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Parsiana

March 1978 Vol. 2 No. 3

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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.

Zoroastrian Congress

Having attended the Third World Zoroastrian Congress held in Bombay early this year, I have the following suggestions to make for the next Congress.

To accommodate such a large gathering, the Congress should be held in an open area such as the Cooperage or Cross Maidan in Bombay. Each *panchayat* should be asked to present a report on its activities from the time of the Third Congress to the Fourth as well as their objectives for the future. *Dasturs* and *mobeds* should be invited to attend the Congress and not be required to pay any fee. Students too should be encouraged to attend at a nominal fee of one or two rupees.

PURVEZ BOYWALA

The Third World Zoroastrian Congress recently held in Bombay has given us an opportunity to meet our fellow Zoroastrians from different parts of India and abroad, to know their views and to understand their problems. After hearing various speakers, we have become aware of our shortcomings in various fields and have now chalked out the strategy for the future.

However, I have four suggestions to make. Firstly, the proceedings of the Congress should be widely circulated among Zoroastrians both in India and abroad so that those who were not able to attend, can know of the aims and objects of the Congress and its achievements.

A conference for Zoroastrians below 30 years of age, from India and abroad, on the lines of the Congress, should be arranged to discuss the religious, educational and vocational problems of the youth. Such a conference should be managed and conducted by young people, and renowned members of the community should be invited to speak.

There was not sufficient time at the Congress to discuss the problems of each regional *anjuman*. An annual conference of the local *anjumans* or *panchayats* should be held, to discuss their particular problems and seek solutions.

There should be a rapport between the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat and the Parsis of Bombay so that the good work done by the Panchayat may be known to the community and suggestions for improvement in the working of the Panchayat can be communicated to the trustees and implemented by them if practical and useful.

B. H. ANTIA

In spite of the presence of an appreciable number of delegates from Iran at the Third World Zoroastrian Congress, not a single paper was read on the magnificent role played by the Persian language in preserving the civilization and culture of Mazdayasna.

Parsis should not forget that Persian Sufi poets, such as Firdausi, Nisami, Sa'di, Haafiz, Rumi and Omar Khayyam, have immortalized the teachings of our faith in their works. For example, the *Shah Nameh* is a majestic illustration of the philosophy of the triumph of good over evil; *Gulistan, Boostan,* and the *Pand Nameh* are charming compendiums of the morals and ethics of Mazdayasna; the odes of Sa'di and Haafiz and the couplets of Rumi are brimming with the mysticism of Mazdayasna.

The incomparable classics of these poets saved Mazdayasna from being wiped out in Iran, and inspired our heroic forefathers to preserve their culture and integrity in India.

BAHMAN S. SURTI
Secunderabad

The organization of the Third World Zoroastrian Congress was excellent, with the proceedings conducted in a business like manner and the majority of written papers carefully thought out. Those professional men and women who spoke from the floor made good, concise speeches. Others were inclined to ramble. On the whole, however, I found the speeches very instructive. For once, Zoroastrians in India were able to see themselves in the perspective of Zoroastrians in different parts of the world.

As a Parsi living outside Bombay, what distressed me most was the severe criticism of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat by the Parsis of Bombay, both young and old. I recall one young entrepreneur saying that he had applied for funds to the Bombay Parsi Panchayat to buy a three-wheel van to start a small business. It took the trustees two years to reply to the application in the negative!

It is naive to assume that the criticism of a single individual, such as Shiavax Nargolwala, or of several individuals, made the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat withdraw from the Federation of Zoroastrian Anjumans. It seems to me that what stung them was the consensus among Bombay's Parsis regarding the Panchayat's alleged inefficiency. A spirited reply was given by Trustee Jimmy Gazdar when he said, and I quote from memory, "If we are such 'old fossils' and 'museum pieces', why don't some of you get together and work out a legally feasible scheme which the Panchayat can adopt. I will be the first to step down if necessary."

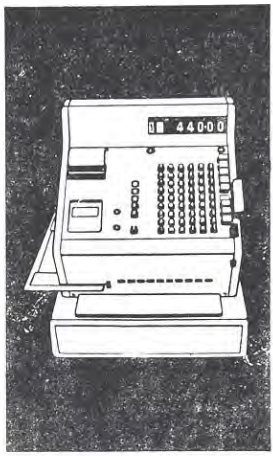
There is still a misunderstanding among certain Parsis that the Third World Zoroastrian Congress cost "lakhs of rupees." It is heartening to recall the announcement made at the concluding session of the Congress that the Rs 25,000 paid by the Bombay Parsi Panchayat and the Rs 20,000 paid by the Surat Panchayat would be returned to both bodies as the Congress had paid for itself because of the massive enrollment.

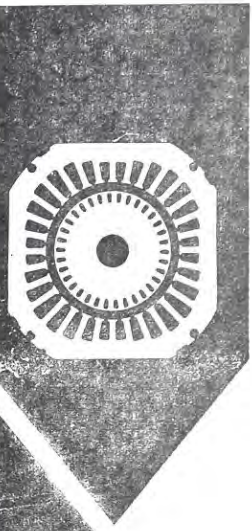
Another criticism is that "no positive good" came from the Congress. I beg to differ. For example, the Executive Committee of the Federation of Zoroastrian Anjumans had agreed that there would be no resolutions

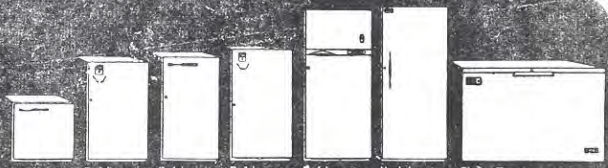
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passed at the Congress, yet the following active committees were formed: the Liaison Committee to help organize the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress to be held in Iran in 1981; the Parsi Youth Committee for self-help and publicity; the Committee for the establishment of a Zoroastrian Community Centre in Bombay and the Standing Publications Committee with representatives from Zoroastrian anjumans at home and abroad. This committee has already planned its first series: *Our Religion*. The first 16-page booklet with coloured illustrations, is named *Zarathushtra* and is seeking a publisher. The booklet is for five to seven-year-old children and is based on material supplied by the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago. The next booklet, on the *navjote*, is also underway.

There were other committees formed by "silent doers", to quote the happy phrase of the announcer, but I cannot remember these at the moment, not having the full report of the Congress before me.

The formation of a World Zoroastrian Organisation, affiliated to the United Nations, is also very important. I sincerely hope that the "silent doers" among the Zoroastrian associations and anjumans abroad will get together, form such a body and have it affiliated to the United Nations by 1981. If the "silent doers" continue to work silently for the next three years, there is no reason why the Fourth World Zoroastrian Congress should not have even more positive results than the third Congress.

PILOO N. JUNGALWALLA
New Delhi

Sindhi World Meet

We read in the newspapers that the Sindhi community was to hold a World Meet in April 1978. Being primarily a business community, the first item on their agenda is an industrial exhibition. Indeed a trump card for prosperity.

At the Third World Zoroastrian Congress, the Parsis laid more emphasis on religious controversies. As Ambassador Nani Palkhivala rightly said on another occasion, "The problems facing our community are so vast, the poverty is so great, the task of educating our younger generation is so immense, that if our time and energies are frittered away in useless controversies, no time and energy would be left for the problems and tasks of the day."

It is high time that the leaders of our community take action on the economic front.

DINSHAW BEHRAM IRANI

"The Big Lie"

The trustees of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat have withdrawn from the Federation of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India on the grounds that "the Federation has not served any useful purpose."

The community expected from the trustees a thoughtful and sensible reason for withdrawal from the Federation. The only proper and sensible reason for *non-withdrawal* from the Federation was given by a solitary, impartial trustee. All honour to him.

SOHRAB A. KALYAN

I was greatly disappointed by your article, "The Big Lie" (*Parsiana*, Feb' 78). A paper has to give *news*. It should not have to discuss the "pros and cons" of any controversies. Do give news.

D. B. IRANI

"What's Cooking?"

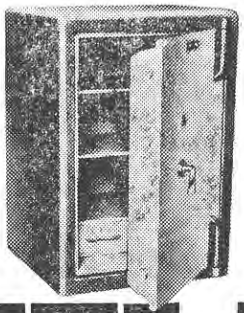
The first recorded account of a wedding reception in Bombay is found in *Mumbai-no Bahar*. Rustamji Dorabji Patel, son of Dorabji Nanabhai (who was the first Parsi to have come to Bombay from Sumari in 1640 when Bombay was in the hands of the Portuguese), had four sons—

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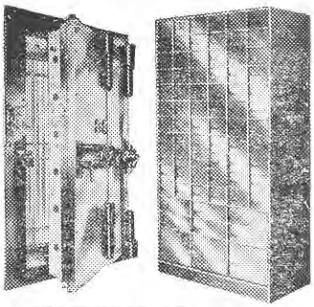
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Cawasji, Dorabji, Kaikhushroo and Tehmulji. In 1761, Rustamji's two eldest sons married and according to the custom of the day, spent a large sum of money to celebrate the happy occasion. The *madavsara* (pre-wedding ceremonies) celebrations and feasts lasted 26 days. Rustamji also distributed sugar in Surat, Sumari, Mora, Adajan, Dumas and Billimora and there too feasted large numbers.

It was not only customary to feast community members at wedding receptions. In 1795, when the son of the governor of Bombay, Sir Johnathan Duncan married, Rustamji's son Cawasji sent half a ton of dried Bombay duck and 30 dried pomphret to the governor as a wedding gift.

In the 1850's, Sorabji Cursetji Pavri was a popular caterer. There was no Albless Baug then and Kaikhushroo Bhoot, our present elderly caterer was not even born. Wedding celebrations used to take place at the Maneckji Seth Wadi which disappeared to make way for Sir Phirozshah Mehta Road.

The cost of a *patra* then averaged 14 annas to one and a quarter rupees, depending on the guests expected at the reception. If the guests included members working in the docks and the textile mills, Sorabji would raise the cost by two to four annas, as they usually consumed more liquor and food. Sorabji also had to send from 20 to 40 *langries* (vessels) of custard to special guests of the hosts.

And while catering today may not require a lot of capital, in Sorabji's times, furniture and utensils were not available on hire and it was also the responsibility of the caterer to provide the *dholis* and *nagarawalas* (drummers).

But the most difficult part was the collection of the bill. A few days later when Sorabji called on the happy household with the bill, there were the usual complaints that *peramni* (gifts) had been not good or as expected, and Sorabji ended up accepting many discounted bills.

In 1896, Sorabji passed away, totally broke.

JAMSHED K. PAVRI
Vancouver, Canada

Learn and Earn

In the answer to the question, "How many *Atash Bahrams* are there in India?" ("Learn and Earn" *Parsiana*, Oct.-Nov. '77), the year 1894 is given in brackets next to the Iranshah Atash Behram. As there might be some confusion I would like to point out that 1894 is the year of the construction of the building the holy fire Iranshah is housed in and not the date of the consecration of the fire itself. The fire was consecrated earlier and transported from place to place due to unfavourable circumstances before being brought to Udvada.

RUSTOM P. MIRZA

Legitimate Rights

Inter-communal marriages will continue in every country and do not necessitate divisions in the family life of those who contract such marriages. The question that remains to be solved is whether our community will concede the fact that a marriage has taken place and that it has been legally contracted; that children of lawful marriages are always deemed lawful; and that the children having committed no wrong by being born, cannot be denied the rights of a *navjote* by a *mobed* or *dastur*.

If a priest were to refrain from performing the *navjote* of any child of an inter-communal marriage, then a Parsi Zoroastrian layperson can undertake to invest the child with a *sudra* and *kusti* if he is satisfied that the child is conversant with the *kusti* prayers, *Sarosh Baj, Din no Kalmo* and *Tan Daroshti*. Our religion allows any Zoroastrian to perform the *navjote* ceremony for a child born of a Zoroastrian mother and father. Such a Parsi Zoroastrian may also invest *any* person above the age of 15 with the *sudra* and *kusti* if the person is conversant with the prayers. These are not reforms but the legitimate rights of every Zoroastrian mother and father and such rights cannot be taken from them by priests.

F. RUSTOMJEE
Colombo, Sri Lanka

Mr Rustomjee, author of The Daily Prayers of the Zoroastrians and other books, expired recently in Australia.

Towering Inferno

The majority in any community is usually poor and therefore, all religious customs should be made to suit their pockets. Electric crematoriums are expensive to install and maintain. Therefore, there should not be a separate crematorium for Parsis. Those who wish to be cremated can be taken to Chandanwadi instead of *doongerwadi*, if they so state in their last will and testament.

M. K. PATEL

The *Dokhme nashini* method of disposal of the dead, in present times, is neither economical nor expedient. The cost of disposal of the dead by an electric crematorium at Chandanwadi in 1973 was about Rs 25 per adult, whereas at *doongerwadi* it was over Rs 300.

RUSI B. PASTAKIA
Jamshedpur

Directions, please

While performing the *kusti*, the *kusti* is to be cracked (like a whip) towards the north, with the right hand. This right hand position is satisfactory while facing east from 6.00 hours to 12.00 hours local time. It is difficult or well nigh impossible to crack the *kusti* towards the north while facing west with the right hand. It is felt that the cracking of the *kusti* with the left hand, between 12.00 hours and 18.00 hours and facing west, would be the best under the circumstances.

May a ruling be given on this point?

K. D. CHARGEMAN

How about north by northwest?

Speak Out

Parsiana should carry the views of community members, young and old, on controversial subjects such as the disposal of the dead, conversion of non-Parsis married to Parsis, *navjotes* of children with one Parsi parent, etc., and not let sleeping dogs lie.

Ms. A. K. PRESS
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Pristine Parsis

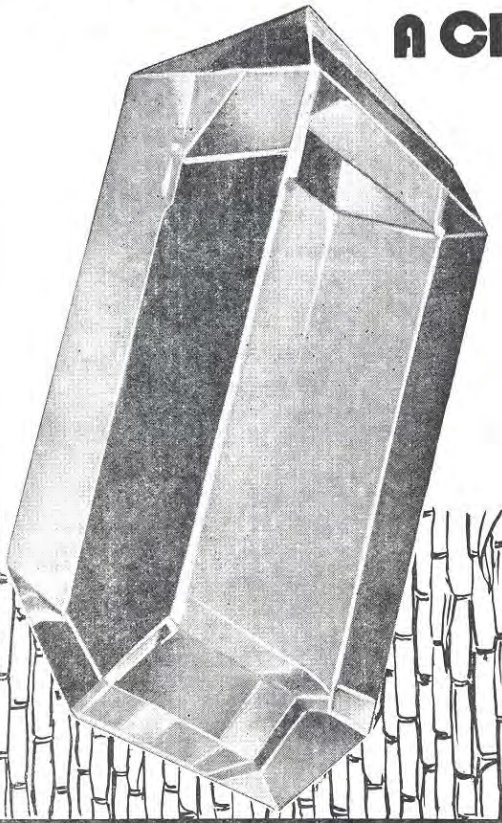
The first item on the list of problems facing Parsis today is the reported decrease in numbers due to late marriages, emigration and mixed marriages. The main objection to mixed marriages is that they will ultimately lead to the extinction of the good qualities for which Parsis are famous and which have kept the community and the religion alive in spite of various vicissitudes.

The champions of mixed marriages have not as yet satisfactorily answered this question—if all human beings belong to one family, why did God not create all human beings as of one pattern, one colour and one trait? It would be better to die nobly of one stock on account of decreasing numbers than lose the precious qualities of charity, enterprise, tolerance and adaptability that the Parsis are endowed with (no disrespect is meant to the other peoples of the world).

The other argument against mixed marriages is the consequences they heap upon the innocent children of such marriages who are invariably torn between two cultures, two religions and two societies.

