir Nusserwanji Engineer and completed his training in the chambers of P. P. Khambatta when Sir Nusserwanji was appointed Advocate General of India. Vakil practised mainly in the city civil court and in the court of the presidency magistrate. He was appointed presidency magistrate in 1954, additional chief presidency magistrate in February 1967 and in 1976 as acting chief metropolitan magistrate.

In recognition of his efforts to brighten the world of the sightless, **Capt. Hormazdiar Desai**, honorary Secretary General of the National Association for the Blind (N.A.B.), was presented the Takeo Iwahashi Award and the Rustom Merwanji Alpaiwalla Memorial Award earlier this year. In a tribute to Desai's three decades of 'outstanding contribution as a voluntary worker', the N.A.B.'s president, Vijay Merchant noted at the time of the presentation, 'There is hardly any institution for the blind throughout the country with which Capt. Desai is not connected and his enthusiasm is a measure of his concern for the blind in the country.'



Capt. Desai receiving the Alpaiwalla award from Freany Ashburner

One of the founders of the N.A.B., the dapper, former government servant initiated and developed many of the association's vocational training and rehabilitation institutions. Extensively travelled, he has represented India at several national and international conferences and served as a member and chairman of committees of the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind. 'Blindness claims 15,000 Indian children every year,' reveals Desai, 'of which 70 to 80 per cent are from the villages.' The corresponding figure for neighbouring Bangladesh is 200,000 says Desai, who was deputed to the country after its liberation to assess

the problems of its sightless. His study was accepted by the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind and the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind, and reportedly, mobilized substantial international aid.

'Preventive work should have top priority,' Desai feels. 'The World Health Organization (WHO) has a vitamin A administration programme. If this vitamin is administered in the right doses, twice a year, loss of eyesight because of malnutrition can be prevented. Even a *vati* (a small saucer) full of green, leafy vegetables can prevent blindness. The Indian diet is often deficient in this respect.' For the 10 to 12 lakh Indians suffering from cataract, the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind, (of which Desai is the honorary treasurer,) organizes 1,000 eye camps every year, he notes.

Yet, for its five million blind (nine million if you consider those who cannot earn a full wage because of partial or weak vision), the country has only 250 institutions. 'But we have made progress,' he says. 'In 1944, we had just 32. The existing institutions cater to about 20,000, at the most 25,000, visually handicapped,' where they are taught the skills of daily living, mobility, communication and subsequently helped to integrate themselves into the community. 'We do not favour institutionalized life,' says Desai. 'For instance, those of average intelligence are encouraged to attend normal schools, colleges and polytechnics. Even employment-wise we try to locate simple, risk free jobs for them, in the kind of environment they are used to. In Bombay alone, 800 totally blind persons work in factories. They function at optimum production levels, and earn a living wage.'

Desai devotes two to four hours of his day helping the blind to adjust to their handicap, and notes, 'The blind can reach any height once they have been trained and adjusted to their handicap. They have been cabinet ministers, journalists and engineers. Pulitzer, the well-known journalist after whom the Pulitzer Prize is named, was himself blind.' Closer home, he cites the instance of Firoz Karkaria, and Cawas Tumboli who have overcome the shackles of their handicap to a large extent. Blind, deaf and crippled, Karkaria works at the Dadar Tata Mills to support himself and his ailing mother, commuting daily from Jogeshwari to Dadar. Unfailingly bright and cheerful, he plays the mouth organ in his spare time and makes plastic bags. The fact that he could not see, did not hamper Tumboli from acquiring the M.A. LL.B. and M.Ed, degrees, and a diploma from the Perkins Teacher Training College, U.S.A. He is now a central goverment grade one officer, principal of the Government School for Blind, Delhi.

The Bombay born, 60-year-old social worker took over as the principal of the Victoria Memorial School for the Blind on his father, Jamshedji's death. 'I owe my involvement in blind welfare to him', he says. A student of the Petit Parsi Orphanage, Desai graduated from the Ismail Yusuf College and Government Law College. He joined government service in 1938 and before retiring in 1974, after 36 years, was the Joint Secretary to the Government of Maharashtra, Finance Department. He is now the personnel manager of the Hindustan Spinning and Weaving Mills in Bombay and trustee of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute, the Ranji Fire Temple, the Anjuman Atash Behram, and the Zarthostriona Rethan Fund. Despite his varied commitments, Desai has found the time to author two books, *The Blind in India* and *Planning Agricultural and Rural Training Centres for the Blind* and is working on yet another, *Rehabilitation of the Sightless in Developing Countries.*

The 55-year-old noted painter, **Jehangir Sabavala,** was singled out for the Padma Shree award along with the noted social worker, Ms Gool Shavaksha (see In Memoriam). Among others to be honoured were **J. P. Suraliwala**, assistant commissioner of police who received the President's medal for meritorious service and **Brigadier Adi Jamshedji Minocher-Homji** who was awarded the Ati Vishist Seva Medal.

Hilla (Khursedji) Mazda, the 26-year-old pianist from Bombay, was among 12 musicians singled out from over 150 for the 'Young Musicians '77' award by the Greater London Arts Association.

Those selected will give serveral solo recitals and concerts all over England which will be subsidized by the Association.

A onetime pupil of Bombay's



Jehangir Sabavala receiving the Padma Shree from Vice-President Jatti on Republic Day, 26 January.

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Olga Craèn, Hilla studied music under the renowned pianist, Rudolf Serkin, at Philadelphia's prestigious Curtis Institute of Music, before launching on a professional career. Acclaimed 'a great talent' by another famed expatriate musician, Zubin Mehta, Hilla was selected from over 80 others last year to play at London's famed Wigmore Hall. The young musician paid a brief visit to her home town last year but feels London is the best place for a musical career.

Of the 18 artists who exhibited their work at the Society of Contemporary Artists of Calcutta show, the stained glass artwork of **Katayun Saklat** stood out 'not only due to their novelty and usefulness but also for their poetry in colour and imagery,' noted the *Indian Express* critic.

'In black and white, they lose their charm but if one sees them against natural lights or even under artificial illuminations, one is transported into a realm of new sensations which only an artwork of very high quality can evoke and inspire,' wrote the critic, Padma Arya.

A graduate of the Indian School of Arts and Draftmanship, 39-year-old Katayun studied Fine Art for a short spell in London on three British Council grants and for a year was a student of Patrick Reytiens, a stained glass artist in Buckinghamshire, U.K. She has worked briefly as an art teacher at various schools, was the artistic designer at the India Hobby Centre Calcutta, and art critic and.correspondent of *The Statesman*.

From the 350 contestants at the Student Education Trust's inter-school singing competition held at Bombay's Shanmukananda Hall in February, the voice of 15-year-old **Peenaz Masani** won her the first prize. A Rotaract prize winner for four years running, and winner of the Vasant Desai vocal music contest, the J.B. Vatchha Wadia High School student was singled out by Music Director Sonik Omi as a potential vocalist for his forthcoming film.

'She would like to sing professionally,' says her father, Doli, who spoke on behalf of his interview-shy daughter. 'But we can't be sure of the future.' Peenaz is a disciple of Ustad Amanat Khan and like her father, has been coached in the Agra Gharana school of singing. Even if the young singer does not pursue the art as a career, she is determined 'to study it forever,' says her father.



Photo: Rusi Davar

The Wadias: Change in leadership

After 25 years as chairman of the Bombay Dyeing and Manufacturing Company Limited and a 45-year career in the textile industry, **Neville Wadia** handed over the reins of the company to his son, **Nusli.** 'The fact that each and every one of my colleagues on the board has done his best to persuade me to stay on a few more years, has only convinced me that I am right,' noted the 66-year-old magnate. 'I believe in the motto, "Five minutes too soon is better than one minute too late."'

Under his chairmanship, the company's share capital doubled, the turnover increased 11-fold, staff emoluments 10-fold, gross profit rose from 80 to 526 lakhs and the company maintained an' unbroken record of dividends since 1885', noted the statement at the annual general meeting on 4th April when the change in leadership was announced to the public.

'Apart from directing the affairs of a company, the most important duty of a chairman is to groom a successor to take his place. I have been paying special attention to this task for the last few years, and I am now completely confident that I can leave the future management of the company to the next generation. . . my advice will always be available whenever asked, but I will have to be asked before I give it.'

Among the other changes at Bombay Dyeing, **J. D. Choksi** has stepped down as vice-chairman and **Homi Batlivala** wished to be relieved of executive duties and is expected to retire as managing director. Both have agreed to remain on the board of directors.



Peenaz: Study singing forever

His forefathers were shipwrights to the famous Wadia master builders and **Noshir Dhunjibhoy** has kept the family tradition going both, as chairman of the South East Asia Shipping Company and this year, as president of the Indian National Shipowners' Association (I.N.S.A.).

His involvement with the shipping industry began when as a boy of 12, he would go to the docks with his father who was engaged in cargo booking and stevedoring activities. He has since served as vice-president of the I.N.S.A. for the last three years and represented it on various bodies such as The Bombay Port Trust, National Welfare Board for Sea-



Dhunjibhoy : Shipping tradition

farers and the National Shipping Board. He is also chairman of the Negotiating Committee of Shipowners.

Dhunjibhoy joined his father in the family business in 1936 and launched the South East Asia Shipping Company in 1948. Starting with a small vessel of 550 'dead weight' tons, *Mahamaya*, which operated on the west cost of India, the company gradually expanded its operations to the entire Indian coast, Burma, Ceylon, and Pakistan. Today, the company owns and operates six vessels of 57,256 d.w. tons on these routes as well as the West Asia Gulf market. Plans are on the anvil to acquire at least four more modern liners which may include a cattle carrier.

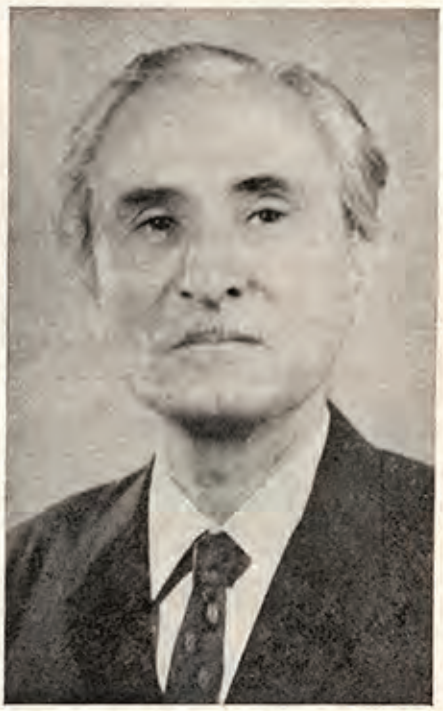
A freemason and senior steward of the Western India Turf Club, Dhunjibhoy's interests include horse riding and sports.

J. F. Mistry, the chief engineer in charge of irrigation projects for Gujerat, was singled out for recognition by the Central Board of Irrigation and Power for his research paper on 'Stability of spillway and power dam blocks on low angled faults and shear zones on the Kadana dam in Gujerat'.

Mistry was awarded a gold medal, a certificate of merit and a cash prize of Rs 250 in March this year. In 1969, he had received a similar award with a certificate of merit from the Vice President of India for a paper that he had presented at the Ninth International Congress on Large Dams, held at Istanbul.

A portrait of the late **Ms Mehroo Sookhia**, founder principal of the Gulistan Finishing School, was unveiled by S. R. Vakil, noted lawyer, on the first death anniversary of the respected and reputed educationist, on 10 January this year.

Ms Sookhia left a teaching job to start an institution with the objective of moulding young women to be better wives and mothers. Reportedly the first of its kind in the country, the school initially met with a poor response but gradually established itself. She then began to amass funds for the Somani Polytechnic which would offer vocation oriented courses. The former principal, who was not only an academician but could also work deftly with clay, leather, cane and textiles, headed the Polytechnic till her death.



Irani : Guarding the railways

Jamshed Irani, a 30-year veteran of the railways, was appointed senior deputy general manager and chief vigilance officer of the Central Railways on 1st February. He has held several posts in India and abroad, including stints at the Indian High Commission in Australia, and the Indian Embassy in Rangoon, and served as additional director, bridges and structures, in the Research, Design and Standards Organization of the Indian Railways at Lucknow.

The late **Prof. Manekshaw Commissariat**, author of the three-volume *History of Gujarat*, considered the standard and most authoritative history of the province, was commemorated recently when his portrait was unveiled in Surat. The painting of the 91-year-old bachelor who passed away five years ago, was unveiled along with the portraits of his parents, by the Surat Parsi Panchayat on the occasion of the Executive Meeting of the Federation of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, in November.

'His *History of Gujarat* supersedes all others and... entitles him to foremost place among modern historians,' noted a review of his tome by Alexandra Findlay in the *Aberdeen University Journal*. When writing the history, Commissariat consulted sources and authorities in Persian, Arabic, Portuguese, Sanskrit and English and collected photographs from various sources to illustrate his books. The first volume begins in the year 1297 A.D. and stretches upto 1573 A.D. when Akbar conquered Gujerat; the second spans the Mughal period and the third continues from there.

Born in Bombay in 1881, Commissariat graduated from St Xavier's High School and then St Xavier's College, Bombay, with a first class and was appointed a Dakshina Fellow for two years. The next year, 1904, he completed his M.A. in history and political economy and two years later was appointed professor of history and political economy at Gujerat College in Ahmedabad where he served for 30 years. He held many positions in the educational field and was a fellow of the University of Bombay. His chief published works are *Mandelslo's Travels in Western India*, *Studies in the History of Gujarat*, and *Imperial Mughal Farmans in Gujarat*. (From a report by Shernaz Wadia of Surat.)

A five lakh rupee endowment in the memory of **Dr Jal Patel** who had ministered to a galaxy of presidents, princes, industrialists and statesmen, is to be raised by his many friends and admirers.

Sponsored by the Research Society of the Grant Medical College and J. J. Group of Hospitals, the Dr Jal R. Patel Memorial Fund is 'to help the cause of medical education and

research so dear to his heart,' according to the society's letter.

Professor of Pharmocology at the Grant Medical College, Dr Patel was appointed Honorary Director of Research in Pharmocology by the Government of Maharashtra and served as Physician to the President of India and as Surgeon Commodore of the Indian Navy. Shortly before his death on 14 January 1976, the 76-year-old cardiologist's name figured prominently in Dominique Lapierre and Larry Collins' best seller, *Freedom at Midnight*, where the authors state that had Patel leaked news of Mohammed Ali Jinnah's deteriorating health, independence would have been delayed and partition possibly averted.

The fund-raising committee is chaired by P. A. Narielwala of Tatas and the interest from the endowment will be utilized for fellowships to undergraduate and postgraduate students in medicine and pharmocology. In addition, a laboratory in his name is to be raised to continue research in the field of neuropharmocology and a lectureship in therapeutics will be instituted and the expenses met out of the endowment.

All donations should be sent to 'The Research Society, Grant Medical College and J. J. Group of Hospitals, A/C Dr Jal R. Patel Memorial Fund', Ward No. 9, 1st floor, Main Building, J. J. Group of Hospitals, Bombay 400 008.

Parsi sporting mettle was again demonstrated in a rash of trophies and broken records. Below we carry a report on three of the teen-aged athletes, Bakhtavar Khambata, Merzi Dubash and Kayomarz Mehta.

'When I started out, friends and relatives said, "You won't grow tall, you will have muscles with all that weight lifting"' recalled 19-year-old **Bakhtavar Khambata** who broke the eight-year-old shot put record at the Inter University Athletics Championships held at Benaras in December and stood first in the discus throw event. 'Now they feel quite proud of the little name that I have made. They think it's worth it.' The tall, strapping athlete has consistently smashed and bettered her own records at the Greater Bombay Region Amateur Athletic Association and state meets, since 1970-71 when she first flexed her muscles. 'We had our school sports and my friends saw my build. They said, "Come and throw." I was the youngest participant and happened to come first. The sports teacher got interested and took me under training.' She also participated at the Nationals in which 'I didn't do as well as I expected.'

Bakhtavar's day starts at seven in the morning when accompanied by her father, Jal, 'who always encourages me,' she goes to the naval grounds to train under Lt. Commander Keher Singh and coach Punner. 'There we do actual throwing and running around practice till 8.30 or 9.' In addition to wielding discs, lugging weights and whizzing in and out of Bombay for the large meets, Bakhtavar finds the time to play the piano and attend St Xavier's College where she is an arts student.

