

The Betrayal of the Federation

RESOLUTION PASSED CURBING FREEDOM OF SPEECH

After months of hectic activity, the delegates of the Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India are biding their time. Following a crucial, September, peace-making meeting in Bombay, the Bombay Parsi Panchayat (BPP) trustees and the leaders of the other anjumans, including Shrivastav Nargolwala, the controversial Federation vice-president and Delhi Anjuman chief, have agreed on a verbal and Press cease-fire, in order to allow heated tempers to cool and bruised egos to heal.

It is reported that five of the seven BPP trustees are now in favour of re-joining the Federation, the holdouts being Dr Nelie Noble and former Justice Jal Vimadlal. BPP President B. K. Boman-Behram whose last salvo at the Federation as a worthless body was made in the Jam-e-Jamshed Navroz supplement, is reported to be willing to rejoin.

But while waiting for the wavering trustees to decide, all Federation activities have ceased. Since the Federation's Executive Council meeting at Poona in September 1977 prior to the World Congress, the functioning of the Federation has been stymied by the abrupt BPP withdrawal in January this year. Both at the Executive Council meetings in Bombay in April, and Delhi in July, this year, the dele-

gates refrained from taking action on pending matters in order not to offend the BPP trustees.

The atmosphere of appeasement eventually led the delegates to pass a resolution abdicating one of their fundamental rights, the freedom of speech. In a resolution passed at the July Delhi meeting, the Executive Council voted not to discuss any controversial religious subjects at its meetings.

"By not stating the problems the problems do not disappear. If you pass this resolution our mouths will be gagged."

The resolution, proposed by the Federation's South Zone President, and Secunderabad and Hyderabad Anjuman head, Jamshed Italia, was the outcome of protracted discussions the night before the meeting. Rather than air their differences in the presence of the Press, the delegates opted to thrash out the issues privately.

Indeed the Executive Council meeting which normally lasts a day and a half, ended in two hours and would have been totally uneventful except for stand taken by the representative of the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman, Farrokh Irani. Speaking on the in-

famous resolution, Irani noted, "By not stating the problems, the problems do not disappear. If you pass this resolution our mouths will be gagged. . . let us be free to speak. . . if you stop discussion of controversial subjects my fear is there will be a split of world Zoroastrians."

"If the objectives of the Federation are to be served," said Bejon Dittia, representative of the Secunderabad and Hyderabad Parsi Anjuman, "we must confine our discussions. . . the unity of the community is the top priority. All other considerations should be set aside."

"Why take up these controversial questions now," asked Behram Sidhwa, president of the Bangalore Parsi Anjuman who attended the meeting by invitation as his anjuman has withdrawn from the Federation. "As far as Bangalore is concerned, these issues have been left to the people themselves. . . the orthodox groups of the Bombay community are fearful that the Executive Council is trying to raise controversial questions. We have to assure them the Council will not do so." Sidhwa suggested a small committee be formed to meet the trustees of the BPP and acquaint them with the resolutions. "You must remember our existence and that of all the anjumans depends upon the generosity of the

orthodox people," Italia said. "We are here to improve the economic condition of the priests and the poor. Other things come later. . . For the sake of harmony. . . we must today decide not to discuss any controversial religious subjects at the Council meeting." As the resolution pertained only to the Federation, Dittia added it did not interfere with the autonomy of individual anjumans. Nargolwala 'entirely' agreed that "unity comes first and nothing should be done to divide the community."

The Surat Parsi Panchayat President, Maneck Ghyera whose anjuman has submitted their resignation from the Federation, but who was invited to the meeting, asked if the resolution applied to the general body of the Federation. "No," replied Nargolwala, "not to the general body."

Jal Khodaiji, representative of the Lucknow Parsi Anjuman wanted to know if the resolution prevented the Council from tackling the issue of the declining Parsi population. The Council decided that it could not be termed a controversial religious subject.

After passing the resolution restricting their freedom of speech, the delegates turned to the requisition notices

demanding the Federation be wound up, signed by several anjumans and panchayats under the behest of the BPP and its allies. Italia suggested an extraordinary general body meeting of the Federation be called to discuss the requisition on September 9 in Bombay. Prior to that meeting, the four vice-

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presidents of the Federation, Dittia, Sidhwa and a few others would meet with the trustees of the BPP to persuade them to remain in the Federation.

Nargolwala termed the requisition "invalid" and in a note of dissent stated that the notice had not been signed by the required one-third eligible voters of the 59 member Federation. "Out of the 20 requisitionists," the note states, "as many as 10 are not eligible to vote as their membership subscription was in arrears or more than three months on the

date of the requisition." Nargolwala said that as he had dissented on the requisition issue, he retained all his legal rights in the matter.