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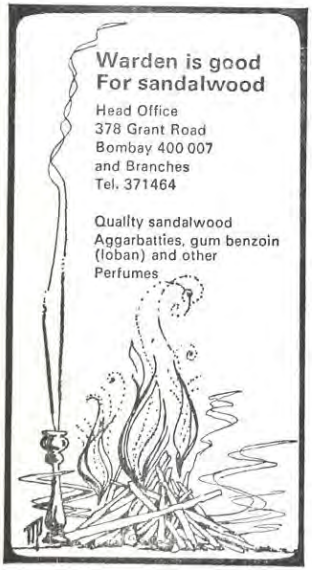
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The practice of not permitting non-Parsis to see a dead Parsi's face after a certain stage of the funeral ceremony, originated in an attempt to preserve the purity and solemnity of the ceremony when Parsis began living amidst the different peoples of India. It is doubtful if a reasonable non-Parsi would insist on breaking this custom.

Although Zoroastrians only number about 1,30,000, we see no danger to the survival of the religion as long as it is faithfully followed by its adherents. After coming to India the Parsis began to observe many of the religious practices prevailing here. In spite of education and the work of reforming bodies, the practice of worshipping Hindu, Muslim and Christian saints and deities continues.

This dual loyalty to one's own faith as well as to that of others results from a lack of knowledge and confidence in one's own religion. When a person takes the easiest course of appeasing the god or goddess of a calamity, they forget that the Creator can never be bribed by offerings or sacrifices. A true Zoroastrian, in such circumstances, would keep faith in God and let Him do what is proper for him. As Zoroaster says in his *Gathas*, "Ahura Mazda is the Judge; as He Himself would will, so let it be."

P. P. BALSARA



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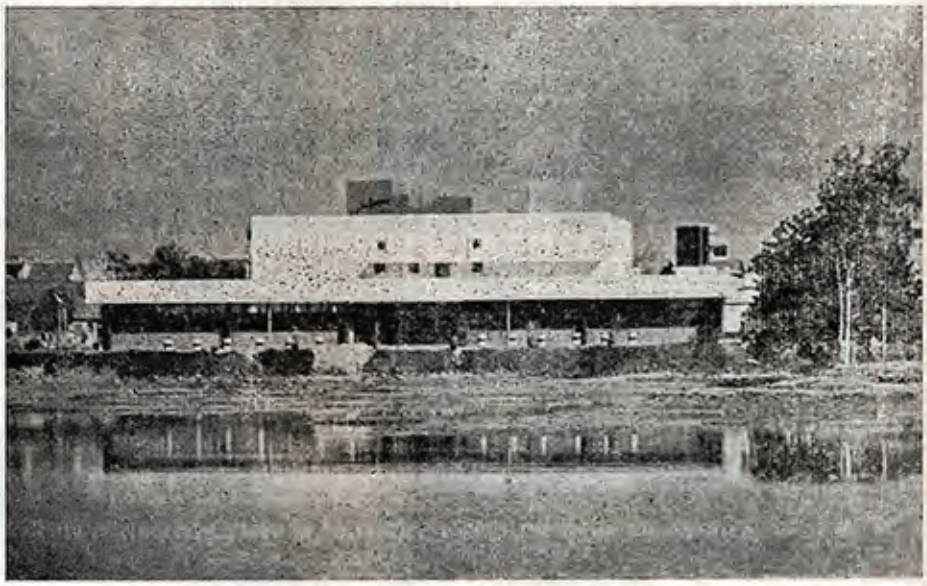
A memorial centre to honour India's pioneer industrialist, **Jamsetji Tata** was inaugurated at his birthplace, Navsari on 21st March by Prime Minister Morarji Desai.

At a gathering which included the descendents of the Tata family, directors and top personnel of the group, the chief minister of Gujarat, Babubhai Patel and other notables, the prime minister said that Tata had put into practice the principles of the trusteeship of business years before they had been enunciated by Mahatma Gandhi and that the tradition of holding income in trust for the benefit of all communities and good causes had been continued by his heirs. "At a time," Desai noted, "when the other minorities are asking for so much, the Parsis have never asked for anything for themselves."

The sleek, modern structure, a short distance from the house where Tata was born 139 years ago, has at its core a centrally air-conditioned, 896-seat auditorium designed for both film and stage presentations, with the latest technical equipment; there is also a smaller hall with a capacity of 200 which can be used for either meetings or exhibitions and a library containing literature in Gujarati and English.

The Centre, built largely from money given by various Tata concerns and individuals, also received from the Mafatlal family, five lakhs for landscaping of its seven acres and a lakh from the Navsari municipality; the land has been leased by the government of Gujarat at a nominal rupee a year. Future plans for the multi-purpose Centre include a Bal Mandir (children's centre), playground and possibly facilities for sports such as tennis, volleyball and swimming.

The Centre commemorates Tata's belief in a constructive philanthropy which does not only aid the weak and helpless but, in his own words, "lift(s) up the best and the most gifted so as to make them of the greatest service to the country." In the care of the J. N. Tata Memorial Trust, the Centre is the latest in a long line of trusts and foundations which own the bulk of the wealth gathered by the House of Tatas over four generations. The endowments have helped set up, among others, the Tata Memorial Hospital and Cancer Research Institute, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research and the National Centre for the Performing Arts.



The Tata Memorial Centre in Navsari: "a constructive philanthropy"

Doongaji Hall

Doongaji Hall, a play of a Parsi family on the decline, won 21-year-old playwright and short story writer **Cyrus Mistry** the Rs 5,000 first prize in the Sultan Padamsee Drama Awards Competition. The bearded Wilson College student, who is also the short story editor of *Debonair* magazine, noted in an interview with Eunice de Souza in *The Economic Times* that this was his first full-length play. "I'd like to deemphasize the fact that it is about Parsis," he stated in the write-up. "It is closely applicable to any minority community. I've always been interested in the Parsis as a disintegrating community with illusions about its past glory. I think it is a tragic situation, and to the extent that tragedy is possible today, this community offers possibilities for tragedy.

"There are only four non-Parsi characters in the play. They are *hamals* who come to take away the furniture. They don't say anything. But visually they present a shock after the Parsi decadence. If I write another play, I'd like to introduce non-Parsis in a more significant manner.

"I've tried to create a language for the play. I don't use Gujarati words but I've tried to evoke a sense of the Gujarati idiom, and a certain rhythm which is not an English rhythm. There is no literal translation anywhere. It's a kind of English no one would actually speak. It's an artificial language but it's necessary if the characters are not to sound unreal and stilted.

"In the stage directions I have said that the characters must dress and act in the farcial manner of an Adi Marzban play. But the theme is serious. You could call it Adi Marzban upside down."

Rise to the Occasion

Dara N. Damania has been appointed the first Indian managing director of Buckau Wolf New India Engineering Works Ltd., one of the country's premier sugar machinery manufacturing units. A 20-year veteran of the firm, Damania was general manager before his appointment and has trained in technical, organisational and company administrative work in Germany and Switzerland.

Buckau Wolf India was founded in 1957 on the initiative of Maschinenfabrik Buckau R. Wolf of West Germany, a company of 139 years standing in the field. Since then, notes a resume sent by the Pune-based firm, the company has launched an export and diversification programme under the active guidance of Damania. With exports so far valued at Rs 70 million, Buckau Wolf India has secured a major project export order for a complete sugar plant in Kedah, Malaysia, which has already finished its first crushing season, as well as an order

for a cane sugar factory in Nairobi, Kenya, which is expected to start operations in 1979. The company has also begun to manufacture spreaders, steam tube calciners and machinery for compost and brewery plants.

In Bombay, **Jehangir Shiavax Khambata,** 47, became managing director of Glaxo Limited when he took over from G. J. Medley earlier this year. (Photograph and bio-data not given.)

Honorary Surgeon

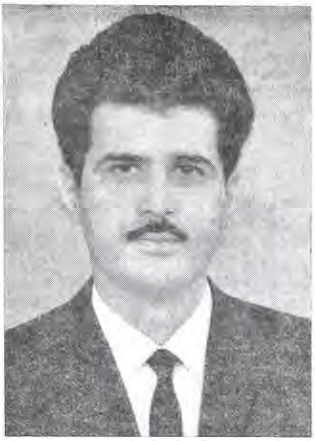
Noted cancer specialist, **Dr D. J. Jussawalla** has been appointed honorary surgeon to the President of India. Jussawalla, director and chief surgeon of the Tata Memorial Centre in Bombay, has also been chosen to represent India on the World Health Organisation (WHO) Expert Committee on cancer.

A pioneer in the field of cancer treatment and research in India, he has been on the staff of the Centre, which consists of the Tata Memorial Hospital and the Cancer Research Institute, since 1941. In 1951, Jussawalla founded the Indian Cancer Society which has been active in fighting the disease through public education, encouragement of research, early detection, new modes of treatment and rehabilitation of cancer patients.

The first chemotherapy and cancer cytology units and the first cancer detection unit at a general hospital in India, were organised by Jussawalla, as was the *Indian Journal of Cancer,* which he edits. A member of numerous medical associations, societies, and committees both in India and abroad, he is currently the chairman of the Asian Federation of Cancer and in 1968, was elected a corresponding Fellow of the Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland, a group whose members number only 50 throughout the world. Jussawalla has been director of the Tata Memorial Centre, the largest cancer hospital and research centre in Asia, since 1973.



Jussawalla: high honours



Damania: Buckau Wolf's new chief

Used Abroads

Postal stamps of Indian origin which were used in foreign countries are the subject of a 68-page book *An Introduction to India Used Abroad* by the noted philatelist, **Vispi S. Dastur.** The Rs 10 book, published by Mysore Philatelics and released by Girish Chitalia, president of the Indo-American Society in Bombay on 17th February, gives "a short description of the place, history, postal history and cancellations of each foreign abode where Indian stamps were used."

Dastur, a chartered accountant by profession, notes his interest in "Used Abroad" stamps started soon after he first became a stamp collector. "I felt there must be something more to philately than just collecting mint sheets and first day covers." He wrote the book because he felt "it would be interesting for one to know why Indian stamps were used abroad in those far-off distant lands, what were the events leading to their use in those foreign countries—whether it was a result of political agreements or army campaigns... "Used Abroads" have a special charm and intrigue."

To Cop It All

Burjor A. Minocher-Homji, a much decorated veteran of the Bombay police force was awarded the coveted President's medal for distinguished service, on Republic Day this year.

The 57-year-old assistant commissioner of police, who heads the "A" division police force of Bombay, an area covering the heart of the metropolis, is also the recipient of the Indian police medal for meritorious service, given in appreciation of his work as a sub-inspector and inspector and the Indian police medal for gallantry which he received for single-handedly rescuing a union leader from an angry crowd of rival union members, during the railway strike of 1974.

"Today, a policeman must be a bit of everything, politician, diplomat," says the burly, soft-spoken Minocher-Homji who joined the force in 1942. "Before '47, the work was more the strict 'police officer' type. Labour unrest is a very important part of police life now, not only law and order. But it is more challenging, we have to be prepared for any eventuality." The Bombay-born police officer graduated from St Xavier's College and then joined the police as a sub-inspector after 14 months training. Starting his career young, he gave up the idea of a medical career to join the police. "Who knows how I would have done as a doctor, anyway?" he laughs.

Minocher-Homji feels that people are indifferent to the police and not as amenable to discipline as they would like others to be and though crime among Parsis was once very rare it is "now a matter of course; crimes such as cheating and forgery are on a distinct rise." The law enforcement officer thinks this may be due to the fact that "respect for the family is dwindling and people think of themselves first."

Thank you, Mr Saklath

A "quiet and devoted worker" who has served the Calcutta community for over 50 years, **Rustam T. Saklath** was felicitated by the Parsi Zoroastrian Association (P.Z.A.) of Calcutta for "his long and meritorious services." At the function held at the Calcutta Parsi Club in November, the leading members of the community showered praise on the former president of the association reports the *Navroz* weekly, Calcutta's leading Gujarati journal.

Adi Rabadi, the president of the P.Z.A., noted Saklath's behind-the-scenes efforts to serve the community especially its young and to impart to them an awareness of the religion. "Despite being a keen student of

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religion he harboured no dogmas," noted Rabadi, "he kept an open mind, readily heard the other man's views and tried his best to solve the eternal controversies that plague the community." Ardesher Batlivala noted Saklath's "fantastic capacity for work and a tremendous ability of being able to speak on any topic and speak well too." Describing Saklath as an "optical illusion—a small man with the energy of an ox," Burjor Modi, joint secretary of the P. Z. A., noted Saklath was "one of the very few men who could talk some sense on our religion."

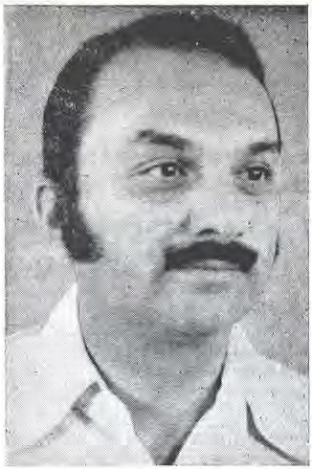
New President for Gujarat Chamber

Jehangir R. Cama, a 40-year-old Ahmedabad hotelier, has been elected president of the 3,500-member Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry, for 1978. The chamber has a constituency of over 2,000 associations across the state, representing a spectrum of trade and industrial interests.

Managing director of Cama Hotels Ltd., Cama also represents the Chamber at the Federation of Commerce and Industry in New Delhi. Among other positions, he is a member of the executive committee of the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India, president of the Ahmedabad Automobile Dealers Association and a director of the Bombay Mercantile Co-op. Bank Ltd.

Good Conduct

Pheroze Manek Mistri, a violinist



Cama: chamber head

with the Vienna State Theatres Orchestra, reached the finals of the prestigious Herbert Von Karajan International Competition for Conductors held in Berlin, last year. Performing in his first international competition, Mistri received praise from Wolfgang Streseman, manager of the Berlin Philharmonic and head of the jury, who described him as a "born conductor (whose) technical competence ... thorough musicianship and ... remarkable knowledge of the scores ... deeply impressed" the jurors.

Mistri, who is also a member of the main orchestra of the Vienna State Opera, studied violin and conducting at the Vienna Academy of Music and Drama which he entered as a J. N. Tata Scholar in 1968. Born into a family of music lovers, he began to study the piano at the age of six with Shanti Seldon, but after hearing Yehudi Menuhin play, changed to the violin which he studied with Mehli Mehta and Silloo Panthaki. After graduating from St Xavier's College, Mistri worked for a short while with a business firm but resigned to attend the Delhi School of Music where he studied conducting with Hans Joachim Kollreuter for a year.



P. S. Balsara, a director of the advertising firm Ogilvy Benson and Mather, was elected chairman of the Indian Institute of Personnel Management. (Bio-data not sent).

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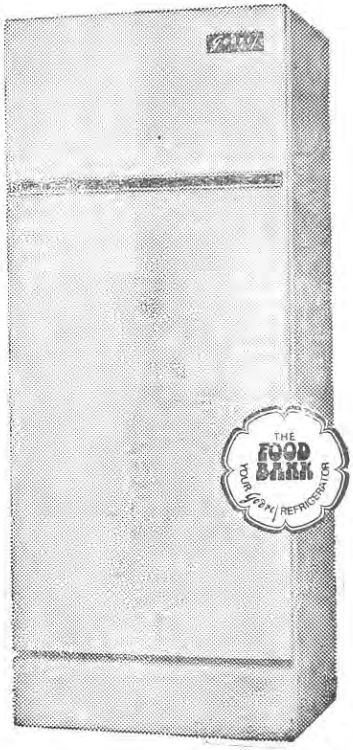
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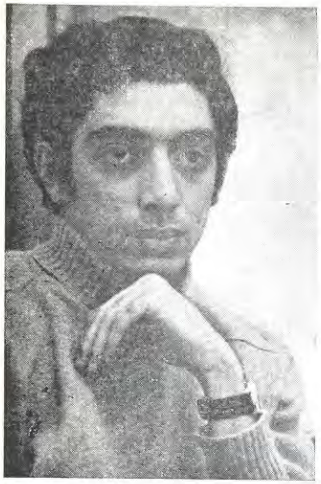
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Mistri: a "born conductor"

In 1973, Mistri led a performance of "Carmen Jones" for the Schweizer Tournes Theatre in Bochum, West Germany and last year led two concerts with the Zilina State Orchestra in Czechoslovakia and as part of his diploma examination in conducting, led the N. O. Tonkunstler Orchestra in Vienna, performing Beethoven's Fourth Symphony.