Tall and lanky **Merzi Dubash** shattered the 100 metres record for senior boys at the Bombay High School Athletic Meet, breasting the finishing tape in 11.2 seconds. 'I had wanted to break the record but I didn't expect to succeed', says the fleet-footed runner from Bharda New High School who carried away the Lifebuoy trophy and scholarship for the Best Athelete at the Hindustan Lever sponsored meet, held in February at the Brabourne Stadium. Hosie Patel who set the record of 11.3 seconds in 1955, presented a special cup to the sprinter.

A cricket and hockey enthusiast, Merzi only recently made his debut in the world of athletics when his coach noticed his potential. Merzi practised daily for two hours at the University grounds and earlier this year participated at the 15th Inter State Athletic Championships held at Madras. For the Boys-under-19 relay, Merzi's four man team stood first and in the men's relay, the quartet stood second. At 18, Merzi has no certain plans for the future, but he is 'serious about athletics. I would like to go for the Asian games and the Olympics,' he says.

Of the 216 boys from various schools who faced the starter at Juhu Lions Park for the Inter School Roadster Cycle Race on March 7, **Kayomarz Mehta** finished the 25 km course first, at the Gateway of India. After a smooth ride along the route, Kayomarz was awarded a rotating shield and a cycle. The meet conducted by the Malabar Hill Jaycees was sponsored by the Metro Cycle Co.





Merzi (above): Would like to go for the Olympics

Bakhtavar (left): Breaking eight-year shot put record



Modi, Ms Modi and Sheriar: Fostering togetherness

As a young collegian in Ahmedabad, Nadir Modi missed the companionship of fellow community members, as Parsi students in his college were few and far between. Making the best of the situation, he banded the handful together into a loosely knit social and cultural organization that met as often as possible. When Modi came to Bombay around 1949, to teach English at the Jai Hind College, he considered organizing a similar association for the local college students. Along with a fellow lecturer, Khurshed Sheriar, Modi established the **Young Collegians' Zoroastrian Association** in February 1952, with the objective of bringing young community members together and enriching their lives.

'At first there was some resistance from the authorities as to the formation of what was considered a communal body,' noted Modi's wife, Homai, presently Y.C.Z.A.'s chief executive. But the founders argued that it was a Zoroastrian, and not a Parsi organization, and therefore, was cultural in nature rather than communal. The association met with enthusiastic support from the young and rapidly increased its activities and membership. In February this year, the Y.C.Z.A. celebrated its silver jubilee with a grand function at Bombay's Allbless Baug.

A crowd of 600-strong gathered for the occasion which started with a *jashan* and was followed by a variety entertainment programme that included skits by Y.C.Z.A. members Sarosh Dastur, Sarosh Aibara, Percy Presswalla, Ronny Commissariat, Percy Ginwalla and Khurshed Garda, a magic show by Minoo Doctor and a violin mimicry by Bal Sathe.

Addressing the gathering, Modi stressed the importance of tending to the welfare of the younger generation. 'Every well-meaning Parsi from time to time talks about this. In our own humble way, we (the Y.C.Z.A.) have been persistently and regularly doing something in this regard.' Over the last 25 years the Y.C.Z.A. has held almost without a break, weekly functions of a social, educational, religious, cultural and general nature. Most of the events are held at the Modi's residence, Modi Lodge, 13 Vachha Gandhi Road, Gamdevi, Bombay 7; an attempt to host the gatherings in larger quarters failed when the Bombay Parsi Panchayat trustees refused to permit them use of the Khareghat Colony Hall. But the Modis decided, however, the 'cordial atmosphere of a home was something that was needed from more than one angle.' In addition to the lectures, hikes, socials and other activities, the Y.C.Z.A. has a library which provides books to around 400 students every year, notes Ms. Modi; the library fund is financed through donations.

'In all our activities,' Modi told the gathering at Allbless Baug, the Y.C.Z.A. has only one aim—the all around welfare of our community ...(as) we are told in the *Kemna Mazda*...happiness unto him who gives happiness to others.'



IN MEMORIAM

We deeply regret to announce the sudden passing away of Mr Fali Meherji Variava on 10 April 1977, at the early age of 51 years.

Mr Fali M. Variava was the Director of Blaze Advertising Private Ltd, and all its associate companies.

A gentleman of distinctive appearance and stature, Mr Variava's was a unique personality. Because of his deep sincerity and ingrained sense of absolute honesty and integrity, he perhaps made a few enemies since he could brook no hypocrisy. But his ready wit and quick humour, as well as his uprightness of nature won him innumerable friends. And yet, perhaps his most outstanding trait was his inborn sense of charity towards his less fortunate brethren. Year after year Mr Variava had been helping innumerable charitable institutions, particularly those for the blind, the widowed, the orphans and the destitutes.

Mr Variava leaves behind him his wife, Silloo, and his two little children, Felicia and Jamshed. His wife, Mrs Variava is now appointed Director of Blaze Advertising Private Ltd, and all its associate companies, of which his elder sister, Miss Freni M. Variava, is the Joint Managing Director.

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NORTHWEST BY SOUTH

Of the four zones the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India is divided into, the North and South generate the greatest amount of activity. The Southern Parsis were the first to host a zonal conference of the Parsi *anjumans* in October, and on 26 and 27 February 1977, they hosted a second such conference at Secunderabad. The North and West zone held a conference of their affiliated *anjumans* in New Delhi on 22 and 23 January this year, and became the first major Parsi Zoroastrian Federation association in India to pass a resolution stating that spouses and children of Parsis married to non-Parsis be admitted into the Parsi Zoroastrian fold.

The West zone which comprises the major *anjumans* such as the Bombay and Surat Parsi Panchayats, has still to host a zonal conference. *Parsiana* reports on the meetings in New Delhi and Secunderabad:

New Delhi

The rain fell intermittently throughout the chilly day as around 400 Parsis gathered at the Bhiwandiwala Hall for the first Zonal Conference of the Parsi Anjumans of North India. They had gathered to discuss issues of crucial importance to them and as the North zone President, Shiavax Nargolwala, who is also President of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman which hosted the conference noted, to examine the need for 'a change of priorities'.

After patiently sitting through over four hours of talks by speakers such as Ms Piloo Jungalwalla, author of several religious discourses including the recently published *The Parsis;* Rustam M. Mehta, a Supreme Court lawyer; Ms Ava G. Khullar, former trustee of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman; Rusi S. Gae, former law secretary to the Government of India; Jamshed N. Guzder, a trustee of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat; Prof. Homai J. Moos, from the Ministry of Education; Ms Parvin C. Bharucha; Ms Perin Driver and Ms Novy Kapadia who spoke on the role of the youth, the delegates broke for lunch. In the afternoon, they attended workshop sessions on subjects ranging from economic problems to the legal aspects of adoption, marriage and divorce. After a tea break, the various resolutions passed by the workshops were taken up for voting and for close to four hours, the members debated the issues under the skillful chairmanship of Nargolwala. While most of the 27 resolutions were passed without much controversy, the following six were heatedly debated before receiving sanction:

* At a suitable opportunity, it may be considered whether the priesthood calling should be opened to all Zoroastrians and not kept exclusively for the *Athornan* class.
* Non-Parsis married to Parsis and their children should be taken into the Parsi Zoroastrian fold with certain pre-conditions, if necessary.
* Non-Parsis whether relations or friends of the deceased, may be allowed to be observers of death ceremonies, especially when they come to pay their last respects.
* When a Parsi female marries outside the community she should not be ostracized by the Parsi community and should not be prevented from making use of the community institutions, trusts and funds, subject to the provision that her marriage has been under civil law and that she has remained a Zoroastrian and continues to profess the faith.
* Conversion by marriage should be allowed by the Parsi community. In this connection, the practice adopted in Iran should be adopted in India. A non-Zoroastrian spouse marrying a Zoroastrian partner, can adopt the faith of the Zoroastrian spouse after due verification.
* The term 'Parsi' may be defined in the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act on the lines of the definition of 'Parsi Community' given by Justice Davar in Sir Dinshaw Petit's Case, (1909) 11 Bom.L.R. 85, but including therein, children of alien fathers by Parsi mothers who have been duly and properly admitted into the Zoroastrian religion.

Secunderabad

The weather in Secunderabad was unusually hot for February. And the soaring temperatures without and within the Bai Pirojbai Chenoy Hall, indicated that while the Southern Parsis were willing to discuss controversial issues, they were in no mood to give them their blessings.

The 200 Parsis who attended the full day session, as versus the 1,000 community members who were present for the *gambhar* the night before, were told by Jamshid D. Italia, acting president of The Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Secunderabad and Hyderabad which hosted the conference, that the purpose of holding the conference was 'not for ourselves, but for our children.' Unlike the Delhi Parsis who, with a few exceptions, were in favour of change, Parsis of the plain cities are split on most of the controversial issues and Italia's plea was to draw attention to the need for change without which many younger Parsis were being alienated. After hearing speakers such as Soli Hataria, president of the Coimbatore Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman; Dr. B. S. Surti, trustee of the Secunderabad and Hyderabad Anjuman; A. F. Taraporewala, of the Madras Anjuman; *Ervad* Shyavax Patel of Hyderabad; Farokh Bamji of the Bangalore Anjuman; Ms Muneezah Banoo Kaoosji; B. K. Boman-Behram, trustee of the Bom-



Surti, Hataria, Italia and Tarapore: 'Not the last day of the world.'

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bay Parsi Panchayat; Dadi E. Mistry, trustee of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman; and Dr Ratan R. Marshall, Special Officer of the Surat Parsi Panchayat talk on a range of subjects in the morning session, the delegates started their deliberations in the afternoon on the resolutions to be passed. Despite several attempts to tackle issues such as intermarriage and admitting into the community the offspring of Parsi women who marry non-Parsis, the only controversial resolution voted through, referred to not ostracizing Parsi women who marry outside the community, nor preventing them 'from making use of religious community institutions subject to the provision that her marriage has been under civil law and she remains a Zoroastrian and professes the Zoroastrian faith.

Aware of the keen sense of disappointment felt by many of the delegates, Italia, at the conclusion of the day's session, counselled them, 'Do not take it to heart. It is not the last day of the world.'

While many of the delegates at the two zonal conferences were amenable to change, the *panchayat*, representatives from Bombay and Surat opposed nearly every 'controversial' reform. At the Delhi meet, B.P.P. trustee, Guzder and Surat Parsi Panchayat president, Maneck Gheyara time and again voiced their opposition to change, claiming that they represented, orthodox constituencies who would not agree to the reforms and that there were more constructive issues to be tackled in the economic and welfare fields. In Secunderabad, Boman-Behram and Gheyara with the additional support of Bamji, Taraporewala and Justice Jal Vimadalal—who inaugurated the conference—proved a formidable lobby against reform.

But whatever the outcome, the conferences signalled an awakening and a consciousness amongst the Parsis of the North, West and South, with the North giving the community both intellectual and moral leadership, and the South following a close second. The meetings also demonstrated the enthusiam and organizational skills of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman trustees, especially Dadi Mistry and the Secunderabad and Hyderabad Anjuman trustees and managing committee who devoted considerable time, effort and money, to serve their constituencies well.

'STANDING ON PRIVILEGE'

The meeting began with a confrontation. Shiavax Nargolwala, the outspoken president of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman, came armed with letters from seven *anjumans* authorizing him to represent them at the executive council meeting of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India held on 2nd April, in Bombay.



Mistry, Motafaram, Debara, Sidhwa, Guzder and Nargolwala: 'A change in priorities.'

'You mean you will have seven votes?' asked a startled Maneck Gheyara, president of the orthodox Surat Parsi Panchayat which views the Delhi Anjuman as reformist.

'Yes, read the rules,' replied Nargolwala, turning to the green 12-page constitution of the F.P.Z.A.I. As the delegates studied the crucial sixth clause of the rules and regulations, B.P.P. trustee, B. K. Boman-Behram allowed that while Nargolwala could speak on behalf of the *anjumans*, 'I should say no, to a right to vote.' As others joined in the chorus, the embittered Delhi president threatened to withdraw from the Federation if he was denied the right to vote. To avoid an open break and the possibility of the issue preventing other matters being taken up, Federation president, Erach Nadirshah reserved a ruling till legal counsel could be obtained.

But the skirmish clearly served to demonstrate the growing rift in the Federation between the democratically elected representatives like Nargolwala and those of the Bombay and Surat *panchayats* who function with a very limited mandate, and are, therefore, reluctant to initiate change. *The Bombay Samachar* report on the meeting attributed the differences to 'The Impatience of Progressive Anjumans'. But whatever the cause, it is apparent the functioning of the four-year-old Federation comprising nearly all the major *anjumans* in India, is severely hampered by all the various stresses and strains it is exposed to.

The divisions became more apparent when the council turned to the subjects to be discussed at the forthcoming World Zoroastrian Congress to be held in Bombay on 5, 6, 7 and 8 January. Aware of the differences that were delaying a consensus, B.P.P. trustee, Jamshed N. Guzder, who is the chairman of the Congress's executive committee, noted, 'We must have a decision today.' The subjects suggested focus on the priesthood, economic uplift, religious education of the young, education in general, the performance of the community over the last 30 years with suggestions for the future and the creation of an organization to provide a link between Zoroastrians the world over.

Nargolwala felt that the fifth item was 'too vague. Can we discuss conversion, intermarriage, disposal of the dead, the marriage act, divorce laws, etc? If it covers all these points, it is too wide. If it does not, I don't see what we will discuss.' Guzder pointed out that Justice Jal Vimadalal who heads the subjects committee, was against discussion of these issues as 'it may result in some chaos.' Jamshid Italia, acting president of the Secunderabad and Hyderabad Anjuman, felt controversial subjects should not be 'shirk-

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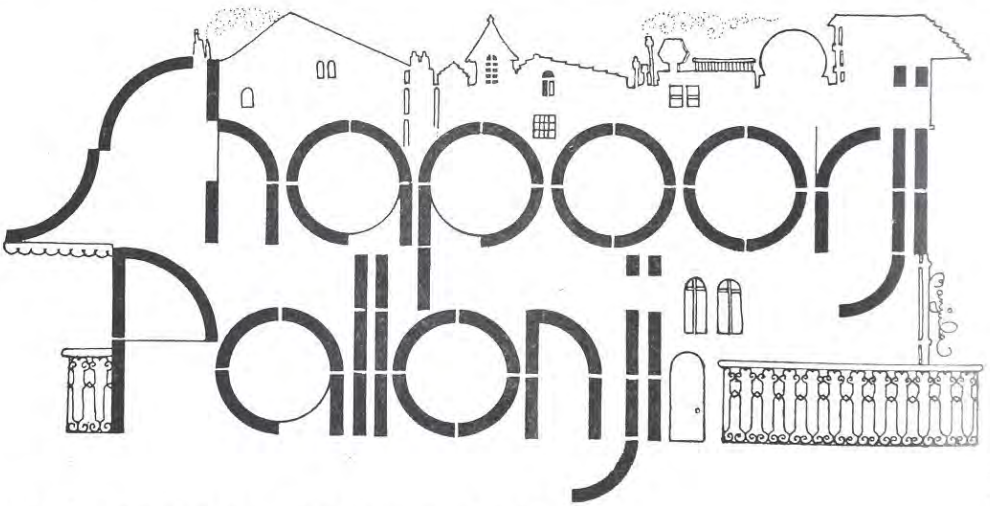
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ed', while Nadirshah felt there was much constructive work to be done and the Congress should not get bogged down in controversies. As Dinshaw Irani, vice-president of the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman noted, that insistence on discussing controversial issues would 'lead to the breakdown of the Congress and Federation. Aside from Delhi, all the other *anjumans* and trustees are orthodox.' B.P.P. trustee, Erach Desai felt a compromise could be arrived at where it would be left to the discretion of the chairman of a particular talk to 'judge the mood' of the gathering and decide.

'Why are you afraid to talk about these problems?' asked Khurshed Irani, who was co-opted on the council from the North zone. 'Let's get down to brass tacks and thrash it out once and for all. Otherwise the Federation will become a travesty.'