The Council decided that invitations for the September 9 meeting should be sent to even those members of the Federation who had not paid their dues. "No person or anjuman should be left out," said Italia. He then concluded the meeting, noting it was "perhaps the shortest meeting of the Executive Council. There has been a lot of behind-the-scenes discussions, a lot of give and take and a lot of understanding. . . the specific item of unity must be foremost in our minds."

With the subsequent behind-the-scenes maneuvering, the extraordinary general body meeting slated for September 9 was never held. The peace making delegates from the Federation however met the BPP trustees, who requested them to adopt a wait and see policy. Later in a dispatch to one of the Federation representatives, the BPP trustee said the matter was under "active consideration." Till that activity materializes into a decision, the Federation has opted to hibernate.

*Report on Delhi Executive council meeting by
Shireen Gobhai*

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News from the media



Persis: Before and after

Razor-quick response to movie offer

By Colin Dangaard
Special to the Sun

LOS ANGELES—Some girls would give their eye teeth for a starring role in a big Hollywood movie.

Persis Khambatta, "the Sophia Loren of India," gave her hair.

And she couldn't be more pleased. Not only did she win the role of Deltan darling Ilia for the up-coming film epic Star Trek, she now has something better than a rubber duck to play with in the bath:

"It feels so wonderful, washing your head when it's bald. So different, so sensual, so smooth!"

Persis Khambatta owns the face that launched more people on Air India flights than any other commercial in the company's history.

And in London, she was a top model, with designers especially keen on her black, lush, shiny hair.

But all the time what she really wanted was a role in a Hollywood movie.

"In London," she says, "my two favourite shows were Star Trek and Mission Impossible. I told myself that one day I would be on one of those shows."

The chance came when the casting call was put out for Star Trek—The Motion Picture, a \$15-million adventure that takes familiar characters such as Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock and thrusts them into even higher galaxies.

Given the success of Star Wars and

Close Encounters of The Third Kind, Paramount Studios predicts Star Trek will be the big movie of next year.

As Paramount president Michael Eisner points out, one of the 79 television episodes of the original series plays 308 times a week in 134 cities of the U.S., in addition to 131 world markets in 51 countries.

The show, he says, is 77 per cent more popular now than it was six years ago. It began running in 1966.

Persis declared at the very beginning she wanted to be part of the new crew, which includes Nichelle Nichols, Leonard Nimoy and William Shatner.

For her audition she wore a carefully selected "bald cap", gluing it to her skull over tightly bound hair.

Asked if she'd be willing to shave the hair off, she said "Yes" immediately—and got the role.

At first sight of her shaven head, Persis was so pleased she spent the day on the phone, calling her agent, her publicist, her friends...

"I really like the look," she says now, after a month of baldness. "I have a whole new personality. With my hair, I was not a confident person. Now I feel that what people see is what I am. There is nothing artificial, nothing covering."

But for those occasions when she does not want the glitter of Hollywood bouncing off her head, Persis has an exhaustive selection of wigs, hats and caps.

Crowned Miss India at age 16, Persis comes from a family in big business in Bombay.

Clearly, she has inherited a talent for deals. She has saved every strand of hair that once sold cosmetics for Vidal Sassoon, among others, and if Star Trek is a hit she says she'll sell them for a million dollars.

"...per strand, that is."

Vancouver Sun October 4, 1978.

Statement that sparked a storm

HYDERABAD: What infuriated the youth of Andhra Pradesh, particularly the teenaged girl students recently was the statement made by the Minister for Tourism, Women's Welfare and Child Welfare, Mrs. Roda Mistri in the Legislative Council a few days earlier that men in Gulf countries desire to marry Indian women as they make dutiful and obedient wives unlike their own who are emancipated.

Replying to a brief debate on the women's welfare demands, Mrs. Mistri told the Legislative Council on September 20: the general apprehension that there was immoral traffic of Indian women in Gulf countries was misplaced as most of the women were legally married and properly looked after by their husbands.

Mrs. Mistri said though these women were often made "second wives" they were happy because their living conditions and social life were far better than in India. Her talks with Gulf officials, Indian diplomats and the women concerned had revealed that

except in rare cases these women were not used for bad purposes or as slaves, she said.

The State Government was thinking of starting a voluntary bureau to provide guidance to the women from Hyderabad being given in marriage to the people in Gulf countries, Mrs. Roda Mistri said.

"When poor parents are not in a position to give dowry here, it is better we allow them to give their daughters to Arabs who want to take these girls as their second wives. This was certainly better than allowing them to be neglected here and take to 'bad practices'."