Body Language

His travels have taken dancer **Astad Deboo** to some 50 countries from the Philippines to Peru where he has performed both the classic Kathak and contemporary dance, earning himself the title of "travelling cultural ambassador of India" from the Mexican daily *El Sol de Mexico*.

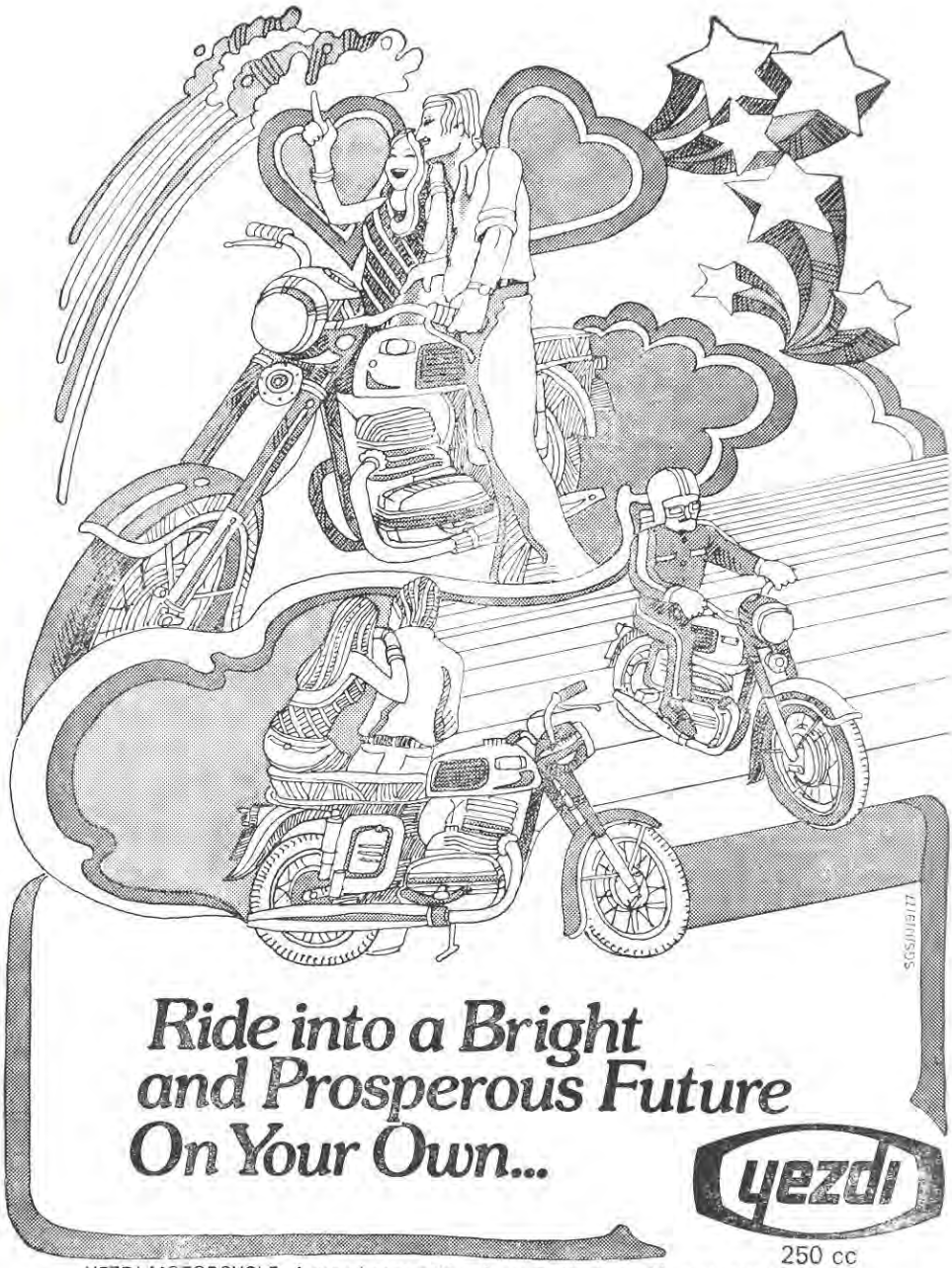
"Dance for me is communication," says the 30-year-old Deboo. "I want to get through to the audience with what I'm trying to say and contemporary dance gives one the chance to present ideas in dance form." Presently in India, three performances, for which he has choreographed Indian movements to western music and vice versa, were to be held this April under the aegis of the Max Mueller Bhavan of Calcutta. Though Deboo does not improvise on any classical dance, his years of training in Kathak—which he began at the age of six—make him "more prone to Indian forms." For the last two years, the young dancer has been studying Kathakali, the dance-drama of Kerala, whose theatricality and mythological themes appeal to him.

Deboo began his travels after graduating from Bombay's Podar College, when, after some "drifting" he decided to go to the U.S. for courses in dance and management. In Europe, however, he got some T.V. work and stayed there for almost a year before moving onto the Americas. Since then, the globe-trotting dancer has given Royal Command Performances in Japan and Thailand, performed with the British rock group, Pink Floyd, danced on a Sioux Nation Reservation in Canada and worked with rehabilitation programmes for drug addicts in Vancouver and Hong Kong—between T.V. and stage appearances.

"It's no disadvantage being a Parsi—I feel a person first," says the Navsari-born Deboo. "Its dedication that matters." Nevertheless, "its been hard" for Deboo who does all his own programming and "I don't think you can make a living in India as a professional dancer. When things go all wrong, I feel like quitting—but I love the dance."

Deboo : ideas in dance form





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The Gifts of Guiv

The largesse extended to the fledgling North American Zoroastrian associations by the Iranian millionnaire-philanthropist Arbab Rustam Guiv amounts to almost one million dollars (approximately 84 lakh rupees) with a gift of $1,54,000 to the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC) "for the purchase of a piece of property for building a Zoroastrian Centre in the Chicago area. At this time we have narrowed our search to a 20-acre lot in Lake Forest, a suburb of Chicago. If the land is deemed suitable for construction we will finalize the contract within 45 days," notes Rohinton Rivetna, the Association's secretary.

Guiv had earlier gifted $1,80,000 to the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York (ZAGNY) for a community centre in New Rochelle and had set aside $6,00,000 to the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario for the purchase of land and for construction of a community centre.

The Arbab Rustam Guiv Darbe Mehr Zoroastrian Temple in New Rochelle had its opening ceremony on 3rd December with a formal dedication held a week later on 10th December ("Zoroastrians Abroad," *Parsiana*, January 1978). About an hour's drive from New York city, the Darbe Mehr or Door of Love is the first centre of its kind in North America and has facilities for community get-togethers, prayer meetings, religious classes and social gatherings.

A special 14-page ZAGNY newsletter, with photographs of the Darbe Mehr and the guests present, published to commemorate the opening of the Darbe Mehr, notes that the board of trustees consists of three representatives of the Arbab Rustam Guiv Foundation and three from ZAGNY. Though the Foundation will provide an additional $4,000 annually towards the upkeep of the Darbe Mehr, the ZAGNY treasurer's report for March 1978 notes, "We cannot maintain this beautiful property through $15 membership or through marginal surplus of bi-annual functions". As a result, the ZAGNY membership fees have been raised by $5 and a Darbe Mehr fund has raised over $22,000 from well-wishers.

In Toronto, Guiv and his wife Morvarid accompanied by Dr Rustom Sarfeh—one of the people instrumental in drawing Guiv's attention to a community centre in New York—and his wife met members of the Zoroastrian community of Ontario at a thanksgiving *jashan* on 3rd December on which occasion he announced his munificent gift.

The centre, to be named the Zoroastrian Centre—Mehraban Guiv





Above:
The Darbe Mehr in New Rochelle, N. Y.

Below: The jashan held on December 3, 1977. The priests were Darius Antia, Noshir Hormuzdiar Noshir and Sam Karanjia, Parvez Patel and Hoshang Unvala.
Seated at the back are (right to left): Madame Morvarid Guiv, Dr and Ms Rostam Sarfeh, Arbab Rustam Guiv and ZAGNY President Erach Munshi.

Darbe Mehr after Guiv's deceased nephew, will have a board of trustees which as in New York will consist of three appointed by the Foundation, namely Kawus M. Nanavati, Keki Shroff and Jamshed Mavalwala and three elected by ZSO. Guiv was made an honorary member of ZSO and presented with a scroll.

History in the Making

The publication of a 150-page history of the Zoroastrian Society of British Columbia, which completed 10 years as a registered body this year, has been suggested by the Society's honorary secretary, Jamshed K. Pavri, at the board of directors meeting. "There are many who do not even know how our *anjuman* was formed, what it has done during these years, very few have copies of our Constitution," recorded the minutes of the meeting held on 27th March. "At least for the sake of our posterity... it would be a good idea to chronicle the events of the last decade." The board of directors also decided to "prepare an updated list of community members and well-wishers."

The British Columbia society, whose assets include 72 burial lots in the Garden of the Four Prophets at Valley View Memorial Gardens, has had a *Fravahar* die prepared for the grave markers at the cost of $160 (approximately Rs 1,400) donated by Ms Lal Varza. The minutes also note that the number of Zoroastrians from Iran "has increased greatly" and with several "retired and self-employed mature persons" among them, it was hoped that at least one of them would become a director of the Society and that as a group, there would be "greater participation" and "sharing of views".

Among various other activities, the Society's tenth annual report mentions that money was sent for *muktad* ceremonies in London; money and braille slates were donated to the Victoria Memorial High School for the Blind in Bombay and around Rs 2,000 was sent to the Youth's Own Union in Bombay for the *navjote* ceremonies of two needy children; although the Book Project, operated for the last six years, has been abandoned "because of great inconvenience caused in the Bombay customs". The *Jamshedi Navroz* celebrations held this year by the Society were filmed by a Canadian T.V. team which was producing a one-hour documentary on the Zoroastrians.

Jamshedi Navroz

Mazdayasna 1347, a 14-page photocopied calendar with 21st March as the New Year, has been published by Dr Jehan Bagli, past president of the Zoroastrian Association of Quebec and editor of its newsletter, *Gavashni*. "Computing the year according to the seasons (*fasal*) is the most realistic way of calculating our year," writes Bagli ("Zoroastrians Abroad", *Parsiana*, Oct-Nov '77). Bound in clear plastic, the calendar for the year 1347 A.Y. (After *Yazdgard*), corresponding to the Gregorian years 21 March 1978 to 20 March 1979, goes through the 12 months from *Fravardin* to *Spendarmad*, along with the Gregorian conversions and has notes on each page explaining the weekly and *gah* (daily) time divisions.

By adding a day every four years, the calendar keeps Jamshedi Navroz constant on the auspicious day of the vernal equinox "when spring begins in the Northern Hemisphere and when the sun appears in the north polar

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regions after a long period of darkness," notes Bagli in an introduction to the calendar. He further explains, "Only by such time reckoning (will) all the *gahambar* ceremonies and the *jashan* of *rapithvan* properly coincide with the seasons of nature. It is in the interest of unity... that Zarathoshties must begin their New Year on the day of the vernal equinox, as was done by our ancestors."

Mazdayasna 1347 can be got by sending one dollar to The Zoroastrian Association of Quebec, 12 Allancroft Road, Kirkland, P.Q., H9J 2G9, Canada.

Easing the pain

A two-page questionnaire "listing information which we think might enable us to afford the maximum amount of help possible, in the event of death or serious injury" has been sent to members of the Australian Zoroastrian Association (AZA) in December. "We have, in the past, had the misfortune of losing members of our community in Sydney," noted AZA president, Gulu Bilimoria in a letter accompanying the questionnaire. "These happenings are tragic, but they do occur, and it may be wise to make arrangements which would make sure that our wishes are adhered to in this very important matter, and also to make sure that everything can be handled as efficiently and painlessly as possible." The idea has been put forward by Pervez Marshall at the last annual general meeting of the association and was welcomed by the general body.

Aside from seeking information on the names and addresses of close family members, the questionnaire also asks for "instructions for disposal of body or ashes", whether "prayers (are) to be arranged in Australia or abroad," if any parts of the body are to be donated, whether the member has nominated a legal guardian for his children and the location of the original copy of his will; members have the option of enclosing a copy of the will.

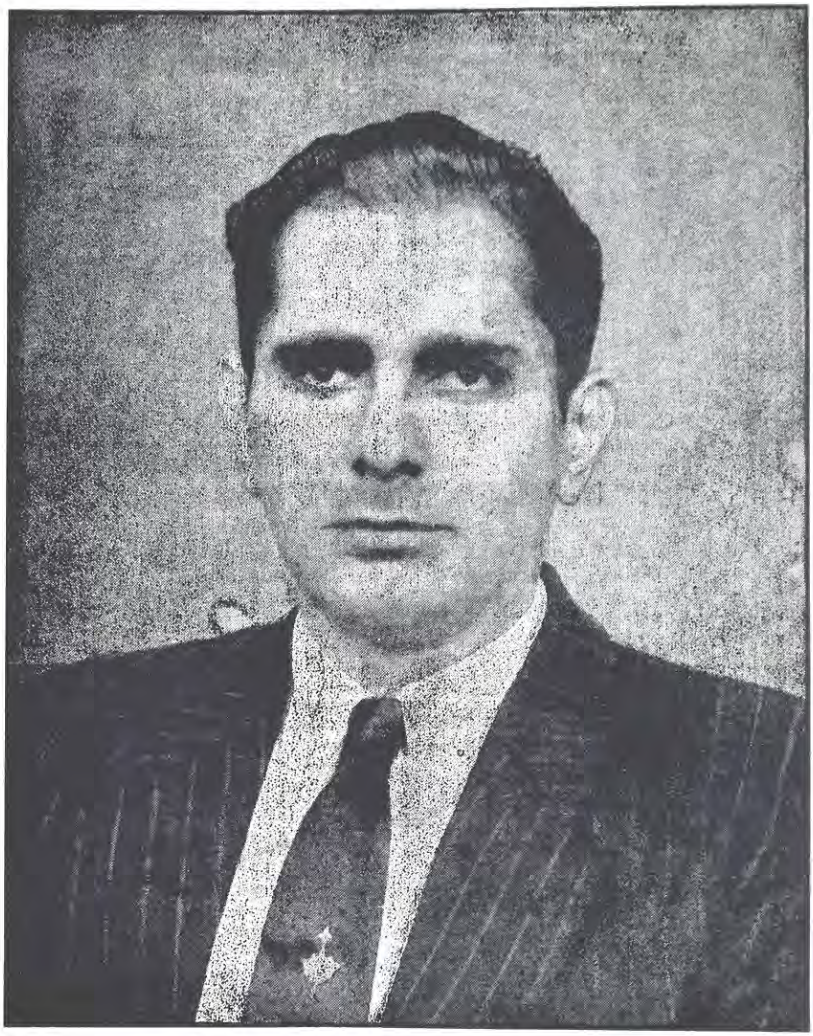
Noting that members are not obligated to answer all questions, Ms Bilimoria writes that the documents are to be delivered in a sealed envelope which will be "kept in safe custody by one of our trustees and will be opened by the trustees/committee only if and when the information is required."

The India Connection

In order to maintain close ties with the Zoroastrians in India, the Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago (ZAC) has appointed Noshir Irani, a marketing consultant who was active in the organization of the Third World Zoroastrian Congress and Dadi Mistry, a trustee of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman and a member of the executive council of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, as the representatives of the Association in India "to act on behalf of the Association under the direction of the board."