'It's not a question of being frightened or shirking the issue,' replied Boman-Behram. 'It's a question of not offending the community. Have a referendum to decide. Once this Congress breaks, it will not be possible to hold another for 30 years.'

Nargolwala noted that a referendum was to be taken in Delhi pertaining to the children and spouses of Parsis married to non-Parsis and that at the North zone conference (see 'Northwest by South'), resolutions had been passed favouring the admission of non-Parsi spouses and the children of inter-community marriages into the Parsi Zoroastrian fold. 'If these resolutions are passed, the Delhi Parsi Anjuman will write to the government,' to make them law, said Nargolwala.

'The Bombay Parsi Panchayat is not against change,' said Boman-Behram. 'We are an orthodox community. People might resort to violence if change was forced on them. Let change come with time. Let us not be impatient. We are speaking on behalf of the majority of the community.'

Nargolwala agreed to the subjects if the fifth item was left 'wide enough. So long as the chairman will not squash it, that's fine. I am not agreeable to any unwritten agreement to permit the chairman to squash a discussion just because it is inconvenient.'

The inability to function, even on matters that all the delegates are agreed upon, became apparent when discussion began on the amelioration of the priestly class, one of the projects undertaken by the Federation. A special committee formed to study the matter, passed several resolutions on 30th November, mainly to form a central body and fund, to look to the interests of the priests and to appoint a committee of priests to collect statistics. When asked for a progress-report on the last four months, Gheyara, who chairs the committee, said the only action taken was a decision 'to take the community into confidence' so there would not be a duplication of efforts by the Federation on the one hand and private bodies on the other.

Even when Behram Nagarwalla, the president of the Ahmednagar Parsi Anjuman requested the Federation to set guidelines for disposing off the dead in those areas where vultures are scarce, the Federation, refused to do so. 'These are local problems to be settled locally', said A. K. Batlivala of Calcutta.

The Federation's major handicap is its administrative dependence on the Bombay Parsi Panchayat. The executive secretary of the Federation, Nariman Vacha, is also a joint secretary of the B.P.P. and aside from one assistant, Ms Gool Tata, who is also a full time employee of the *panchayat*, the Federation is staffless. And attempts to create a substantial fund for the Federation have been thwarted by the larger *panchayats*. Aside from the financial drawbacks, Nargolwala, who has been involved with the founding of the Federation and has reportedly attended every council meeting, was peeved at the poor attendence record of many of the delegates. In the past, out of a total council membership of less than 29, one found, from 11 to 16 members absent, he said. 'There are two meetings in a year. If a person takes up public office and does not perform his duties, he should make room for others.' Ms Mani Clubwala of the Madras Zarthosti Anjuman noted that the cost of transport was a deterrent for many of the representatives to attend. But Nargolwala stated that even when meetings were held in Bombay, it was not unusual to find many of the Bombay trustees absent, a shortcoming they compensted for at the April meeting by attending in full strength.

The North zone representatives have also been irked by some of the rules and regulations of the Federation, especially clause number 35 which states that if the chairman presiding at the executive council feels that a matter is prejudicial and should not be discussed, then an 80 per cent majority is required to overrule his decision. 'At present, 21 per cent can prevent 79 per cent from discussing an issue,' noted Nargolwala and Mistry. 'This is not democratic. The figure should be amended to 50 per cent.'

'They are not good rules,' countered Nargolwala, 'they are transitory rules.' He noted the rule was framed to ensure the B.P.P. with its four seats on the executive council, veto power. 'Those who have privileges are very reluctant to give them up.' To which Boman-Behram retorted, 'Do you think we are standing on privilege?' Before the issue became another controversy, Gheyara attempted to soothe matters by noting the Federation was only five years old. 'Give it time,' he pleaded.

COMING SOON

PARSIANA AUG.-SEPT. '77

The 3rd World Zoroastrian Congress
Is it necessary? A cross-section of the community decide and suggest the issues to be tackled and how.

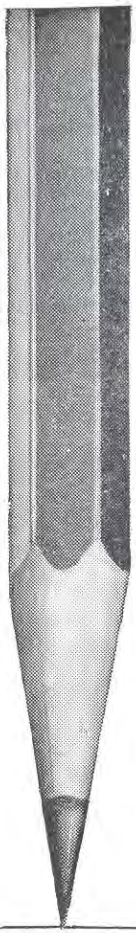
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Warehouse of Knowledge

by Dorab Mehta

At the confluence of the Dadabhai Naoroji and Sir Pherozeshah Mehta roads stands a quiet monument to past giants of India: The Jamsetjee Nesserwanjee Petit Institute. Built in the memory of the prematurely deceased only son of Nesserwanjee Petit, the gracious old edifice with its crenelated tower and mock gothic arches has served for over 70 years as a gentle haven of peace and perusal to many a member, from slogging student to sleepy intellectual. Below, columnist and playwright Dorab Mehta writes of the renowned library where he has gathered much fare for his dramas.

In 1856, about a dozen Parsi students of Bombay's Elphinstone College, among whom was Jamsetjee N. Tata, the industrialist-to-be, began to collect books with the idea of forming a mutual lending library. They shelved them on the fourth floor of a house in old Mody Street in Fort. The idea took root and the library began to grow. Encouraged by their success, the sponsors proceeded to have it formally opened as a full-fledged library on 1 April 1856, naming it The Fort Improvement Library.

The following year, at a meeting in the Durbar Room of the Town Hall, a management committee was appointed with Prof. A. Gordon Fraser presiding. This was a fateful year in the history of India; in Bengal, the Great Sepoy Mutiny had just broken out. In Bombay, the foundation of a great cultural institution was being laid and the Bombay Government reacted favourably by including the newly opened library among the educational institutions eligible for Government aid, and also offered the library free books.

Within its first year, the Fort Improvement Library had 115 members on its rolls, all Parsis. There were two classes of membership: the first paying eight annas and the second, five annas per month. Apart from the total stock of 900 books, twenty-one periodicals were received for the Reading Room, some gratis, some at concessional rates and a few were subscribed to at their full rates. The library's first president, Navroji Furdoonji and its first secretary, Edulji Shapurji, spared no efforts to set the library on a secure financial foundation.

As the library began to expand, more space was needed. In 1857, it was removed to a more spacious building in Rampart Row, Fort where Dr Haines, the then Educational Inspector, visited the institute and expressed his satisfaction at its progress. In September 1867, the library's name was changed to The Fort Reading Room and Library. Before another year was out, the subscribers' list had grown enough to make the library self-supporting.

The second milestone was reached on 31 August 1875. The library was registered for the first time under the Act for the Registration of Literary Scientific and Charitable Societies. About this time, Jamsetjee Nesserwanjee Petit, whose name the institute was destined to bear, became a life member of the library and was soon elected as one of its directors. From the very beginning he took a most lively interest in the institute's welfare and progress until his premature death in 1888. In 1891, his sorrowing father endowed the library with a sum of Rs 25,000 to perpetuate the treasured memory of his only son. This handsome gift placed the library, now housed in a big hall on the first floor of a house rented for the purpose in Churchgate Street, beyond want for a considerable time to come. In recognition of the gift, the library's name was changed by the grateful members to The Jamsetjee Nesserwanjee Petit Fort Reading Room and Library.

Four years later, Bai Dinbai Nesserwanjee Petit expressed a desire to establish an ideal public reading room and library in memory of her deceased son. It was said, up to Rs 2,50,000 for a special building to be erected for that purpose, would be donated. She was requested to turn over the amount to the already established library and to endow therein the Jamsetjee Nesserwanjee Petit Institute. Bai Dinbai consented. The building was completed and opened for use on 1 May 1898 and finally registered under its now permanent name of The J. N. Petit Institute. A constitution of the governing body was also framed.

An extension to the Institute was completed in 1938. The result was a graceful combination of art and utility. The Golden Jubilee of the Institute was celebrated on 1 May 1948 and the function was attended by a large number of members and distinguished guests, His Excellency Raja Maharaj Singh, governor of Bombay, presiding.

The Institute provides many facilities to its members: from the lending library, a wide range reference room, to the old file room and other departments. But the most popular is its Reading Hall at the top of this gothic building, well stocked with newspapers and periodicals and comfortable easy chairs in which members sometimes can be heard snoring as they doze off. For many retired and aged persons the Reading Hall is like a second home. They pass their day reading, resting, and discussing the Share Bazaar news; even appointments are kept here by members and their mail is received on the first floor.

He preferred The Times, for his daily nap. He replied that the paper was thicker than the others and best for avoiding the glare while sleeping.

The Institute also copes admirably with the eccentricities of its members. Those reluctant to get up every time from their easy chairs to get another paper, collect several before settling down. But since the peon on his rounds collects them off the floor, they usually hide them behind their backs or below their seats to read them one by one. One member used to come regularly every afternoon, pick up *The Times of India*, wipe the easy chair with it, settle down, spread it on his face and go to sleep. Once, his sound sleep was disturbed by another member who silently carried away the paper from his face, much to the former's indigna-

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tion. I asked him why he preferred *The Times* for his daily nap. He replied that the paper was thicker than the others and best for avoiding the glare while sleeping.

The water cooler in the reading room is often out of order, because some thirsty members use all their strength on the poor lever to draw a full glass of cold water, while others wait patiently. I first thought it strange that the two huge wallclocks should be either erratic or out of order constantly. But then I learnt that they were electric clocks, and due to fluctuations of power supply they showed the wrong time. As members complained regularly, it was decided to keep the clocks permanently out of order. Now another small wallclock is installed while the two old ones continue to amaze the uninitiated.

The intrusion of students holding day long cramming sessions in the Institute's sedate rooms has led to confrontations with the more long standing members, some of whom feel that a special student's corner should be reserved for them. Another improvement mooted is to open a small canteen in the garden which belongs to the Institute or in one of the rooms. It would bring in the extra revenue much needed to keep the graceful stone arches and their cool shade still standing amidst the surrounding jungle of concrete.

As one who has been visiting this old institute almost every day since many years, I fondly remember the stormy Annual General Meetings. The late Burjorji Bharucha, a strong critic of the Institute, even kept scrupulous records of the librarian's lunchtime and complained about any dirt on the usually polished and clean staircases. One member complained that the lift was often 'sick' at peak hours so that members had to climb the long and never ending stairs, making themselves susceptible to heart attacks. At times, members had been trapped in the old lift between two floors, and it was quite a sight to see them being extricated. Since then, the lift has been renovated. Another vehement critic was the late Burjor Shroff who complained regularly about bugs in the easy chairs, to which the then Secretary replied jocularly that it was due to some members who thought the reading room was their bedroom. But the stormiest meetings were when the management introduced proposals to increase the members' fees. These resolutions were regularly thrown out by the members; however, since then, persuasions have prevailed and fees have been raised.

There were two classes of membership : the first paying eight annas and the second, five annas per month.

Although this institute of culture and learning had to face some financial difficulties, it has still survived and made vast improvements for increasing the amenities for its membership which has now risen to about 4,660. The Institute is maintained by a staff of 50 under the management of Jehangir Shroff, A. J. Khambatta and E. R. Seervai and 1,01,416 books, including many costly ones in various languages, ranging in subject from Literature and Politics to Science. Apart from Indian dailies and periodicals, a large number of foreign journals are also available to members.

The Institute has been fortunate not only in having the help and guidance of the illustrious Petit family, but also that of well-known public figures who have given valuable honorary service to the library over many years. For many, bibliophiles or arm chair philosophers, public personages or students, the Institute continues to provide a sizeable store of information in the refuge of sympathetic surroundings—a fitting monument to the ideals of a young coterie.

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We can overcome

by Lovji Cama

Dr Lovji Cama's essay won the second prize in The Lost Generation Essay Competition. As there was a tie for the first place between Cama's essay and that of Dr Jamshed Modi, the final decision was taken by the sponsor.

Cama is a senior research chemist with Merck Sharp and Dohme Research Laboratories in New Jersey, America. A 17-year resident of the U. S. A., Cama was secretary of the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York for a number of years and is presently on its Board of Officers. He has written two articles previously for 'Parsiana'. Below, we publish a slightly abridged version of his prize-winning essay.

A generation is defined as a group of individuals born and living at a particular time, sharing similar ideas, problems and attitudes. In human terms a generation occupies a period of roughly 30 years between the birth of parents and birth of their offspring. We are then concerned with a group of Parsis born in the last 40 years or so (late marriages in the Parsi community led to a longer generational gap) who for the purpose of this essay will be called the Lost Generation.

A Lost Generation is best defined as a generation in which the majority of individuals have lost their moorings and identity. For Zoroastrian Parsis there are two aspects to their identity—race and religion. To the Lost Generation neither of these two are meaningful.

Why? The causes are many. To acquire historical perspective let us turn to the end of the last century. Anyone who reads *The History of the Parsis* by Dosabhai Framji Karaka, cannot but be impressed by the confidence and the sense of identity and direction the community possessed. Yet, only 70 years later, we appear to have ground to a halt, our confidence lost, our numbers decreasing, our commitment to our religion weakened.

It is easy to claim that we had our heyday during the British Raj, that with its tide we prospered and with its ebb we fell. This is only partly true. One forgets another world-wide event which occurred during the last 75 years—the Industrial Revolution. More than any other community in India, the Parsis saw, and took advantage of, the opportunities of the Industrial Revolution. Thus one sees illustrious Parsis pioneering industry after industry and becoming fabulously rich and powerful. Parsis supplied much of the educated expertise and leadership by rapidly embracing western education. A community of traders and farmers became, in 50 to 70 years, an urban community of professionals, highly educated and looking towards the west for cultural values. But this phenomenon occurred world-wide; was there a difference for us?

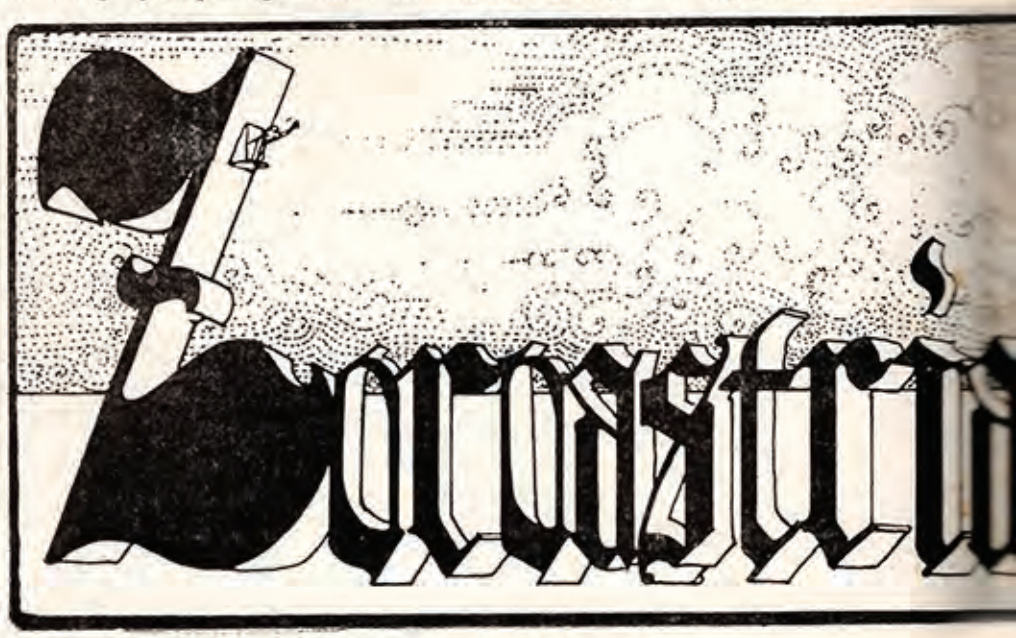
We cannot afford to have more than one Lost Generation.

Yes. While even the United States was only 50 per cent urbanized by the end of World War II, we were 80 per cent urbanized, and that too in a poor country like India. At a time when the rest of India had barely begun to assimilate western culture and education, 95 per cent of the Parsi community was already literate, many of us in English, and were eagerly acquiring western culture and ideas. Westernization and education changed our thinking, slowly at first and then more rapidly in the last 25 years. And we started to question that pillar of our identity, our religion.