The Minister immediately left Hyderabad to attend a meeting of Social Welfare Ministers at Delhi and meanwhile, her statement, which came at the fag end of a debate in the Legislative Council failed to catch the eye of the members in the Upper House. But, publication of her reported statement naturally caught the attention of the public, particularly the youth all over Andhra Pradesh. Statements poured in from various organisations condemning the Minister for her statement and student organisations made known their plans to lead a demonstration to the Assembly House

on September 28 on her return from tour. The Minister however, did not care to clarify or contradict her statement if she felt it was misreported by the Press. Neither did any one in the government come forward to contradict it on her behalf.

On the other hand, when she returned from Delhi on the evening of September 27, she was warmly received by several Muslim "mullahs" at the airport who profusely garlanded her and hailed her statement. A photo of the Minister taken in the company of the Mullahs was immediately sent by her to the local Press along with a statement of the Mullahs in appreciating terms for publication forthwith. But the local English Press did not oblige the Minister, while the Urdu Press, which was supplied a block, promptly published it, perhaps with the intention of forestalling the proposed demonstration of the students near the Assembly Hall next morning.

The issue was raised by two Janata members S. Jaipal Reddi, and P. Ashok Gajapathi Raju (son of Mr. P. V. G. Raju, MP) under rule 329 of the Assembly Rules. But since neither the Minister nor the Chief Minister was present in the House when the issue came up immediately

after the question hour on September 29, it was postponed till the Minister found time to attend the House at about 11.30 a.m.

When the matter was taken up when the Minister was present in the House, Mr. Sultan Salauddin Owaisi, leader of the three-member Majlis group, objected on the ground that they would not allow anyone to interfere with their personal law. But Mrs. T. Lakshmi-kantamma, the intrepid Janata member, made a fighting speech calling upon Muslim women to break their shackles. This led to heated exchanges between the Majlis member and the Janata member whereupon on the suggestion made by Mr. Jaipal Reddi, the Minister read out a prepared statement clarifying the statement she had made in the Legislative Council on September 20.

The statement (clarification) read: While replying to the discussions on Womens Welfare Department in the Legislative Council, clarifications given by me to the query raised regarding traffic to Gulf countries of Hyderabad girls, it was said that "women from Hyderabad are not going to the Gulf countries for immoral purposes. By and large, they are honourably married and taken as wives."

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"The honourable members' impression is that my statement sounded like encouraging the issue. It can only be said how is it possible for me to do such a thing? There is no question of encouragement involved at any stage."

"Once again, let me reiterate my faith in the great traditions of the women of our country and it shall always be my humble endeavour to continue to serve their cause to the best of my ability."

The clarification and expression of regret supposed to have been made by Mrs. Roda Mistri failed to convince either the opposition Janata members or the students who were by then demonstrating outside the House. About ten students gate-crashed into the lobbies and they were pulled out by the police who resorted to lathicharge and teargas on the demonstrating students including teenaged girls outside the premises. The ugly situation and brutal lathicharge against the students had its echo immediately in the House and amidst heated exchanges, the Deputy Speaker adjourned the House for half an hour.

When the House reassembled around 1 p.m. there was persistent demand from the opposition benches that the Minister should tender unqualified apology for her Council statement and for what happened that day.

And finally, the Minister was forced to tender unqualified apology saying: It is with heavy heart I hereby offer my apology. I tender my unqualified apology," saying so, she immediately left the House.

*Free Press Journal
8 October 1978*

8-year old has tips on travel to China

Among Zoroastrians in the news abroad, is eight-year-old Cyrus Deboo who is probably the youngest community member in recent times to set foot on Mainland China.

We carry below an article on him by Columnist Jim Casey that appeared in the *Everett Herald* published from Washington, U.S.A.

At the age of 8, Cyrus may be the youngest China hand around. He recently returned from a Far East tour that included five days in the People's Republic.

An 8-year-old American halfway around the world? It's easy if your mom's a travel agent. Manijeh Deboo, of 2834 Panaview Blvd., Everett, manages Aurora Village Travel.

She won the trip aboard the Holland-

America Lines' M.V. Prisdendam during a seminar for cruise experts. "They offered it, and I took it—fast," she says. "As soon as I heard we would go to China, I jumped."

Her husband, Behram, couldn't leave his job, so Manijeh took Cyrus on the journey that started April 22 from Seattle via San Francisco to Singapore. After two days in Manila



Manijeh and Cyrus: China trip

and two days in Hong Kong, the ship entered the People's Republic at Shanghai.