ZAC has also elected a new board of directors for a two-year term, namely: Bahram Farhadieh, president; Kersi Antia, head priest; Noshir Daruwala, vice-president-cum-treasurer; Rohinton Rivetna, secretary; Hoshang Khambatta, assistant secretary; Dilshad Antia, Godrej Billimoria, Darius Captain, Boman Damkevala, Yezdi Engineer, Roshan Guard, Rusi Gandhi, Hooshmand Khadkhodian, Sarosh Khambatta and Dara Rivetna.





In Memoriam

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The Third World Zoroastrian Congress:

A COMMUNAL CATHARSIS

In the end there was the applause, loud and sustained. The Third World Zoroastrian Congress had come to a successful, albeit uneventful, conclusion. No momentous decisions were taken, no plan of action chalked out but for four and a half days, over 1,500 Zoroastrians from all over the world had congregated in Bombay, exchanged views and beliefs, revived old ties. The diverse gathering of young and old, conservative and liberal, people with differing accents and outlooks, dressed in attire ranging from sarees to minis and *daglas* to bush shirts, voiced their concern and aspirations for the community. From the lectures to the peppery three-minute discourses of the delegates, a sense of purpose and mission was evident, a belief that whatever the community's problems, if people made a united and concerted effort, all difficulties could be overcome.

The Congress was historical not only because it was held after 14 years but also on account of the unhappy developments that lay in its wake: the break up 17 days later of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India (FPZAI) under whose auspices the meet was held. The clash of personalities that occurred on the floor of Bombay's Sir Cowasjee Jehangir Hall snapped the slender ties between the democratically elected anjumans and the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP) which played a pivotal role in the organization of the Congress. Thus the Congress that initially nobody wanted and which later became a rallying flag, belied its great expectations.

Inauguration

On a cool, pleasant January 4 evening, amid the glare of spotlights and whirling cameras, the Congress was inaugurated by the Vice-President of India, B. D. Jatti, at Bombay's Birla Matushri Sabhagar hall. Speaking before a distinguished gathering of the Zoroastrian community leaders and delegates, Jatti, Maharashtra Governor Sadiq Ali and Maharashtra Chief Minister Vasantrao Patil, praised the small community's multi-faceted achievements and contribution to the nation. "The high ideals of the Zoroastrian faith are reflected in the manner in which Parsis who came to settle in our land a thousand years ago have developed over the centuries," said Jatti. "They have shown a pioneering spirit, a progressive outlook and exemplary self-reliance." Though there were "reports of increasing poverty among Parsis, of more people seeking doles from Parsi Trusts and of the plight of Parsis living in rural areas...these are problems that face all communities in the world and a certain measure of dynamism is required in handling them. I am sure both by tradition and training, the Parsi community is quite capable of generating the required resources and dynamism to meet the challenge successfully."

Governor Ali also noted, "You have undoubtedly some problems connected with your economic, social and cultural life which you will naturally like to consider so that you can better serve your community and the country. You are eager and anxious to increase your contribution to the growth and progress of India in many fields. The fact that you are numerically small has not and indeed, need not depress or frighten you. Ultimately, it is the quality of life and the pursuit of excellence which count. If you have a wide vision, clear heads and stout hearts, the world is yours; at any rate, you have your proper and legitimate place in it. You may well keep your identity within a wider loyalty to India and its great goals and aspirations. India is a free, secular democracy in which our Constitution and the idealism that we have inherited from India's struggle for freedom and our ancient heritage assures safety to the smallest minority community in the country. For all these and other reasons, all our good will and good wishes are with you as you all settle down to your deliberations."

Boman K. Boman-Behram, president of the Congress, the FPZAI and the Bombay Parsi Panchayat, noting that the theme of the Congress was "The Zoroastrian Community in a Changing World," said it was "time that we, of the Zoroastrian community, made an assessment of the situation and the challenges it poses and adjust ourselves to the new world that is springing up around us." The chairman, who had suffered a heart attack a couple of days prior to the January 4th inauguration and did not attend any of the following days' sessions, urged the delegates to discuss issues "in a restrained manner without acrimony and with tolerance...the prime purpose of the Congress is to bring together Zoroastrians from all parts of the world. In other words, it is a search for Zoroastrian unity."

Jamshed N. Guzder, the chairman of the Congress's executive committee, a trustee of the BPP and one of the major forces behind the Congress, noted that though the single largest concentration of Zoroastrians was in India, "certain problems that are peculiar to India alone should not be allowed to monopolize the attention of the Congress... may I, therefore, urge my fellow Parsi Zoroastrians not to forget that we are in fact the hosts and that this is a World Zoroastrian Congress and not a Parsi Zoroastrian Congress." Messages were also received from the President and Prime Minister of India and the Shah of Iran; the latter, whose message was read by Dr Farhang Mehr, vice-chancellor of Pahlavi University, Shiraz, stressed the ancient ties between the Zoroastrians and Iran and hoped "that as a result of your deliberations in the areas directly relating to the Zoroastrian community and its history, a better understanding of the glorious, ancient Iranian culture and civilization will be achieved."

Format

The next morning by 9 o'clock the delegates gathered at the three-tiered Sir Cowasjee Jehangir Hall for the first of the four-day sessions. The subjects scheduled for the Congress pertained to the priestly class, rel-

igious and secular education of the young, a social and cultural survey of the community, economic uplift of Zoroastrians and the formation of a world Zoroastrian organization; a session was also reserved for foreign speakers.

The format of the Congress required the speakers to deliver a summary of their papers, which in most cases had been distributed prior to the talk and then for the audience to voice their views, with each individual being permitted a maximum of three minutes. Many of the speakers, instead of summarizing their talks, tended to read from their papers, making the first half of many sessions tedious. The papers, with the occasional exception, did not throw much new light on the subjects tackled as most of the speakers relied on the information already available or limited to their individual study. Many of the papers amounted to little more than the voicing of the speaker's particular prejudices and points of view. These were followed in most cases by the voicing of even greater prejudices by the members of the audience. Thus, for example, many speakers, lay and learned, stated that Parsi girls were smarter and more hard-working than Parsi boys though no one cited any reference or study to substantiate this point. On the basis of this uncorroborated statement, numerous speakers then put forward their suggestions on how to motivate Parsi boys and increase their IQs. Other allegations put forth as facts claimed that the Congress was attended only by the rich and the middle-class but not the poor, that it was the poor who were religious but not the well-to-do and that the Congress represented the liberal elements of the community but not the orthodoxy. In some cases, the Congress served as a duelling ground, as in the verbal exchange between Federation Vice-President Shiavax Nargolwala and BPP Trustee Jal Vimadalal over some legal technicality. The tendency to generalize and digress manifested itself throughout the meet, marring the proceedings and preventing the Congress from serving as a forum for the dissemination of factual information.

Subjects

The choice of subjects, chosen largely to avoid controversy, also restricted the intellectual outpourings of the Congress. Aside from the session reserved for the foreign speakers, four of the remaining six subjects had been discussed threadbare at the Second World Zoroastrian Congress held 14 years prior, with no gainful results. Thus speakers instead of talking on subjects they were most knowledgeable in, were required to speak on one of the set topics: A nuclear physicist spoke on the problems of education, lawyers spoke on social and cultural events, a politician spoke on economic uplift and representatives of anjumans who could have thrown light on the state of their communities, instead spoke, chaired or served as rapporteurs on general topics. Thus, though it was billed as a world Congress there was no report on the Parsis of Poona, the second largest concentration of Parsis in India if not the world, no report on the plight of the Parsis of Gujarat and though representatives from Australia, Pakistan, Iran, England, U.S.A, Canada and other parts of the world attended, few if any, were called to speak specifically on their communities. As a result, no clear picture of the world Zoroastrian community evolved at the Congress. The meeting was in many ways, a Bombay Congress more than a Zoroastrian or even a Parsi one.

Despite earlier misgivings and the occasional outburst, the "workshop" discussions were conducted without acrimony. The chairmen of the various topics handled the audience with



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expertise. Whilst subjects such as the priestly class or religious education were not expected to provoke much controversy, item number five, a "Social and cultural survey of Zoroastrians in the recent past and suggestions for the future," over whose inclusion the liberal and orthodox section of the community had been heatedly debating, went off smoothly thanks to the adroit chairmanship of Nadir Modi, a prominent Bombay lawyer. In those sessions where the chairman, however, threw his weight around or permitted certain speakers to exceed the time limit or stopped a speaker before his time was up, the public voiced their outrage. Thus when Dr Farhang Mehr, chairman of the sixth topic permitted Homi Taleyarkhan, India's former ambassador to Libya, to exceed the three-minute limit to state his views on setting up a world Zoroastrian body, and then cut short Shiavax Nargolwala, the innocuous session ended up far stormier than the ones dealing with the so-called "controversial" subjects.

While the abrupt withdrawal of the BPP from the Federation 17 days after the Congress, made the sixth topic, "The setting up of an organisation to provide a link between world Zoroastrians and continuity of action after each World Zoroastrian Congress" an exercise in futility, the Congress did demonstrate the influence of overseas Zoroastrians, especially the Iranian delagates, on the Bombay leaders. Unlike the other liberal anjumans in India with which the BPP is constantly at battle, the Bombay trustees paid heed to the views of the influential and moneyed Iranian Zoroastrians. Just the mention of the millionaire-philantrophist Rustam Guiv's name was sufficient to elicit applause from the audience. But the VIP treatment did not extend to all the foreign invitees. Godrej Sidhwa of Karachi who spoke on the priestly class, reportedly could not even get a pass for his wife to attend the inauguration and though an apology was offered, it was obvious there were many lacunas in the organization and conduct of the Congress. Perhaps, the most glaring deficiency was the lack of sufficient copies of the papers, as the organizers had expected only about 1,000 to enroll.

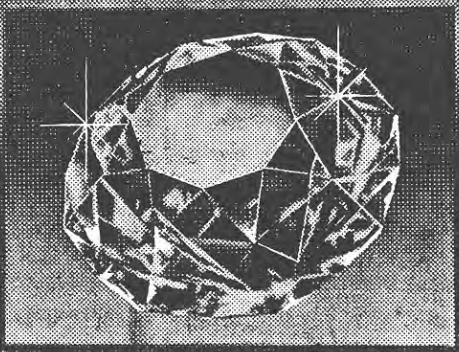
Sidelights

The evening programmes, which provided welcome relief from the daily talkathons, included two *nataks*, one by Yezdi Karanjia and his troupe from Surat and the other by Freny Ponda and Gool Gandhi; an audio-visual slide show organized by Homai Pudumjee depicting a stylized history of Zoroastrianism, followed by a fashion show and dinner. The other sidelights of the Congress included a host of stalls selling items of interest to the delegates. These ranged from out-of-print books on Zoroastrianism collected for the occasion by Edal Cassad, an enterprising businessman who covered the books in plastic and added a generous price mark-up, to a portrait of Zoroaster painted by a young Gujarati artist, Ravi Trilok who took orders for paintings on Zoroastrian themes. Several publications such as *The Bombay Samachar*, *The Kaiser-I-Hind*, *The Jam-e-Jamshed*, *Youth Times*, *Himmat*, *Motif* and others, brought out special issues on the Congress and the Parsis. Numerous individuals and groups also printed and distributed literature of varying shades of religiosity. Others wishing to convey their plans occasionally resorted to the microphone during the recesses until they were shooed away by the organizers.

Though generally the Congress was well organized, the loudest applause was reserved for the critics of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat. Whether they were unjustly accused of being "old fossils" or justly attacked for their anachronistic election system, the crowds cheered wildly. The two



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speakers who received the loudest ovations were Burjor Antia, a noted Bombay lawyer who espoused the orthodox point of view and whose paper was the only one (inadvertently) not to carry the remark, "The views expressed in the paper are the views of the author and not the views of the organizers" and Shiavax Nargolwala, the liberal president of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman who attacked the BPP leadership and was termed "The Man of the Congress" by *The Bombay Samachar*. Thus while the sympathies of the audience lay largely with the orthodoxy, they judged events and speakers on merit.

But perhaps, the individual who impressed the gathering the most with his deft handling of affairs, his concern to see that everyone received a fair hearing and his attempt to keep all factions together, was Jamshed Guzder. When the conclusions of the rapporteurs were being read out, it was Guzder who asked the crowd whether the summations accurately represented the sentiments of the house, especially so in subject five where there was a controversy over whether the audience approved or disapproved of accepting the children of Parsi mothers and non-Parsi fathers into the community.

Bouquet

Guzder noted that criticism could serve a constructive purpose and asked members of the audience to bring their problems to him and his colleagues. He then offered thanks on behalf of the organizers to the large number of people who had voluntarily contributed their time, effort, and money to make the Congress a success, especially the much maligned staff of the BPP. In a gesture that will be long remembered for its genuineness and simplicity, he offered a red rose to two of the Panchayat's and the community's loyal workers, Ms Gool Tata and Ms Sheroo Master. With the vast gathering singing *Chaiye Hame Zarthosti*, the Congress came to an end and achieved what many doubted it could have done, a sense of oneness, albeit shortlived.

Summaries of the paper topics will be published in the next issue.

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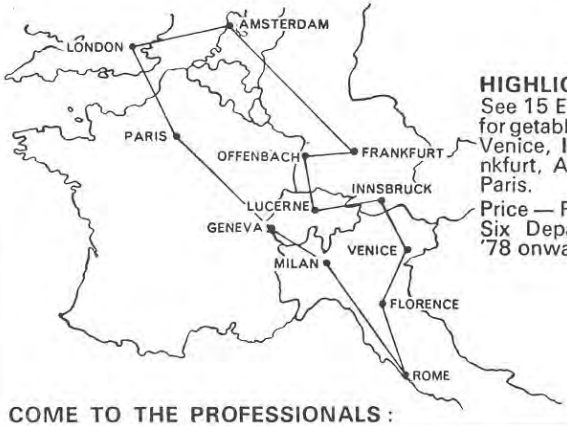
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A Matter of Regret

Upon the trustees of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat withdrawing from the Federation of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India on 25th January this year ("The Big Lie", *Parsiana,* Feb. 1978), Shiavax Nargolwala, vice-president of the Federation of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India and president of the Delhi Parsi Anjuman, sent a letter to the various member anjumans of the Federation. In the course of the letter, he requested that the executive secretary of the Federation, Commander N. H. Vacha, convene a meeting of the executive committee in April. We carry below a slightly abridged and edited text of Nargolwala's letter.

I have received a letter dated 27 January 1978, signed by B. K. Boman-Behram as Chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, and addressed to "The Panchayets and Anjumans affiliated to the Federation of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India" and enclosing therewith a copy of the resolutions passed by the Board of Trustees at their meeting held on 25 January 1978.

The said letter and the copy of the resolutions have been received by me in an envelope addressed to me by name as President, Delhi Parsi Anjuman. The manner in which the resolutions have been passed, circulated and publicized (particularly in the *Jam-e-Jamshed of* 2nd February) without any prior notice or communication to the Federation of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, is a matter of surprise and regret.

It is a matter of surprise that the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and the Trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, who are the original founders and co-sponsors of the Federation, to whom and to whose Trustees pride of position has been given in the Federation and who have been concerned directly and closely with all the activities of the Federation, should purport to withdraw and discontinue from the membership of the Federation, without having expressed any of the grievances contained in their resolutions at any time prior thereto at any meeting of the Federation or its Executive Council and contrary to the spirit and the letter of the Memorandum and Rules and Regulations of the Federation, which contain no provision for the resignation of a Member-Anjuman once it has joined the Federation.