The clergy

This urbanization, westernization and sudden rise in the education level, resulted in another change. The priesthood which was considered the better educated section of the community lost its status to the laity and within a short time, lost the leadership of the community also. By nature orthodox, by vocation bound to what they considered the unchangeable religion (even if only dimly understood), they could not, and would not, westernize themselves. Westernization does not mean the pursuit of material goods so much as the development of a questioning mind that researches and reinterprets the dogma and ritual of religion. Westernization, to the priests, was anti-religion.

Certainly, a few academics followed the footsteps of the western scholars of Avestan and Pahlevi and began religious research. But their research was, and still is, hidden away in scholarly articles and books. Little was transmitted to the average working priest, who



resented it in any case. Thus a 20th century Parsi community turns to a 19th century priesthood for religious solutions. A vicious circle has been created in which the inability of the priests to lead significantly earns them disrespect, which in turn drives away many intelligent, young men from the priesthood. Thus the clergy is left with a majority of individuals who are blind to change, and resent it.

Compounding the situation is the complete lack of a central guiding light for the priests—a central body which makes decisions. Our learned *dasturs* have no desire to lead, they seldom meet and if they agree on anything, it is usually to maintain the status quo or to blame the laity.

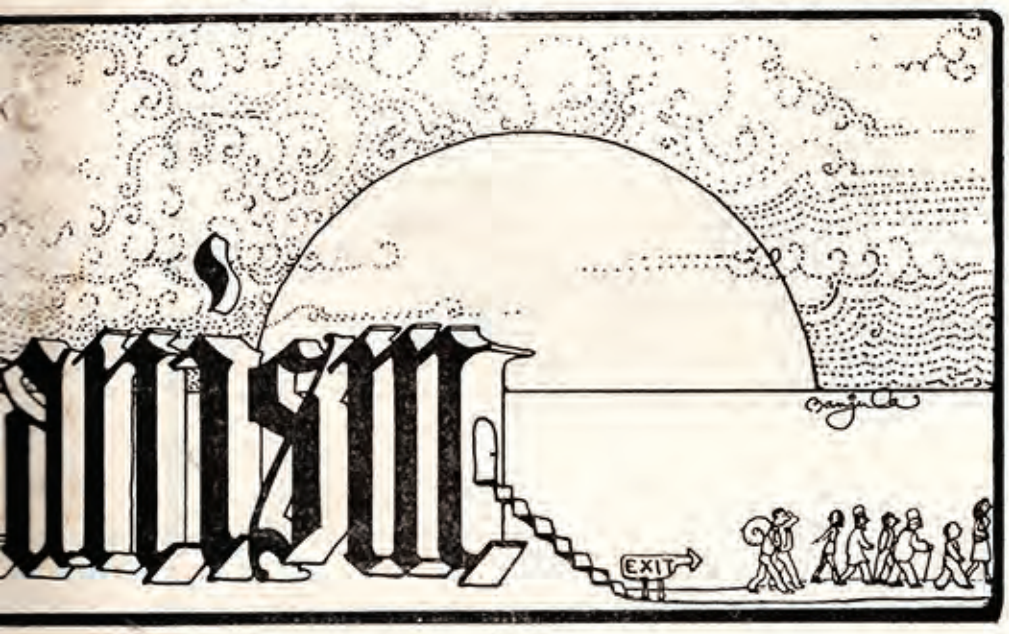
The Laity

The Parsi Panchayat of Bombay was first formed after the island passed to the British from the Portuguese. The *panchayat's* authority waxed and waned over the years depending on the quality of the persons who served on it. In 1787, a new *panchayat* was elected with the authority of the government of Bombay. It was effective for a time, but eventually suffered a decline as there was no democratic mechanism to replace its members. Membership was by inheritance, monetory influence or contacts. It became so decadent that by 1836 some members, led by Framji Kavasji, publicly exposed its behaviour and resigned; as a result its authority was extinguished. An attempt made two years later to gain a formal mandate from the Legislative Council of India failed, and with it went the last hope of the *panchayat* to function as a legislative body with powers of enforcement for the Parsis. From then on it became essentially a trustee for the charitable funds of the community.

The present *panchayat* of Bombay to which all the other Parsi *panchayats* still look for leadership, suffers a great disadvantage. Its archaic election system denies it the mandate of the community; 99 per cent of the community have no say in who gets elected. A community which leads India in nearly every field, does not bother to look at its own selection system nor even to follow the system that India chose and inherited from the British upon achieving independence—a democratic system. The Parsi community has all the hallmarks necessary to function democratically; 95 per cent of Parsis are literate, many are highly educated and individualistic. The Bombay Parsi Panchayat was most effective when its members were popularly elected in 1818. The *panchayat* can lead only if it has the mandate and respect of the community. It cannot lead when its members know in their hearts that they were selected by a tiny minority. Authority has to be earned. If the average Parsi feels he has no say in the selection of those who wish to speak for him and control his destiny, he will feel no need to listen to them.

In the absence of a mechanism for change, how does a community change? By an insidious process whereby each individual has to defy conventions when the person feels he or she cannot live by them in the modern world. When a great number of individuals thus defy it, the old convention is lost.

This process is the voice of the people, but the voice of a people lost in the wilderness without leadership. The process is divisive; it creates guilt in the individual who is forced to break the convention; it leads to frustration and disillusionment; it makes it difficult to be a Parsi for those very Parsis whose intelligence and thoughtfulness is required to solve the problems of the community.



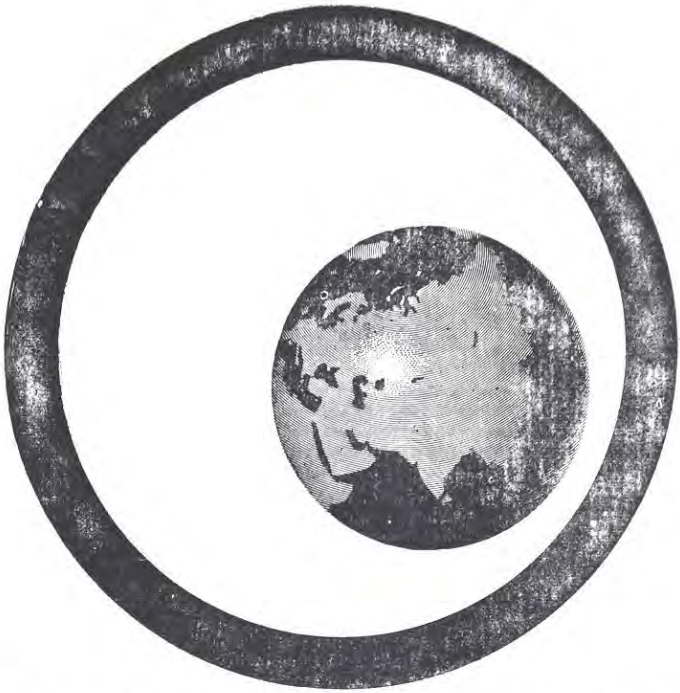
When a great number of individuals defy it, the old convention is lost.

If such is the case among the elite, then it is worse for the mass of the community. Without direction or leadership, either secular or religious, they lose the capacity to care and begin looking to leaders and false leaders, outside the community, for answers.

Until we solve our two basic problems—a priesthood out of touch with the thinking of the average Parsi and the inability to select leaders responsive to the needs of the people and deserving of their mandate—we will dissipate our energies trying to find piece-meal solutions to our problems.

One often hears that the young have no pride in being Parsi. What should they be proud of? The past? It is hidden in scholarly books in musty libraries and unspeaking stone statues scattered over Bombay. Their religion? The beauty of the *Gathas*, with their timeless wisdom, ethical teachings and demanding ideals, are never explained to the young. The daily prayers are learned either without meaning or through translations that are often inadequate. The rituals appear meaningless and are performed mainly without grace. Zoroastrian rituals are the least understood part of our religion; should a child or adult be curious enough to ask the performing priest for an explanation, the chances are that he or she will either receive no answer, or an answer fit for the 18th century.

If the young are not proud of their community and religion, it is because they possess the basic character of their religion: honesty. There is very little to be proud of at the present. During the last generation the material success of the community cushioned its problems. Eco-



The world had nothing before it got zero

India introduced the concept. The Sanskrit name for the figure was Sūnya meaning void. India was the first to use it in the modern form. The earliest inscription dates back to 800 A.D. But there is evidence in Indian scriptures that the zero was used centuries before.

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nomic wealth was something to be proud of, but today even that is disappearing.

So what is the alternative? Give up and declare that it is time for the *Soshyans* to come and deliver us? No. Deliverance must come from ourselves.

We have two institutions which must be changed : the Bombay Parsi Panchayat and the Cama Athornan Institute.

The Bombay Parsi Panchayat Board of Trustees should be converted into a board of directors. It should be composed of five, seven or nine elected directors. Every Zoroastrian above the age of 21, who has resided in Bombay for at least one year before the election should be entitled to vote. The definition of a Zoroastrian is any one who has undergone the *navjote* ceremony. The directors, when running for office, must declare their views and plans publicly and have them published in newspapers and magazines. To stand for election each candidate should have the signatures of 101 qualified voters to nominate him or her. The directors should hold office for only five years, after which they may seek re-election.

The elected *panchayat* directors must identify the problems of the community in an order of priority and set achievement goals. They must overhaul the *panchayat* bureaucracy so that it functions as an efficient corporation. Lawyers, social workers, doctors, engineers and others can offer their services equally and on a voluntary basis. If its leaders are popularly elected, our community's young will respond when approached.

A 20th century Parsi community turns for religious solutions to a 19th century priesthood.

The Cama Athornan Institute is the foremost institute for the education of Zoroastrian priests. It has a sizable endowment, so that fees are not necessary and it is lodged in a grand building on spacious grounds. But its main drawback is its method of instruction. The institute stresses learning by rote rather than scholarship and individual thinking. The education of a priest stops too early. On the religious side the school teaches up to the *navar* and *martab* level and on the secular side up to the high school level. What is needed is at least four more years, the equivalent of a college degree, during which the priest has a chance to study Zoroastrianism and other religions, our history and Avestan and Pahlevi languages. Only a handful of priests will do so, but it will serve our purpose more than adequately.

The priests' duties could include teaching at the Athornan Institute and other *madressas*, and being assigned to various fire temples in Bombay and other cities where they would prepare children for the *navjote*. They could teach the prayers and their meanings, and give a basic idea of our religious ethics as exemplified in the *Gathas*. The priests could also teach young Parsi children their community's history, not only in its glory but also in its failings so that they would get a balanced view. Above all the religious curiosity of the children must be aroused and satisfied. Then only can the *navjote* be a significant experience. The child's learning need not stop at the *navjote*, but would continue with such priests.

If such priests do an outstanding job and show their love for learning and teaching, then they must be sent abroad to broaden their outlook. The community must find the funds for this as well as to pay the priests a salary commensurate with their standing. In short we must encourage a new order of priests who would be teachers and researchers. Zarathustra himself was proud of being a teacher first and then a priest.

We have to act decisively. Let all of us who are concerned come together, argue less, listen to one another, be honest with one another. Let us say what we feel without personal animosity and leave our petty rivalries behind. Let us remember that we cannot afford to have more than one lost generation. *Ahura Mazdah* has looked after us these many centuries, because even at the worst of times we made the effort to look after ourselves. Our ancestors travelled to a new country to preserve their religion. We are immeasurably better placed today. Let us not be afraid of the future; merely because we seem to be doing badly now compared to 50 years ago, does not mean that we have lost the capacity to survive. We are an intelligent people. All we need to do is to reorganize our energies and the structure of our leadership to reflect the needs of the present.

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Do You Favour Adult Franchise?

Once upon a time, it was sufficient for rulers to claim their mandate from heaven. Today, individuals and political parties claim their legitimacy from the people; either through the ballot box or the barrel of a gun. But whatever the system, the ability to govern efficiently is dependent on the maximum number of people participating directly to select their representatives.

Once, the board of trustees of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat managed the affairs of the community with the mandate of the entire community. Today, the seven trustees are elected to office by an electoral college comprising around 400 Parsis, half of whom have bought their right to vote by paying Rs 5,000 or more. The other half of the college is supposed to be elected by the rest of the community but, due to an archaic and complicated electoral system coupled with the lack of any voter registration drives, less than 1,500 Bombay Parsis cast their vote for this half. As a result, the present trustees serve with the mandate of less than two per cent of the 65,000 strong Bombay community.

In a country where even an illiterate person is considered responsible enough to vote and has acquitted himself admirably in the recent General Elections, how do Parsis view their lack of direct franchise?



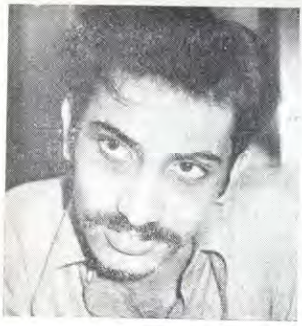


Amy Panthaky, 71, Social Worker

'I would prefer it. If more people voted for the trustees directly there is the possibility of getting younger, better trustees.

'With the present system the same sort of people will be reelected. We never know before the elections who are the good people. We just have to hope for the best. Initially, a trustee may seem a nice man but later who knows how he will turn out? We need good and straight administration by people who can look after the community. In the present state of affairs, you need influence to get things done. I know of someone who had bequeathed his land to the *Panchayat* for housing purposes. Yet when his poor relations needed housing, they were refused.'

As for the voter, Ms Panthaky feels, 'He should be 25 years old, educated and knowledgeable about community matters. He should keep a check on the trustees after the election. If he feels they are not good he needn't elect them again. The term of trusteeship should be reduced to five years. Seven trustees are enough. We should not have male or female quotas—it must depend on who is capable.'



Khushru Dastur, 18, Student, Sydenham College

'Everyone above 18, should be given the vote, to make the system more representative of the community. It would fulfill the ideals of democracy.

'The voting should be direct like the American system as it creates greater awareness and involvement among the voters.

'Seventy to eighty per cent of Parsis don't know anything about the Parsi Panchayat, who the trustees are, how they are elected, and on what basis. The *Panchayat* should publicize what they are doing, when the elections are going to be held, who the candidates are. The term of trusteeship is too long. It should be from three to five years at the most. The best people should be elected even if it means all seven are women or all, men.

'The ballot should be secret so that the voters are not victimized later for allotment of accommodation and charity. There is not much you can do after the elections to see whether your representatives take the right course or not. Perhaps there should be a provision for impeachment and the Press should be free to campaign against wrongs.'



Homayun Saroshian, 50, Housewife

'No. If everyone were to vote, it would be like mixing *jowar* and *bajara*. Only the few who are intelligent and knowledgeable should be allowed to vote. Voters who don't realize what is good for the community, would vote only for people they know personally.'

Ms Saroshian feels the electorate should consist of 'a group of a 100 Parsis and Iranis, 30 years old and above. The voter could be informed of the elections through the *anjumans*, the papers or Irani restaurants. When electing a trustee, his background, what he has done in the past, whether he has experience, etc. should be considered. The trustee should be given a year's trial and a five-year extension if he is good.

'There should be about 20 trustees who can guide each other. The more trustees the better so that every member of the community would know at least one of them, if they needed help. If not 20, have at least 15 or 10 but they should be good and capable. The number need not be fixed. If women candidates are better you could have more women and vice versa.'