Cyrus came away with his own vivid impressions. "I thought it was pretty good," he says, "for a Communist country."

"It is very clean. You can't find any dirt on the roads. Everybody is well-dressed and well-fed. Nobody is begging. Everybody is working."

Cyrus was put off, though, by the look-alike, unisex, baggy blue suits of the workers. "It looked like they had a blue uniform on everybody, but a man told us it was the style and everybody liked it," he says. "But the children don't like them."

He had a chance to meet his Chinese contemporaries when he visited the Children's Palace in Shanghai. "It's not an ordinary school," he says. "You learn embroidery, handicrafts, radios, airplane system."

"The children were nice. I competed with some girls (in a bicycle race) and took second place. They kept on saying I was very clever."

Other things Cyrus observed were acupuncture treatments at a hospital.

"They stick needles in the nerves and cure all your sickness," he says.

And after three days in Shanghai, the tour group went to Hsuehou (Suchow), 300 miles to the northwest, where the Deboos saw the Embroidery Research Institute. "They sew kitty cats that cost \$500 American," Cyrus says of the intricate needlework.

They also visited an 80,000-person commune close to Peking. Cyrus was impressed with its efficiency. "It's a self-sufficient country. They don't import anything," he says.

But the regimented lifestyle wasn't for him, he decided. "I wouldn't want to stay in one group," he says. "It's nicer to be free."

Everywhere, moreover, loomed the face of Chairman Mao. Although dead, Cyrus says, "He is just like their leader. They worship him like God."

He enjoyed the trip, which ended May 14 after stops in Japan and Honolulu. "It's fun," he says, "because you get to see a lot of things and meet new people." He'd like to visit China again someday.

He wouldn't want to stay, however. "They don't have all the luxuries," he says. "I missed the cars, the big, beautiful houses, all the bright colours."

So if you still have your heart set on a Chinese vacation, make sure you book a round trip. It's a nice place to visit, Cyrus says.

But take it from an 8-year-old: you wouldn't want to live there.

Submitted by Jamshed Pavri of Canada

25 Years of Service to Sport

By Joe Crasto

SILVER jubilees together with all the pomp usually associated with it go unnoticed but the one which relates of the *Sir Ness Wadia Club at Ruston Baug (Byculla)* commands more than ordinary importance for it marks a milestone in a colourful career of valuable service to sport and many outstanding achievements.

Last week the club was very much in the news by the memorable visit to Ruston Baug by the 70-year-old Japanese Hagamuchi, the living god of Karate, and his devout disciple Sakamoto, the reigning World Champion of the martial art.

Built in 1954 on the sprawling estate of Ruston Baug by Mr Neville Wadia and gifted to the tenants of the colony to perpetuate the memory of his father, the late Sir Ness Wadia, the club has never lagged behind in encouraging sportsmen and sports-women to reach international, national, state and university levels. Ness Wadia Club is probably the only one belong-

ing to a residential colony in Bombay to have a modern club house, equipped with one of the finest indoor wooden flooring badminton court, library, cafeteria and indoor games hall along with a full-length maidan for field games such as hockey, football and cricket. The annual fee is kept as low as possible with the intention of bringing it within the reach of even young students.

The heartening progress is reflected in almost every game and the maximum honours gained by its members are in karate. They brought to Maharashtra the national title and three of their representatives figured in the victorious Indian team which won the international.

One of the earliest to make an impact on the Bombay sports field was St. Xavier's and Bombay University collegian Dara Doomasia who later represented India in the Asian Games and came through the Loughborough University in London as a coach. Others from the Ness Wadia Club to

shine in athletics have been state representative Darayus Sarkari and University stars Jamshed Jemadar and Kushroo Contractor and Maharashtra school's champion Percy Irani.

In football this club dominated the All-Parsi tournament for several years and the two who have brought most honour to the institution are Aspi Contractor and Jangoo Sholapurwalla. Hockey, too, has been enriched by the club representatives. Miss Dilnaz Daruwalla, better known in table tennis with Kersi Engineer, gained the university colours, while goalkeeper Rumie Guzdar is also a good umpire.

Vispi Kapadia has been their brightest star in badminton, but the once third ranked national junior player has forsaken the game for karate. Others to distinguish themselves in the shuttle game have been Yezdi Bharucha, Mahrukh Mody, Darayus Gazdar, Dolly Irani and the former Maharashtra State women's champion Hufriah Nariman who twice failed to become the national champion at the

last hurdle.

Commander Soli Contractor has excelled in yatching by winning the national championship in 1967. He was the Services champion in 1969 and later in 1970-71. He was also the South Asia champion and won the bronze-medal at Bangkok, and represented India in the Olympics at Munich in 1972.