It is a matter of regret that the Trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet who took a prominent part, under the auspices of the Federation, in holding the Third World Zoroastrian Congress and who represented to the delegates the right to freely and frankly express their views and to objectively consider the same, should now state that this constituted attacks on the credibility and prestige of the Punchayet, without specifying the same and without pointing out which attacks were unwarranted or unjustified. It is not understood how the Trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, which is a Member of the Federation, (a body) which was founded with the joint co-operation of the then Trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet and other major Anjumans and in which the present Trustees have a full representation, should suddenly say that the Federation does not serve any useful purpose or has failed to achieve the objects for which it was founded. In fact, the Federation is the only body and the apex body which brings together the Anjumans and Punchayets of Parsi Zoroastrians throughout the country. It would be a mistake on the part of the present Trustees to think that they would serve the interests of the community by withdrawing from, and discontinuing their membership of the Federation at a time when the Parsi community has become highly conscious of matters pertaining to its progress and welfare and is in a mood to have a free and frank dialogue to sort out pressing problems. The action of the (Bombay) Parsi Punchayet Trustees can only be a shirking of responsibility at the time when it is most needed.

The action of the (Bombay) Parsi Panchayat trustees can only be a shirking of responsibility at the time when it is most needed.

In view of the fact that the Executive Council of the Federation was to hold its meeting in Bombay on the 25 and 26 March 1978 as resolved at the last meeting of the Executive Council held at Poona, when all the member-Trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet were present, and furthermore that the Executive Council will meet in the course of the next month or so, I do not propose to go into this matter *at any length* at this stage as it would not be proper to do so—as it was not proper for the Trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet, without first informing the Federation of their decision to withdraw, and without permitting the Executive Council of the Federation to meet and frankly discuss matters, to have circulated and publicized their unilateral decision. I may, however, be permitted to make the following brief observations:

You, as Member Anjumans, are fully aware of the useful purpose which the Federation has served since its first Executive Council Meeting of July 1973 and the extent to which it has begun to achieve the objects for which it was formed. Without the Federation, there would not have been the brotherhood and sense of unity which the Federation has fostered through periodic meetings of its Executive Council and its General Body and the various regional conferences held throughout India. Without the Federa-



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tion, there would have been no Third World Zoroastrian Congress which brought together Zoroastrians from all over the world in a common cause and in a most friendly spirit. Without the Federation, consideration of important problems such as the amelioration of the priestly class and representations to the Government on the Adoption Bill, the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, Parsi Succession Laws, religious education, etc., would not have been initiated. I gave evidence before the Select Committee of Parliament, to save the pre-1962 Communal Trusts from income tax. The book, *The Parsis* was brought out by the National Book Trust on the initiative of the Federation. The Federation has also started a journal of high quality, *Rah-e-Asha*. Such examples can be multiplied.

Whatever progress has been achieved, has been in sharp contrast to the past lethargy displayed by the Trustees of the Parsi Punchayet, Bombay. It has been alleged that the activities of the Federation are sowing seeds of discord in the community. The factual position is exactly to the contrary. All decisions and resolutions of the Executive Council and the General Body of the Federation have been unanimous *without a single dissenting vote*. The Trustees of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet have been a party to all these decisions. There has been a spirit of give-and-take between holders of different views and the success of the Third World Zoroastrian Congress is living proof of the unity and brotherhood assiduously fostered by the Federation. On the other hand, the recent history of the functioning of the Parsi Punchayet, Bombay, is full of examples of in-fighting amongst the Trustees and resignations of eminent persons like Advocate P. P. Khambatta and Shiavax Vakil, and the failure of the antiquated election procedure to throw up really competent and devoted Trustees—no doubt with some rare exceptions!

The last allegation that unwarranted and unjustifiable attacks on the credibility and prestige of the Parsi Punchayet of Bombay were made by responsible representatives of members of the federation is equally false. As is well known, participants in the Third World Zoroastrian Congress attended in their *individual* capacities and not as representatives of Member Anjumans. It was made amply clear that the views expressed by the delegates were their own and were in no way to be regarded as the views of the community, the Parsi Punchayet of Bombay or the Federation. This was made clear by B. K. Boman-Behram, Chairman of the Parsi Punchayet, himself in his letter dated 23 December 1977, to the Secretary of the Bombay Zoroastrian Jashan Committee. In fact, at the concluding session of the World Congress, J. N. Guzder, a Trustee of the Parsi Punchayet, Bombay, who was in the Chair, welcomed criticisms and suggestions for the better working of the Parsi Punchayet, Bombay, and promised to consider them dispassionately. The criticism made of the working of the Parsi Punchayet, Bombay, came not from any Member Anjumans as such but rather from the Parsi citizens of Bombay, particularly the younger generation. Thus the reasons given by the Parsi Punchayet for its withdrawal are not *bona fide* or genuine. On the contrary, it has been alleged from some quarters—not without substance—that the move of the Chairman of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet was *inter alia* prompted by his political ambition of getting elected to the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly with the support of the orthodox sections of the community in his constituency.

I appeal to all the Member Anjumans affiliated to the Federation to look at the problem frankly and objectively and not to be swayed or pressurised by the circular letter and resolutions of the Trustees of the Parsi Punchayet, Bombay; to insist on a full and frank discussion and to examine the reasons and the decision of the Bombay Parsi Punchayet to withdraw, after which the full facts would be placed before the members of the community to judge.

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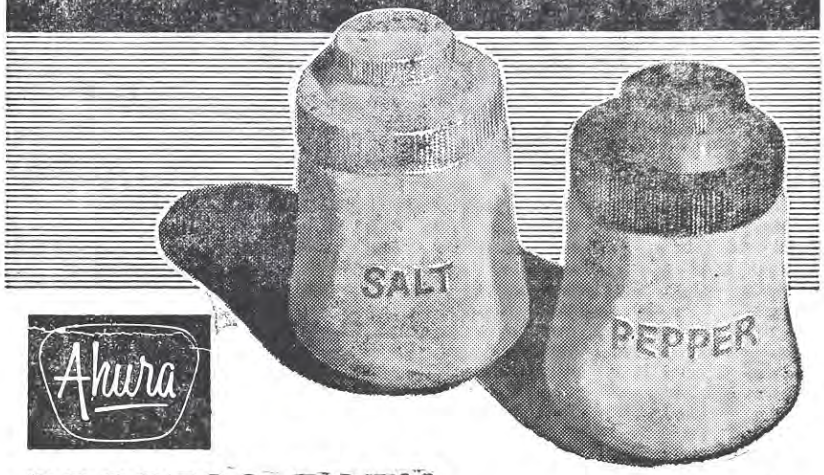
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Impressions of the Third World Zoroastrian Congress

By Asphandiar D. Moddie

Ironically, after the Third World Zoroastrian Congress I found myself taking a train to Cochin—the home of the last remnants of endogamous Jews and also of the Syrian Christians. The Jews, who reputedly migrated to India's West coast after the fall of the Temple, are now a pale handful, reflecting a major concern of the Zoroastrians at the Congress—survival; the second are confidently growing with faith, with inter-marriage, with conversion.

In a recent issue (Aug-Nov '77) *Parsiana* raised the question, "Is the Third World Zoroastrian Congress necessary?" Seven contributors between the ages of 18 and 72 then thought it necessary. In the event, it proved not only necessary, but useful; at times instructive and elevating, at others depressing or comic. In this, the largest assembly of Zoroastrians in one and a half millennia, there was inevitably, an exhibition of the best and the worst. On the whole, however, it was a worthwhile, educative experience and hopefully, a landmark for both the individual Zoroastrian and for his many organisations, including the proposed world body.

At many a doorway and inside the Sir Cowasji Jehangir Hall, one heard the question, "What will come of the Congress?" One can only guess at the answers. Many Zoroastrians—I almost said the silent majority, but in such an articulate gathering that may be the wrong term—must have taken home a better understanding of the religion, history and problems of this brave little community scattered all over the world. At the level of the groups of pro and anti-changers there was a free and fair exchange of ideas, without verbal violence or disruption. While there was agreement to disagree, there was also agreement to pursue the common goals of spiritual and material survival, along with the best contributions to the societies we live in. This was a concern shared by all and the ardent spirit of Parsi and Zoroastrian societies abroad to keep the flame alight whilst adjusting to a changing world, came through in speaker after speaker. Perhaps the adjustment to change was hardest in India, especially western India.

Parents, I am sure, went away with a greater sense of responsibility for the upbringing of their children in the best traditions of Zoroastrian faith and culture. But the priests must have wondered: what beyond words for our promised welfare and security? The laity must have similarly wondered: what beyond words in our expectations of priests as more than reciters of prayers and performers of ritual? Perhaps the biggest question mark in people's minds was: what beyond speeches at the organisational levels? If the organisations do not act more purposefully now, the demand for electoral reforms will grow. One implicit message to the community's managers was, "Get on with the job or get out."

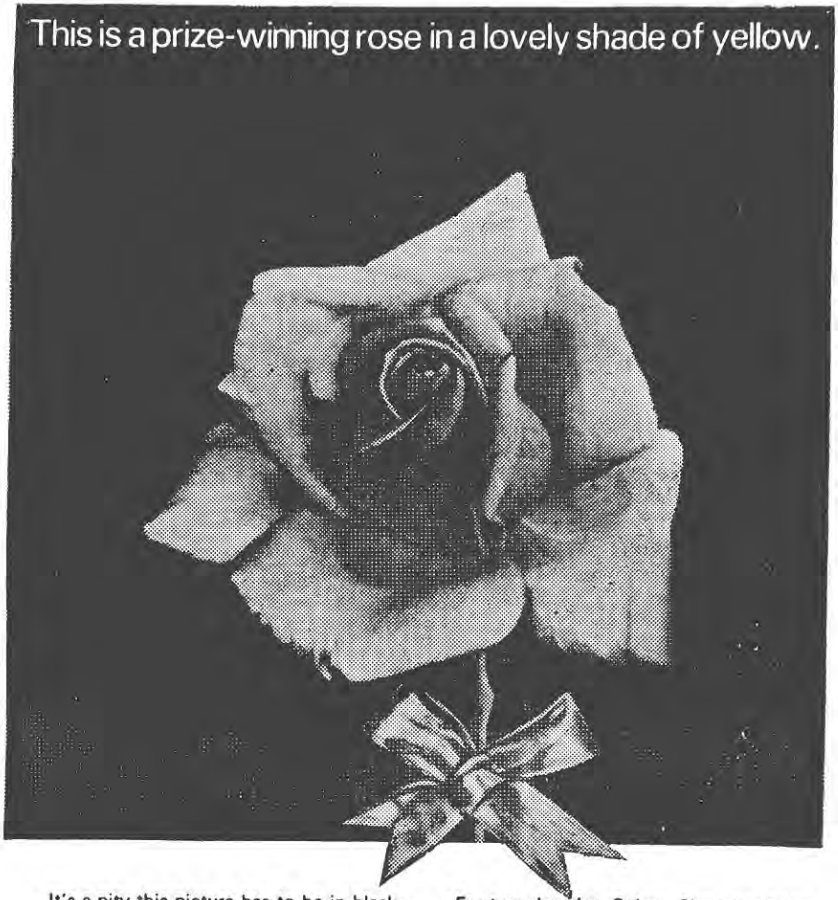
There was a sense of euphoria at the Congress, constantly below the surface but easily bursting through into loud and repeated cheers. The euphoria fed on things such as the Congress being, according to one speaker, "the largest meeting of Zoroastrians in the world" and a miniscule community felt a sense of size and strength—the miracle of survival after 1,300 years, and the considerable achievements of Zoroastrians in the last 200 years in so many fields, in so many countries, but especially India and Iran and now the promise of their repetition in the west caused breasts to swell in pride and clapping hands resounded through the spacious hall. It seemed their "finest hour"; but euphoria went a little too far beyond that. There were impassioned pleas for the purity of the racial stock, the "Aryan" stock. Never did so little genetics go so far! For a moment one wondered whether one was at a Zoroastrian Congress or at a stud farm. No one seemed to remember a man who made the same claims only a generation ago: Adolf Hitler. No one remembered one of the greatest biologists of the age, Sir Julian Huxley, who quite apart from the terrible consequences of Nazi genetic claims, disproved them on scientific grounds.

So heady was the stuff at the Congress that it even lead to a moment of inspired revelation. Fervent femininity rose on the highest tier of the hall, covered the head with the sari and proclaimed in a voice choked with emotion, "This is not the voice of Zoroastrians, this is the voice of Zoroaster!" Whereupon the chairman calmly called, "Next speaker please", and euphoria oozed out as air from a child's balloon.

While the educational, economic and social conditions of Zoroastrians exercised nearly all, the Iranian and expatriate Parsi communities showed a robust, realistic and rational approach to these issues. There was a sense of confidence about what they were doing. One did not get the same impression from Parsis in India. There certainly seemed to be a lack of appreciation that the ends of all—the preservation of the spirit of Zoroastrianism and the progress of Zoroastrian peoples along Zoroastrian principles—were the same. There also seemed to be a lack of understanding over means, between the changers and non-changers, or should one say, adapters and non-adapters? Whatever the terms used, there did not appear to be any breakthrough in a reasonable spirit to an *Asha* (order) where both could find a meeting of ideas and souls.

Perhaps a mammoth Congress is not the right place to expect such things. Can we find a more congenial place for a meeting of people who share basic goals? The Parsi Zoroastrians need healers of the spirit more than they need anything else and such people need to be on *panchayats* and in positions of leadership. The path

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to hell is paved not only with good intentions, it is also paved with extremism.

A restlessness of the spirit seemed in the conservative school of thought to focus on mixed marriages and conversions; in the other on electoral reforms, interpretations of scriptures in a modern idiom which youth particularly, could find relevant; on imaginative, educational aids for these purposes and on the role of parents and priests in "keeping the flame alight." "A good mother is worth a hundred school masters", said Dastur Minochehr-Homji to loud approval. The underlying fear of the first school was "alien and western influences" from which they exhorted their co-religionists to "turn back." Strangely, there was no answer to this point. Perhaps, because most knew in their bones that all progressive communities must go forward with the times, retaining of course, the most valuable of their faith. The very traditional migrants from Gujarat to Bombay and other cities of the world, demonstrated that there can be no turning back.

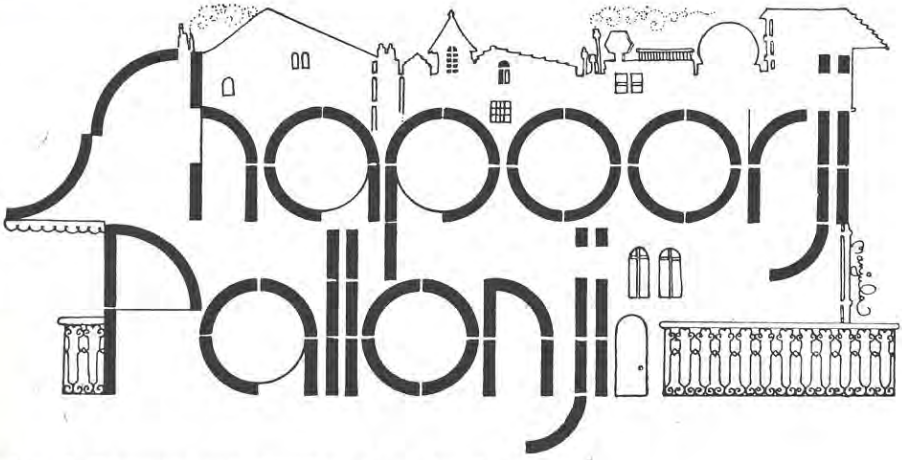
At the end of the Congress came that phenomenon of Parsi youth, Khojeste Mistree, awaited both by the young and not so young. He had a reputation of being a kind of Billy Graham, commanding packed halls. I had never heard him before and found myself taking more notes from him than from any other speaker. Unlike Billy Graham, Mistree's appeal was not to faith, or faith alone, but to the facts of the Zoroastrian past and to reason, though in his racy discourse he quoted neither chapter nor verse. I think the secret of his relationship with his audience is that he provides much wanted matter in contemporary idiom. So great must be the vacuum left by parents and priests that when Mistree stops, his listeners clamour for more.