Bejon Madan, 33, Partner, General Office Typewriters

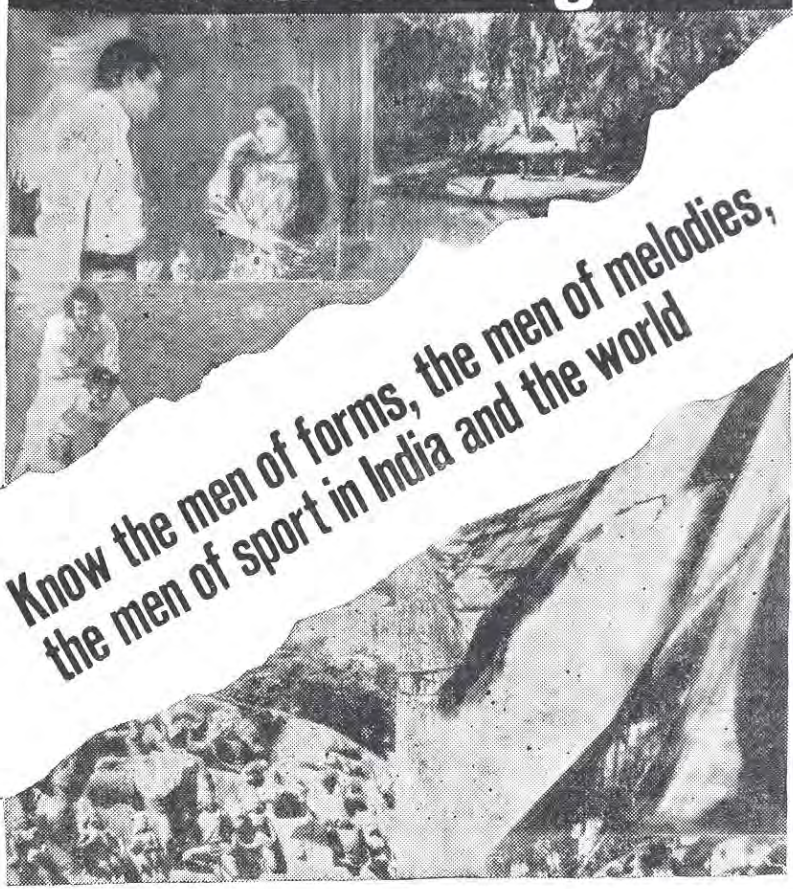
'I'm not concerned with the *Panchayat* so how does it affect me who is at the top? I'd be interested in voting if I needed something from the *Panchayat*.

'Perhaps if the system was simplified, and a card were sent home to me, I would vote. However, from the point of view of the community, I think, everyone above 30 should have a say. Younger people are more concerned about their studies or their career rather than community affairs. The voter should be literate because if he isn't, his vote can be easily bought.'

As for financing of campaigns, Bejon feels that the '*Panchayat* should have a kitty and divide it.

'Elections should be declared well in advance. The candidates should be brought into the public eye, so people know who they are voting for. If after the elections, power is misused for personal ends the trustee should be kicked out. There should be a complaint register and the trustees themselves should bring each other to book. There should be at least about 10 to 15 trustees. They should be elected on merit, regardless of sex.'

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Shirin Patel, 26, Graphic Designer

'We should do away with the college because it creates a kind of caste system. It is almost as though the average Parsi cannot be trusted to vote. If the voter votes directly it puts more responsibility on him and he feels a greater sense of involvement. Young people and poor Parsis especially, should have a say because they have a vested interest in the funds.

'Trustees should be elected more frequently so that the community is sure it is benefiting from the system. Ten years is too long. If the *Panchayat* were like a corporation one could throw out the people who don't deliver the goods. But since the trustees are honorary one can't pull them up. We have to depend on their public spirit.

'The *Panchayat* should bring out its own publication or publish the minutes of every meeting in the Press, so that the community knows whether it's doing a good job or not. The voter shouldn't have the right to impeach because in the first place the trustees should not be vested with such great powers. But trustees should have the power to administer and reallocate funds.'



Eruch Engineer, 63, Retired

'Of course, I favour it. Every adult Parsi should have the right to vote directly for the trustees. The present system is outdated. So many of calibre don't vote.

'The ballot should preferably be secret as a safeguard. After the elections the voter should try and ascertain whether the person he has voted for is right for the job or not. If he doesn't find him fit, he needn't select him again. The Press should be free and taken into confidence by the *Panchayat*.'

As for the trustees, Engineer feels, 'They should be in sound mind, educated, have status in the community and the capacity to earn. They should not be over 70. Their term should be reduced to three years or at the most, five years. Seven trustees are too many. There should only be three aided by a kind of liaison committee. The committee should consist of paid staff. The members should be qualified to guide the trustees as they are busy and have their own business. The trustees should be paid as well. Any capable and efficient person whether male or female could be eligible.'



Rhoda Maneckji, 46, Beautician

'Yes, the system should be changed. Even if we had adult franchise only those who are interested would vote and those who aren't, won't bother. But that is no reason to restrict the vote to the elite. In the past they may have been the right people, not now.

'If we changed the system, we might get worse trustees instead of better and younger ones. The attitude right now is that the younger generation can't do anything, so lets go on as we are. But its worth trying out as most Parsis are educated and mature enough to vote.' After the elections, Ms Maneckji feels, 'there should be a meeting every year where voters can air their grievances. If there has been misuse of power, it should be punished.

'There is no need to have more than seven trustees. But all seven should be dedicated, straight forward and function openly, not within themselves. Ten years is too long. It should be five years. It is pointless to fix the number of trustees depending on their sex. You can't get the right people if you restrict it to any one sex.'

INTERVIEWS BY JEROO GORIMAR AND FEROZA CHAVDA

Adoption Marriage and Divorce

Rustom S. Gae

Below, we carry an article adapted by the author from a speech given by him on 23 January 1977 at the First Zonal Conference of the Parsi Anjumans of North India held in New Delhi and titled, Legal Aspects of Adoption, Marriage and Divorce Laws and the Changes Needed Therein. Rustom S. Gae, a senior advocate of the Supreme Court, was former secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of law.

Different communities in India have different personal laws. The Parsi community also has separate personal laws, for example, the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936 and a separate chapter in the Indian Succession Act, 1925, containing special rules for Parsi intestates (persons not having made a will).

ADOPTION AMONG PARSIS

In India, adoption is well known among Hindus and is governed by the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956. Among Parsis, the custom of adopting a male child as *palak* or as *dharmaputra*, was common in the past. A *palak* is appointed by the father in his lifetime, and a *dharmaputra*, after the death of the adoptor, for the performance of the funeral and other ceremonies of the deceased. The prevailing view is that an adopted son cannot succeed to the estate of a Parsi male intestate.

Some years ago, the Parsi Panchayat of Bombay appointed a Parsi Law Reform Committee to make recommendations for amending the personal laws (including the law regarding adoption) applicable to Parsis. It is not known whether any report was submitted by the Committee nor, if so, what its recommendations were. The Parsi Panchayat of Bombay should enlighten us.*

*According to a senior Bombay Parsi Panchayat official, the report has been submitted and is awaiting action in New Delhi.

Adoption of Children Bill, 1972

In India, there is no general law of adoption, though adoption is permitted by statute amongst Hindus, and by custom, amongst a few other communities. Recently, there has been a growing demand for such a law particularly from social welfare organizations and social workers who see adoption as an opportunity to provide proper homes and families for abandoned, destitute and neglected children. This led to the introduction of the Adoption of Children Bill, 1972, in the Rajya Sabha on 1 June 1972, the first real attempt to secure for Indians a uniform secular law on adoption.

Salient features of the Bill

The Bill applies to all communities in India including Parsis. The provisions of the Bill, when enacted, will apply to all adoptions. Any adoption contravening these provisions shall be void. Any person over 25 may adopt a child. Unless otherwise provided by the Court, the adoptor must be older than the adopted child by at least 21 years. The same child cannot be adopted by more than one person unless they be a married couple. Any child not already adopted or married, may be taken in adoption. Thus, a non-Parsi child can be adopted by a Parsi. Before an adoption order for a child is made by the Court, the consent of the parent or guardian of the child or of the institute, in whose care the child may have been, must be obtained.

Effect of adoption order

The next provision regarding the effect of the adoption order needs careful consideration in respect of the adoption of a non-Parsi child by a Parsi.

From the date on which the adoption order takes effect, an adopted child shall be taken to be the child of the adoptor, and the adoptor shall be taken to be the parent of the child, *as if the child had been born to that adoptor in lawful wedlock*, for all purposes including intestacy. Thus, the adoption order virtually equates the position of an adopted child with that of a natural born, legitimate child.

Adoption of non-Parsi child by Parsi

Does it mean then, that a non-Parsi child adopted by a Parsi would automatically become a Parsi or that a child of a *behdin* adopted by an *athornan* would automatically become an *athornan*? Would such a child be automatically entitled to claim the benefits of trusts and funds meant for Parsis, e.g., trusts regarding Towers of Silence and fire temples? These are questions causing concern to the community.

The constitution contains two guarantees regarding freedom of religion. The first guarantee provides that subject to certain restrictions, every person has a fundamental right, not merely to entertain such religious belief as may be approved by his conscience, but also, to exhibit his belief and ideas in such overt acts as are enjoined or sanctioned by his religion; and further, to practise and propagate his religious views for the edification of others. The second guarantee provides that any religious denomination, or a

Would a non-Parsi child adopted by a Parsi automatically become a Parsi ?

section of it, has the fundamental right to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes and to manage its own affairs in matters of religion. This includes the right to spend the trust property or its income for the religion and for religious purposes and objects indicated by the founder of the trust, or established by usage in a particular institution.

Two principles emerge from the above constitutional guarantees: the first principle is that freedom of conscience and religion is not limited merely to matters of religious doctrines and beliefs but extends also to acts done in pursuance of religion. Thus, rituals and observances (including customs and usages), ceremonies and modes of worship which are integral parts of religion are also guaranteed. The second principle is that the constituents of an essential and integral part of religion or religious practices have to be judged in the light of the doctrine of that particular religion, and such practices, as are regarded by the community as a part of its religion, must also be included in them. The legislature is not precluded from making laws 'providing for social welfare and reform'. It is intended thereby to save only, those laws which do not invade the basic and essential practices of religion guaranteed by the constitution. That does not, however, enable the legislature to make laws intended to 'reform' a religion or religious practices out of existence or identity.

In 1909, long before our constitution, Justice Davar of the Bombay High Court, in a case from Bombay, upheld the bequest of property by a Parsi for the perpetual performance of ceremonies like *muktad*, *baj*, and *yejushni*. The Supreme Court cited with approval the following observations of the Judge: 'If this is the belief of the community—and it is proved undoubtedly to be the belief of the Zoroastrian community—a secular judge is bound to accept that belief—it is not for him to sit in judgement on that belief—he has no right to interfere with the conscience of a donor who makes a gift in favour of what he believes to be the advancement of his religion and for the welfare of his community or of mankind.'

It is a long-standing religious practice recognized by custom and usage that conversion to the Zoroastrian religion is not recognized by the community as part of the religion. Thus, the provision of the Bill dealing with the effect of the adoption order, which virtually equates the position of an adopted child with that of a natural born, legitimate child, cannot affect the practice of the Zoroastrian religion against conversion.

It is significant that the Bill does not contain any provision regarding consent to the religion in which the adopted child is to be brought up. The absence of this provision is not accidental but seems to be intentional to guarantee fundamental rights regarding the freedom of religion or religious practices. Therefore, it is considered that a non-Parsi child adopted by a Parsi under the Bill, when enacted, would not automatically become a Parsi Zoroastrian. Similarly a *behdin* child adopted by an *athornan* would not automatically become an *athornan*.

To remove any possible doubt, a representation may be made to the central government, recommending the insertion of a sub-clause as under:

'For the removal of doubts, it is hereby declared that nothing in sub-section (2) shall be construed to change the religion or religious denomination or sect of an adopted child into any other religion, religious denomination or sect to which the conversion of a person not born in such religion, religious denomination or sect is not permissible according to the doctrines, usages or customs applicable to the followers of such religion, religious denomination or sect.'

The Adoption of Children Bill, 1972, as reported by the Joint Committee, is already pending in the Rajya Sabha, but since it has not been passed by the Lok Sabha, the Bill has not lapsed on the dissolution of that House on 18 January 1977. Any representation to the central government in the matter to include a clause should be made immediately.

Use of fire temples and trust funds by adopted child

The next question arising for consideration is whether a non-Parsi child adopted by a Parsi, would automatically be entitled to claim the benefits of trusts and funds meant for Parsis. Can such a child be entitled to the use of the Towers of Silence (*dokhmas*) or the right of entry to fire temples (*agiaris* or *Atash Behrams*)? This would depend upon the terms and conditions of the relevant trust deeds or schemes. Trust deeds in such cases, usually contain a provision that the benefits of the trusts (including trust funds and trust properties) should be given only to Parsi Zoroastrians. The benefits of the trusts cannot, therefore, be given to a non-Parsi child adopted by a Parsi.

The position regarding succession is different. The heirs of a Parsi need not be Parsis themselves. An adopted child, though a non-Parsi, can claim under the will of the adoptive Parsi father and can also succeed to his estate if he dies without leaving any will.

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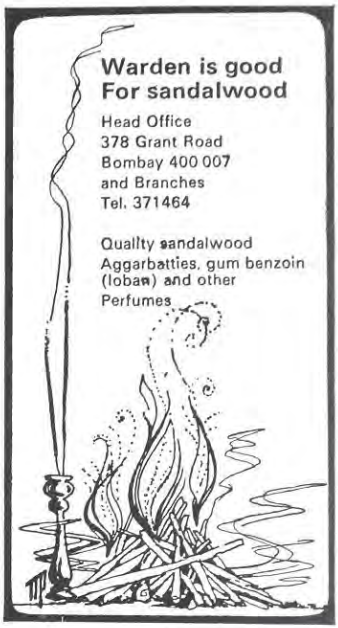
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Separate adoption law for Parsis not feasible

The central government will not favour a separate law on adoption for such a microscopically small community as the Parsis, since the Adoption of Children Bill, 1972, as reported by the Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament, and pending before the Rajya Sabha is a step towards a uniform secular law on the subject.

Representation by Parsi community—advisability

Unfortunately, no representation was made on behalf of the community, suggesting amendment of the Bill in its application to Parsis, before the Joint Committee submitted its report to parliament in August last. Once the report of the Select Committee or the Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament on a Bill is received and laid on the table, amendments are not usually accepted. It is, therefore, late for the community to make any representation to the central government, much as I would have liked to have done so. An attempt may, however, be made to have a clause included as mentioned above.

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

The personal law of marriage and divorce amongst Parsis, the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936, is based on the English matrimonial law prevailing then. Since then, there have been considerable changes in the English law itself, as well as since Independence, in the personal laws of other communities. The personal law of Parsis in India is based primarily on the English common law and the Hindu customary law. Changes are called for to bring the Parsi matrimonial law in conformity with the laws applicable to Hindus and other communities.

Basic features of Parsi Marriage & Divorce Act

The basic framework of the Act is that once marriage between Parsis is solemnized by *ashirvad* by a Parsi priest, in the presence of two Parsi witnesses and is contracted under the Act, it can only be dissolved by a competent Court under the provisions of the Act, regardless of subsequent change of religion, domicile or even nationality.

Meanings of 'Parsi' and 'Zoroastrian'

It is essential that parties to the marriage be 'Parsis'. A 'Parsi' is defined as meaning a Parsi Zoroastrian. The definition contemplates the double qualification of being a Zoroastrian by religion and a Parsi by race. As regards the first definition, Zoroastrian means any person who professes the Zoroastrian religion, be he English, American, Hindu or Parsi. As regards the second qualification, the word Parsi has only racial significance and has nothing to do with his religious profession.

Parsis are the descendants of the original Persian immigrants, who came to India at the end of the seventh century. A person born a Parsi remains a Parsi, no matter what other religion he may subsequently adopt or profess.

Difficulties as to meaning of 'Parsi'

The absence of a *precise* definition of 'Parsi' has caused difficulty in practice. The word denotes only race or community and has nothing to do with religion. As the definition of a 'Parsi' is a Parsi Zoroastrian, one who is not a Zoroastrian by religion would not be recognized as a 'Parsi', even though he may be born of 'Parsi' parents. The words 'Parsi and 'Zoroastrian' have been loosely used at times as synonymous terms, but there is definitely a distinction as mentioned above.

Judicial view on meaning of 'Parsi'

The word 'Parsi' has been the subject-matter of judicial decisions. In 1908, the Bombay High Court in Sir Dinshaw Petit's case, which was in the nature of a *cause celebre*, held that the Parsi community in India consists of (1) Parsis who are descended from the original Persian immigrants, who are born of both Zoroastrian parents and who profess the Zoroastrian religion, (2) the Iranis from Persia professing the Zoroastrian religion, who come to India, either temporarily or permanently, and (3) the children of Parsi fathers by alien mothers who have been duly admitted into the religion. In 1926, the Privy Council in Bella's case, took a similar view, while defining a 'Parsi', when it held that the Parsis are 'racial Parsis or people deemed after a long lapse of ages to be racial Parsis'.