The stylish left-handed Mehli Irani has been their outstanding cricketer, while Zal Irani has been their best cyclist.

The Club is fortunate to have the guidance of sturdy enthusiasts who, as office-bearers and members of the managing committee, have steered the club with great tact and ability, especially the present president, Mr. Manek Medora. They have seen the club through difficult phases of its existence and have spared no pains in absorbing and initiating fresh ideas for its healthy progress.

Evening News of India
29 August 1978.

'Name Game'

Caption Contest

Though we received many worthy entries for the Puppet 'Name Game' (Parsiana May-June, 1978), we could not decide on a name. So for the time being we have kept him nameless. As for the prize, rather than divide the Rs 100 between the 23 entrants we will be sending the contestants the Parsi Book of Names, priced at Rs 9, free. Below we list in order of receipt the names of the participants in the 'Name Game' contest and their entries: Bejan P. Gotla, Bangalore: *Pesutan Poppatji*; Ms Piloo N. Jungalwalla, New Delhi: *Parsiana Puchri, Bawa Adam*; Aloo C. Nasarwanji, Lonavla: *Seth Ookerji Agboatwalla*; J. J. Tarapore, Calcutta: *Persiana-Na-Pudumji*; Rusa K. Doctor, Bombay: *Jamasji Bhejan Bhaji*; Yasmeen R. Nazir, Shillong: *Bhikhajee Pestonjee Lamboonakwala*; Maharooh Mistry, Bombay: *Pudamjee Puppet*; Ms M. M. Dubash, Bombay: *Dahya Dosu*; Ms C. M. Dubash, Bombay: *Kadarno Keku*; Freney Marshall, Surat: *Bomanji-bawa*; Arvind A. Deshpande, Bombay: *Nosey Survivalwalla*; Sehra Singara, Bombay: *Shavaksha Satti*; Parin A. Modi, Bombay: *Khursedji Khunkhodja*; John Alexander, Nagpur: *Conservative, Paranoid, Progressive, Salesman-cum-Scholar*; Firoza N. Vakil, Bombay: *Pestonji Phanchatwalla*; Anaita N. Vakil, Bombay: *Sam Samacharwalla*; Bahman S. Surti, Secunderabad: *Seth Chatpatia Khatpatia Parsiana-vaachak*; Aloo J. Bacha, Bombay: *Fali Fikarmand*; Dolly Fali Vania, Calcutta: *Philosopher Jamasji*; Roda Kaoosji, Hyderabad: *Nosey Parker*; Katie F. Seervai, Bangalore: *Parsiana—Premi Pestonji*; F. P. Seervai, Bangalore: *Pestonji Popat Parsianana Premi*; Adi F. Merchant, Bombay: *Dhanjishah Dhansakh, Behramshah Bettahbekar, Fardoonji Fanfanmar, Erachshaw Ekchopri*.

The photograph of a Parsi drinking water from the Bhika Behram well despite a municipal notice prohibiting it, evoked a host of suitable captions from readers (Give the Picture a Caption Contest, Parsiana May-June 1978). The entry judged best is the caption "Faith" submitted by Mithoo Coorlawala and Sarosh J. Panthaki, both of Bombay, who share the Rs 50/- prize.

Among the other best entries who will receive a complimentary copy of the Parsiana Book of Iranian names, are: "I swear this water makes me healthier day by day", by Prof. P. D. Sunawala of Bombay; "Well, to-do," by Sharookh Rustamji of Belgaum; "Faith Hope or Calamity" by Dinyar F. Dhondy of Allahabad; "Prohibition may come and prohibition may go, but we drink on forever," by Ms Farida N. Vakil of Bombay; "Bhika Behram's Faith Cure" by F. F. Mullan of Udvada; "The Well of Blind Faith" by B. S. Surti of Secunderabad; "Here's to Health and Long Life and damn the Municipality's jaundiced eye and sickly tap-water" by Dinsah J. Panday of Bombay; "Yatha—Tari—Madad" by Noshir Rustamji of Belgaum; "Faith Kills Filth" by Ms F. K. Antia of Hyderabad; "In Defiance of Death and Disease" by Naushad E. Bhagwagar of Nagpur; "The Forbidden Longing" by Ms M. Kaoosji of Hyderabad; "Trust in God and Not the Trustees" by K. F. Khodaiji of Bombay; "Caution to the Wind" by Mr K. D. Chargeman of Bombay; "The Drink Divine Despite Municipal Mumbo-Jumbo" by R. J. Boyce of Bombay, and "Warning in Vain" by Ms A. K. Dossabhoy of Bombay.