Right at the start of Mistree's talk the jolt came. We Parsis are not from what is now called Iran but from what is now Uzbekistan and the southern republics of the U.S.S.R.! At one stroke he took the lid off a whole bin of assumptions about Iranian origins. Why had traditions broken down? he asked and replied: because the religion has not received the degree of intellectual stimulus required. "No religion can be in business without an investment in scholarship." For that reason there must be full-time, high calibre priests and this needs to be backed with money. "The purpose of ritual is psychology. There is purpose in ritual when you understand it", he said to those who paid greater attention to ethics and dismissed ritual.

But the point that Mistree made and which I wish to keep for the last, is his statement that Zoroastrianism is a religion of moderation, "sin is excess." If we remember that, we can go into a changing future, mature and rational, a modernizing and humane community which retains its soul and has "broadly agreed means to broadly agreed ends."

And for that may Ahura Mazda show us the Light, to light up our own perceptions and not to burn up others!

A. D. Moddie, 57, a management and rural development consultant, read a paper on "Education for Zoroastrian Youth" at the Congress. A former director of Hindustan Lever Ltd., he is president of The Himalayan Club.



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Our Family?

Jeroo Gorimar

The camera dwells lovingly on four-poster beds, ancestral portraits, easy chairs and sewing machines, tracks through a middle-class Parsi interior to focus on the *sadra*-clad inhabitants. This glimpse of Parsi life preludes *Khatta Meetha,* directed by Basu Chatterji and the first Hindi film to use a Parsi milieu as a backdrop to the story.

The Rupam Chitra production which revolves around a Parsi family, comes in the wake of commercial potboilers where Parsi characters only provided "comic relief" from the sniffles and the duets. *Khatta Meetha,* prior to its release, raised the hackles of a section of the community who voiced their fears in the Parsi Press that the movie might distort and caricature the community's way of life or sacred rituals.

The misgivings would now seem to be exaggerated, for the Parsi viewer who masochistically expects to be subjected to two hours of ridicule on celluloid, will find that the film is basically an inoffensive commercial venture; more concerned with providing undemanding "family funfare" (as *Khatta Meetha* is billed) than making statements about the community, controversial or otherwise. In fact, beyond portraying the archetypal, possessive Parsi mother with her Oedipus complex-ridden son and sentimentalizing the middle-class Parsi family, the community is almost cold-shouldered. One is left with the niggling suspicion (belied by the film's considerable commercial success) that here is a family film too slow for adults and too tame for children reared on *Bobby* and *Sholay.*

Based on a Turkish film, *Our Family,* Chatterji's small budget venture deals with complications that arise out of the marriage of convenience between an ageing widower, Homi Mistry and a widow, Nergish Sethna. Mistry (Ashok Kumar) is a foreman in a factory and has four sons: Fali (Ravi Raaj), more often under his ramshackle bus than in it; Jal (Devendra), always plucking his guitar; Rusi (Ranjit Chowdhury), the aspiring karate expert and Pilloo (Master Raju) the little school boy. The widow, Nergish (Pearl Padamsee) has three children, Firoze (Raakesh Roshan) in his last year in college; 28-year-old daughter, Freni (Preeti Ganguly) whose post-adolescent tantrums the mother can barely cope with and Faredoon (Vimal Sahu) who does nothing in particular beyond brawling occasionally.

The film deals in part with the initial hostility of the children to each other and their new parents and moves on to their final adjustment. To keep the narrative moving noisily along, a subplot focusses on the love life of Firoze and his girl friend, Zarine (Bindiya Goswami) and that of Dara (Mistry's colleague) and Freni.

One would expect a film dealing for the first time with Parsi life to deal with people and situations evocative of the everyday life of the community. But here, there is nothing inherently Parsi about the characters in the film, the situations they find themselves in or the problems they face. They are the formula film stereotypes in hackneyed situations, with often no coherent motives to account for their actions. If Faredoon and Fali, Zarine and Freni were substituted with Ram and Shyam, Sita and Gita, it would make little difference to the story; except perhaps in the case of Nergish and Homi whose November-December marriage would be more acceptable in a Parsi family than in a Hindu one.

Nor are the problems the principal characters grapple with and overcome, any indications of trends in the community. What motivates many of them is the urgent need to get married, an urge which they gratify with incredible swiftness, thanks to the machinations of the director. Thus, the marriage contract between Homi and

Right: Bindiya Goswami and Raakesh Roshan; Pearl Padamsee and Ashok Kumar: The "Parsiness" is a lifeless prop.

Below: Deven Varma and Piloo Wadia: Apron Strings.



Nergish is clinched over a cup of tea and after a few sheepish appraisals of each other. Dara, the 33-year-old bachelor who trails his mother around whining for permission to "marry anyone as long as she is a woman", marries fat and past her prime Freni before the intermission. Chatterji also sees to it that the star-crossed lovers, Firoze and Zarine are not crossed too long by Zarine's class-proud, "villainous" father, Mr Kerawalla (Pradeep Kumar)—a formidable, commercial Hindi film cliche.

It is because the Parsi ethos does not form a backdrop to the interplay of the genuine tensions and conflicts inherent in a small community, that the "Parsiness" remains a lifeless prop and fails to send any shivers of recognition down middle-class Parsi spines. *Khatta Meetha* has none of the profusion of detail with which the director effortlessly evoked the Bengali milieu in *Swami* probably because Chatterji has little insight into or empathy for the community and has apparently done little research to compensate for this lack. Brief wedding shots which at one point degenerate into a dance scene; references to Udwada and Parsi superstitions; *Jam-e-Jamshed* and *The*





Bombay Samachar prominently displayed; a self-conscious use of the greeting *sahabji* and Parsi names that seem to be suspended awkwardly between long stretches of dialogue in Hindi are among some of the director's unconvincing and cursory salutes to the Parsi way of life.

As a peep into Parsi life the film is not all that perceptive or even accurate and it is further marred by a plot where comedy—sometimes bordering on farce—matters more than realism. One misses the vein of quiet humour springing from incidents of everyday life, which characterize the best of Chatterji's films. Unable to sustain the comedy, the director introduces runaway buses, startled pedestrians, harassed porters and narrow escapes which get steadily worse because he does not know when to stop. Though there are moments in the first half when some of the gags do come off, others fall flat because they are unnecessarily labored.

As for the handling of the camera, it is intelligent enough and the family scenes are well-composed. But the film has no interesting use of dramatic images or even the technical sleight of hand and flashes of visual beauty which to some extent, redeem Chatterji's most mediocre films, even a fanciful inanity like *Tumhare Liye*.

Nevertheless, even if *Khatta Meetha* seems to landmark the director's cinematic menopause, a major plus point is its championing of the cause of widow remarriage in a society where Hindu widows had limited options—*sati* or total seclusion. Admittedly, seen in the context of the commercial Hindi film world, *Khatta Meetha* and its predecessors have proved interesting—more for what they do not have than for what they have. Chatterji's clean little tales, scrubbed of all obscene innuendos, oversized bosoms and sizzling cabaret scenes, have none of the heady thrills, gross violence, unreal problems and fractional truths typical of the big budget multi-starrers spun by Bombay's dream merchants. The lack of depth, a shortcoming characteristic of a Chatterji film, is often compensated for by a story well-told, a telling sense of the comic and a tasteful and delicate handling of human relationships. These qualities (now increasingly elusive) led critics to classify Chatterji's work when he first began as transitional cinema—a compromise between the blatantly commercial film and the honest one.

After *Khatta Meetha*, one has the nagging suspicion that Chatterji has ceased to compromise ... the next step a big budget multi-starrer a la *Sholay*?

* * *

He saw a Parsi for the first time in his life when he moved to Bombay and ever since, Director Basu Chatterji's association with the community has been "happy and warm. It strengthened my resolve to portray the Parsis sympathetically in *Khatta Meetha* and not lampoon them as in other Hindi movies," he says of his recent 10-lakh venture which is set against a Parsi background.

"The filmmaker has a responsibility towards the community he portrays," notes the Ajmer-born Bengali who feels people living outside Maharashtra, Gujarat and a few other places in India, do not know much about the Parsis "or they may have preconceived notions about them. I hope *Khatta Meetha* will increase awareness and understanding of the community." However, the 48-year-old director points out that he is essentially a storyteller who likes to

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tell a "meaty family tale" rather than make an in-depth, sociological study of a community.

Relying almost solely on the guidance of Parsi friends, his own acquaintance with the community (including two former employers) and the advice of an "expert *dastur*", Chatterji has tried to evoke a Parsi milieu in the belief that aside from the attire and customs, "Parsis are Indians after all". He toyed with the idea of trying to weave in the rhythm and idiom of Parsi speech by the use of Parsi Gujarati interspersed with broken Hindi "but it would have sounded artificial and perhaps ridiculous. Besides, I wanted to cater to an all-India audience," he says.

As for the actors, with the sole exception of Piloo Wadia whose forte has been caricaturing Parsi idiosyncracies, the film has no Parsi artistes. "I didn't use Parsi stage actors because I needed people who have some knowledge of working before a camera," he says. An exception was made in the case of the Bombay stage veteran Pearl Padamsee because the director found her combination of "motherly qualities and histrionic talent" irresistible. The rest of the film is peopled with lesser-known actors with the exception of Ashok Kumar. "An actor can assume any role he is given," says the director. "Ashok Kumar has been acting for 40 years and had never portrayed a Parsi before. He loved playing the role."

Though *Khatta Meetha* has all the cliches of the commercial Hindi film, Chatterji asserts, "I don't make films to make money but for the love of the medium"—a statement perhaps borne out by the fact that some of Chatterji's earlier films were not box office hits and won a certain amount of critical recognition. His involvement with the medium which he describes "as walking on a razor's edge", is 10 films old. Prior to that Chatterji was a journalist for a while and later, a cartoonist with *Blitz* for 18 years. Those were the days he read all he could on films and started the film society, Film Forum, along with another interested friend. He got his first break in films when opportunity arose to assist Basu Bhattacharya with *Teesri Kasam* in 1962.

The year 1969 saw his maiden, Film Finance Corporation-sponsored effort, *Sara Akash*, but the offbeat theme and its handling did not click at the box office. His next venture, *Us Paar* which Chatterji produced himself, also flopped badly and since then, he has only directed and not produced his work. Luckily, the following ventures, *Rajnigandha, Chotisi Baat* and *Swami* were minor successes "because I make films which can communicate with people who see them. I am not concerned with any ideology or with conveying a message."

Belonging to the school of thought that looks upon the film as primarily a director's medium, Chatterji observes, "Everything is coordinated according to my wishes and instructions. Of course my actors have the freedom to interpret their roles and I need cameramen and other technicians. But when I am shooting the first shot I also have the last shot in mind." After taking six to eight months to write the screenplay the film is shot within 30 days with very little on-the-spot improvisation. "It's like raising a building according to a blueprint that I have in mind; after which I may make a few changes here and there. The mark of a good director is his ability to visualize an entire film and his craftsmanship to translate it into form."

To encourage good cinema and to break the stranglehold of the commercial Hindi film on Indian audiences, Chatterji pleads for more art theatres all over the country. "These could screen the offbeat and the honest film," he says. "People like Mani Kaul and Kumar Shahani have the right to make the kind of films they do for their select coterie of admirers."

Though initially inspired by the films of Vittorio de Sica and Satyajit Ray, Chatterji with six directorial assignments on hand, is trying to model himself on director Billy Wilder (of *Irma La Douce* fame) and exploiting his sense of the comic to make light comedies. "My philosophy is that life is full of misery but it has its beautiful moments. As Thomas Hardy rightly said, 'Happiness is an interlude in the general drama of pain'. In my films, I like to dwell on the interludes rather than dilate on the pain."

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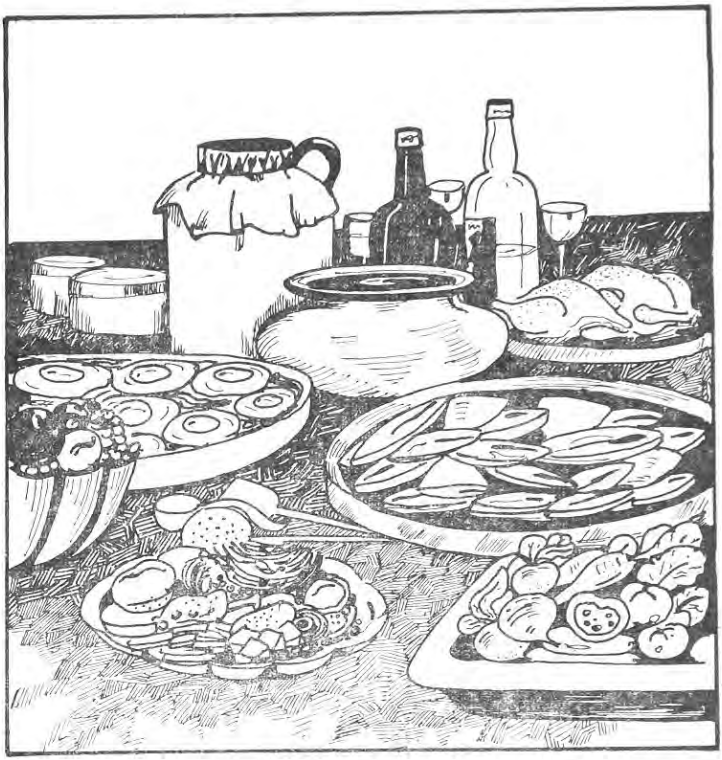
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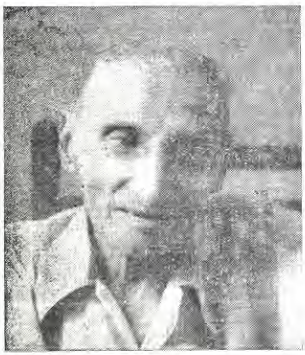
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What's Cooking?

Dhandar, patyo, sali boti and *dudh puff* are the shortcuts to a Parsi's heart. While controversies rage and split the community Parsis are united in their love of good food which has become a part of their *khai pi ne maja* (eat, drink and be merry) way of life. No Sunday afternoon is complete without the langour-producing *dhansak*, prawn kababs and *kachoombar; sev* and *dahi* add the necessary, festive touch to birthday, *navjote* and wedding celebrations; and yellow *khichdi* signals post-funeral blues. Over the years, Parsi food has become inseparable from certain, symbolic associations which like the age-old recipes handed down from generation to generation, remain unchanged.

The wedding season wafts to eager Parsi nostrils the fragrant aroma of the *lagan nu bhonu*—the sumptuous wedding repast which relieves the tedium of the occasion and is relished gourmet-style by the 500-odd guests. But with western and Indian fare now invading Parsi kitchens, will the *patra ni machi* lose ground to the fish souffle and the homely *rotli* to the *paratha?* To discover where their 'loyalties' lay, we asked our seven interviewees this time, whether they enjoyed Parsi food.





Minocher Mehta, 73, Retired businessman

"Parsi food is a combination of all communities' and Parsis have cosmopolitan food habits," says Mehta, a long-time resident of Karachi. "I eat Parsi food practically every day. A typical Parsi meal is *dhansak* with prawn *kabab* and *kachoombar* but we have no hard and fast rules and eat *dhansak* anytime, though we have *dhandar* on special occasions. At parties, the type of food depends on the occasion. Meat is not sold twice a week in Pakistan so we have two meatless days.

"Yes, Parsi food is fattening—too much ghee, butter and spices. In Karachi, *lagan nu bhonu* is buffet-style, though the food is much the same as in Bombay. But Parsis waste too much food.

"My favourite dish is macaroni cheese and I like *doodh puff* and *falooda* and *eda pak* in winter. Alcohol is too expensive now, so, people can't really drink too much.

"Parsi cooking is not dying out. Parsis like their own food. They don't diet unless forced to and have their three meals alright! *Parsio to khadra khara* (Parsis are greedy)."



Taera Vakil, 14, Student, J. B. Petit High School

"My favourite Parsi meal is *dar chaval* with *khima* or *sali boti*. We have *dhansak* and *kababs* every Sunday and *dhandar* on birthdays, and though my mother is strict about non-meat-eating days, I often forget them.