This exposition of the law applies even today to the Parsi community. Thus, the Parsi matrimonial law in India applies to the above three categories of Zoroastrians. Parsis from other countries would generally fall under one or the other of these three categories, as they would be descended from the racial stock in Iran or in India.

Redefine comprehensively the term Parsi to include children of a non-Parsi father and a Parsi mother.

Disability suffered by Parsi Women

According to judicial decisions, a Parsi can only be a Parsi by birth and cannot be a Parsi by conversion. This puts the Parsi woman at a disadvantage due to the patrilineal system of descent amongst Parsis.

Anomaly as to children of non-Parsi father and Parsi mother

The child of a Parsi father and a non-Parsi mother may be initiated into the Zoroastrian religion by the *navjote* ceremony, but conversely, the child of a non-Parsi father and a Parsi mother cannot be so initiated. On principles of justice and equity this is incongruous and paradoxical. This has virtually resulted in the dwindling of the Parsi population, more so, when marriages of Parsi girls to non-Parsi boys are increasing. The community has strong reservations and resentment against Parsi girls marrying outside the community but the marriges of Parsi boys with alien girls are accepted with greater grace.

Causes as to diminution of population

The winds of change are blowing across the community swiftly, but these changes must not become a threat to our survival and ultimately affect the existence of Parsis as a separate community. Intercommunal marriages among Parsis may be as high as 25 per cent. The community is deprived of this legitimate population growth and is thus the loser. This fall in population is due primarily to the fast growth of higher education among Parsi girls and the dearth of correspondingly suitable Parsi boys, coupled with the economic independence of girls who prefer to remain single.

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Parsi girls continue to marry outside the community and the community has not been able to arrest or prevent the increasing number of such marriages. This has prevented the influx of fresh blood into the community, thus leading to a gradual diminution of the population at the rate of 1 per cent per annum, which is quite high for so small a community as ours. Diminution of population is due to other reasons too, e.g., an increasing number of unmarried persons, late marriages and small families.

Safeguards regarding children of non-Parsi father and Parsi mother

The time has come to redefine comprehensively the word 'Parsi' on the lines of the judicial view expressed above, including at the same time within the definition, children of a non-Parsi father and a Parsi mother initiated into the Zoroastrian religion by the *navjote* ceremony. This may be done by suitably amending the definition of 'Parsi' contained in the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936. Though conversion is not prohibited by the Zoroastrian religion, Parsis do not believe in proselytization. Conversion to the Zoroastrian religion is against the custom and usage of Parsis in India and is a controversial issue in the community.

Changes in grounds of divorce

The Marriage Laws (Amendment) Act, 1976, recently enacted by Parliament amending the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, and the Special Marriage Act, 1954, is a progressive social measure. Some of the provisions of this latest Act could conveniently be made applicable to Parsis by amending the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936, for the purpose.

Divorce by mutual consent

The Parsi Marriage Act must contain special provisions regarding divorce by mutual consent. Such provisions already exist in the Special Marriage Act and have also been recently included in the Hindu Marriage Act. The new provisions empower both the spouses to make a joint petition to the Court stating that they have been living separately for more than a year, that they are not able to live together

The Parsi Act must contain special provisions regarding divorce by mutual consent.

and that they have mutually agreed to dissolve the marriage and obtain divorce from a competent Court.

Parsis marrying under Special Marriage Act

Even today, there exists an indirect way of getting divorce by mutual consent by Parsis: by registering their marriage under the Special Marriage Act after celebrating it according to Parsi religious rites under the Parsi Marriage Act. Parsis who marry under the Special Marriage Act are governed by the provisions of that Act and not by their own personal law i.e. the Parsi Marriage Act. It is essential that this provision regarding divorce by mutual consent, which is absent in the Parsi Marriage Act should be included in it, so that two adults may have their marriage dissolved honourably by remaining within the provisions of law applicable in the matter.

Delegates for Parsi Matrimonial Courts

Under the Parsi Marriage Act the judge constituting the Parsi Chief Matrimonial Court or the Parsi District Matrimonial Court is assisted by seven Parsi delegates, selected from a panel appointed by the state government, and appointed for a period of ten years. The system of delegates seems to be modelled on the jury system then prevailing in the country. All questions of law and procedure are determined by the judge and questions of fact, by a majority of delegates and if they are equally divided the judge decides the questions of fact too.

System of delegates not favoured

In the past, there was some justification for having a system of delegates, because a large number of judges were British and not familiar with Parsi customs and usages. The position has now changed completely. All judges are Indians and are supposed to be familiar with Parsi customs and usages. Criticism of this system has been voiced and the perverse verdicts given by delegates in some cases have also been noticed. The jury system on which the delegate system is based has been abolished throughout the country and the above system does not operate in the personal laws of other communities. When the constitution contemplates uniformity in personal laws of all communities, the system of delegates prevailing under the Parsi Marriage Act should be dispensed with.

Other amendments to Parsi Marriage Act

There are other provisions relating to the Parsi Marriage Act which also need amendment.

Conversion by the defendant is a ground for divorce provided the suit is brought within two years after the plaintiff became aware of it. Since freedom of religion is one of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution, conversion *per se* should not be treated as a matrimonial wrong. The Parsi Marriage Act should therefore, be amended by deleting conversion as a ground for divorce.

The Parsi Marriage Act recognizes the right of the wife to maintenance, both alimony *pendente lite* (during the pendency of the suit) as well as permanent alimony. This is on the ground that marriage obliges the husband to maintain his wife. Alimony cannot exceed one-fifth of the husband's net income. Permanent alimony is determined by the court and is based on the ability of the husband to pay, the wife's own assets, the conduct of the parties and what is just for the purpose. The Court's order remains in force so long as the wife remains chaste and unmarried. The Parsi Marriage Act does not recognize the corresponding right of the husband to claim maintenance from his divorcing wife in matrimonial suits.

In the context of the changed social status of Parsi women coupled with the avowed declaration of equality of man and woman as envisaged by the constitution, it is irrational and improper to place the obligation of maintenance on the man only. There are today, many economically independent women in the community who are capable of looking after not only themselves, but also their indigent parents, husbands and children. The Parsi Marriage Act should be amended to impose an obligation on such women to maintain their dependent husbands and to share with them the maintenance of their children and with their brothers, the maintenance of their indigent parents.

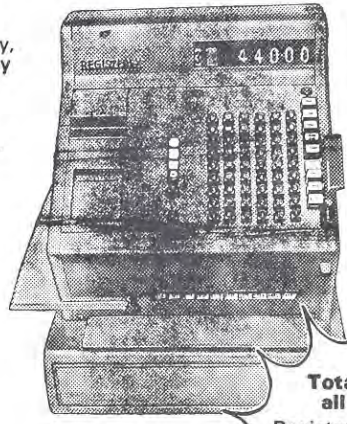
Amendments are further needed regarding divorce on grounds of cruelty, desertion, leprosy and mental

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disorder (including psychopathic disorder), expeditious disposal of matrimonial cases, holding of proceedings *in camera*, provisions regarding reconciliation, and other such factors.

Reform in Parsi Marriage Act necessary

Enlightened Parsi opinion is in favour of reforming the Parsi Marriage Act. The Federation of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India should examine the matter and, if necessary, appoint a high level committee to make recommendations about reform in Parsi personal laws. The sentiments and views prevailing in the community including the views of the Parsi youth, and the reforms recently made in marriage laws of other communities, should be taken into consideration. Some of the provisions of the Parsi Marriage Act are out of tune with the progressive trends in society and need early amendment. If the necessity for change in the law is brought by the Federation to the notice of the central government, the government may be persuaded to amend suitably the Parsi Marriage Act by passing a Bill in both Houses of Parliament.

CONCLUSION

In his presidential address at the Seminar on Islamic Personal Law in Modern India, in January 1972, Union Law Minister H. R. Gokhale, observed, 'We believe that while we should do everything possible to build up and cultivate the consciousness for reform, the urge and the demand for the reform must come from the community itself.' Public opinion in the community should therefore, be mobilized in favour of reforming the law.

The unfortunate customary contention on vital questions concerning religious or social changes, prevalent among some Parsis, must not be allowed to come in the way of the reform needed in the personal law of Parsis. The community must steer clear of the petty differences and factionalism noticed in some quarters. Leaders should be found who can unite and guide the community at this crucial time in the history of the community. For this purpose, I cannot think of a better body than the Federation.

The Parsi community is a microscopically small community and a mere drop in the sea of Indian humanity, constituting, according to the 1971 census, only 0.02 per cent of the total population of India. If it has been able to maintain its separate identity, uniqueness and traditions, it is primarily due to its socio-economic solidarity, personal laws, religious faith and fervour, and unity in resolving difficulties. It is on these pillars that the community must build its future.

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How much do you know about your social, cultural, religious and economic heritage? Most Parsis are brought up on myths which they continue to believe till the *dokhma*. To help readers gauge the extent of their knowledge and also to keep them informed and enriched, *Parsiana* continues the Z-Quiz on behalf of the sponsor of The Lost Generation Essay Competition. The entry with the highest number of correct answers will receive Rs 75, the next Rs 50 and the third Rs 25. In case of a tie, the amount will be split among the winners.

Send your replies to The Editor, Z–Quiz, c/o Parsiana, GPO Box 892, Bombay 400001 by 15th August. Answers will be published in the next issue.



1. Was Firdausi, the author of the *Shah Nameh*, a Zoroastrian?

2. How many *Atash Behrams* are there in India?

3. How many Zoroastrian World Congresses have there been?

4. What is the message of the *Ashem Vohu*?

5. Who was the first Indian to cut Gujerati type?

6. What is the *baj* ceremony?

7. Who is the first Indian woman to set foot on the Antarctic?

8. According to the *Kissah-i-Sanjan* what were the five terms Jadi Rana made for the Parsis to stay in India?

9. What is the literal translation of *Ahura Mazdah*?

10. What is a *varasya*?

Response to the first Z-Quiz, from one-liners to mini-theses, came in varying degrees of accuracy.

The total prize money of Rs 150 will be equally divided between K. D. Chargeman, Ms Freny Marshall, Ms Katie Seervai and B. S. Surti who replied correctly to all 12 questions.

Copies of Dastur Khurshed Dabu's *Handbook of Information on Zoroastrianism*, generously gifted by the publisher, Sohrab Ranji, will be forwarded to the runners-up; Ms F. K. Antia (11 correct), Ms Thrity Keeka (10), Manchi Davar, Jehanbux Edelbehram, Hormuz Irani, A. K. Kathawalla, Rustom Mehta, Ms Yasmin Mirza, Ms Nergish Nusserwanji and Maneck Patalwala.

1. Was the Iranshah fire brought from Iran?
No, the sacred fire was consecrated in India.

2. What is the difference between a *dastur* and a *mobed*?
A *mobed* is a priest with the minimum qualification of *navar* or *martab*. A *dastur* is a high priest usually of an *Atash Behram*.

3. What is the literal translation of *Atash Behram*?
'Fire Victorious'. The fire in the royal chapel of the Persian emperors was known as Verethraghane, the smiter of the enemy. This was later corrupted to Vaharram and then to Behram, the angel of victory.

4. Was Cyrus the Great a Zoroastrian?
Much depends on how the word Zoroastrianism is interpreted. The original religion as taught by Zoroaster was much changed by the time of Cyrus and had become one of the many 'religions' of the Persian empire; Cyrus himself, paid homage to various gods.

5. What does *Khshnaothra Ahura Mazda*, mean?
Glory be to Ahura Mazda.

6. What is the *boye* ceremony?
Performed 5 times a day at the commencement of the five *gahs*, it is the ceremony of keeping the fire in a fire temple, always burning, by feeding it with fragrant wood. The word '*bui*' in Pahlavi and '*baodha*' in Avestan means 'odour' or 'smell'.

7. What is the message of the *Yatha Ahu Vairyo*?
Also known as the Ahuna Vairya, (Y27, 13), the prayer is made up of three lines containing seven words each. Being the most ancient verse in the Avesta text, it is the most difficult to translate and there are as many versions as there are scholars. The three lines appear to answer the question, 'who or what is to be chosen?' The spiritual leader, who because of his store of *Asha* (the changeless, eternal laws of God), is as powerful as a king. Those who work for *Ahura Mazdah* and have the gifts of *Vohu Manah* (Good Mind). Those who help the lowly and needy and have *Ahura's Khshathra* (creative power).

8. How many Zoroastrians are there in the world (approximate figure)?
Approximately 1,25,000.

9. Is Pateti New Year's day?
Pateti, from '*patet*' (repentance), is New Year's eve—a day of introspection and repentance for deeds and acts committed in the past year. *Navroz*, 'new day', is New Year's day.

10. How many trustees are there of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat?
Seven; E. A. Nadirshah (Chairman), B. K. Boman-Behram, E. B. Desai, Dr. A. F. Golwalla, J. N. Guzder, M. B. Hodivalla and Dr (Ms) N. Noble.

11. Who was the first person to unfurl the Indian (tricolour) flag?
Madam Bhikaiji Rustom Cama (1861-1936), on 18 August 1907 at the International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart, Germany.

12. What is the name of the Parsi couple who hold the record for the longest marriage in the world?
Sir Temulji Bhicaji Nariman and Lady Nariman, were married from 1853 for 86 years.

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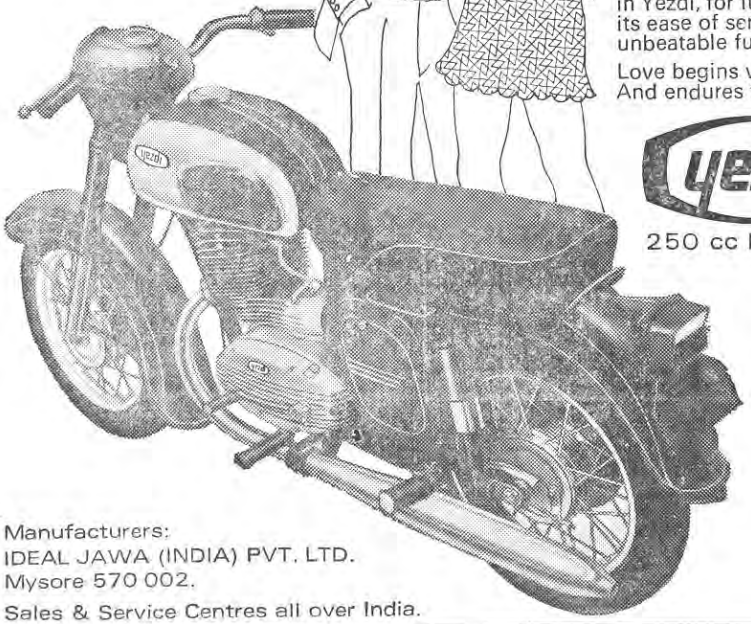
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Ode to a Poet

Browsing in the libraries of far-flung cities, Dr Perin Driver unearthed the mouldering manuscript of a long forgotten 17th century Parsi poet, Rustom Hormazdyar. 'It was a rare manuscript and apparently had not been seen or touched by anyone,' she recalled. The discovery resulted in her 1,400 page doctoral thesis, *Gujerati poems composed by the Parsi poets of the 17th century*, part of which was recently published.

'Rustom was the pioneer of Parsi Gujerati literature,' says Driver. 'He is to our language what Chaucer is to English and Narsinh Mehta to Gujerati literature.' The first writer to innovate a poetic form called *akhyan* (ode), Rustom penned his poems on the banks of the river Tapi in Gujerat during the strife-ridden reign of the Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb. 'His themes were legendary and historic,' says Driver. 'He wanted to educate people, especially in religious matters. His first poem, *Ardaviraf Nameh* was about God, heaven and hell. In *Zarthosht Nameh* he wrote about the life and philosophy of the Prophet. Rustom understood human psychology. He wrote about love, sin, war, good and evil.' His five available narrative poems are a slice of Parsi history and 'influenced his contemporaries, especially, Noshirwan Jamshed, the seventh ancestor of Jamshedji Tata,' observes Driver.