"My Parsi friends at school grumble that the food is too heavy. Rice and potatoes are fattening but the meat and fish are nutritious.

"I go to weddings and *navjotes* especially for the food. I think it is super, especially the custard. I love Parsi sweets like *dar ni pori* and *sutar feni*.

"Young Parsis drink a lot, not so the older generation. I like beer. *Falooda* and *lassi* are typical Parsi drinks. I enjoy *doodh puff* the most but hardly ever get it.

"Inter-marriages do not affect Parsi cooking. Foreigners enjoy Parsi food but Hindus, who do not eat meat and fish, may not. Most of my Hindu friends love *dhansak*.

"Many Parsis eat for the sake of eating. The women think they can diet but they never succeed. Give up!" advises Taera.



Roozbeh Shroff, 30, Cardiac Surgeon, J. J. Hospital

"I like Tibetan food. Parsi food is not very nutritious. Overcooking destroys the food value. It has very high cholestrol and leads to cardiac diseases, hypertension and affects the kidneys and eyes. These are aggravated by overeating.

"*Tans mare* is a custom among Parsis in coastal villages where a gallon *matka* of *todi* with a leaf tied to it is drunk bottoms up. *Kahvo* is a typical Parsi drink and Iranis love *falooda*.

"A typical Parsi meal would have fried fish, *kachoombar*, rice and curry, *patya* or *dar*. My mother follows diet restrictions and non-meat-eating days but I do not even know these auspicious days.

"I don't think *lagan nu bhonu* is a waste of money so much as a waste of food. We should cut down the number of dishes. Parsis tend to be gluttonous and to overfeed their babies.

"I do not think inter-marriages have affected our food at all. Most communities enjoy Parsi food and all my non-Parsi friends love it. There is nothing like it!"



Ms Mani Contractor, 65, Housewife

"A typical Parsi meal, like *dhansak*, fried meat and potatoes, is very heavy, with lots of ghee and oil. My husband and I eat Parsi food every day, and some semi-boiled because of our age. *Dhansak* is too heavy and we only have it for guests. At my parties, everyone enjoys *kharia* and non-Parsi friends also ask for Parsi dishes. We eat *dhandhar* any time, and on special occasions, we eat out," says Ms Contractor. She also thinks that the "days of diet restrictions are gone."

"Parsi food is good but fattening. However, it is nutritious, and if cooked with less oil, would be healthier. Parsis do eat a lot: I recently watched eight ladies finish one kilo of *biryani*, one kilo of *sali boti*, plus *sev*!

"I enjoy *lagan nu bhonu* but it is a real waste of money and food. Alcohol goes well with Parsi food, but I don't think Parsis over drink.

"Parsi food is dying out. In mixed marriages, husbands like the food of their own community and younger people prefer English-style food."

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Cyrus Patel, 25, Businessman

"I love to eat. I prefer continental food and my favourite dish is steak, especially Chateaubriand; but I love Parsi sweets, especially *copra pak* and *kajoo pak*. *Vasanu* is also a great favourite of mine. We have about 50 per cent western and 50 per cent Parsi food at home and for parties. I do not follow any diet restrictions nor meat-less days.

"Parsi food is certainly not fattening. It is nutritious since it contains meat, fish, *dar*, eggs, which are all full of proteins. *Dhansak* is a typical Parsi dish.

"I enjoy *lagan nu bhonu* once in a while. I do not think it is a waste of money since it is for a good occasion, which, why not celebrate well? Parsis are good drinkers but not to an excess though this depends on the individual. Whiskey and gin go best with Parsi food—not wines.

"Though most Parsi women are diet-conscious, they rarely succeed. Parsis really do enjoy their food. I have never come across a Parsi glutton, as such, but most Parsis are good eaters."



Ms Villie Mehta, 47, Cooking Teacher

"Parsis definitely enjoy their food. My family eats Parsi food every day as the main course," says Ms Mehta who serves mixed or western food at parties. "A typical Parsi meal is *dhansak*, prawn *kabab* and *kachoombar* but we don't eat *dhansak* every Sunday, as my family prefers Goa-style curry rice. Though I was brought up to observe meatless days, I don't believe in the food taboos.

"Parsi food is nutritious because it's well balanced; but sometimes. it is overcooked.

"I usually enjoy *lagan nu bhonu* though it is a waste of money. My favourite food is crab and I think beer goes best with Parsi food, but I don't think Parsis drink too much. The average Parsi is not as fat as the average non-Parsi and Parsi babies aren't overfed either, however, the younger generation is perpetually on diets.

"I don't think Parsi food is dying out. Girls marrying out introduce their husbands to it, and even in America, you get Parsi food in Parsi homes. Parsi food will live as long as there are Parsis."



Ardashir Mehraban Yazdegardi, 58, Partner, Pyrkes Provision Stores and Cafe

"Irani food is nutritious, but Parsi food is cooked more for the taste," says Yazdegardi, who came to India in 1931. "We eat Irani food, which is like the Parsi but not so spicy, as well as Parsi food, with *dhansak* and *dhandar patia* anytime. My favourite food is Irani-style *gosh*, but I observe the non-meat days eight times a month. It is good if all Zoroastrians wash their hands and mouth and say a short prayer before eating, to thank God for the food.

"*Abghos*, a soup with meat and *chana*, and *chelo kabab* are two Irani favourites which I serve Irani guests. *Gaz e Isfahan* and *halva e hardah* are famous sweets, and very nice. *Shirazi falooda* is popular with everyone. In Iran, beer or orange juice is drunk with food; I like a glass or two of beer with a good meal.

"*Lagan nu bhonu* is a waste of food—guests ask for all the dishes but leave much of it behind.

"Parsi cooking will not die out, as even non-Parsis are acquiring a taste for it."

Interviews by Shireen Gobhai and Shirin Bahadurji

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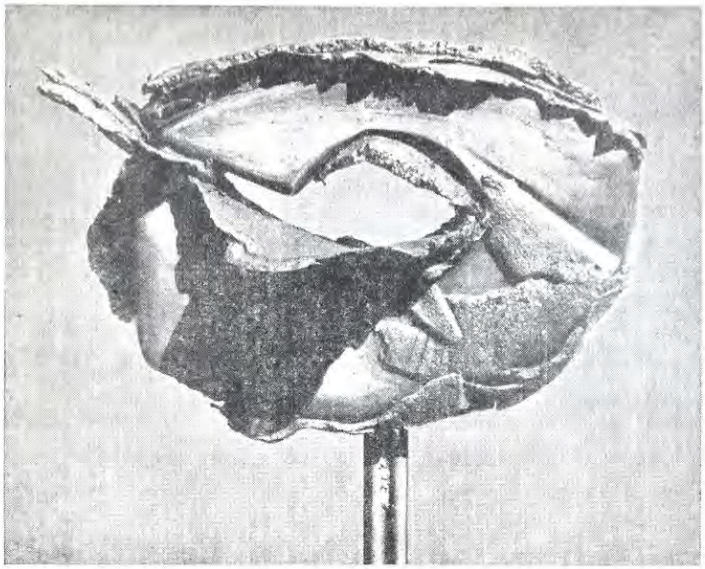
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"Embryo": one of the works exhibited

Sculpture amidst the Corals

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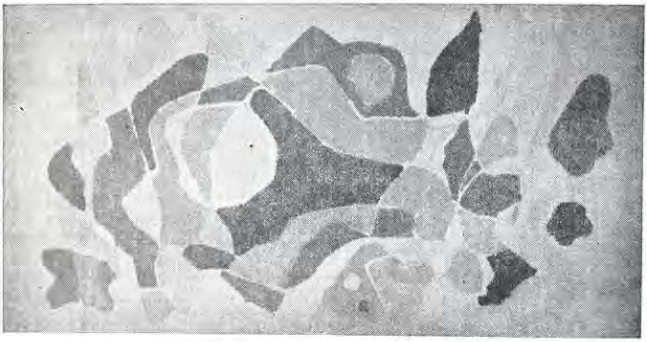
It was the season of coral flowers in the garden where Pilloo Pochkhanawala chose to display the work that represented 25 years of achievement in the field of modern sculpture. The metal objects, scarred, twisted and gouged pieces of aluminium, mounted on thin rods fixed to solid stands, were placed at various vantage points in the somewhat bleak landscape of the garden, each display surrounded by a battery of admiring flashlights which would no doubt provide a dramatic effect at night. During the day, one looked up and saw the curved red blades of a coral tree in bloom, rising up against the blue sky like the thousand waving scimitars of a horde of Mongols just returning from a kill. In the midst of such splendour, Ms Pochkhanawala's sculptures looked bleak and remote, the painfully wrought creations of man in answer to what nature throws out with such thoughtless profusion.

Art with a capital "A" is perhaps best off in the anaesthecized surroundings of an art gallery or the air-conditioned recesses of a drawing room. One feels a sense of unease at driving through the scabrous slums of Worli with their stunted children playing on the pavements decorated with mounds of sculpted human excreta, to gaze at pieces of welded metal elegantly displayed in a garden. Yet if Ms Pochkhanawala had wanted to go in for the cheap sentimentalizing that is resorted to by some so-called socially relevant artists, she could have called any one of her pieces "Worli Chawl '78" or "Fragment of a mill-worker" and been hailed as an artist with a socialist conscience. Instead, she has chosen to label her pieces in the context of time and evolution, as bits of matter in the process of achieving form, and in some curious elemental fashion, they do portray the eternal yearning of man to soar beyond the ugliness of his earthly limitations in search of the eternal. This may be one reason why, in spite of all its elitist connotations, its cold, linear rationalizations, Ms Pochkhanawala's sculpture is not only seen in drawing rooms but out in the open, in the middle of the Worli chawl itself, fighting for relevance amidst irrelevance. Her work represents the search for form in a world of formlessness, the questing nature of man, trying to rise beyond nature and failing, yet trying again.

It is this spirit that one admires about her work, the fighting, defiant spirit that is displayed in her very handling of the metal which seems at places almost whipped and curdled into place, at other times casually welded and cut out into shapes, the very casualness belying the fierce tension which holds her creations together. It is the spirit which has the audacity to contemplate the imitation of a nebula, one of the most spontaneous, luminous and tumultuous creations of the universe and to fix it in a metal form. Not that she succeeds, for her nebula is a static grey thing, tied to the earth with umbilical rods that keeps it forever stillborn.

The display shows a wide range of her work, some of which she has exhibited before, from the smooth rounded stones trapped in webs of welded metal in the quixotic "Atomic Couple" and "Steel Nest", to the collection of spanners that make up "Nag Panchami" and the star-trekked channels of steel rods displayed in "Flight".

One's reactions to all these tend to be subjective for they are the outpourings of a highly individualistic vision. Her work demands either total acceptance or total rejection. The one thing it does not allow is indifference and most artists would not ask for more than that of their work.



Chavda

One of artist Shiavax Chavda's recent works which was exhibited this February at Bombay's Taj Art Gallery. Chosen one of the "nine eminent artists of India" by the Lalit Kala Akademi, Chavda's paintings have been acquired by private and museum buyers including The National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Saklat with a piece originally done in stained glass

Zoroastrian Material

While Zoroastrian issues were being heatedly debated in the C. J. Cama Hall during the Third World Zoroastrian Congress held in Bombay this January, the cool interior of the nearby Gallery Chemould saw an exhibition of a quieter nature.

Calcutta-based artist, **Katayun Saklat,** trained in the stained glass technique, has here used cloth as a substitute for glass, creating "fabric collages" of such Zoroastrian images as fire, *Fravashis* and the Iranshah.

Fabric was used, Ms Saklat explains, both because there are not enough commissions for stained glass work (which needs to be lit from behind) and because the lead necessary is unavailable. While some of the pieces shown were originally executed in stained glass, "fabric has some of the glow of glass and a substitute medium is as satisfying to execute," she says.

Quite a few people who attended the Congress visited the exhibition, says the artist, and some offered suggestions—not aesthetic but on the lines of, *aie pugree em nai bandhai* (this pugree cannot be tied this way) and one man even offered to send her the "correct" proportions of a *Fravashi*.

Ms Saklat, who teaches art at the International School and the Aural School for the Deaf in Calcutta, has been working on Zoroastrian themes since 1973, when she studied stained glass technique with the English master Patrick Reyntiens, in England. "Maybe it's to do with realising one's roots," says the 37-year-old artist who has expressed this feeling not only in the fabric collages and stained glass, but in water colours, silkscreen and enamel on steel.

"I don't think Zoroastrianism is a restricted theme," says Ms Saklat, whose latest one-woman show was presented by the British Council of Calcutta, this March. "I will continue with it—there is so much material—fire for example, a concept which is intangible and vast."

The Music Man

From the waltzes, light opera and big band music of over 25 years ago to the rock and "disco" sound of the Seventies, **Goody Seervai** and his bands played it all. When he died on 16 January 1978 at the age of 63 in Bombay, the portly, smiling Goody—no one ever called him anything else—and his accordion had become not only a familiar sight at weddings *navjotes*, balls, variety entertainments and the dining room at the Taj Mahal Hotel, but an indispensable part of many Parsi functions. "Goody enjoyed playing, to him it was not just a job, it was fun—and when he played you sang and danced," says Adi Marzban whose Pateti and Navroz variety shows featured Goody for over 30 years.

Starting with a largely Parsi clientele in the Forties, Goody came to be known to and to play for all the many communities in Bombay; working in the film industry for many years (the movies starring Raj Kapoor and Nargis featured his accordion); given the title of "maestro" by the manufacturers of Hohner musical instruments in West Germany; receiving an honorary membership to the American Accordion Association and in the process, making "The Cuckoo Waltz" and "Goody, Goody" known as *his* songs.

Many of todays successful band leaders, including Adrian d'Mello, Maurice Concessio and Nelly Battiwala of Nelly and her Band, began their careers playing with Goody who was the first to use and popularise the accordion as a band instrument in India. Said Nelly in part of a tribute read at a condolence meeting held in Bombay in January, "When Women's Lib was not even heard of, Goody encouraged me to join his band as the first lady accordionist Bombay has ever heard of."

Goody never seemed to stop going. Says son, Dr Jangoo Seervai, "His day would begin at 7.30 in the morning and sometimes end at 5.30 the next morning." Marzban says the musician was "a very easy person to work with. We used to rag him a lot, but he was able to take jokes against himself." Though classical music was Goody's first love, "he was very keen on keeping up with the times, and always got music and cassettes from abroad" says Jangoo. Nelly remembers going with Goody and others to see the film *Rock Around the Clock* and how he had disliked the music at first, but "Goody loved all kinds of music and he adapted himself to it—as we all must. If we played waltzes now, people would fall asleep!" And Goody well knew this. Whatever was requested he played and indeed, formed a special group, Rock Revolution, for just this reason.



Goody: a household word

Born in 1913, Goody graduated from the Bharda New High School and attended St Xavier's College, which he left to work in an income tax office—a job he was to keep for 10 years. But music had always been a part of his life. As a child he had studied Indian music and the harmonium, then the violin, which he played in the Bombay Symphony Orchestra under Mehli Mehta. The accordion came naturally to him, "his fingers were used to the harmonium," says Jangoo, "so it was easy. He loved that instrument." Goody first worked with Sebastion Vaz, then formed his own group and by the Forties, when he had married Rupy Maneckshaw and the twins Jangoo and Silloo had been born, he was a full-time musician, also teaching music on the side.

Goody was also the guiding spirit behind the Bandleaders Club, an association formed to get bandleaders together in a friendly and co-operative way to help each other when necessary. Begun with a membership of just seven, it was Goody who got all the hotel bandleaders to join, says Nelly, who wonders what the association will do without him. In recent years, Goody had been distressed by what Nelly describes as "Parsi 'bandleaders' who are mere clerks and know no music. They lie to people about how much we (the established bands) charge and when we are free to play—and offer to do so for Rs 350. Many people don't know good music and agree to this. The 'bandleaders' can often only play the tambourine. Goody wanted to do something about this but I demurred until it was too late."