Rustom wrote in Prakrit, a vernacular dialect derived from Sanskrit. 'His *akhyans* were read and heard by Parsis and Hindus,' notes Driver. 'He was the first poet to write in the language of his people. But today Rustom is unknown not only in Gujerat but also among Parsis. Prakrit is Greek and Latin to even Gujerati speaking Hindus today. The problem is that Parsis don't appreciate high flown Gujerati literature and a writer who writes in Parsi Gujerati won't be read by Hindus. It's a thousand-year-old problem.' Driver's 256-page book priced at Rs 30 met with enthusiastic response mostly from non-Parsi readers and was published with the assistance of Jamshed Pavri of Canada. Driver hopes to finance publication of her second volume through the sale proceeds of the first.

'I've always been fond of the Gujerati language and I'm proud of it being my mother tongue,' says the bespectacled and loquacious scholar. Her paper, *Arrival of the Parsis in India and their influence on Gujerati culture* won the Navsari born and bred writer the Maharaja Sayaji Rao III Memorial Research Prize for 1973-74. She has contributed a chapter to the *History of Gujerati Literature* published by the *Gujerati Sahitya Parishad* and two chapters to the *History of the Parsis* to be published by the Bombay Parsi Panchayat. Driver is vice-president of the South Gujerat Kavi Milan in Surat and her activities range from writing plays and short stories for All India Radio to translating the works of foreign poets.

A graduate of Tata Girls School and S. B. Garda College in Navsari, she studied for her M.A. and law degrees simultaneously and also taught at a school some distance away. 'My friends could not understand how I could burn the candle at both ends. After the Bar Council exam in 1959, I practised in the courts of Bombay for five years. But it was difficult running from one court to another and there is little scope for women.' After her marriage to Dara Driver she started lecturing at Navsari's Mahila Arts College. She received her Ph.D. in 1973 from Gujerat University. 'My original intention had been to write on the Parsi poets of India but I realised the thesis would become voluminous,' says Driver. 'I visited the libraries in Gujerat, Calcutta and Bombay and when I came across the poet Rustom's verses, I decided to limit myself to the 17th century Parsi poets.' She believes a manuscript of Rustom's *Aspandiar Nameh* is lying in a library in France.

Driver spends much of her time writing poetry and intends to publish a book of her poems shortly. 'My poems are mostly on philosophical and spiritual themes. Some have been published in Gujerati newspapers and some have been read at poetry readings. Writing them doesn't take long. I write them on the spot when I am inspired.'



Driver and Pres. Dr Jagannath at All India Oriental Conference, Haryana.

JEROO GORIMAR

Door of Love

'I am extremely happy to inform you that on 4 May 1977, formal papers were signed to transfer the ownership of the building in New Rochelle, New York, to Darbe Mehr Zoroastrian Temple.' With those words, the newsletter of the **Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York** (ZAGNY) informed its members that 'The Gift of Guiv' (*Parsiana*, May 1976) had become a reality. The millionaire Iranian philantropist, Arbab Rustom Guiv donated over Rs 10,00,000 to enable the Zoroastrians of the New World to establish the first community centre on the American continent. The name of the centre was suggested by Guiv and means 'Door of Love'.

'Detailed plans are now being prepared for renovations and repairs to meet the zoning regulations as well as to make it suitable for our purposes,' noted the newsletter signed by ZAGNY secretary, Jehanbux B. Daruwala. Changes were scheduled to have begun under supervision of a four-member subcommittee consisting of Dinyar Wadia, Dara Sagar, Dinyar Dalal and Eruch Munshi. The trustees of the centre are Guiv, Sarfeh, Eruch Munshi, *Ervad* Pervez Patel, Lovji Cama and Framroze Patel.

Attempts towards establishing a centre began as early as 1972 when the office bearers of the association created the 'ZAGNY Special Fund' to muster finance for the project. Guiv heard of the venture from Sarfeh, the editor of the journal *Hukt*, published in Persian from Iran, and offered to help buy a place and also contribute towards the annual maintenance.

After examining several sites, a large old building formerly used as a school house, in New Rochelle, close to New York city, was settled on for the sum of around Rs 8,55,000. When ready, Darbe Mehr Zoroastrian Temple will serve as a place for worship, social gatherings, religious classes and will house a library.

'With ownership comes responsibility,' noted the ZAGNY newsletter, 'and a deep commitment by the membership that the community centre will help to sow the permanent seeds of Zoroastrianism on the American continent.'

Give Us Your Hearts And Minds

Echoing the above sentiments, the **Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago** was to host a symposium on, ' Survival and Perpetuation of Zoroastrians in North America' on 21 and 22 May 1977.

'The Zoroastrian community in Canada and the U.S.A. faces formidable hurdles in its survival', warned the smart red and blue brochure. 'What pragmatic and concrete steps can we take to preserve our noble religion, our heritage, our culture ?'

Starting in true Zoroastrian tradition, with a banquet at the Sheraton —Chicago, the symposium was to continue at the Illinois Institute of Technology. Listing a veritable roll call of the erudite, the brochure outlined the programme: On the religious aspect, Dr Framroze Bode was to talk on, Zoroastrianism; An Ancient Faith for Modern Man and the *Gathas*—Quintessence of Zarathushtra's Teachings; and Dr Behest Najad, Professor, Oregon University, on The Mazdayasnan Movement. On the historical front, Dr Rostem Sarfeh, Editor, *Hukt* magazine, was to speak on Zoroastrianism in Iran, Present and Future; and Dr Mary Boyce, Professor, Iranian Studies, London University, on The Contribution of Zoroastrianism to the World's Great Religions. And contemplating the survival and perpetuation of the religion, Dr Richard Frye, Professor, Iranian Studies, Harvard was to deliver the keynote address, Survival of Zoroastrian Theology and Culture: Dr Jamshed Mavalwala, Professor of Anthropology, Toronto University, was going to report on the Demography of the North American Zoroastrian Community; Dr Jehan Bagli, past president, Zoroastrian Association of Quebec was to suggest Code Changes for Adaptation to North American Realities; and Minoo Treasurywala, past president, Zoroastrian Society of Ontario, was going to speak on Knitting the North American Zoroastrian Community Together. The symposium, under the chairmanship of Keki Bhote of Chicago pooled the combined talents of several North American associations in its advisory committee, from Los Angeles to New York and Toronto to Montreal.

With a nominal fee of $15 and every attempt being made to host out-of-towners in Chicago homes (arrangements were even made to divert children under twelve of participants at a nearby centre) the plea, 'Explore with us ways and means to perpetuate our way of life. Give us your hearts and minds', may not have gone unheeded.

For Womb The Bell Tolls

Across the Atlantic, equally concerned about dwindling numbers, the Zoroastrian Association of Europe (Z.A.E) in **London**, had planned a seminar on The Present Demographic Trend and the Future of the World Zoroastrian Community, on 30 April at the London School of Economics.

According to the Z.A.E. newsletter, sent by Dr Shirinbanoo Kutar, president, and Ruby Contractor, honorary secretary, experts on population and demographic development from the U.N., Manchester University, the L.S.E., the All India Institute of Demographic Studies, Bombay, and other relevant bodies were to discuss amongst other things, the fecundity of Zoroastrian females; the status of children of mixed marriages, especially those of a Zoroastrian mother and an alien father; and the impact of such marriages on the dwindling Zoroastrian community. There is a proposal to set up a World Zoroastrian Organization affiliated to the U.N. Economic and Social Council for Consultative Status. A report on the deliberations, suggestions and recommendations of the seminar will be published by the association as soon as possible.

The Rite Of Spring

Jamshedi Navroz was celebrated with prayers and parties by various far flung Zoroastrian associations. In **New York**, 205 adults and 55 children met on 26 March for a *jashan* performed by Parvez Patel and Hosang Unvala, followed by dinner. Dr Jal Pavri who was there with his sister, the Marchioness of Winchester, addressed the gathering on The Importance of the *Gathas* in our Scriptures. The children enjoyed a magic show while the adults helped the ZAGNY special fund for maintenance of the Darbe Mehr Temple, by contributing to a raffle.

Inspite of discouraging weather, about 275 attended the Navroz *iashan* and children's party in **Ontario** on 20 March. Moti Balsara and her committee report a very successful function with the local ladies pitching in by making *rawa*. Boman Kotwal and Yezdy Antia performed the *jashan* and Hoshi Patel provided a very enjoyable puppet show.

The Zoroastrian Association of **Quebec** also hoped to celebrate Navroz with a *jashan* and dinner on

20 March and in **London,** the Parsis were to gather to imbibe the traditional *falooda* followed by a 'tot' in '*salamati*'. A *jashan* was to precede the merrymaking culminating in a 'scrumptious dinner'.

At the other end of the globe, the Zoroastrians in Australia, also celebrated Navroz with *falooda* on 19 March in **Sydney** with one of the largest gatherings they have been able to attract so far. With prayers offered by Ms Pilloo Sidhwa and Dr Peshotan Katrak, there were further contributions by members, the younger ones providing musical items, and several intrepid ladies performing a *garba* choreographed by Maharukh Irani. Children participated in a fancy dress competition while the grown-ups rounded off the evening with dancing.

Yearly Yearnings

Many associations abroad published their annual reports and presented their yearly financing for scrutiny. For the **New York** association, Framroze Patel cited no less than President Carter as inspiring him to thank the 'wonderful people who were principally and primarily responsible for steady growth of ZAGNY'. The year 1976 was summarized in one line: 'Growth, Yes. But at a lower rate compared to the preceding year.' Though revenue receipts were higher, expenses were almost double due to the ubiquitous inflation.

In **Vancouver,** the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia published its ninth annual report. 'Our society is now a debt-free society and we do not owe anything to anybody,' it's honorary secretary and director, Jamshed Pavri announced. The society has managed to pay off all payments outstanding towards the purchase of 73 burial plots at Garden of Four Prophets at Valley View Memorial Gardens; $119 were collected by Ms Khorshed Panthaky by telephoning members of the community, for the Variety Club Telethon for Handicapped Children and $44 were received towards a fund for Mother Theresa of Calcutta. From the sale of Olympic coins and Stamp Sculptures, the association donated Rs 500 to Raipur Durg Parsi Anjuman for repairs and maintenance of their cemetery and $100 to the London Association for their Burial Ground Fund.

The **Australian Zoroastrian Association** also made its half-yearly financial statement. The initial bank balance of $214.63 in July 1976, had risen to $408 in December.

Sesame Nameh

New York, Toronto and Sydney now all run Sunday school classes for children. In New York, the classes 'have been an unqualified success;' the ZAGNY newsletter informs. Basic prayers are taught with the emphasis on meaning, and stories on the life of Zoroaster and from the *Shah Nameh* are recounted. Snacks and soft drinks are brought along for a break period.

In **Toronto,** unfortunately, the response was not that enthusiastic due to the location, but attendance soon picked up when the venue was changed to Noshir Parakh's own house, to and from which he even provided transport. This rather restricts the dissemination to a particular area, but Parakh was willing to help even those not in the locality if they got in touch.

In **Sydney**, the first Sunday school classes were to begin on 3 April, and will continue from then onwards on every second Sunday of each month.

Tuan Up On You

From Singapore, Suna Kanga sends the following report on the Zoroastrian community in South East Asia.

In **Singapore** and **Malaysia** our community has just hit the century mark. The influx of *aj-kal-na Parsis* is welcome and newcomers are inevitably drawn into community affairs. For most of us, the periodical get-togethers and picnics are welcome occasions, and the twice a year *jashans*, a good exposure to ceremonial prayers.

The history of the Parsis dates back to 1829, when a Parsi convict,



A simple *jashan* at the new funeral parlour, Singapore.

Muncherjee, fell fatally ill here. At the suggestion of an Armenian, Aristarous Sarkies, the transient Shanghai merchants subscribed to buy a burial plot and Parsi trustees were appointed. In 1848, more land was bought but in 1896, part of it had to be sold after litigation. By then, most of the trustees were in India and the sale proceeds were transferred to Bombay. When the Singapore Parsis came to know of this, they took court action and the amount was returned. Thereafter, in 1959, the plot was sold at a good profit, as part of it was acquired by the government. The exhumed were re-housed at a new site which, though it is very well maintained, has been closed for burials since 1974. Now, once again, a new resting place has been prepared.

On Farvardin Roj, 8 April, a *jashan* ceremony was scheduled to be performed at the recently constructed funeral parlour of the cemetery, by *Ervad* Behram Vakil, honorary *dastur* to the community, who is often assisted by his teenage son Ratan. Vakil, here since 1948, is Manager of Jumabhoy & Sons (agents for Shipping Corp. of India), and in recent years was Air-India's District Sales Manager.

Jamshedi Navroze was celebrated here by the Parsi Association with a buffet dinner at the Cricket Club. It was also to bid farewell to Banoobai Mehta and her daughters Homai, a government civil servant, and Bapsy, a teacher, who were leaving us for Bombay. The Mehtas lived in Malaya before the war, and have been here for fifteen years.

Earlier the same day, the 23rd Annual General Meeting of the Parsi Association (formed in May 1954), was conducted by outgoing vice-president Ms Dinoo Antia and secretary Ms Roshan Mistri. President Mr Homi R. Mistri was unanimously re-elected to the post, with Mr R. J. Kanga as vice-president, and Ms Nergish Nagarwalla as the new secretary. Dr R. C. Cooper was elected honorary auditor for the ensuing year. New committee members are Ms Khurshid Mehta, Ms Nergis P. Medora, Mr Noshir J. Mistry and Mr Jamshed Medora. Mr Medora along with Mr Rutton M. H. Patel and Mr Behram Vakil form the nucleus of The Parsi Lodge Charity. It is their responsibility to safeguard the community chest, a substantial six-figure fund, and to disburse the earned interest on education, upkeep of the cemeteries, religious ceremonies, and medical and housing benefits. At



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present, 26 scholarships are given, two, to Parsis.

Among the longest resident Parsis is Pesi Davar who came in 1925. Businessman Davar recalls the period when most of the Parsis here were employed by two soft-drink factories owned by Mr P. Framroz and Mr N. Mistri.

Here since 1948, is Rutton M. H. Patel who deals in Indian film distribution. He and his Chinese wife, Joyce, demonstrate an active interest in the Association.

Prominent among the families of long standing are the Medoras and the Mistris. Insurance expert Keki Medora's wifeNargis has won government recognition for social service.

The doyen of our community, Homi R. Mistri arrived here in 1950, a few years before the death of his wealthy brother, Naoroji Mistri. A bachelor and philanthropist, the late N. Mistri came in 1909 as a dock engineer, started the flourishing Phoenix Aerated Water Co. in 1925, and died a multi-millionaire in 1953. On his death, his staff was substantially rewarded, a million dollars were donated for a children's ward in the general hospital,fifty thousand for T.B. research, and even today, there are several charities continued in his name in Bombay and Singapore. Homi and Khorshedbanu Mistri's spacious home serves as a regular meeting place for our Association.

But particularly noteworthy are the Maneckshas of Malaysia, who probably qualify as the longest resident Parsis in this area as they have been in business for over sixty years. Today, Mr and Ms R. Manecksha and Mr J. Manecksha are still in Taiping and there are other members of the family in other cities. Upcountry too, is biochemist Sam Tata who last year won recognition for his breakthrough in rubber research (In the News, *Parsiana*, May '76).

Today, the Parsis here represent a cross-section of various professions. To name a few: in medicine are Dr Putli Martin, Dr J. Daruwalla, Dr Firdaus Medora, Dr Pilloo Chacha and orthopaedic surgeon Dr Pesi Chacha. In economics, Dr R. C. Cooper and Jamshed Medora and Zarine Cooper, a lawyer by profession, now in business. In insurance are K. Medora, P. N. Medora and S. Sanjana. In journalism there is Singaporean Nancy Byramji of *The Straits Times*. Holding top positions are Baji Palkhivala, senior vice-president of the American Express Int. Banking Corp; Soli P. S. Talyarkhan, regional director of Reader's Digest Asia Ltd; Soli Setna, chartering manager of the Neptune Orient Lines Ltd; Minoo Nagarwalla, general manager of Rotary Screens of Asia Pvt. Ltd.; and in Kuala Lumpur, N. N. Pundole, managing director of Edible Oil Products. Also here are Yezdi Mehta with an oil company, Noshir Mistry a marine surveyor, Mehli Chapkhanawalla from James Finlay and B. Batliwalla with Dodsal.

Aviation is represented by Tata's Behram Batliwalla, and the Singapore Airlines pilots and engineers: Billy Antia, Adi Kapadia, Faredun Irani, Dhun Daruwalla, Baji Kapadia, Rusi Kanga, Jamshed Marzban, Soli Dallas and Homi Sethna.