What made Goody the institution he became? Says Marzban, "Goody had warmth and the ability to project it—and this is what we call personality." Son Jangoo, who though a dentist has now become a professional musician and also plays the accordion, says of his father, "He was not just a musician, but a great entertainer."

Goody is survived by his wife Rupy, son Jangoo and daughter Silloo Madan.

Died: **Naoshir S. Chenoy**, 87, prominent jurist and president of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjuman of Hyderabad and Secunderabad and its last Life Trustee, on 18 December 1977.



Chenoy: a sense of the just







Above are the photographs of the Parsi Air-India crew members who lost their lives when the ill-fated Dubai-bound 747 crashed in the sea after take off from Bombay on New Years Day. From left to right: Flight Purser Adil M. Dubash, 31; Hostesses Kamal Maneck, 22; Jeroo Dinshaw, 24; Dilshad Mehta, 22; Kettu Paymaster, 25; Jeroo Nadirshah Kotwal, 25; Cherazade Kothak, 23. Photographs of Flight Purser Kali M. Kotwal, 37; and passenger Jal N. Dotiwala, his wife Dolly and their 18-month-old child who were bound for Dubai after holiday in India, were unavailable.




A condolence resolution passed by the twin-cities *anjuman* noted Chenoy's "yeoman service" to the community and mentioned his "benevolence to the poor." A lawyer by profession, it was through Chenoy's efforts that the Government of India "conceded in allowing Zoroastrians the exemption from obtaining a Probate and to be brought on par with Hindus, Jains and Buddhists", notes a press release sent by the *anjuman*, as it was also due to his efforts that when "the proposal to shift the Secunderabad Courts to Hyderabad was undertaken by the State Government, the Secunderabad Courts were allowed to be retained."

A graduate of the Deccan College, Pune, and University College, London, Chenoy was called to the Bar and practised at the Inner Temple before returning to India to join the Nizams High Court of Judicature in 1920 and the Hyderabad Residency Bar the following year. When someone remarked that it had been a waste for him to have studied in England as he would not be able to practice in the High Court where the language used was Urdu, Chenoy was able to assure them that he was fluent in the language. A keen Free Mason, who held the highest rank of Past Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of India, Chenoy was also a Persian scholar and vice-president of the Indian-Iranian Association. When the Shah and Shahbanu of Iran visited Hyderabad in 1956, he read out an address in Persian on behalf of the Parsis of Secunderabad. In the course of the address, Chenoy noted that the Parsis there were very happy under the rule of the Nizam, Mir Osman Ali Khan Bahadur, a remark that certain members of the community wanted removed, but which Chenoy, according to the press release, read out "with characteristic determination and a sense of what was just."

Chenoy is survived by his wife Soona.

Died: **Rattan S. Pochkhanawala,** 56, scion of a banking family and general manager of the Central Bank of India, the country's largest bank before nationalization; of a heart attack on 15 January 1978 in Bombay.

Remembered as a gentleman banker by his associates, Pochkhanawala served the bank founded by his father, Sir Sorabjee, for 25 years. At a condolence meeting held at the bank's headquarters, the chairman of the bank, P. F. Gutta and other leading officials of the bank and the employees' union recalled the devotion, zeal and dedication that characterized Pochkhanawala's career at the bank and his self-effacing and unassuming manner. K. J. S. Banaji, the bank's joint general manager and Homi Jhaveri, joint secretary of the All India Central Bank Employees' Federation described him as "a friend to all" and S. Bijai, general secretary of the union referred to him as a "true Gandhian in spirit."



Pochkhanawala: gentleman banker

Pochkhanawala, who lost both his parents while in his teens, studied at the Bharda New High School and

St. Pauls, London, earned a B.Sc. from the London School of Economics and was called to the Bar before returning to India to join the Central Bank as a junior officer in 1946. He left in 1954 to work with the then Bombay State Financial Corporation where he held the position of managing director, before rejoining the Central Bank in 1962 as secretary, becoming assistant general manager in 1973 and general manager the next year.

"Rattan enjoyed the creative process of banking. He always felt that money given at the right time to the right person not only helped the individual but created more money and helped the entire economy," said his wife Pilloo, a noted sculptress. "He believed the Central Bank had been left a great heritage it should work to fulfil. On studying the old files, he realized the progressive ideas his father had had such as rural banking, investment trusts, recurring deposit and other schemes which today are a reality."

Aside from banking, Pochkhanawala worked actively with the late Achama Matthai who started the Bharat Sevak Samaj. He was joint treasurer of the National Association for the Blind for some years and at the time of his death was vice-president of the Education, Audiology and Research Centre (EAR) and president of the Indian Adoption Society.

Pochkhanawala is survived by his wife, daughter Meher, brother Noshir and sisters Sheroo Kavarana, Mehroo Cooper and Jaloo Pochkhanawala.

Died: **Phiroze Cowasji Davar,** 85, scholar of Persian history and literature and of comparative religion, professor of English, on 3 February 1978, in Ahmedabad.

Davar taught two generations of students in Ahmedabad and was author of several books, including *Iran and its Culture, Iran and India Through the Ages* and *Art and Morality*. "He had a vast knowledge of history and religion and could take a chance remark and talk brilliantly," says Jehan Daruwala, editor of *The Bombay Samachar* and who attended Davar's public talks in Ahmedabad as a boy.

In 1956, at the invitation of the Iranian government, Davar lectured on Iranian culture in Iran and in 1966, was a member of the Indian delegation to the Second World Zoroastrian Congress held in Teheran. A well-known orator, Davar "had a wonderful voice, clear and ringing," says Ratan R. Marshall, a friend of many years.

The Ahmednagar-born scholar who held a masters degree in English and Persian as well as a law degree, taught briefly at the Deccan College, Pune, before beginning a 27-year-stint at the Ahmedabad Gujarat College, after which says Daruwala, Mahatma Gandhi invited him to teach at the L.D. Arts College where he was head of the department of English till his retirement in 1966. He was awarded an honorary D. Lit. from Gujarat University in 1971, an occasion on which several *panchayats* and *anjumans* of Gujarat also honoured him. The Gujarati poet, Kavi Nanalal Dalpatram would, according to Marshall, tell his admirers to "go to Davarsaheb if you are interested in learning. He showers scholarship".

Though Davar rarely lectured out of Ahmedabad, he was there known not only to students but to the Muslim and Hindu communities who often asked him to talk on matters of interest to them. According to Daruwala, there had been a demand for Davar's book, *Iran and its Culture* to be published in English but though the aged scholar approached "each and every Parsi trust" for assistance in the matter, he met with no success. Davar's books in Gujarati were all published by Gujarati book societies.

Davar is survived by his wife Soona and daughter Armaiti.

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Send your replies to The Editor, Z-Quiz, C/o Parsiana, G.P.O. Box 892, Bombay 400 001, by 31st August. Answers will be published in the next issue.



1. Which Parsi rose to eminence in the court of the Peshwas?

2. What are the main themes of the Bundahishn?

3. Which orchestra in the U. S. does Zubin Mehta conduct?

4. How many initiatory ceremonies are there for the Zoroastrian priesthood?

5. What is the sagdid ceremony?

6. Which town in India is named for a great Parsi industrialist?

7. What is the literal meaning of navjote?

8. What is the Yasna?

9. Who was the first qualified woman architect in India?

10. Who built the famous palace complexes at Persepolis in Iran?

There were four winners with 10 correct answers, for both Z Quiz 3 (*Parsiana*, Oct.-Nov. '77) and Z Quiz 4 (Jan. '78). Z Quiz 3 winners are Ms Navaz Wadia, K. D. Chargeman, Sarosh Gherda and B. S. Surti. Z Quiz 4 winners are Ms Katie F. Seervai, K. D. Chargeman, B. S. Surti and Harvesp D. Sopariwala. In both cases, the prize money has been divided between the four winners. Z Quiz 3 runners-up receive a copy of A. D. Gorwala's book *The Queen of Beauty and other tales*, gifted by the author; Z Quiz 4 runners-up receive Piloo Nanavutty's *Fravarane* (I Believe), gifted by the Parsi Zoroastrian Association of Calcutta. Below are solutions to Z Quiz 4.

1. How many kinds of fire are used to consecrate an Atash Behram fire?

16 fires, ranging from that used in the house of a ruling authority to that from the household fire of any Zoroastrian, are used to consecrate an Atash Behram fire.

2. Who was the first Indian to be knighted?

Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy (1783-1859), received a knighthood in 1842 and a baronetcy in 1857.

3. What is the Denkart?

The *Denkart* or "Acts of the Religion", is a large collection of information regarding the doctrines, customs, traditions, history and literature of the Zoroastrians, written in Pahlavi. Books III to IX were discovered in Baghdad in 1020.

4. Who is the Chief of Staff of the Indian Navy?

Admiral Jal Cursetji, who became Chief of Staff in March 1976.

5. What are the names of the Amesha Spentas?

Ahura Mazda, Vohu Manah, Asha Vahista, Khshatra Vairya, Spenta Armaiti, Haurvatat, Ameretatat.

6. Who were the three Indian M. P.'s at Westminister?

The three Indian members of the British House of Commons were Dadabhoy Naoroji (Liberal), Sir Mancherjee Bhownagree (Conservative), and Shapurji Saklatvala (Communist).

7. What is the Din no Kalmo?

The *Din no Kalmo* ("Confession of the Faith") is a prayer in praise of the Zoroastrian religion. The prayer notes that the faith was received from Ahura Mazda through the prophet Zoroaster. The *Din no Kalmo* is always recited during the *navjote* ceremony by priest and child.

8. What is the nirang-din ceremony?

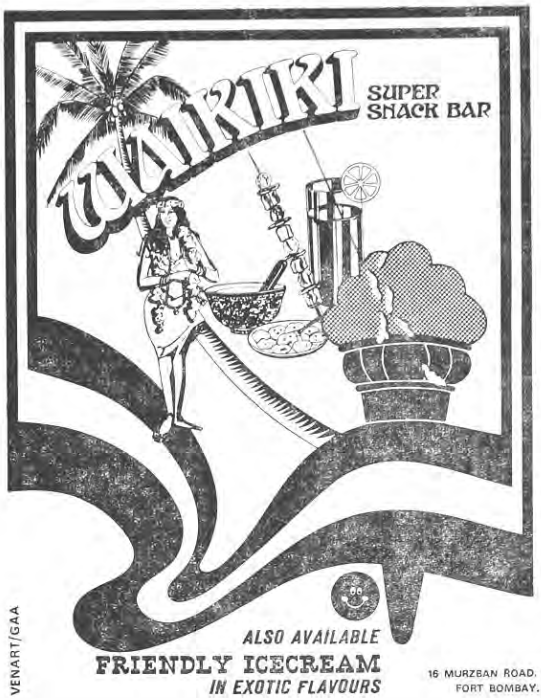
The *nirang-din* ceremony is the ceremony of consecrating the urine of a *varasya* (sacred white bull) and water. *Nirang* is the urine of a *varasya* and is so called because its use is generally accompanied by the recital of a *nirang* or prayer formula, the consecrated urine is spoken of as *nirang* or *nirang-din*. (The question was erroneously phrased in Z Quiz 4, *Parsiana* Jan. '78, as "the *nirang* ceremony" instead of "the *nirang-din* ceremony.")

9. Who is the president of the Federation of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India?

Till the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP) ceased membership in the Federation in January 1978, the chairman of the BPP was ex-officio president of the Federation.

10. Which dynasty did King Jamshid belong to?

The Pishdadian dynasty.



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Sahebji, Hello

by Dr. Ratan Marshall

"Because you are a Parsi do not hesitate to give credit to your ancestors for their excellent pioneering work (in the Gujarati language). Educated people today may mock 'Parsi Gujarati' and criticise the incorrect use of the language, but if they had not done what they did years ago it would have taken years for the Gujarati language to develop. Gujarat will ever remain grateful to the Parsis for their contribution." The Gujarati literary giant, Balvantraj Thakore said these words to me while I was researching my dissertation on the "History of Gujarati Journalism."

Parsis were the first to cut Gujarati type, the first Gujarati printing press was founded by a Parsi and the first Gujarati books, calendar (*Panchang*) and newspaper were printed, published and edited by Parsis. Strained financial conditions and lack of proper facilities were obstacles that did not stop this pioneering work.

Today in contrast, Parsis speak little Gujarati and read and write even less. Sometimes before addressing a gathering, the speaker is requested to use English and not Gujarati. How did this change come about?

The Parsis originally lived mainly in and around Surat, then the centre of commerce and industry in India, where they came in close contact with foreigners, particularly the British. When the latter left for Bombay, Parsis followed in large numbers and with the passage of time the centre of Parsi population shifted to Bombay. The Parsis, of all the peoples in this vast country, came to be the group most affected by Western ideas, language and way of life. When the British became the masters of India, the Parsis were among the most educated and proficient in English. This gave them an advantage which they continued to enjoy all through the *raj*. To read, write and speak good English became a much desired attainment for the Parsis and indeed it was with pride that some of them would say, "We do not know Gujarati at all."

After India became independent, there began experiments in education which continue today. With a view to the solidarity of the country, the portfolio of education should perhaps have been with the central government. It however remained with the states, resulting in a multitude of educational policies, varying from region to region. The Parsi population was, and still is, centered in Maharashtra and Gujarat. There was, and still is, a considerable difference in the educational systems of the two states. In Maharashtra there have been excellent facilities for the study of English. Parsi students in this state receive their education in the English medium and read, write and speak fluent English. The community even thinks it necessary to provide prayer books in English for their benefit. The fact that their interest in Parsi *nataks* is not extinguished allows one to surmise that their knowledge of Gujarati is just sufficient to understand these plays. Parsis living abroad are even more removed from the language and their use of it even more limited.

The situation in Gujarat is quite different. While a fair percentage of the Parsi population there is taking advantage of the few educational institutions that use the English medium, the language used in the homes of these students continues to be Gujarati. They have not forgotten their mother tongue and one hopes they never reach that point.

But Gujarat is an exception and

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viewing the situation in other places where Parsis live, one is forced to ask: Can Parsis afford to completely neglect Gujarati? Zoroastrian prayers and books explaining the meaning and philosophy of these prayers are in Gujarati; hundreds of books on Parsi history are also in this language. Will it be possible to translate all these into English? Who will undertake to execute this difficult task and at what expense? At the most, a few standard works may be translated and published in English and new books written in that language. Moreover, there is always the possibility in India, of a situation in the near or distant future when English will not hold the importance it does today and the tide turn in favour of the national language, Hindi or the regional languages.

Taking all these factors into consideration, it seems that while the young Parsi should certainly study English thoroughly, it does not mean that he or she should cultivate a complete disregard for Gujarati or take pride in the ignorance of it.

The writer, while addressing fellow Zoroastrians in different parts of the country, had many happy experiences. On his speaking before them in simple but pure Gujarati, he was not only heard patiently but often members of the assembly would tell him, "It was a pleasure to hear sweet Gujarati after such a long time. We hope we get such opportunities every now and then so that we can follow the language better each time." At a conference in Secunderabad, the president remarked, "The speaker has been allowed to exceed the time limit so that people present may hear good Gujarati."

But while addressing meetings of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, the writer had a very different experience, being once told that he should not continue speaking in Gujarati. It was painful to realize that there are Parsis who do not want one to talk to a gathering of Parsis in their mother tongue. If this trend continues, we will not only deprive those who wish to understand and keep abreast of what little Gujarati they know, but we will help to extinguish all knowledge of the language. Can a community which considers itself, and is considered to be, educated and cultured, afford not to have a language of its own?

Dr Ratan Marshall, a doyen of the Gujarati language, is the Special Officer of the Surat Parsi Panchayat. A Gujarati version of the above article appeared in the Kaiser-I-Hind Annual, 1977.

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