With the Godrej group in Malaysia are Yezdi Mistry, Aspi Birdy and Dara Palkhiwalla and in Singapore H. Baxter and K. Khajoria.



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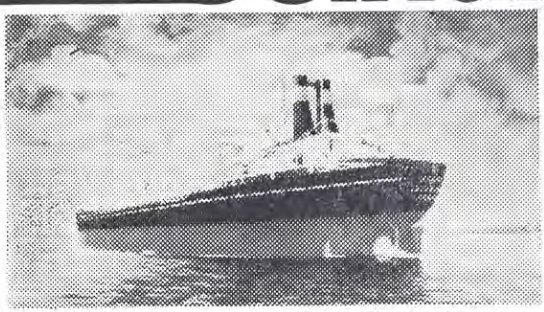
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Banaji: 'Valuable guidance'

Died: **Hormusji Banaji,** 77, senior advocate of the Supreme Court and Bombay High Court and former trustee of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat; of cardiac arrest on March 7, at his residence.

Clad in the traditional black Parsi *dagla* and *pheta*, Banaji had frequented the courts for 50 years and won the respect of the judiciary and the Bar 'for his erudition, fairness and advocacy,' noted a resolution passed at a condolence meeting held at the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute in March and convened by the India-Iran Cultural Society and seven other associations. A man who could talk with equal facility in Gujerati or English on the intricacies of law, as in French on the genius of Tagore, Banaji 'will always be remembered for his cheerfulness,' recalled Jehangir Shroff, an associate of many years.

A member of the International Law Association and of the International Commission of Jurists, Banaji had the distinction of being the only Indian advocate to argue an appeal before the United Nations Administrative Tribunal at Geneva in 1957, on behalf of an Indian citizen. In 1954, after an in-depth study of the adoption laws of other countries, he worked for the introduction in Parliament of a Bill on adoption. On the invitation of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Banaji who had been the honorary legal advisor to the French Consulate in Bombay for 45 years, went to Paris to study the social and judicial institutions of the city. In the sphere of Parsi law, he participated in the drafting and enactment of the Parsi Charity Trust Registration Act and worked for long-needed, essential reforms in the Parsi Laws of Divorce and Succession and the Law of Alimony.

As a trustee of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat from 1958 to 1968, Banaji visited many of the *anjumans* in India to talk to people about the workings of the Bombay Panchayat, and was at one time invited by the five Parsi *anjumans* of East Africa on a lecture tour. 'In legal matters his guidance was very valuable,' noted the Bombay Parsi Panchayat resolution but Banaji did not seek reelection to the Board of Trustees when his ten-year term expired as he wished to give others a chance to serve the community. In later years, he felt the Panchayat had become too political and counted himself amongst its critics.

Born in Bombay, Banaji asserted his independence even as a child of six when he marched off to the Pandey Girls' High School where his sister was studying, and got himself admitted without waiting for his parents' initiative. He matriculated from the Bharda New High School and maintained close ties with it through the Old Boys' Association of which he was the founder member, noted his brother, Jehangir. After graduating from Wilson College, he taught English Literature and French there for two years, before appearing for the Solicitors' and Advocates' examinations in 1924. Subsequently, he practised as a solicitor for five years and in 1929, enrolled as an advocate of the Bombay High Court in the chambers of Sir Jamshedji Kanga. In a few years he had built a substantial practice and set up his own chambers where he in turn trained many lawyers.

'He enjoyed communicating and talking to people', said his wife, Purviz. 'He made numerous speeches at Bar dinners and Rotary meetings' where the advocate would spice his pontifications with humour. If the audience comprised friends and colleagues they would clamour for the latest string of 'Banaji jokes', she recalled. Banaji and his wife, who according to friends were 'inseparable', travelled extensively in the course of attending law, Rotary or Moral Rearmament conferences, and often purely for pleasure. 'He would do anything that was out of the way and unusual. He had wanted to see the passion play which is performed once in 10 years. So we went specially to Oberammergau in the Bavarian Alps in Germany where it was held. He travelled because he wanted to know more about people, to study their customs and manners and their life style,' said Ms Banaji. 'He would make voluminous notes each time we went abroad and then write from them in the *Jam-e-Jamshed* to inform Parsis back home. Strangers would often come and tell us how much they appreciated his travelogues.'

As vice-president of the Iran League and president of the India-Iran Culture Society Banaji had a special fondness for Iran where he explored all the remoter Zoroastrian strongholds, 'to relive the hardships the Zoroastrians had suffered at one time, while we were safe in India,' recalled his wife.

Banaji's interests varied from listening to music and reading to playing chess and tennis. 'He had led a full life and died peacefully,' said Ms Banaji. 'He had gone through his usual routine of going to court and to his chambers. We went for a walk in the evening, had dinner, and a little later he passed away.'

He is survived by his wife Purviz, and Tehmina, Jehangir, Bacha and Rustom, his brothers and sisters.

Died: **Gool Shavaksha,** 72, noted social worker and Founder President of one of Bombay's leading social service organizations, The Time and Talents Club; of cancer on 12 April 1977 at the Breach Candy Hospital.

For almost half a century, she sought 'to relieve poverty, ignorance, and suffering,' noted the



Shavaksha: 'Led till the last'

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club's press release. 'Her fine mind and acute social consciousness made her a highly effective social worker.' The driving force behind the club's 23 committees, Ms Shavaksha worked in collaboration with numerous other organizations such as the Seva Sadan and the Indian Red Cross Society whose Fund Raising Committee she once chaired. Aside from raising large sums of money for the blind, T.B. patients, the physically handicapped and other charitable causes, she was instrumental in starting the popular seaside restaurant, The Victory Stall, to raise money for dependents of the armed forces during the Indo-China war.

'She was a most gay and entertaining person,' noted her sister, Ms Hilla Daruvala, the sole survivor of the pioneering four who started The Time and Talents Club in 1934. 'She was deeply interested in religion and philosophy,' and authored *The Zoroastrian Credo*, a book on the religion, for children, a play on the life of Zoroaster, *The Splendoured One* and numerous articles on the religion.

Daughter of Sir Dinshah Mulla, the eminent jurist, who inculcated in her an avid interest in reading, Ms Shavaksha did not attend school or college but was taught at home by governesses and tutors. At 26, she started voluntary work at the Naigaum centre at Nagpada. Four years later, she founded The Time and Talents Club, encouraged by her mother, Lady Jerbai Mulla and her lawyer husband, the late Kaikobad Shavaksha who was instrumental in drafting the club's constitution. From 1936 to 1965, as a juvenile court magistrate and Justice of Peace she worked with the inmates of the Bombay Remand Home.

During World War II, Ms Shavaksha worked closely with Lady Mountbatten as colonel-in-chief of the Women's Voluntary Service in the Bombay presidency. She was air raid warden, secretary of the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Board and secretary of the Silver Trinket Fund. She held these posts from 1940 to the end of World War II. In recognition of her work she was awarded the Kaiser-I-Hind Medal by the Viceroy and the War Services Award by General Auchinleck on behalf of the Government of India for her outstanding services. Twice elected president of the Bombay Presidency Rangers Committee, and as editor of the *Indian Guide*, Ms Shavaksha was also presented the Girl Guide Beaver Award. She collected funds for the Bai Shirinbai Mody Hostel for working women (which had its beginnings in a small residential flat) and continued to look after the material and psychological needs of the girls. The Holiday Home Committee of the Time and Talents Club was started which held annual camps for working women at the Panchgani home of Ms Shavaksha, the expenses being subsidized by the club.

'She loved music', noted Ms Daruvala and initiated the Time and Talents Concert Committee which sponsors outstanding artists and groups for concerts of Indian and Western music, dance and theatre productions. In recognition of her varied services, Ms Shavaksha was awarded the Padma Shree earlier this year.

The genial social worker's zest for living and concern for people remained undiminished despite a protracted and debilitating illness, according to Ms Perin Gobhai, a longtime colleague and friend. 'She led us till the last. When she couldn't leave the house, members would go there to discuss knotty problems. Till the last day, with drips in her arm, she was joking with the hospital staff' and when on the point of virtual collapse, she apologized to the doctor for spoiling his evening.

Ms Shavaksha leaves behind her two daughters, Silloo Dhondy and Zarine Kothawalla and her sister, Ms Daruvala.

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Bra-less at Bhulabhai

By Geeta Doctor

My Darling Daughter produced by Adi Marzban and Burjor Patel
Directed by Adi Marzban

It cannot be Adi Marzban's fault that the man sitting next to me had a fondness for garlic. Nor that every time he laughed he turned to my side and let out a 'Haw Haw Haw!' reeking of garlic. I only hold the director responsible for making him laugh so loudly and so often through another of the hit-and-run routine comedies for which Marzban is now so famous.

Without meaning disrespect to the genre, one feels, such mechanical forms of entertainment should be measured by mechanical means. Devices are used to record the responses of audiences in T.V. studios, so why should they not be effective in the theatre also? To invite a critic to this form of entertainment is to induce *rigor criticus*, a painful stiffening afflicting a critic when he finds himself engulfed by manic laughter the cause of which he is unable to understand.

Adi Marzban was once known for producing plays that were good, clean fun and for creating highly original comedies that exploited the humour that sprang out of the odd Anglo-Parsi culture. Nowadays, he is even better known as the producer of plays that are good, smutty fun on risqué subjects like homosexuality, adultery, and in his latest offering, the problems of a permissive society.

While most Indian parents would collapse at the very thought of their carefully tended offspring straying from their communal pens, they apparently do not mind laughing at stage parents whose children casually announce their preference for members of their own sex and jump in and out of bed with indiscriminating gusto. That's all right because it's not happening to them. Just as it's alright to ogle a heroine in bra-less T-shirts and very self-consciously liberated, while the real Indian woman in the audience, has her saree *pallav* modestly draped over her bosom, or *sadra* carefully tucked in place or *burkha* over the shoulder. What happens on stage has no connection with the audience which is why they can afford to laugh heartily, while feeling grateful that thanks to Messrs Marzban and Patel, they are able to keep up with the sophistication and wit of the theatre going Joneses on Broadway and in the West End. Marzban proves that not only is it quite safe to have double standards but that it can be quite amusing.

This latest burnt offering from America, appears so stale that the actors must be congratulated for romping through their paces with such apparent enthusiasm. Briefly, the play is about a daughter who upsets the cosy comforts of her parents' home by landing up with a baby daughter who is being brought up papoose-style, various attitudes belonging to early women's lib and discarded long since, and a baseball playing husband who it turns out, was never really her husband. After much shouting and screaming across the yawning generation gap, the daughter who wanted to leave the father of her child so that she could do her own 'thing', is persuaded that her 'thing' includes being married to him formally. The parents are happy to be left alone again, the emotional Italian father-in-law is happy that he does not have a bastard grand



Scheherazade Mody and Hosi Vasunia: Romping with apparent enthusiasm.

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daughter and the audience should apparently be happy to go home.

Having been around so long, Marzban productions can generally be expected to have a certain slickness, sureness of pacing and a kind of smooth efficiency. Too smooth perhaps. Everyone does predictably well. Each actor is so set in his comfortably oiled groove that whether we see Hosi Vasunia as the father with the homosexual son in *Ah Norman* or as the perplexed husband in *Move over Mrs* or the harassed grandfather in *My Darling Daughter*, give or take a few kilos it is the same old Hosi Vasunia.

As for Ruby Patel, she cannot but give a polished performance but one hardly even realized that she was speaking English and that it was her first appearance on the English stage. She gave her standard Ruby Patel act, the same intonation, the same high pitched voice bordering on hysteria shrieking from play to play whether English or Gujerati, 'Darling . . . Darling . . .', the same facial tricks, coy pouting of mouth and wrinkling of nose with one of her oh-so-adorable smiles.

Dinyar Contractor is justly famous for his size, the sight of which alone, is enough to make audiences laugh. He did not disappoint them this time either, though he has shed a bit of his tonnage. It was his first appearance on the English stage, according to the programme which was infinitely more interesting than the goings-on on the stage and full of chatty details (Scheherazade Mody who played the daughter, is apparently an excellent cook, while Dinyar is a bachelor and 'always a big draw in parties, etc.'). As an overtly emotional Italian father-in-law he was very funny. At least he was able to maintain his Italian-American accent throughout while Hosi Vasunia's flat nasal twang came and went depending on whether he breathed through his nose or through his mouth, and made the poor man sound as if he were talking with a mouthful of ether.

In case there are some who feel this too harsh a condemnation, it would be worthwhile mentioning that the high point of the evening is reached when Hosi Vasunia comes on stage in fancy Cuban dress and announces that his plane has just been hijacked to Cuba and returned. Somewhere long ago in the sixties it was fashionable to laugh at such jokes. Since then the Cuban problem has slipped off the cold war shelf and drifted into oblivion. So too should plays like this one.

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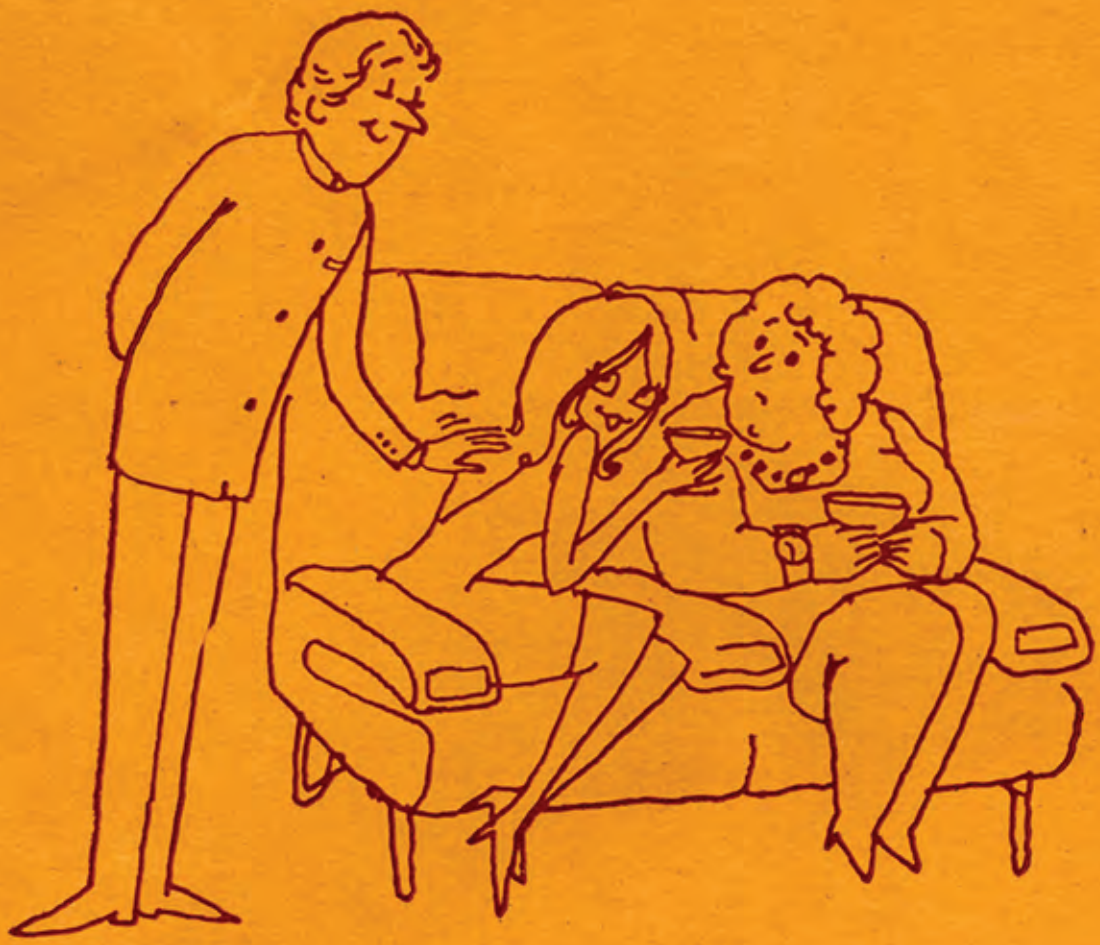
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